

Nineteenth
Century
American
Women
of
Freethought

Book Two

L - Z

by

Carole Gray

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Emmett F. Fields
Bank of Wisdom, LLC

Comments

I wanted to make a few comments on this second volume that were not included in the first volume.

First, I would like to apologize for the quality of the pictures. Even when I had a good source from which to copy, I have pretty antiquated equipment to reproduce it. It was not until August, 1998 that I “moved up” to a 486, so you can see how limited I have been. I mentioned being a gas station attendant in the introduction to Volume I, and as such, have no money for better equipment, and was only able to get a 486 because the Y2K scare has company’s selling out all their equipment, allowing me to purchase a 486 for only \$200.

In the worst case scenario, some of the pictures were found in the *Blue Grass Blade*. The problem with that is that whoever saved the original copies of the *Blue Grass Blade* folded the newspapers in half vertically, and the pictures were invariably directly in the center of the page. The copy I borrowed from the library was on microfilm, with a black line right down the middle of each page and hence, each portrait, caused by the folding. So, the original was faulty, then I was making a photocopy from microfilm, using library photocopiers, which aren’t the best, then I was scanning a photocopy. With each step, the picture degraded a little more. Believe it or not, I actually was able to improve them a little bit using “Paint,” although you may not think they look much improved. Helen Lucas is an example of one of the very worse copies with which I had to work.

I also want the reader to know the purpose for all this work. I realize it is not very good, because I am not a professional historian or researcher, but I admire these ladies so very much, I wanted them to once again become known to at least some people, if I can’t present them to everyone. And I sincerely hope with all my heart that somewhere a real historian will read about one of these ladies and develop an interest in her, and do a proper job of investigating and presenting her life story. That would indeed be a wonderful reward, and make the effort worthwhile.

In addition, I wanted to note that I am not making one dime from any of this. The only remuneration for which I asked was ten of the finished CD’s, so that I could send them to a few colleges and friends as gifts. Also, I will not be accepting any correspondence regarding this work, however, if you have any comments or questions, please write to Emmett F. Fields at Bank of Wisdom and perhaps he can respond to them. This little effort really has been done solely out of love for these wonderful, courageous, far-sighted women.

Finally, I wish to very sincerely thank one institution and two marvelous humans:

- C The Columbus (Ohio) Public Library**, who always did their best to get me the books or microfilm I needed.
- C Emmett F. Fields**, the greatest Freethought publication collector and publicist I’ve ever had the privilege to know, for his encouragement, kind words, and for finalizing this project for me.
- C Frank Zindler**, whose mind is awe-inspiring, whose kindness knows no bounds, and who kept me alive long enough to finish this little work.

Thank you all, so very, very much.

I hope you enjoy the information I’ve collected.

Carole Gray

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LOU LAWRENCE

LOU LAWRENCE

3/20/1855 - 1932

Miss Louise Lawrence, of Barnesville, Ohio, was an active member of both the Buckeye Secular Union and the Materialist Association, serving in the former as secretary for seven years and in the latter on several action committees. In addition, she wrote articles explaining her Atheism with a style which was both entertaining and educational, using simple, down to earth language. She emphasized the need for alternatives on Sundays to church attendance, urging the creation of Sunday entertainments and educational opportunities designed to appeal to the poor and middle class alike.

Lou was of middle class background and in her youth was nicknamed "Ouisse." In her fictionalized autobiography, *The Confessions of an Old Maid* (1904), Lou names two sisters, whom she calls "Nancy" and "Dodie," who both married and left Lou as the "Old Maid" of the family. Lou reluctantly forsook a career to care for her mother by turning the family home into a boarding house after her father's death. Although she had received several proposals of marriage, her heart belonged to a married man who was a famous Freethinker. Due to the dictates of the times, she and this man parted, he returning to his family. They never met again and she learned of his death through a third party.

Lou does not explain how she became an Atheist, however, in her autobiography, an interesting clue is given when her overbearing sister, Nancy, told her she should read *Woman's Duties to Society and the Church*. Lou's good friend and boarder, Dan Laughlin, an older gentleman, told Nancy, "Let the girl alone, Nancy, she's been told enough about the duties she owes to God and the world. Let her learn the duties she owes to herself." When Lou asked him what those duties were, Dan proceeded to tell her that the only duties people needed to be concerned about were getting all the possible happiness out of life and making the best of the conditions in which they found themselves. Dan helped to bring Lou out of the heavenly mists in which her sister would have placed her, and back down to earth, and she both loved and respected the old boarder.

Lou Lawrence died in 1932.

Quotes

The purpose of Rationalism is to supplant superstition in the minds and "hearts" of the people. To do this, it must inaugurate a system of entertainments, diversions and instructions which will appeal to the great mass of humanity. It must take the people as it finds them and win its way by catering to their needs - social, mental, sentimental, and otherwise. Those individuals, who are strongly intellectual may sometimes be won by appeals in the shape of printed arguments; but the most intellectual of the race, as well as the most sensual, must eat, drink, and wear clothing; and the result is that they exercise their powers as far as possible along the lines which give worldly advancement in return; or, failing in this, most of them deem it expedient to seek to keep as closely as possible in touch with the masses for the sake of having their assistance in the mere "struggle for existence." 11/15/08

- "The Ohio Idea of Propaganda: What Can Be Accomplished by Local Union Work if Rationalists Will Only Take Up the Work," *The Blue Grass Blade*, 11/15/08, p. 6-7.

Man's ignorance of his own nature and that of the universe around him has, most probably, been the cause of all superstitions; and superstitions, in their turn, have been the cause of innumerable effects - mostly evil in their nature.

- "Superstition and the Law of Cause and Effect," *The Blue Grass Blade*, 11/29/08, p. 6.

Man is not responsible for the existence of evil. He is not responsible for his own existence, nor for his propensity to sin. The Power that built the universe is responsible for all these things. You call that

Power "God." You say that he created man. No omnipotent god could have a right to create man, or any other sentient being, except for its own good. If an omnipotent god created man with his propensity to sin, and then punishes him for indulging that propensity, he has used his power beyond the bounds of justice, and fills the popular conception of the devil instead of a god. I, for one, could not worship such a god; neither can I believe in the existence of such a god; and I think this fact adds much to my happiness.

- "A Freethinker on the Defensive," *The Blue Grass Blade*, 10/24/09, p. 11.

Like every other fallacy, the god-idea has come to the point where it hampers Progress. While no one saw it to be a fallacy, the world could not be blamed for accepting it. But that necessity is passed. While science may not be able to explain the life-force behind nature, while the best she can do will be to say that this force is an attribute of Matter, she has demonstrated conclusively that there is no possible foundation for a belief in a personal "God," a being apart from nature.

- "A Freethinker on the Defensive," *The Blue Grass Blade*, 10/24/09, p. 11.

Belief in a future life will not make one immortal any more than belief in the nutritive qualities of sand would keep one from starving if he adopted that article as a daily diet.

- "A Freethinker on the Defensive," *The Blue Grass Blade*, 10/31/09, p. 2-3.

"But what would the world do without religion?" "Aye, there's the rub!" But that question has no need to trouble anybody who has lost faith in religion. The consequences will be but a repetition of what has happened over and over again in the history of the human race. Hundreds of gods have died and been buried. First; the sun, moon and stars were believed to be gods. Men worshipped these heavenly bodies, and prayed to them for guidance in their search for food, for success in their hunting expeditions, and for skill in murdering their enemies. But these gods died - that is they died as gods - and yet the sun, moon and other heavenly bodies remained.

.....

Mankind has also believed that trees and animals were gods; and have made sacrifices to them, and prayed to them, and decorated them. But these gods died; and yet the trees and animals remained.

After the worship of such a multitude of gods, mankind began to believe in deities who presided over the various departments of Nature - Neptune, the god of the sea; Thor, the god of thunder. The voluptuous [*sic*] and sensuous Greeks had a whole galaxy of gods made in their own images; and the brave old Norseman had his divine family, whose characters almost command the respect of the twentieth-century philosopher.

But Neptune is dead; Odin is dead; Jupiter, Venus and Isis, are dead; yet the sea and sky, wisdom and culture, love and motherhood remain. And some day, if Jehovah, Allah and Budha [*sic*], Mohammed and Jesus, are carried to the same cemetery, the Universe and Humanity will still be here.

When the churches and the god-idea have passed out of existence, the family, the school, and the platform will be left. Instead of the worship of a supposed Omnipotent Creator, there will then be the study of the sciences, which explain, as far as may be, the operations of Nature, and teach how to investigate them still farther; instead of prayer to an unknown God for the blessings of health and strength, there will be the study of the laws of right living, which show a surer way to the attainment of these blessings. Instead of kneeling in worship before the mother of Jesus, man will still do reverence to the mothers of men. Instead of teaching children to pray to a "father in Heaven" they will be taught respect for and obedience to their fathers on earth. When it is no longer necessary to go to church to prove one's loyalty to god; men, wmen [*sic*] and children will have time to investigate their duties to their country, to the world, and to each other. When it is no longer thought needful for man to do the right to win the favor of an mnipotent [*sic*] tyrant in

the skies, a righteous life will still be necessary to commend him to his fellow-men and satisfy his own conscience. When the churches and religion are gone, the Good and the Beautiful, Industry and Art, Truth and Justice, Honesty and Loyalty, Virtue, Love, Liberty and Fraternity will endure. When "God" is gone, MAN in his majesty will remain.

- "A Freethinker on the Defensive," *The Blue Grass Blade*, 10/31/09, p. 2-3.

..... Rationalism will never die. There is nothing in its teachings to bind men to a dead creed. What it offers to the world, it offers as the best deductions from accumulated knowledge. But, as the sum of human knowledge may be greater tomorrow than it is today, Rationalism may have something better to offer in the future than it has at present. It asks no favor but the acceptance of demonstrated facts and the use of the reason.

- "A Freethinker on the Defensive," *The Blue Grass Blade*, 10/31/09, p. 2-3.

My friends, what would you have the Freethinker do? He has weighed the evidence in favor of your religion. He has studied its history, analyzed its foundation, considered its promises and its threats. His reason rejects its assumptions. His judgment refuses to accede to its demands. To him, it is a mere superstition and its "God" is a monstrous myth. He looks around him and finds a superabundance of churches and a lack of libraries and hospitals. He sees women drudging to decorate temples for the pleasure of a hypothetical "God" who had power to build a universe, and children saving their pennies to publish the will of a being who has the strength to rouse an earthquake and start a cyclone on its path of devastation. He realizes that time and money are being wasted in the propagation of ideas which are contradiction [*sic*] to known facts. He knows that there is enough of the known, the proven, the temporal, to fill man's life to the uttermost; and that, in the struggle for life, health, and happiness, man has no time to waste in blind adoration of an unproved "God."

- "A Freethinker on the Defensive," *The Blue Grass Blade*, 10/31/09, p. 2-3.

A Freethinker on the Defensive
When Christian Sects Permit the Exercise of Private Judgment
as Against Creed and Tenet, Nothing but the Mere
Name is Left.

(By Lou Lawrence.)

This being the case, would infinite love or infinite justice permit such a god to create a being doomed to even a preponderance of misery? Would not such a course be, rather, the act of a being endowed with infinite hate? Think of the pain and misery of this life, to which all - good and bad, believers and unbelievers - are doomed alike! Add to this the punishment to which a majority of men are supposed to be destined, and where is the infinite love? Where is even a finite love? Where is even a hint of justice?

It is useless to plead that god gives men a choice between good and evil, between pain and happiness. Men are where they are and what they are by the will of their creator, or else that creator is not infinite in power and knowledge; and if man's fate is the will of an omnipotent and omniscient being, that being is altogether in sentiment of love and justice. Eternal punishment - a preponderance of suffering, even - is not consistent with infinite justice and love coupled with infinite power and knowledge.

"Well! but that doesn't matter," says my Christian sister, "you do not need to believe in eternal punishment to become a member of the Christian church."

Certainly not. Quite a respectable number of your members do not hold that belief. It seems that many of them have given up the doctrine of an eternal hell. But let us see to what that concession leads. If there is [no] heaven to gain, no hell to shun, no angry god to be appeased, then there was no need of an atonement, and the claims made for the Christ are false. In that case, Jesus did not die to save man; there was no need for the shedding of blood; the foundation is swept from under Christianity and the churches are obtaining money under false pretenses.

If a belief in and practice of the fundamental tenets of a religion are not necessary to man's well-being beyond this life, what does the church stand for? If persons can be good Christians after discarding one of the original dogmas, by every rule of reason they can discard another and still another, until there will be none left. When a sect begins to permit private judgment of its creed among its members, there must come a time when nothing but the name will be held in common.

Again: If you are going to give up hell, you must give up heaven - you must give up immortality; or admit that the good and bad reach the same goal; and that admission is a contradiction of the dogma of rewards and punishment, and renders the doctrine of the atonement null and void.

Man is not responsible for the existence of evil. He is not responsible for his own existence, nor for his propensity to sin. The Power that built the universe is responsible for all these things. You call that Power "God." You say that he created man. No omnipotent god could have a right to create man, or any other sentient being, except for its own good. If an omnipotent god created man with his propensity to sin, and then punishes him for indulging that propensity, he has used his power beyond the bounds of justice, and fills the popular conception of the devil instead of a god. I, for one, could not worship such a god; neither can I believe in the existence of such a god; and I think this fact adds much to my happiness.

"If you do not believe there is a god, how account for the existence of the earth and the heavens? for plants, animals and man? Things do not come into being of their own accord. There must be a Power somewhere that fashions suns and stars, lands and seas, birds and flowers.["]

My sisters, that is just what I expected you to say. That question was, most certainly, the mother of the god-idea. This desire to account for themselves and the universe has long been a difficult, though natural, problem in the minds of men.

As children want to know who made their toys, their clothes and their homes, so the human race, in its infancy, wanted to know who made the things which impressed it most - the earth, sea, sky, and themselves. With little outside of nature to arrest his attention, it is not wonderful that primeval man early set about solving "the riddle of the universe." There are points about that riddle which have not been made altogether plain up to the present time; and it is not at all surprising that, in the childhood of the race, men made crude guesses concerning it. But their method was unscientific; and their solution, while it may have served a good purpose in the past, is not consistent with the sum of present knowledge; and for this reason has ceased to be of value.

The business of science is to explain the Unknown in terms of the Known. Hence, the primitive method of accounting for the universe and man was unscientific because it was an attempt to account for one unknown quantity by postulating a second quantity not less unknown, but more distant. Our forefathers could not believe that the earth and man had made themselves. So they said "A god made them;" and the god was so far away that he did not arouse, in their minds, a sufficient curiosity to induce them to ask who made him. They did not seem to see that if a man was such a wonderful creature that he could not have made himself, a god, which was certainly a much more wonderful being, could much less have produced himself. Childlike, they had accounted to their satisfaction for that which lay nearest to them; and their intellects were not sufficiently penetrating to see that they had shifted the difficulty only one step farther away.

I am not ready to say that, in the infancy of the race, religions did not benefit mankind. When, from lack of scientific investigation and intellectual power, men could not know truth if their errors assisted them physically, morally or socially, the errors were not in vain.

Truth is brought to light only by a multitude of mistaken guesses. For ages, our ancestors have been stumbling from one guess to another, discarding each as it proved to be useless, or false, and establishing an occasional point beyond the possibility of a doubt; and it will be in this manner that posterity will, at last, lay a firm foundation on which to base its calculations. This is the method by which mankind will succeed in building its temple of Truth, the only temple which Time cannot lay in ruins.

No, I am not disposed to assert that the god-idea has been an unmitigated evil; and I am ready to attack it only because I believe that civilized man has outgrown it, and because he is offered a philosophy which, if not absolute truth, is certainly much nearer the truth. As we discard out-grown garments because they would hamper the growth of the body, so we must discard out-grown ideas because they interfere with the growth of the intellect.

Like every other fallacy, the god-idea has come to the point where it hampers Progress. While no one saw it to be a fallacy, the world could not be blamed for accepting it. But that necessity is passed. While science may not be able to explain the life-force behind nature, while the best she can do will be to say that this force is an attribute of Matter, she has demonstrated conclusively that there is no possible foundation for a belief in a personal "God," a being apart from nature.

And now I will tell you in a very few words how I do account for the existence of the earth and all it contains, as well as for the vast expanse of the heavens, of which I can conceive no end, without having recourse to the declaration that there is a god.

We know intimately only ourselves and the earth. We have a slight acquaintance with the sun, moon and stars - the denizens of Infinite Space - but much of what we say about them is mere speculation.

Of the Known, near and far, science has never been able to discover anything that was not material. Even our minds, the most subtle phenomena within the range of our recognition, have a material basis; or, as I am fond of saying, are woven of Matter. If anyone disputes this, let him exhibit a specimen of the mind which exists apart from Matter.

This Matter - this fundamental, or primordial essence of all the known universe - this substance of which all things are builded - is a demonstrable fact. Land, water, air, ether - the firmest rock and the most delicate gas, are all combinations of Matter. Science has traced the various phenomena of nature to this point. How this primordial substance came, she has never been able to tell us. It is here; it is everywhere. It simply IS. We accept [*sic*] it; and so far as knowledge goes, there is nothing beyond its ULTIMATE ATOM.

Here is where I stop. Something, somewhere, must be self-existent. Something must possess the Building-Power - the Life-force - and I can see no evidence of its existence apart from this Ultimate Atom - this ONE THING without which "was not anything made that was made."

We know that the Life-force does exist in this connection. We know nothing beyond. To my mind, Matter is the Creative Power of the Universe. It is the one indestructible quantity; and why should we suppose anything beyond it when it is just as easy, and far more reasonable, to suppose it to be the self-sufficient Cause of the magnificent, incomprehensible ALL?

Can you, my sisters, demonstrate to me the existence of a single phenomena which has no material basis? Thought has been named as an instance of this kind; but there can be no thought without a brain, and the brain is built of Matter. Your pastors have talked much to you about "soul" and "spirit;" but they have never proved the existence of either, as an entity.

You believe in these things because you have heard them talked of since you were able to understand. You believe them just as you once believed in Santa Claus - no less and no more. Until you questioned his existence, you could not possibly know that he was a myth. So, you cannot know that any of the gods, which have been taught by the various religions, are simply the creations of an infantile stage of the human intellect until you begin to think it possible that these are myths also.

Let me ask you why, when you hear that some one questions the existence of your god, you do not apply yourself to the solution of the difficulty? Having asked this question [sic], I want to give the answer that my friend gave me when I asked her to discuss the subject.

"Oh, but I'm afraid you'll be too much for me," she said. This is the reason. It is fear - FEAR spelled with capitals. But why should you fear to know the truth? Is anything less false because you do not know it? Will belief in a falsehood make it a truth? There are some folk who deny the existence of disease; but they die all the same. There are people who believe in ghosts; but you do not, and they have never been able to convince you or produce a ghost. There are those who believe the earth to be a great, flat plain; but science has long ago demonstrated this to be a fallacy. If a man could believe he would live a thousand years, would his dream come true?

Let me make an assertion. Supposing that belief in a fallacy could once have been beneficial, whenever the mind begins to question it, it loses its utility. If you are afraid to discuss your religion lest you be convinced that it is false, that religion is not sufficiently real to you to benefit your life.

(To be continued.)

- *The Blue Grass Blade*, 10/24/09, p. 2-3.

**A Freethinker on the Defensive
Investigation Will Prove Any Truth More Clearly. Women Fear
Inquiry Into Religious Ideas. Extension of Religious
Controversy.**

(By Lou Lawrence.)

This fear about the investigation of religious subjects is a uzzle [sic] to me. My Methodism was one as ardent as the religious bias of any woman of my acquaintance. Indeed, I think I must have had a little more faith in the foundation of my creed than most of you, for I did not hesitate to investigate the objections that were brought against it.

I said "My creed is true, and the more a truth is investigated the more evident it will become." Now, doesn't that seem reasonable? If, looking at the blinds, you decided that the sun was shining and [I] declared that it was not, would you hesitate to open the shutters for the purpose of deciding the matter? If you were correct in your judgment, you would convince me of my error; but if you were mistaken, no amount of belief on your part would warm the air.

Just so it is with religious ideas. If they are true, investigation will but demonstrate the fact more clearly; if they are false, no amount of belief will make them realities. Belief in a future life will not make one immortal any more than belief in the nutritive qualities of sand would keep one from starving if he adopted that article as a daily diet.

But there is another kind of fear which deters people, especially women, from the investigation of their religious ideas. I do not think this consideration has the same power over men. Indeed the contrary seems quite evident; for there can be little doubt that there are a hundred men who are Rationalists in matters of religion to where there is one woman; and the reason for this disparity in numbers is the reason why women refuse to consider the subject.

Women are more afraid of public opinion than men are - unless they, the men, happen to be running for office. Women accept their religions as they accept their fashions - because they are the fashion.

It is not necessary to trace this undue fear of running counter to public opinion which characterizes the female mind; but it is there in excess of that possessed by her brothers. Of course, if men in general were to discard their religious beliefs, and make open avowal of their mental attitude, women would soon follow. Mental independence would be in the air. Reason would occupy the pulpit. Freethought would be the fashion. But men, have so long been the leaders of thought that they must continue to be so for a time to come.

And I would say here, by way of parenthesis, that if all the men in the United States, who have lost faith in Christianity, would come out and boldly [*sic*] declare their positions, there would never be need for the erection of another church within her boundary. Moreover, if there were now as much skepticism among women as there is among men, some of the churches already built would have to be sold under the sheriff's hammer. While women are more afraid of meriting popular odium than men are, they are more ready to defy it when once it is cast upon them.

It is her fear of running counter to popular opinion, coupled with her subordinate position as a leader of thought, which deters woman from the consideration of the claims of her religious faith. She has not been accustomed to having her ideas accorded equal courtesy with those of men. She shrinks from the possibility of laying herself open to criticism. She prefers to believe - or to believe that she believes - lest she find herself outside of what she considers to be the pale of respectability. I know, my sisters, that you have much more to contend with than men have, and that is the excuse I make for your unnecessary conservatism in matters of religion.

Two more points which my friend made were, First: that the trials and disappointments of our present life were so numerous that it would not be worth living were it not as a preparation for a future and happier existence; and that our sorrow for our lost friends would be unbearable if we could not hope to meet them again.

If life is worth living only as a probation for eternity, it is then valuable to those only to whom eternity will bring happiness. It is not only an unprofitable game, but a losing game to those to whom everlasting life will be an everlasting curse. Is there any consolation in this idea? Is it not possible that you may be one of those whose probation will not prove profitable? Or, if you are sure of your own gain, how can you rest when you know that many of your friends will not make a safe landing on the shores of a happy eternity? Can you see any consolation for the troubles of earth in the contemplation of that thought? Would it not be more satisfactory to know that what happiness one could obtain for himself and what joy he could give to others were so much of an addition to the sum total of Universal Good which no false step in the evening of life could overbalance a hundred-fold by bringing unmerited misery in the future?

Moreover, what evidence have you that a future life would be any more satisfactory than the present one? Is there anything in Nature to warrant such a belief? If a god of infinite power forced us into one life in which suffering predominates, is there any reason to believe that he would do any better by us in a second existence? If god created man for eternity, why did he not make him as he wanted him and place him where he wanted him? If an earthly life is necessary as a trial for eternity, what becomes of children who die in infancy, or at birth.[?] If the babe that never opens its eyes to the light of this world is a fit inhabitant for heaven, why is an earthly life necessary for any individual, except as an opportunity for sending him to perdition? If god can make a being fit for Heaven, why does he not make all of that kind and place them there? If he knows that any creature runs a risk of suffering - much or little - by being forced upon an earthly life, is it not criminal negligence, or wilful culpability, on his part, when that being is born?

These questions are not irrelevant. If you are not satisfied with god's treatment of you here and now, it is more than good policy to make sure that he will treat you better in the future.

If you saw a mother giving her child unnecessary pain today, would you think it probable that she would treat it any better tomorrow? If you saw your own child undergoing pain and suffering which you could prevent, would you permit its misery to continue for years because you intended to give it an inheritance in the distant future? This is just the sort of conduct which you attribute to your god - a god whom you declare to be infinite in love and power. If you deny this - if you assert that god is doing the best he can, then you have no assurance that he is able to do any better by you in that next life than he is doing now. In the light of Reason, the probationary theory is not consolatory. It is inconsistent even as applied to those to whom it promises a future of happiness; and it is brutally immoral and unjust to those who are to fall victims to its merciless threats.

When our friends die, would it not be desirable to believe that they are immune from, not only the evils of this life, but also from any possibility of additional evil in a life to come? I am far from arguing that the ills of life overbalance its pleasures; but which-ever way that question is decided, death is inevitable; and, since the longer it is deferred the more pain and disappointment must be added to the debit side of Life's account, I do [not] see why men should not meet it with satisfaction at any time, and lie down with no wish to make again a venture which has been, to the individual, of every doubtful utility. Who does not welcome sleep? and what is the blessing which sleep brings but unconsciousness? The rest it gives is the only good we realize. Then why should we not welcome Eternal Rest - eternal unconsciousness?

Immortality, seen in the light of Reason, does not appear [sic] to be desirable even if it were an established fact. All life passes through its various stages. There are always infancy, youth, maturity, and old age; and if, when the prime is passed, the individual cannot die - cannot pass into nothingness, what a long, long, dreary old age must be his!

The fable of eternal youth cannot stand the light of science. Only the sanguine imagination of mental childhood can harbor the hope of such a state. Science proves that even worlds are born and die; and it is the veriest egotism in man to suppose that he is an exception to the rule. What begins in time, must end in time. The one immortal existence is Matter; the substance, if it be called substance, of which the great ALL is constructed; the Force, if it is to be called Force, which builds all things. There is no division. There can be no division. The Force is inherent in the Substance; or the Substance is the mere expression of the Force. Fundamentally, all is one; and that is the ONE IMMORTAL.

Oh, my sisters, with your belief in an eternal life, with your hope of an eternal Heaven and your fear of an eternal Hell, you do not - you cannot feel a satisfaction greater than is experienced by him who reads by the light of science that he is a part of the Infinite; that his little life, though so very small, is a link in the beginningless, endless chain of the Cosmos; that whatever his individual ills may be, he is still a factor in the UNIVERSAL GOOD. When I have looked out upon a Spring landscape and taken in the beauty of the springing grass, the swelling buds, the shimmering water, the misty hills, and the smiling blue of that vast sea of ether over all; and have clearly realized my oneness with all this natural glory; I have felt an ecstasy which no dream of a Heaven, large enough for me but too narrow for all mankind, could possibly awaken.

I have said that man is the leader of thought, the captain of the mental army; I must now assert that woman is the maker of morals. I do not mean that woman is never immoral, or that she cannot be even more immoral than man. But, as a class, women have borne the burden of moral progress. I shall not go into the details of any theory of the principles behind this fact. It is, possibly, selfish in its origin - a mere desire to please for individual gain. But, whatever its source, it has been the blessing - the salvation of the race.

It may be that woman has been industrious, prudent, patient, self-sacrificing, loving and virtuous, because these qualities increased her popularity with the opposite sex; but, in doing this, she has builded

these qualities into her nature; she has transmitted them, in a measure, to her sons as well as to her daughters; and it remains only for her to widen her sphere until it is co-extensive with that of her brothers, and then to demand of them the same honor, probity and purity which they demand of her.

(To be continued)

- *The Blue Grass Blade*, 10/31/09, p. 2-3.

**A Freethinker on the Defensive
Honesty Demands We Discard Opinions Shown To Be Erroneous.
Conclusion of a Strong, Logical and Argumentative
Discourse.**

(By Lou Lawrence.)

The study of the philosophy of human life is a mental process, the practice of its teaching is a moral one. Common honesty requires that we discard opinions when we see them to be erroneous. It is a crime to conceal a crime, it is an error the [*sic*] conceal an error, it is treason to abet a traitor, it is falsehood to support a falsehood, and it is tyrannous to march with tyrants. To give support, if the support of numbers only - if but a passive support - to a fallacy, a tyranny, either physical or mental, is to assist in clogging the wheels of Progress. To endorse an opinion which is not believed is to live a lie. To refuse to apply the light of science to the care of both body and brain is to throw our weight against the advancement of the race.

In matters of religion, what is the part of the honest, intelligent, progressive lover of the human race - man or woman? What, but to open the windows of the mind and let the light shine into it? What but to look facts in the face and embrace the conclusions they present us? To think, to investigate, and to decide for ourselves, and to accord to others the same privileges?

When you, my sisters, follow this course, you will be living up to the demands of the age. When you have conscientiously taken these steps, if you still feel your present religion to be true, it will be your duty to put it in practice - not a half-hearted, perfunctory sort of practice, but a genuine, enthusiastic devotion which will tell for righteousness on your own life, whatever may be its effects on humanity at large. But if, on the other hand, you are convinced that your creed is founded in error, that the demands of your church are robbing other reforms of the needed support, that unquestioning adherence to a creed formed in the darkness of the past is no more than voluntary mental blindness, it will be your duty to stand apart from your old associates and prove yourselves true soldiers, doing battle for the uplifting of humanity.

"But what would the world do without religion?" "Aye, there's the rub!" But that question has no need to trouble anybody who has lost faith in religion. The consequences will be but a repetition of what has happened over and over again in the history of the human race. Hundreds of gods have died and been buried. First; the sun, moon and stars were believed to be gods. Men worshipped these heavenly bodies, and prayed to them for guidance in their search for food, for success in their hunting expeditions, and for skill in murdering their enemies. But these gods died - that is they died as gods - and yet the sun, moon and other heavenly bodies remained.

Indeed it may well be said in passing, that men were nearer the proper worship when they fell down upon their knees before the sun than they have ever been since. Outside the earth, on which we live, the sun is the phenomenon of the universe which is of most importance to us, and without which man would never have existed. The sun, the center and source of the solar system, might, with a very little stretch of the imagination, be said to be the creator of the earth and the father of the manifold life thereon. Poetically speaking, the sun is the father and the earth is the mother of us all.

Mankind has also believed that trees and animals were gods; and have made sacrifices to them, and prayed to them, and decorated them. But these gods died; and yet the trees and animals remained.

After the worship of such a multitude of gods, mankind began to believe in deities who presided over the various departments of Nature - Neptune, the god of the sea; Thor, the god of thunder. The voluptuous [*sic*] and sensuous Greeks had a whole galaxy of gods made in their own images; and the brave old Norseman had his divine family, whose characters almost command the respect of the twentieth-century philosopher.

But Neptune is dead; Odin is dead; Jupiter, Venus and Isis, are dead; yet the sea and sky, wisdom and culture, love and motherhood remain. And some day, if Jehovah, Allah and Budha [*sic*], Mohammed and Jesus, are carried to the same cemetery, the Universe and Humanity will still be here.

When the churches and the god-idea have passed out of existence, the family, the school, and the platform will be left. Instead of the worship of a supposed Omnipotent Creator, there will then be the study of the sciences, which explain, as far as may be, the operations of Nature, and teach how to investigate them still farther; instead of prayer to an unknown God for the blessings of health and strength, there will be the study of the laws of right living, which show a surer way to the attainment of these blessings. Instead of kneeling in worship before the mother of Jesus, man will still do reverence to the mothers of men. Instead of teaching children to pray to a "father in Heaven" they will be taught respect for and obedience to their fathers on earth. When it is no longer necessary to go to church to prove one's loyalty to god; men, wmen [*sic*] and children will have time to investigate their duties to their country, to the world, and to each other. When it is no longer thought needful for man to do the right to win the favor of an mnipotent [*sic*] tyrant in the skies, a righteous life will still be necessary to commend him to his fellow-men and satisfy his own conscience. When the churches and religion are gone, the Good and the Beautiful, Industry and Art, Truth and Justice, Honesty and Loyalty, Virtue, Love, Liberty and Fraternity will endure. When "God" is gone, MAN in his majesty will remain.

I shall call attention to but one more point commonly urged upon the Freethinker by just, conscientious, earnest Christians. They ask us why, even if we cannot believe in a god, we do not keep quiet on the subject. They tell us that our unbelief injures us socially and interferes with our temporal usefulness. I frankly, but not cheerfully, admit that this assertion is partially true. Out-spoken skepticism is, in some places, more or less detrimental to social recognition and favor. But the degree of ostracism meted out to the religious skeptic varies with the degree of intellectual culture of those with whom his lot is cast. Among the negroes of our South-land, a reputation for Atheism wuld [*sic*] be likely to give a man full possession of the other side of the street. Among the unlettered in Catholic countries, his presence would cause many a poor creature to make the sign of the cross. Both these intellectual back numbers would be likely to think him little removed from a devil incarnate.

But, among the most enlightened people of the most enlightened countries, skepticism means no barrier to social preferment. In witness thereof, I will but mention the fact that the man who will occupy the chair of the chief executive of this nation for the next four years is a Unitarian; and Unitarianism means no more than a belief in one god, a deification of the Forces in Nature, or a faith in nothing at all, at the mere pleasure of the professor.

Religious skepticism never stood between Huxley and an invitation to dinner. It never causer [*sic*] the wisest and best of England's scholars to miss a possible opportunity of listening to Tyndal, Spencer, Mill, Lyon, Leckey, or Darwin.

Between these two extremes, the degree of tyranny with which society punishes the mental honesty of the man who dares to question its religion, is marked by a thousand fine graduations; and to these the skeptic resolves to submit; or else he plays the hypocrite. And I tell you, the hypocrites are not all in the churches. But, while a reputation for skepticism may, and frequently does, injure the usefulness of the

average Freethinker to the average society of his own day, the value of his life to his race is ever a blessing. It is only as men have had the courage to face the opprobrium of their [sic] fellowmen, that knowledge, science, art, industry, morality, even religion itself, have been improved. It was through the courage of its early votaries that Christianity, one of some four of the best religions we have today, won its way to public favor; and it will be only through the courage of Rationalists [sic] that Rationalism will, one day, come to bless the world.

But Rationalism will never die. There is nothing in its teachings to bind men to a dead creed. What it offers to the world, it offers as the best deductions from accumulated knowledge. But, as the sum of human knowledge may be greater tomorrow than it is today, Rationalism may have something better to offer in the future than it has at present. It asks no favor but the acceptance of demonstrated facts and the use of the reason.

My friends, what would you have the Freethinker do? He has weighed the evidence in favor of your religion. He has studied its history, analyzed its foundation, considered its promises and its threats. His reason rejects its assumptions. His judgment refuses to accede to its demands. To him, it is a mere superstition and its "God" is a monstrous myth. He looks around him and finds a superabundance of churches and a lack of libraries and hospitals. He sees women drudging to decorate temples for the pleasure of a hypothetical "God" who had power to build a universe, and children saving their pennies to publish the will of a being who has the strength to rouse an earthquake and start a cyclone on its path of devastation. He realizes that time and money are being wasted in the propagation of ideas which are contradiction [sic] to known facts. He knows that there is enough of the known, the proven, the temporal, to fill man's life to the uttermost; and that, in the struggle for life, health, and happiness, man has no time to waste in blind adoration of an unproved "God."

And why must he not publish his convictions to the world? Why should he not say to his brother, "Take your eyes from the skies and see the opportunities which the earth offers you. Stop dreaming of happiness in a Heaven you cannot locate, and live so as to merit joy and gladness here and now."

In common with all men, the Freethinker has aspirations to benefit his fellowmen; and, obeying the law of progress which impells [sic] men to try to lead others to the new light which they have received - to banish the delusion under which their brothers labor, his first impulse is to combat the dominant religion. He feels this to be incumbent upon him. It is, for him, what the world calls a duty. Because a man has outgrown his religion, it does not follow that he has relinquished his love for his fellowmen. Hope is an instinct of the human mind; and when men have ceased to hope for a heavenly home for themselves beyond the skies, they will begin to labor for a better home on earth for their race. Just as the religionist exerts himself to win future happiness for himself; so the Freethinker, who merges himself in the race, exerts himself for the future welfare of humanity.

"They are slaves, who will not choose
Hatred, scoffing and abuse,
Rather than in silence shrink
From the truths they need must think;
In the right with two, or three."

And the Right, for each individual, is the Truth as he sees it.

It is the Freethinker's knowledge of the beneficence of the message he brings mankind which gives him the courage to bear whatever of censure and unhappiness society may be disposed to heap upon him. This is the reason for his refusal to listen in silence to the propagation of what he considers to be a harmful fallacy. Neighbors may stand aloof, friends may turn aside, patronage may be withheld, but he keeps steadily on in his course. And why? because his conscience has greater terrors for him than public opinion.

Barnesville, Ohio.

- *The Blue Grass Blade*, 11/7/09, p. 2-3.



Lilian Leland



Grace Leland

THE LELAND FAMILY

**MARY A. LELAND, RACHEL/LILIAN LELAND ANDREWS,
and GRACE LELAND MACDONALD**

Mary A. Leland and her husband, Theron, were Freethinkers who never thought to impose the myths of the popular religion on their children. Therefore, it was not until their daughter Rachel was six that she heard a prayer, through the efforts of a religious woman taking care of her. Little Rachel was so innocent to this idea that she thought it was a new bedtime game, and made such fun of it that the woman soon abandoned her efforts to make the child believe the fairy tales she repeated.

The Lelands allowed their children, Rachel and Grace, to go to Sunday school whenever they chose, and so the children visited christian, islamic and hindu services, but found the "lessons" more amusing than instructive.

Mary A. Leland was an esteemed liberal poet and writer. She was among the first women to study medicine, and lectured on anatomy as early as 1852. She was an advocate of women's rights.

She did not attain her enlightenment easily. Reared in the South, she married a rich man, who proved to be a worthless tyrant. By law, their children were kept by this brute when the couple separated. It was from these experiences that Mary realized the need to change the legal and social conditions of marriage.

Mary moved to New York, and, when Josiah Warren's plan for a community based on equitable commerce and individualism became a reality called "Modern Times," Mary moved in with the residents.

When Moncure Conway visited the community in 1860, he wrote of Mary that she was the "Queen of Modern Times," a "beautiful woman, in the prime of life." "It would be impossible," he wrote in the *Cincinnati Gazette*, "for anyone to see her in her inspired mood, and to hear her voice as it sweeps through the gamut of feeling, rehearsing the sorrows of her sisterhood, without knowing that she brings many momentous truths from the deep wells of nature."¹

Theron Leland was schooled at the Wesleyan Seminary, from which he graduated with honors, but the religious training he received there did not impress him. He became a Fourierist, and became very active in liberal circles, where he was better known simply as T.C. Leland.

He learned "phonography," or the use of phonics in reading and writing, resulting in a type of shorthand, from Stephen Pearl Andrews, and was so impressed with it that he made speeches on the subject to audiences including such men as Daniel Webster and William Lloyd Garrison. He used this new method in his work as a successful reporter during the day, taught phonography in the evening, and co-edited the Liberal League paper, *Man*, in his "spare" time.

Theron used phonography to teach his children to read. Thus, Rachel learned to read in six weeks, and soon was tackling Shakespeare and other classics. After reading *The Merchant of Venice*, and the *Prison of Wellevreden*, a book about India, she longed to visit Venice and the far East.²

Described as so petite as to resemble a child more than a woman, Rachel was said to be pleasant and cheerful, but firm and resolute, and possessing a great deal of nervous energy. Her deep sense of determination resulted in the realization of her dream to travel around the world, quite unescorted, creating a sensation for her daring and bravery to perform such a feat. Her trip lasted over two years, during which time she traveled nearly six thousand miles.

Adopting the name "Lilian Leland," she wrote a book of her travels entitled *Traveling Alone*. This book was unique in that rather than including the bigotry caused by a typical religious upbringing in describing natives of other countries, she depicted her experiences from a Freethought standpoint. After her

¹ *Fifty Years of Freethought*, Volume I, George E. Macdonald, New York, The Truth Seeker Company, 1929, p. 450-455.

² *400 Years of Freethought*, Samuel Putnam Porter, 1894, The Truth Seeker Company, p. 757-760.

adventures, Lilian married the son of her father's mentor, Stephen Pearl Andrews, but did not abandon her efforts at promoting Freethought.

After the publication of her book by the Freethought press, Lilian spoke on her travels in a speech entitled "Freethought Around the World." She described the effects of christianity on the "heathens" of other countries, saying that she saw more missionaries than converts in Japan. The hindus of India warned her against dealing with their converted brothers, saying they had learned hypocrisy with their new religion. In Jerusalem, islamic soldiers had to guard the so-called "tomb of christ" to prevent warring christian factions from killing each other for its possession.³

When Theron died in 1885, at the age of 64, Mary moved from New York to San Francisco to live with her two daughters. There she was interviewed by George Macdonald for a newspaper article about this important member of the Freethought community. George found another event more momentous than his interview with Mary, however. He could not have been disappointed when Mary asked him to her home for the interview, rather than traveling to his office, for it allowed him to see Grace. This was not the first meeting of the couple. George had met Grace casually several times before, and had already determined to marry her, but the meetings were too brief, and the timing wrong, and his desires came to naught.

After Mary's interview had taken place, Grace began working at George's Freethought Society office, transcribing her sisters book, and acting as receptionist and secretary. George soon "detected favorable signs," and the couple were married in 1888. Asking Grace forty years later if she would have accepted his proposal at any of their earlier meetings, she answered emphatically, "Yes." As the wife of the editor of *The Truth Seeker*, Grace was involved in Freethought activism the rest of her life, and wrote some Freethought pieces, including *The Ingersoll Birthday Book*.

³ *Fifty Years of Freethought*, Volume I, George E. Macdonald, New York, The Truth Seeker Company, 1929, p. 506-508.



HELEN LUCAS

HELEN M. LUCAS

8/10/1841 - ?

Helen M. Clark was born in Belpre, Ohio, August 10, 1841 - her father a Clark and her mother a Chapelle - liberal minded parents who raised their children to be refined, knowledgeable and broad minded. She had at least one sibling, J. Chapelle Clarke, born in 1833, who attended theological school and received a degree from Iowa University, working first as a math teacher and later as an attorney. At his funeral in 1908, he was praised for his liberal views, with quotes being read from his favorite authors, Marcus Aurelius, Seneca and Epictetus. It was related that he liked to read German poetry in the original and never considered his learning complete. This would seem to typify the results of the nurturing received by the Clark children.

Helen married Henry G. Lucas, and moved to Marietta, Ohio. Helen and Harry, as he was known by his friends, had three children. Of the three, one became a Major in the marine service, another became a physician and the third died while an infant. Harry Lucas died in 1900.

Raised a liberal, Helen was not drawn to activism until a particular incident occurred with a catholic neighbor. This neighbor proudly told Helen that before her marriage she had arranged that even if she died while her children were still young, her husband had been forced to agree to raise the children as catholics. She went on to relate to Helen that she was following in the footsteps of her own mother, who was the second wife of a Freethinker whose previous wife had been a protestant. One day, while the neighbor's stepfather was away from the house, her mother had gathered up her stepchildren and taken them en masse to her priest and had them baptized. Although the father was furious, it was too late.

Naively, Helen, having been raised in a household that encouraged thinking, questioning, and tolerance, was shocked and furious at the disregard for the rights of others shown by the neighbor and her mother. She began to investigate whether this was an isolated incident or whether this attitude of tyranny was the general practice of the church. It led to a widening scope of investigation in which for the first time, she realized how religious indoctrination was being forced upon the public by the unlawful union of state and church.

Helen then became active in her community to inform others of this travesty. She was particularly perturbed by religious indoctrination in the public schools. All taxpayers were required to pay for the schools, she told her readers and listeners, and all children forced to attend. Then all children were forced to participate in the prayers of the faith of their particular teachers' religion. This, despite the inclusion of a clause in the state constitution stating that "No person shall be compelled to attend, erect or support any place of worship against his consent: and no preference shall be given by law to any religious society; nor shall any interference with the rights of conscience be permitted." She did not oppose religionists practicing their own religion, but she vehemently opposed their practice of forcing others to join them.

Going further, she fought tax exemptions for churches, for, by increasing the tax burdens on the citizenry to make up for the taxes lost by these exemptions, the citizens were in effect, being taxed to support religion. This argument was enlarged by including not only the taxation of citizens to support churches through exemptions, but also taxation for federally appointed chaplains paid from the public coffers. She reported that a bill to appropriate two hundred thousand dollars per year for chapels at army posts was being urged in the federal Congress.

Her methods of dealing with religionists was purposely nonconfrontational, for she felt that as she wished her religious neighbors to respect her right to nonbelief, she must respect their right to believe the religion of their choice. It was only when one religion infringed on the rights of others to choose their own beliefs through preferential treatment by the government, whether that involved one sect overruling another, or any sect forcing its beliefs on a Freethinker, that Helen rebelled.

She prescribed an almost impossible character for a Freethinker, writing, "The character of those who work for secularism should be above reproach, and they should never lose opportunities for self-improvement. They should be patient with each other and with everyone, - Their methods always kind, reasonable and seasonable, with adherents and opponents. Their associations should be refined, and they should educate their children in the same environment. They should never yield to discouragement, and never, by silence, seem to consent to aggressions of the church on the domain of the state. They should never forget their duty to try to convince the unthinking that the use of force in religion is despotism, and that control of religious sects endangers the life of the Republic."¹

Each year Helen sponsored a Thomas Paine birthday celebration. There was a clamor in the nation for federalizing religion, and one of the activities opposed by the religionists was Sunday newspaper delivery. Helen issued an open invitation to all Newsboys to attend her Paine party.

Helen attended the Buckeye Secular Union Conventions as well as the Materialist Conventions and served on both the committees for Finance and Sunday Meetings in the latter. Joining her on the Sunday Meeting Committee were Lou Lawrence and Eliza Mowry Bliven.

The largest Freethought organizations in existence at the time tended more toward being Liberal Religious groups rather than Atheistic organizations. Many within the Freethought ranks felt that by joining such groups, their membership fees were paying for the propagation of ideas to which they did not subscribe, such as Spiritualism or Socialism. Wishing to establish a group with a narrower focus, suggestions were made for its guiding principles. Helen wrote her own ideas:

Still Clamoring for Organization
Ideas and Suggestions Offered for our
Best Consideration. - Pure Freethought Wanted. -
More Favorable Comments on the New Movement.

Helen M. Lucas Speaks Out.

Are suggestions in order?

On what can all Freethinkers unite?

They differ on many subjects, but I know of no one who does not oppose the union of church and state. They oppose the employment by the government of chaplains in the army and navy, Congress, State Legislatures, penal and charitable institutions. All oppose religion in schools supported wholly or in part by taxation; exemption of church property from taxation; the use of the oath in our courts of law; religious proclamations by our Presidents and Governors; all laws enforcing the religious observance of any day.

Can not all unite on these questions?

There are many lines of argument against all these ways in which church and state are united in this country. Is not the work here suggested enough for one society?

Of course, no member would be restricted to these things, but could take up as many as he pleased, either individually or in their particular organizations. But we can not all unite on other questions, though they do not pertain properly to Freethought. Local clubs could discuss them, but a national society must stand for what we all believe. If the money of a Spiritualist should be used to spread Materialism there would be a split more or less wide; and it would be the same with other different beliefs. We have

¹ *Blue Grass Blade*, 3/22/1908, p. 2, p. 5.

Materialist, Spiritualist, Woman Suffrage, Socialist, and other societies where no one need drag in the work of our proposed organization. To be plain, the work properly belonging to them should never be allowed in this one.

Guided by former complaints, it seems to me the expenditure of the money of the society should be governed by the ballot of its members.

Let the new organization be irreproachable in every respect.

TO ST. LOUIS, NOVEMBER 14TH!

Marietta, Ohio.²

Unfortunately, Helen's trail ended here in my research. I hope some other Freethinker may further investigate the life of this wonderful woman, of whose life I have only been able to glimpse.

² *The Blue Grass Blade*, 10/17/09.



CLARA NEYMANN

CLARA NEYMANN

1840 -

Clara Neymann was born in Germany in 1840, but moved to the United States while young, and married before she was twenty. It was her husband, a prosperous Milwaukee merchant, who first encouraged her liberalism. Although retaining a basic belief in a "god," Clara did not believe in the divinity of the bible, or of many of its precepts. "God never discriminates," she wrote, "It is man who has made the laws and compelled woman to obey him. The Old Testament and the New are books written by men."¹

When the couple and their children, a son and a daughter, moved to New York City in 1873, Clara attended a Woman's Suffrage Convention, and heard Elizabeth Cady Stanton speak for the first time. Clara wrote that "her stirring appeal to women to come out from their seclusion and work for the betterment of humanity converted me, and I became a Woman Suffragist."²

Clara then translated Elizabeth's speech into German for publication as a pamphlet for her countrywomen, who, after reading it, began asking her questions. This led to speeches before small groups of German-American women.

A constant feature at Woman's Rights Conventions, Clara also made several visits to her native Germany, where she spoke to crowds which included the Empress of Germany. Although Clara tempered her remarks for the German crowd, and even the Crown Princess wrote Clara to praise her efforts, Germany was so repressed that the Society before which she spoke was closed down by the police for six months after her appearance.

Always wishing to increase her knowledge, Clara attended the University of Zurich during one of her European sojourns and studied philosophy, chemistry and history.

As Foreign Corresponding Secretary, Clara was seated on the stage at the Tenth Annual New York Convention of the National Woman Suffrage Association in 1877. She spoke on the progress of women in Europe, and specifically, England, Switzerland and Germany. Based on her observations, women in England were being elected to school boards, but until very recently, Swiss and German women generally seemed uninterested in their legal rights. She stressed that since this interest now seemed to be increasing, the American and British women's groups must act to encourage progress in this area.

1884 found Clara speaking at the 16th Annual Washington Convention of the National Woman Suffrage Association, at which it was reported that women in the Wyoming Territory had been granted unrestricted suffrage, while twelve states provided voting for school board members. England and Scotland offered both municipal and school suffrage and the Isle of Man allowed both municipal and parliamentary suffrage. The audience was reminded that the primary effort of the association was to secure national protection in the citizens right to vote through a sixteenth amendment to the Constitution.³

After Mr. Neymann's death in 1885, Clara continued her efforts for women's rights. In 1886, she gave an address on "German and American Independence Contrasted," in which she passionately stated that "While monarchies live under constant fear of war and bloodshed, the American people can settle their disputes with the ballot and the only thing needful is an increasing number of public spirited men and women who take an intelligent interest in their own welfare... Universal suffrage is the only guarantee against despotism. Every man who believes in the subjection of woman will play the despot whenever you give him an opportunity... We have no right to ask if it expedient to grant suffrage to women. We recognize that the

¹ *The Woman's Bible, Part II*, New York: European Publishing Company, 68 Broad Street, 1898, p. 22-23.

² *The Woman's Tribune*, 3/31/1888.

³ *The Woman's Tribune*, 2/1/1884.

principle is just and justice must be done though the heavens fall. It is small minds that bring forth small objections. The man who believes in a just principle trusts and confides in it, and thus we ask you to confide in suffrage for women."⁴

In 1888, she spoke on "Sentimentality in Politics" before the Woman's International Council, saying, "Our Republic was ushered in by the philosophy of reason. Reason and justice applied to human affairs mark the incoming spirit of the Nineteenth century. But this high priest of the mind has of late disappeared from our political life, and we have in its stead sentimentality and unreason... The triumph of republican institutions, a genuine democracy, depends upon the freedom of all, and not upon the monopoly of one class or one sex. Thou, America, for this scheme's culmination, for this thou hast been created."⁵

Clara's son graduated from Columbia University and resided in Cleveland, Ohio as a chemist. Her daughter graduated from Cornell University, and practiced dentistry in Philadelphia.

In 1898, Clara was one of the Revising Committee of the *Woman's Bible*, under the leadership of Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

Quotes

The antagonism which the Christian church has built up between the male and female must entirely vanish. Together they will slay the enemies - ignorance, superstition and cruelty. United in every enterprise, they will win; like Deborah and Barak, they will clear the highways and restore peace and prosperity to their people. Like Deborah, woman will forever be the inspired leader, if she will have the courage to assert and maintain her power. Her aspirations must keep pace with the demands of our civilization. "New times teach new duties."

God never discriminates; it is man who has made the laws and compelled woman to obey him. The Old Testament and the New are books written by men; the coming Bible will be the result of the efforts of both, and contain the wisdom of both sexes, their combined spiritual experience. Together they will unfold the mysteries of life, and heaven will be here on earth when love and justice reign supreme.

- Clara B. Neymann, - *The Woman's Bible, Part II*, New York: European Publishing Company, 68 Broad Street, 1898, p. 22-23.

Sentimentality in Politics.

Mrs. President, Coworkers and Friends: I am glad, nay, I am happy to see this day, to be with you on this memorable occasion. It is a proud day for the women of America. Those represented here show that woman can excel in devotion to principles, devotion to intellectual pursuits, devotion to the practical work. Miss Anthony, Mrs. Stanton, Mrs. Howe have verified by their own lives and actions the theories they have taught to us, to know them, to be with them, is not to have lived in vain. If I am not jubilant in the words I shall speak to-night, it is because I remember the poet's words, "Success makes a harder struggle necessary."

Our Republic was ushered in by the philosophy of reason. Reason and justice applied to human affairs mark the incoming spirit of the Nineteenth century. But this high priest of the mind has of late disappeared from our political life, and we have in its stead sentimentality and unreason. Our cause, women's enfranchisement, though far advanced among the thinking public, would be triumphant if it was

⁴ *The Woman's Tribune*, 3/1886.

⁵ *The Woman's Tribune*, 4/3/88, p. 9.

not for this new foe which judges and assigns things not according to their intrinsic value, but as to personal likes and dislikes. Petty arguments, selfish ambition, mercenary motives have taken the place of genuine patriotism, and our just demands of helping man in the arduous business of government is opposed upon sentimental grounds. Sentimentality is partially, while reason and justice are universal, and apply to all and each alike. They tell us that politics is unclean, while it is, next to religion, the most sacred occupation of the civilized man or woman. The pursuit of politics rightly conceived, and honorably pursued calls into activity the highest motives and the most exacting virtues of the human soul - self-sacrifice and self-devotion. And these virtues woman has all through the ages practiced in her home sphere, preparing herself for her higher mission, a political reformer. Since her home-sphere no longer remains her exclusive occupation, she must now offer these gifts and virtues she has developed, and which every true man admires, upon the altar of her country and devote herself to her country's welfare and her country's honor.

Since questions of peace, of arbitration, of reconciliation, have superseded those of war and conquest, it is folly, sheer sentimentality to still hold up the medieval ideal of womanhood. Men who hold up this effete ideal are responsible for woman's frailty and frivolity; they strengthen by their preference of weak and sentimental girls and women all the folly and pettiness we Suffragists would like to eradicate. The coming woman must be strong and sweet. She must come from her well-ordered home and bring grace and dignity and purity into our public and political life. Life means activity. Let us make our actions great and noble and far-reaching. Give woman freedom for a wider and broader exercise of her best gifts and virtues, as the basis of all moral action is freedom, opportunity for the full exercise of faculties. We have no desire to compete with man, to be his equal in character or attainment, we simply ask for free scope and an open field, leaving the result to the discretion of every individual woman. The triumph of republican institutions, a genuine democracy, depends upon the freedom of all, and not upon the monopoly of one class or one sex. Thou, America, for this scheme's culmination, for this thou hast been created.

- Clara Neymann, speech before the Woman's International Council, *The Woman's Tribune*, 4/3/88, p. 9.



NETTIE A. OLDS

NETTIE A. OLDS

Aaron K. Olds was one of the first settlers of McMinnville, Oregon. As with many pioneers, Dr. Olds was, to a certain extent, a jack-of-all-trades, working as a physician who practiced the water bath cures popular at the time, and also as a farmer, and was said to have forged the first iron in Oregon in 1860.¹ In the mid-1800s, the title of "doctor" was used somewhat loosely, as the medical profession had not yet formed strict guidelines on what training was necessary to allow a practitioner to use that title, and Dr. Olds' accreditation as a medical doctor is not confirmed. It is more likely that he used the title after training in the field of hydropathy in a small college, much as today one can be trained in a community college in a specific area of medical assistance. Dr. Olds and his wife aided Freethought groups whenever possible, bringing food to the workers laboring on the Oregon Secular Park in 1894,² and teaching their children the importance of individual freedom of thought. Dr. Olds was a life member of the American Secular Union, and was probably present to hear such speakers as B.F. Underwood, Robert Ingersoll, Samuel P. Putnam and Mattie P. Krekel when they toured Oregon, speaking on Freethought.

Mrs. Olds was also quite liberal. Unfortunately, I only know her by her initials, "M.J.," which is how she signed her letters to the *Torch of Reason*. She reported that her grandmother made her pray when she was young, and that she participated only because she loved the older woman.³ She was interested in all the "modern" concepts, including Spiritualism and phrenology, and did what she could to help promote Freethought in Oregon, including donating books to the Liberal University library.⁴

Anette Amanda Olds was youngest daughter of the Olds' family, and grew up in this liberal environment. She was educated at the McMinnville College Academy and the Portland Business College.⁵

Nettie embraced her parent's liberal views, and was opposed to any union of church and state as well as being skeptical of the authority of representatives of organized religions. She was, however, open to the idea of Spiritualism, which was a popular concept at the time.

It must be remembered that in the 19th century scientific and medical discoveries were bursting from the limits imposed on them for centuries by organized religion. Increasingly over the past few centuries, the power of religion had waned and with that loss of power, the threats of torture and death for research in science and medicine had been removed. Scientists no longer had to fear the fate of Kepler's mother, Galileo, or Bruno, for these areas had finally been allowed to expand for the benefit of mankind, and discoveries which should have been made hundreds of years previously, if religion had not severely retarded research, were finally given the freedom to proceed.

Of course, having been denied the ability to perform research for centuries, the scientific and medical communities had yet to standardize a systematic approach to verification of theory. Being in the infant stage, and in some areas, having to relearn what scientists knew before the rise of christianity had erased that knowledge, members of the scientific and medical communities made wondrous discoveries and colossal errors. New areas of science were being studied, and the field was wide open to speculation. Thus, the general public was, to a certain extent, prepared to accept the new findings that were constantly being

¹"Organized Free Thought in Oregon: The Oregon State Secular Union," Patricia Brandt, *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Summer, 1986, p. 176.

² *Ironclad Age*, Vol. 40, No. 22, 8/11/1894, p. 1.

³ "Religious Experience," Mrs. M.J. Olds, *Torch of Reason*, Vol. I, No. 15, 2/11/1897.

⁴ "University Notes," *Torch of Reason*, Vol. I, No. 15, 2/11/1897.

⁵ *Torch of Reason*, 11/5/1896.

reported as knowledge was gained concerning the age of the earth, the laws governing the evolution of living creatures, the functioning of the human body, and other areas which for centuries had been denied investigation.

The idea of a life after death was, of course, religious in origin. The Spiritualists, however, tried to give this concept a scientific veneer while still fulfilling the wishful thinking of the public that somehow individual personality survived death. Many of the followers of Spiritualism could accept the idea of disembodied personalities while rejecting all other concepts of christianity. There was a Spiritualist group assembled at New Era, Oregon which was quite active, and Spiritualist leaders such as Moses and Mattie Hull visited the state and spoke on the subject. Nettie was present during the Hull's visit,⁶ and probably participated in the Spiritualist activities in New Era.

When Katie Kehm Smith began her rise in power in Oregon, Nettie was by her side. The two young women must have been good friends, for they traveled the state together, speaking to groups about Freethought. In 1894, when Katie wished to spend more time in speaking tours, Nettie assumed responsibility for the Secular Sunday School in Portland, leading the choir and acting as superintendent, and covered the Portland circuit as a lecturer for the First Secular Church of Portland.⁷

Katie reported that Nettie was quite talented at playing the violin and piano, as well as being an accomplished vocalist. When Katie, her husband, and Nettie toured the state of Oregon in 1894, Nettie not only provided speeches on Freethought, but musical entertainment for their audiences. The tour was more spontaneous than planned, and the trio traveled with little cash, expecting to raise funds by "passing the hat" in their audiences and finding lodging and meals with sympathetic Freethought families.

Their goal was to organize Freethought groups in various towns, assigning speakers who would promise to lecture on a regular basis in those towns and take over the leadership of the local organization. The trio felt that education was essential to the spread of Freethought, and always insisted upon the inclusion of a Secular Sunday School for youngsters in the areas they visited.

The small towns they visited welcomed the event of outside speakers, regardless of the differences in their religious thought, and enjoyed the musical entertainment, if not the message. Audiences of 75 to 100 were not unusual, and from those numbers, perhaps ten would agree to become active in promoting Freethought in the area.⁸ Nettie was an impressive speaker, and was called "the deservedly popular eloquent and gifted young Hypatia."⁹

When Katie died unexpectedly in September, 1895, Nettie became the primary woman Freethought promoter in the state, leading the Oregon State Secular Union (O.S.S.U.). Frictions were to develop, however, with the rise of power of John and Minnie Hosmer and Pearl Geer, whose views of Freethought were quite different from Nettie's.

⁶ *Ironclad Age*, Vol. 40, No. 22, 8/11/1894, p. 1.

⁷ *Ironclad Age*, Vol. 39, No. 45, 1/12/1894, p. 2.

⁸ *Ironclad Age*, Vol. 39, No. 31, 10/6/1894, p. 2.

⁹ *Oregonian*, 7/14/1895, p. 9; reported in "Organized Free Thought in Oregon: The Oregon State Secular Union," Patricia Brandt, *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Summer, 1986, p. 176.

Still acting as the leader of the O.S.S.U., Nettie thanked the subscribers of the *Truth Seeker* for their financial support and reported the completion of the First Secular Church and Science Hall of McMinnville, her home town, in 1896. The hall was 70 by 40 feet, with a gallery, large stage, scenery, kitchen and sitting rooms.¹⁰

Nettie called the Eighth Annual Convention of the Oregon State Secular Union to order in Silverton, Oregon, on October 2, 1896, acting as First Vice President of the organization. Nettie spoke on that last day of the convention, October 4, on "The Needs of a Practical Religion."¹¹

During this convention, John and Minnie Hosmer took an active part, with John working on the resolution committee, and being elected State Superintendent of Sunday Schools, Minnie being elected Second Vice President, and Pearl Geer being elected President of the organization. In addition, John presented an address on "Secular Education," and after his speech, Nettie pressed for the establishment of a Liberal University in the state. Facilities and provisions were donated by citizens of Silverton and the Liberal University was on its way to becoming a reality. Nettie was to be one of the teachers at the new school, along with the Hosmers, with Pearl Geer acting as business manager. The University was to be overseen by the Oregon State Secular Union.

In addition, money was raised to establish a newspaper to be printed by the faculty of the new university. On November 5, 1896, the first issue of the *Torch of Reason* was printed.

This meeting was to begin the showdown between the Hosmer/Geer faction and Nettie's followers. Up to this time, Nettie had assumed the leadership of the O.S.S.U. after the death of her friend Katie Kehm Smith. The Hosmers and Pearl Geer, however, were ready to change this and make the organization follow their own vision.

John, Minnie and Pearl were Freethought Puritans. For better or worse, they did not agree with the tenets of the American Secular Union concerning the inclusion of Spiritualists, Free Lovers, Liberal Christians, etc. They wanted only Atheists in their group. In addition, they felt members of the O.S.S.U. should conduct their lives according to their own accepted rules of behavior, which excluded all smoking and drinking, as well as any other actions they would consider disreputable. There were many who agreed with them across the country; for instance, Helen Lucas of Ohio promoted the same ideas, but it was detrimental to the larger cause of promoting liberality in that they necessarily diminished their numbers.

The Hosmers and Pearl Geer began steps to set up their ideas of the O.S.S.U. Their first step was to remove Nettie. Although she was popular and successfully promoted the idea of the Liberal University, she was too liberal for the Hosmer/Geer group. John Hosmer's editorship of the *Torch of Reason* helped this group, as they could present their own side to the residents of Oregon. First, they denounced Nettie as a Free Lover.

Mr. William Haight was a follower of Spiritualism and had come from Chicago enthusiastic about helping the liberals of the state. Nettie sponsored him before the O.S.S.U. at the 1896 convention, where he offered his services to the group, but the increasingly powerful Hosmer/Geer faction rejected him. Nettie then announced that she was going to marry William Haight in six months, and in the meantime was living

¹⁰ *Fifty Years of Freethought*, George E. Macdonald, Vol. II, Truth Seeker Company, New York, 1931, p. 124.

¹¹ *Torch of Reason*, 11/5/1896.

with him. The Hosmer/Geer group was horrified - Spiritualists and Free Lovers! She was labeled "one whose ideas of Secularism are as far from what we think is right as the liberty of the savage is from the liberty of a civilized American citizen."¹²

Angry, Nettie returned to McMinnville and the following January, began a tour of western Oregon to promote the Liberal University, visiting North Yamhill, Independence, Corvallis, Albany, Junction City, and other towns. In February, she reported that she was making progress, and that she had gained several students for the university, subscribers for the *Torch of Reason*, and had raised money for the cause.¹³

Nettie became Nettie Olds-Haight in April, 1897.

In 1897, the Hosmer/Geer group was ready to act. They passed new rules for membership, excluding all they considered "undesirables," and expressly excluding Spiritualists. Nettie and her followers reacted by declaring the convention illegal, and fought the takeover. Liberals now excluded from the state group wrote letters to the board members, and Nettie spoke and wrote against the new rules. In response, the new leadership of the O.S.S.U. refused to renew Nettie's speaking license, so that she was no longer an official spokeswoman for the organization. They also falsely reported that she had resigned the O.S.S.U., when in truth they were attempting to force her out. In fact, in Nettie's view, she was still a member and it was the Hosmers and Pearl Geer who were the interlopers.

Money promised to the Liberal University through Nettie's efforts was not delivered because of the rift. Alarmed, John Hosmer defended his position by writing that under Nettie's leadership, the university might end up as a "Freelove institution, or turned into a Spiritual seance....The organization being composed of these widely differing elements, the school might be controlled by Materialists this term, but next term pass into the hands of the Spiritualists and Freelothers, and still at another time the Theosophists might get control. This is not merely speculation, for we are satisfied that there was a plan on foot to deprive the materialistic Secularists from conducting the school."¹⁴

When the executive board of the O.S.S.U. next met in June, 1897, the Hosmers and Pearl Geer decided that they would personally take over the newspaper and the university, removing it from the control of the O.S.S.U. Nettie, who was in attendance, and Edwin L. Smith, the treasurer and secretary of the O.S.S.U., opposed the move, but the Hosmers claimed the measure was passed by one vote. Mr. Smith said that because he held two posts - secretary and treasurer - he should have two votes, and as secretary he recorded his vote against the measure twice. This, of course, would mean the measure did not pass, so John Hosmer, as President of the board, removed Mr. Smith from office, and appointed Kate DePeatt in his place. Pearl Geer purchased the rights to the Liberal University and the *Torch of Reason*. Mr. Smith's response was to refuse to relinquish the official books of the organization, thus the new leaders were unable to collect quarterly dues or issue membership certificates. Finally, he relinquished the books, but continued to fight the takeover by speaking with and writing to local Oregon Freethinkers.

Nettie continued to fight the takeover by taking her arguments to the columns of nationally printed Freethought newspapers, including the *Truth Seeker*, who backed her position as being more liberal. The Hosmer/Geer faction responded by sending Pearl Geer on a trip through the eastern United States to personally meet with Freethought leaders and impress them with his arguments. With the support of *Freethought Magazine*, the enthusiasm felt by the Freethought community for any university based on

¹² *Torch of Reason*, Vol. I, No. 52, 10/28/1897.

¹³ *Torch of Reason*, Vol. I, No. 15, 2/11/1897.

¹⁴ *Torch of Reason*, Vol. I, No. 52, 10/28/1897.

Freethought, and the benefit of having their own newspaper in which to print their viewpoint, the success of the Hosmer/Geer group was further ensured when Thaddeus B. Wakeman, a leader in the Freethought movement, moved his whole family to Oregon to help their cause.

At the 1900 Convention of the Oregon State Secular Union, Pearl Geer was elected President, with Minnie Hosmer as superintendent of Sunday Schools. Their victory was short-lived, however. They had tightened the requirements for the O.S.S.U. by rejecting Nettie and her followers from its ranks, but now tragedies began to beset the new leaders. First, John Hosmer suffered physical collapse and resigned for health reasons. Next, Minnie died, and John watched as the more liberal T.B. Wakeman and Dr. E.B. Foote once again began allowing Free Love advocates as members of the O.S.S.U. John turned against the O.S.S.U., purchasing a newspaper and printing his opinions about the new group. His former friend, Pearl Geer, still a member of the O.S.S.U., wrote counterattacks against him in the *Torch of Reason*. The organization began to fall apart, its members disillusioned.

After the death of William Haight, Nettie moved to California and practiced the medical skills learned from her father.¹⁵ She married a real estate agent and became Nettie Haight Stingle and was living there at least until 1925. An interview for the *Oregonian* was conducted with Nettie in 1936 which found her back in McMinnville, at which time her last name may have been Booth.¹⁶ I have no record of when or where Nettie died.

A Secular Thanksgiving.

A lecture delivered at a thanksgiving entertainment in Silverton, Oregon, Nov. 28, by Nettie A. Olds:

Those who from early childhood have been taught to look upon certain things as sacred, those who have been born and raised in the atmosphere of superstition, and have from infancy been trained to doff the hat, fall upon the knees or clasp the hands in reverential supplication at the mere mention of those persons or events claimed by their teachers to be of sacred origin, must necessarily march in the mighty throng forever advancing and halting at the command of Custom.

The child that from the earliest moment of recollection has seen the tiny stocking hung upon the mantle piece, and has clapped its chubby hands in frantic delight at the story of old Santa Claus, as its parents traced the outline of his footprints in the ashes, feels as grateful to this imaginary being and clings to the comfort and satisfaction of the thought as tanaceously [*sic*] as the ignorant Chineese does to the sacredness of his Joss.

The ideas first impressed upon the mind of a child are by the laws of nature, generally speaking, controlling factors in the life of the man or woman. Since these first ideas must be as varied as the conditions of human birth, so the controlling factors in the lives of men and women must be varied. It follows, then, that in the discussion of every subject, we must in justice grant to each the privilege of differing from every other.

Thanksgiving, like Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, and other so-called sacred days, is, as a matter of fact, considered by me from a purely Secular standpoint. Secularists have no idols, no gods for whom to

¹⁵ "Organized Free Thought in Oregon: The Oregon State Secular Union," Patricia Brandt, *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Summer, 1986, p. 200.

¹⁶ Personal correspondence with Patricia Brandt, 1/31/1996.

set apart a special day of thanksgiving and praise. Many, however, are not averse to observing thanksgiving as a feast day, yet I believe they would feel just as thankful to a friend for an invitation to sit at a turkey dinner any other day in the year as on the last Thursday in November.

But in whatever manner it is observed, we are to deal with thanksgiving only as a religious or sacred day.

For years it has been the custom for governors to issue thanksgiving proclamations each fall. I wish to speak especially of the one issued in this state two years ago, because in it are found the words of my text. It was issued by Mr. Pennoyer and reads as follows:

"I hereby appoint the last Thursday of this month a thanksgiving holiday. 'In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity, consider.'"

We would ask what right has any governor to issue a thanksgiving proclamation? What right has a public servant to dictate the actions of those whom he serves? As an official, how can the religious duties of the public in any way concern him?

The constitution of the United States is purely a secular document, and Geo. Washington, in the famous treaty with Tripoli, declared, "This government is in no wise founded upon the Christian religion." The constitution of our own state plainly reads: "All men shall be secured in their natural rights to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences. No law shall in any case whatever control the free exercise and enjoyment of religious opinions or interfere with the rights of conscience."

It may be argued that the observance of thanksgiving is not compulsory and is not, in fact, a law. Granted, but does this relieve the official from the act of injustice inflicted upon the public as a result of his proclamation. There is nothing in the constitution of Oregon that gives to the governor authority, as an official, to affix his hand and seal to any document, whatever, except it be of a legal nature. The orders of the governor should be only those that can and ought to be enforced. Is it possible to force the observance of thanksgiving? Can the people be forced to do that which is illegal? No. Then hundreds of honest Secularists are compelled to disregard the governor's order. It will at once be seen that the governor, in exercising a right that does not belong to him, does a great injustice to every Secularist and those who do not care to observe his appointed day, by forcing them to a public disregard of the order of the highest official in the state.

As lovers of justice, we protest against the usurpation of any such authority by our officials, either of the United States or of separate states. How and when a man shall thank his god, or whether he shall thank any at all, is the sole business of the individual, and in case of every such proclamation, every resident of the state would be justified in sending the governor the same message Gov. Pennoyer sent to Pres. Cleveland, namely: "You attend to your business, and I will attend to mine."

Now let us return to the words of the text, "In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity, consider." Throughout all the pages of "holy writ" there could not be found a text more appropriate for this occasion. The golden sun of 1896, fast descending the western slope, throws his lingering light over a year of adversity. Dark clouds of dissension and strife hang about the eastern sky, and the horizon of the West is draped in heavy mourning for the pain and anguish of the dying year. Yes, the days of adversity are upon us. Along the backward path of time we trace the footsteps of a restless people. Moaning by the wayside are the wretched and the dying, and along the stony pathway are strewn the victims of starvation and of crime. Within the very shadow of the temple of Plenty, Poverty sits and weeps; within the sound of the jungle of millions, helpless beings toil and slave for the bare necessities of existence.

Consider, oh ye who feel not the sting of the arrows of want, the condition of your fellow men! Consider, oh ye arrogant and haughty-spirited, the poor and unfortunate who are not permitted a single ray of the sunlight of happiness. Consider, oh kings and high priests, the lamentable condition of the millions upon whose life blood you feed!

Every fresh breeze that sweeps across our national domain, brings to our ears the rumblings of discontent. Every gust of wind is laden with the cries of the wretched. In the gutter of infamy and shame lie writhing the poor victims of nineteenth century barbarism. Cunning and Deceit parade under the cloak of respectability, while Virtue and Honesty receive the sneers and abuses of an unfeeling public.

But what is thanksgiving, and what does it signify? The idea perhaps originated when first the human mind realized that its happiness was increased by the voluntary acts of another in its behalf. Selfishness and greed, for ages the dominating powers in human character, finally came to be supplanted by more charitable feelings and the sensation of pleasure became a sensation of thankfulness, in which the deeds of others were recognized as prominent factors in the pleasures of existence. The happy smile, the flush of inward joy, the quick heart's beat at the realization of some kind thought, some encouraging word or some rare gift of friendship or of love, are all indications of the feeling of thankfulness, and are as purely natural as that the sunshine should dispel the darkness.

The feeling of thankfulness is not of supernatural origin. It is as natural an attribute of the human mind as kindness and affection, and the degree with which men and women are possessed of this thankful spirit, this appreciative feeling, is a true indication of the degree of real manhood and womanhood attained. Then thanksgiving is, in fact, a condition of the brain, a stage in the development of human character, attained as we live down the coarser qualities of our natures and rise into that exalted state where we can recognize the true worth of others, and find our greatest pleasure in endeavoring to promote the happiness of others.

But what does thanksgiving signify? As originally observed by the Puritan fathers, it was a day of rejoicing and praise to God for the blessing of freedom from the mother country. For many years the food of our forefathers, except their corn, pumpkins and wild turkeys, came from England. For this reason, corn in any shape, whether bread or pudding, pumpkin pies and turkey always constitute the characteristic part of a thanksgiving dinner.

At the time of the year when their corn was gathered and their cellars well filled with pumpkins for winter use, it was quite natural that they should feel joyful. Having been taught that the earth and the fullness thereof is the special gift of God, it was also natural that they should assemble, and around the festive board, laden with nature's bounties, return thanks to him for his merciful providence. Indeed, it would have been a remarkable instance of neglect and inappreciation had they failed to do so.

The privations of the early colonists were very great, and it was no unmeaning cause for rejoicing when they had at last so far "rent asunder the tyrants chain" as to be no longer dependent upon England for food. There is no doubt as to the justification of their thankfulness. The doubt lies in the question: Was the object of their thanks a worthy one? Did they attribute the cause of their blessings to the true source?

After a time it became the custom in New England to hold an annual thanksgiving each fall, a custom which, because of the great power of the church, soon became a popular one. But it was looked upon as the exclusive right of those who wished to observe the custom, no disregard falling upon those who did not care to observe it. No objection was offered until the heads of our government sought to force, in a measure, the observance of the day by an official proclamation from the president of the United States.

As a proclamation from the president ought to be indicative of the sentiments of the people whom he serves, it would seem, on the face of it, that we are a religious people, and that our president was elected to serve, not only in the capacity of an official, but also that of High Priest; and since he has no authority to dictate the religious actions of the people, he is, in issuing a thanksgiving proclamation, violating the obligations of his public trust.

The noble framers of our constitution knew only too well the effects of a union of religion and politics. They reflected with horror upon the condition of Russia and of Rome. They saw that wherever the cross was raised above the flag, the condition of abject slavery of the masses existed. They saw that whenever superstition had been allowed recognition upon the statutes of civil law, war, misery and bloodshed was the result. And now, that freedom from the mother country had been won, it devolved upon them to found the laws of this government upon such principles as would forever guarantee the maintenance of freedom, not only from foreign powers, but from powers that would arise within our borders. How perfectly this was accomplished is told in our glorious Declaration of Independence and constitution, and the freedom which since then has been the boasted pride of the American nation. That any power should seek to alter our laws in such a way as to deprive us of this freedom, is one of the things we cannot enumerate as a blessing for which to be thankful. Indeed, the continued efforts of ecclesiasticism to force a union of church and state, should receive the most earnest consideration of every Secularist and lover of liberty in our land.

When the officers of our government so far abuse their rights and privileges as to assist in such efforts by officially proclaiming the religious duties and ceremonies of the people, we are reminded that "eternal vigilance is the price of our liberty," and that today, as in ages passed, it remains for a few brave men and women to defend the flag of our freedom against the enemy's marshaled hosts.

The thanksgiving proclamations issued last year from our nation's capital exceeds by far, in religious bigotry and intolerance, anything that has yet been issued by a president. The mandates of the Czar of Russia or the Pope of Rome are not more indicatite [sic] of religious authority than these proclamations from Mr. Cleveland. No greater insults to justice can possibly be conceived. The American flag, drenched in the warm life-blood of millions who fought to free themselves from the tyranny of England, cries aloud to every patriotic heart, "Oh, preserve to me the precious name of liberty!"

We would ask, what right has the president, a man avowedly chosen by a popular vote to serve in the capacity of a civil officer - a man elected by people of every shade of religious belief as well as those whose only religion consists in doing good to their fellow men - what right has he to officially perform any religious function or to officially recognize a particular religion as divine and true? His privileges as an individual are unlimited in this direction so long as he does not, in his worship, infringe upon the rights of any other person. Was not the first amendment to the constitution made for the express purpose of restraining all executive officers from any dictation of or interference with the religious opinions and duties of the people? Most assuredly! and yet the very officer who is sworn to "preserve, protect and defend the constitution," brings multitudes of his people who cannot and will not obey his illegal command, into unjust and unnecessary contempt of the highest official of the United States.

This most priestly usurpation of religious authority and violation of public trust should be denounced by every defender of religious liberty. The freedom of thought and action which made possible the degree of civilization we enjoy today is a precious legacy, bequeathed to us by such noble men as Thos. Paine and Thos. Jefferson, and we should cherish it forever, nor permit such desecrations of it to go unrebuked.

Whenever a prayer of thanksgiving is addressed to God for the blessing of life, it always seemed to me equivalent to a child thanking his parent for not having killed him. If God is the father of the human race, is it an occasion of thankfulness that he permits them to live? Surely it must be admitted that all that a man is and all that he has is the result of human efforts. Should a child thank his parents for forcing him

into existence? And after he is in existence, are the parents deserving of special thanks if they clothe and feed him? It is a matter of simple duty and not of thanksgiving. And so I say of God (if there is one), that it is nothing more than his duty to provide for his children.

But are we a thankless people? No. When we reflect upon the efforts of friends to shower about our pathway the flowers of sympathy and love, when we think of the words of encouragement, the tokens of living esteem, when we think of the sacrifices others make in order that we may the more thoroughly enjoy life, then, indeed, do we offer a prayer of true gratefulness to them. * * * * *

Not to the gods, but to human kind are Secularists thankful. To every one who has lightened the burdens of a life, who has wiped an orphan's or a widow's tear, who has endeavored to lift the fallen and cheer the faint, to every heart that bears in sympathy for the unfortunate and oppressed and who, with willing hands, are striving to convert this "vale of tears" into an earthly paradise, to every friend of our Secular organizations who has made it possible for them to succeed, we are thankful, yea, a thousand times.
- *The Torch of Reason*, Vol. I, No. 5, 12/3/1896.

The Christmas Festival.

The celebration of Christmas as the birthday of Christ is exclusively Christian, but the celebration of the 25th of Dec. as a day of merriment, rejoicing and presentation of gifts is a custom which from time immemorial has been observed by the most ancient people in almost every part of the globe. By the imagination of men it has been clothed in a mythical garb, yet the idea, in its true origin, rests upon a well-established fact in nature.

To all except those who, like St. Paul, are determined "to know only Christ and him crucified," it will be interesting to note that Christ was only one of the many so-called Gods and Saviors of the world, sixteen of whom were crucified.

In reading the history of Chrisna, contained in the Baghavat Gita, one would almost believe himself to be reading the history of Christ. In the life of Buddha, a sacred God of the Hindoos, who was crucified 600 B.C., we find very many characteristics corresponding almost to the letter with those of the life of Christ. We are confronted by like similarities in the lives of many other Gods, worshipped hundreds of years before such a personage as Christ was ever dreamed of. But the most important point in this connection is that their birth was celebrated on the 25th of Dec.

Having found sufficient cause for the fixing of the date of Christ's birth on Dec. 25th, it remains for us to determine why the ancient people chose this particular date for the birth of their Gods.

Among the causes that co-operated in fixing this period, perhaps the most influential was that almost all the heathen nations regarded the winter solstice as the most important point of the year. They observed that at this point in the ecliptic the sun is farthest removed from the equator, and that he is, consequently, at the turning point in his apparent course. They regarded what we call Dec. 25th as the shortest day in the year. They believed the old sun died and the new sun was born, and taught: let old feuds end; rejoice in the new Sun; renew old friendships and form new ones; cement them by gifts.

Here, then, in this simple astronomical fact in nature, we find the reason why these heathen people celebrated the 25th of Dec. The Celts and Germans from the oldest times celebrated the season with the greatest festivities. At the winter solstice the Germans held their great Yule feast in commemoration of the return of the fiery Sunwheel. Many of the beliefs and usages of the Germans and also of the Romans relating to this matter passed over from heathenism to Christianity and have partly survived to the present day.

No scholar even pretends that Christ was born on the 25th of Dec. Rev. Talmage says; "Whether it really took place on the day on which we celebrate it, cannot now be proven. In the question of the year, as in the day of his birth, there is some uncertainty."

History shows that Dec. 25th was selected as the alleged birthday of Christ because that date was regarded from time immemorial as the birthday of Sol, (the sun) the glorious luminary of heaven, it being the period when he is born again into the new year and commences again his journey of life.

Hence it is that to heathen interpretation of natural phenomena we owe the festive day known as Christmas, and it is, indeed, a beautiful custom. Who does not rejoice after the short, dreary days of winter, when the world is seemingly wrapped in mists and clouds and darkness, to welcome again the return of the sun, the great God of day, the light and life of every living thing? However this beautiful astronomical fact has been celebrated by our heathen ancestors, it detracts nothing from the beauty and grandeur of it. And so we, glad and happy in the birth of the new year, may justly strive to bury the ills and wrongs of the past year, to win again the peace and friendship that is lost, and to cement the kindly feelings and affections of our loved ones by gifts and tokens of grateful remembrance.

NETTIE A. OLDS.

- *The Torch of Reason*, Vol. 1, No. 8, 12/24/1896, p. 1.



LUCY PARSONS

LUCY PARSONS¹

March, 1853? - March 7, 1942

Although Lucy Parsons is most often remembered as the wife of Albert Parsons, one of the Haymarket Square political martyrs, most of her very active life was spent without Albert by her side. Lucy was one of the most fiery defenders of worker's rights in the later 19th and early 20th centuries, advocating violence when she felt it was necessary to attain decent living conditions for laborers. Before she met Albert and after his death, Lucy was a fighter.

Lucy was in Texas when she met Albert Parsons. Lucy's heritage was one of those wonderful mixtures of races often found in a country of immigrants, and included African American, Mexican, and Native American ancestry. She changed her claims to ancestry to fit the situation in which she found herself, for instance, sometimes saying she was of Spanish ancestry to explain her dark skin, when prejudice against African Americans might override the empathy her audience would otherwise feel towards her pleas for workers.

In Texas, Lucy was already a human rights advocate when she heard of the attempts of Albert Parsons to register black voters. Albert, who had served the Confederacy in the Civil War, but had become a radical Republican, editing the *Spectator* in Waco, Texas. He was shot in the leg, thrown downstairs and threatened with lynching for trying to register black voters. The Ku Klux Klan atrocities against blacks in Waco at the time included the castration of a young black boy and the murder by rape of an eight year old black girl in 1867. When the Klan found that the courts tended to be lenient toward them, they escalated their barbarity, and in 1868 alone they murdered a black man in the Waco Public Square, committed the mass murder of 13 blacks near Waco, severely beat twenty black women, stripping ten of them of their clothing, robbed both sexes of any age, and mass raped females, including those as young as seven. In the instances when these crimes even came before a court, they were either dismissed, or if the court "could not avoid it," the Klan members were fined one dollar each.

Albert's brother, who had raised him, had been a Confederate Colonel and became a state senator after the war. Although William Parsons was a white supremacist, Albert obtained several governmental positions through appointments due to William's influence. Still, with the rise of the power of the Ku Klux Klan, Albert knew his effectiveness in Texas was minimized.

Lucy and Albert were drawn together as two passionate personalities drawn to the cause of fighting for the poor and downtrodden. They were apparently never married, but would be together for as long as both lived. They left Texas and moved to Chicago in the winter of 1873-1874, where Lucy, no longer required to devote her energy to fearing imminent reprisals from the Klan for her race, was able to develop her talents as an advocate for the poor. Although their neighbors were at first apprehensive about a white man and a black woman living as a couple, the German immigrants who comprised the majority quickly accepted them, and once Lucy and Albert began fighting for the rights of their poor laboring neighbors, their presence was completely approved.

After the great Chicago fire, a Relief and Aid Society had been established to help the poor victims of that devastation. Unfortunately, the Board Members selected to administer this society included all the wealthiest industrialists in Chicago, who used the millions of dollars in society funds as low interest loans for their own companies, rather than using it for its' original purpose. In the winter Lucy and Albert arrived at Chicago, 10,000 workers and unemployed gathered in front of City Hall to protest these abuses, and for weeks afterwards, huge crowds assembled outside the offices of the Society. In addition, a depression was in progress. The neighborhood in which Lucy and Albert made their home had the highest infant mortality in Chicago, with half the children born there dying before the age of five.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, the material for this biography came from Carolyn Ashbaugh's excellent *Lucy Parsons, American Revolutionary*, Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, Chicago, 1976.

Albert secured a position as a printer and joined the Typographical Union. After attending a speech given by the Social Democratic Party, he joined the group and became a speaker for them. He also joined the Knights of Labor and founded, with two other men, the first Knights of Labor Assembly in Chicago. When the Social Democratic Party dissolved, its members joined with several other organizations to form the Workingmen's Party of the United States. The Chicago branch of this party often met at Lucy's and Albert's apartment. This allowed Lucy to participate and learn.

The depression had depleted trade union ranks from 300,000 in 1872 to 50,000 by 1878, because of unemployment, wage cuts, union busting and hard times. In 1877-78, one of the largest mass strikes in U.S. history took place, affecting the textile, coal mining, and railroad industries. The workers walked off the job, derailed trains, and shut down public transportation. Albert urged law and order in his speeches, trying to prevent violence, and urged his listeners to use their voting power to change the laws. On July 22, 1877, Albert announced to the crowd that the following evening there would be a mass rally sponsored by the Workingmen's Party in Market Square.

The industrialists were in a panic. Five thousand businessmen met in the Moody and Sankey² Tabernacle to develop strategies to destroy the "ragged commune wretches." Civil officials called up 250 police officers and 2,000 Illinois National Guardsmen.

When the rally took place, the crowd cheered as Albert took the podium. Again he urged calm and political solutions. The *Chicago Tribune* reported that "Parsons advocated an obedience to law and order, but a peaceful yet determined maintenance of their rights. He counseled them ... never to attack anyone until they were attacked." The Party condemned the laws which allowed police to arrest working people from joining unions to secure better wages, while allowing employers to combine in reducing wages. Civil war veterans were especially angry, for they felt they had given their utmost to their country, only to be reduced to starvation level by profiteers.

The day after his speech, Albert reported to work as usual, only to find his name crossed off the list of employees. He was now officially blacklisted. Going to the offices of a radical newspaper, he was there "conducted" by two men to the mayor's office. There he was surrounded by thirty or more leaders of business and questioned. Albert had caught a cold the previous day, and was sick, exhausted, and had just learned he had lost his job. The men in the room blamed him for the strike and cries of "Hang him!" "Lynch him!" and "Lock him up!" were made as he tried to explain that one person could not possibly be responsible for the strike, and reminded them that he had advocated peaceful means of protest, specifically telling his listeners *not* to strike, but to vote to change policies. The men released him, fearing his arrest would incite the crowds to violence.

That evening, Albert went to the *Chicago Tribune* offices to talk to fellow printers about the strike. He was grabbed from behind by two strangers, a gun put to his head, and thrown out, with threats that he would be killed if he tried to come near the *Tribune* offices again. Stunned, Albert returned home. Unfortunately, the police and business leaders had succeeded this time in cowing him and other speakers, for they did not take further action in the strike, and without leadership, the strike waned. The police were now well organized, and the business leaders were chagrined that they had taken the strike so seriously, when it was so easy to bully its' participants into acquiescence. The Workingman's Party urged its' members to return to work. Still, it was not the only group whose members were striking, and violence continued.

The military placed two cannons on the streets and on July 26, 18 strikers were killed and 32 wounded. The police broke into the Furniture Workers' meeting and clubbed its' members, shooting and killing one person. All the while, the *Chicago Tribune* praised the efforts of the police, while denouncing the strikers, suggesting extermination for the "dead-beats, vagrants, drunkards, thieves, guttersnipes,

² Moody and Sankey were evangelical fundamentalists who had gained fame by their fiery speeches for the return of "old time religion," with all its' oppressions.

Communists, and vicious loafers who came to the front" demanding labor. "The world owes these classes rather extermination than a livelihood," the *Tribune* exclaimed, ignoring the fact that these men would not be "loafers" or "vagrants," and probably not "Communists" if they had enough money through labor to feed themselves and their families.

The aftereffect of this strike in Chicago was the deaths of between 20-35 workers, with another 200 seriously wounded. The lesson learned by the industrialists was not that basic rights should be given workers, but that to enforce their lack of rights, more firepower was needed, in an absolute disregard for life. They purchased a Gatling gun with which to mow down hundreds of people at a time, established armories to house soldiers, and passed "conspiracy" laws directed towards workers. The press painted the picture of workers as criminals. Albert and Lucy learned that the industrialists would stop at nothing to exploit workers. Across the nation, hundreds had died. They learned that even the leaders of a strike could not stop it when the people were incensed, and that next time, they vowed to be true leaders for the people.

With the prospect of personal starvation due to Albert's inability to find work, Lucy opened a dress shop, and Albert worked there taking orders.

The Workingmen's Party met in Newark, New Jersey in December, 1877, changing its' name to the Socialistic Labor Party. Questions of race and sex were considered. Although there is no evidence that Lucy and Albert supported racist views, the Party fought to exclude Chinese laborers from entering the country. The Party did, however, officially promote sexual equality.

In 1878, Albert founded the Trades and Labor Assembly of Chicago and became its first president. In March, 1878, he spoke to a meeting of the Chicago socialists, and advocated health and sanitation measures, the eight hour work day, public schooling for all, and other improvements. The group continued to be peaceful, despite the growth of armed groups of workers, formed in response to the violence shown them in the 1877 strike. Albert defended the right of the workers to arm themselves, but advocated that peaceful, lawful measures be used to fight for rights instead of force.

Albert put the power of the vote to the test by running for office several times and successfully gained many votes. When, in his second race for Alderman, he received the winning vote, but was "counted out," his opinions began to change as to the efficacy of voting as a means of change.

When the Chicago socialists started their own paper, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* [*The Worker's Newspaper*], in 1878, they named Albert assistant editor, paying \$8 a week, but the paper folded in 1879. In addition to his newspaper activity, Albert was elected Secretary of the Chicago Eight Hour League, was a member of the committee for the Trades and Labor Council, and spoke before the Illinois Legislative Committee to Investigate the Cause of the Depression on unfit working conditions.

Lucy continued with her dress shop, but began speaking for the Working Women's Union and writing. In the *Socialist*, her first effort was published, a poem based on Lord Byron's work:

"I had a dream, which was not all a dream." ...
 And men did wander up and down the cheerless earth,
 Aimless, homeless, hopeless..
 As, by fits, the realization of their impoverished condition
 passed like a vision before them.
 Some laid down and hid their eyes and wept
 As the cries of their hungry children
 And prayers of their despairing wives fell like curses upon them;
 And some did rest their chins upon their clenched hands
 And swear to help abolish the infamous system that could
 produce such abject misery...
 And some did gnash their teeth and howl, swearing dire vengeance
 against *all* tyrants.

And War - which for a moment was no more - did glut himself again;
 A meal was bought with blood (tramps' blood),
 And each sat sullenly apart, gorging himself in gloom.
 No love was left;
 All earth, to the masses, was but one thought - and that was:
 - Work! Wages! Wages!
 The pangs of hunger fed upon their vitals.
 Men, in a land of plenty, died of *want* - absolute -
 And their bones were laid in the Potter's Field.

In addition, Lucy was pregnant with their first child.

Lucy reached the conclusion that the interests of labor and capital were irreconcilable. She watched as all around her, people were dying by being regarded by society as working drones, easily replaceable. She saw mothers dying due to poverty, overwork, malnutrition, and lack of medical attention, children starving, the unemployed and unhoused freezing to death and the suicides of those who saw no hope out of the oppression.

Lucy saw the life of the reformer as unimportant, and thus refused to talk about herself, turning questions instead towards the wrongs experienced by workers. Her focus was on groups rather than individuals, and felt contempt for those reformers she thought pursued personal fame rather than using all their energies to promote workers' rights. She argued that the focus should be on the reform, not the reformer, using Abolitionism as an example by saying that it was not important who freed the slaves, but that the slaves were free.

Lucy took a lead in the Working Women's Union, advocating equal pay for equal work, and urging suffrage for women. In 1880, they supplied a float at the Eight Hour League's 4th of July Festival reading, "When Woman is Admitted into the Council of Nations War will Come to an End, for Woman More than Man, Knows the Value of Life." It was difficult for women to join the labor organizations run by men, but when the Knights of Labor finally allowed women equal membership in 1881, Lucy, along with Mother Jones and many other women, quickly joined. When the Knights began accepting women, the Working Women's Union was dissolved.

Albert Richard Parsons was born to Albert and Lucy on September 14, 1879. His birth certificate read "Negro." Motherhood did not slow Lucy down one bit. When the Greenback convention was held in 1880, Lucy and Albert both attended as delegates of the Socialist Labor Party. When a union of the two parties was urged, the Parsons, along with a large contingency of mostly German laborers, withdrew and started their own group. The dissension between groups continued throughout 1879 to 1881, and Lucy quickly became a leading spokesperson for the most militant faction. On April 20, 1881, she gave birth to a daughter, Lulu Eda Parsons, whose birth certificate read "Nigger." In addition to Party participation, and the birth of two children, Lucy provided the main source of the Parson family income through her efforts in the dress shop.

August 1, 1880 found Lucy and Albert participating in the "Great Excursion of the Armed Organizations of Chicago and Milwaukee." Albert had abandoned peaceful means to achieve labor rights, and Lucy, always more militant than her husband, applauded the armed unions as the only insurance against police and military violence against workers. Their coworkers included August Spies, a brilliant speaker in both German and English, who had come to Chicago around the same time as the Parsons, and who would go on to become editor of the party newspaper, and Oscar Neebe, a socialist organizer.

In 1882, Johann Most visited the United States. A former Reichstag member, Most had been expelled from Germany under the antisocialist laws, and had recently been released from prison in England for supporting the assassination of the Russian Tzar. Most visited Chicago in March, 1883 and met Lucy and Albert.

In October, 1883, the Revolutionary Socialists, which Lucy and Albert had joined, met in Pittsburgh and drafted the Pittsburgh Manifesto. Johann Most, August Spies and Albert were all members of the committee which drafted the Manifesto. The Manifesto used lines from the Declaration of Independence and attempted to justify the use of force using Karl Marx's labor theory. Its main goals were to destroy the existing social structure of class rule, establish a cooperative society, organize free, secular, scientific and equal education for both sexes and all races, equal rights for all regardless of sex or race, and the regulation of public affairs by free contracts between independent communes and associations. In addition, the delegates unanimously adopted that part of the Manifest which stated that "The Church finally seeks to make complete idiots out of the mass, and to make them forego the paradise on earth by promising them a fictitious heaven."³ At this meeting, the International Working People's Association was also formed, which was seen as an anti-authoritarian anarchist group. Thus, by joining, Lucy became an anarchist.

Lucy and Albert moved at least once a year between 1875 and 1886. One neighbor remembered that the neighborhood was scandalized when a German couple owning a large house rented a flat to a white man and a black woman. The German owner's "immediate neighbors were somewhat shocked and indignant, and the gossips were kept busy for several days," the neighbor related, but "Lucy was so well-bred and dignified that she commanded the respect of all with whom she came in contact."

In 1873, hundreds of thousands of farmers had lost their livelihoods in the depression of that year, and had moved to cities looking for work. Also, eight million European immigrants came to the United States between 1870 and 1890. Another depression occurred in 1883, which adversely affected workers. Living conditions in the workers ghettos were appalling. In 1883 the Citizens' Association of Chicago sponsored an investigation into housing, and Michael Schwab reported what he had seen: Three and four families living in one room, using the beds in shifts, rooms lighted only by cracks in the walls, entire families sick, children starving, no heat. Still, no help came.

In 1886 the wages in Illinois were lower than they had been in 1882, with the average daily wage for men under \$2, for women \$1.11 and for children 70¢. In addition, to save money, factories fined employees for singing, talking, being late, and other infractions, which the employee would not discover until payday. In 1888, the *Chicago Times* found that women lost \$3-\$4 a week from their wages in fines. Workers were forced to sign a contract agreeing not to join a union.

During this time, Lucy became good friends with Lizzie Swank (later Holmes), another militant anarchist. Lizzie came from a radical family, with her mother Hannah J. Hunt and her sister, Lillie D. White, both writers for the radical paper *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*. In addition, they both led an organizing effort in the sewing shop where they worked.⁴ Both Lucy and Lizzie advocated violent revolution.

When the International Working People's Association decided to publish an English newspaper in 1884, they named Albert Parsons editor and Lizzie Swank assistant editor. The paper was called the *Alarm*, and the first issue featured an article by Lucy on the front page. In 1885 Lucy wrote "Dynamite! The Only Voice the Oppressors of the People Can Understand" for the *Denver Labor Enquirer*. In that article, she defended violence for defense and offense. It must be remembered that the factory owners were already promoting violence to fight strikers, and the newspapers were with them, printing such inflammatory statements as, "When a tramp asks you for bread, put strychnine or arsenic on it and he will not trouble you any more..." (*Chicago Tribune*), "...the best meal that can be given a ragged tramp is a leaden one," (*New*

³ "The Haymarket Atheists," Joseph Jablonski, *Haymarket Scrapbook*, edited by Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont, Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, Chicago, 1986, p. 107.

⁴ "Women in the Haymarket Events," Carolyn Ashbaugh, *Haymarket Scrapbook*, edited by Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont, Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, Chicago, IL, 1986, p. 97.

York Herald), and "Hand grenades should be thrown among these union sailors, who are striving to obtain higher wages and less hours" (*Chicago Times*).

The *Alarm* reportedly had an average edition of 3,000 copies, and was the only English publication issued by the Chicago movement. Shares were sold to raise money, and picnics and benefits were held to keep the paper solvent.⁵

On April 28, 1885, Lucy and Lizzie Swank led the I.W.P.A. march on the Board of Trade building. Inside, wealthy patrons paid \$20 a plate for their meal, while outside, police drove the marchers away. On May 4, troops opened fire on strikers in Lemont, Illinois, killing four. Lucy was furious, and advocated the murder of the rich in retaliation for the starving and killing of the poor. Albert and Lucy were now speaking every Sunday afternoon on the lakefront, drawing crowds of 1,000 to 5,000 listeners. Although the press was writing that Lucy and the other anarchists were dangerous, it was the police, Pinkertons (hired private guards) and industrial spies who were committing all the violence. In 1885 Pinkertons fired into a crowd killing several people.

While Albert traveled around the country setting up I.W.P.A. units, Lucy kept the *Alarm* and her family going in Chicago, being mother, housekeeper, professional seamstress, activist, editor, writer and speaker.

Lucy did not forget her heritage in her writings. In 1886, she wrote of the massacre of 13 black people in Mississippi. She attributed the killings not to color, but to class, writing, "Are there any so stupid as to believe these outrages have been, are being and will be heaped upon the Negro because he is black? Not at all. It is because he is *poor*. It is because he is dependent. Because he is poorer as a class than his white wage-slave brother of the North." Lucy argued that all social ills were due to economic oppression: blacks because they were chattel slaves, then wage slaves and women because they were economically dependent upon men.

In 1886, an event occurred which did not have an immediate impact upon Lucy or the worker's movement, but which would become important in years to come. Emma Goldman arrived in the United States from Russia in that year. Emma was to develop different solutions to the workers problems from those of the Lucy Parsons and Voltairine de Cleyre school of thought. Whereas to Lucy and Voltairine class was everything, Emma fought as an individual. When working in Rochester, New York, Emma went to her boss and demanded more money, and, not getting it, quit. Lucy and Voltairine would never have done this. They would have met with the other workers and as a group demanded more money, and, if refused, would have walked off the job. For idealists like Lucy and Voltairine, individualism was selfishness and everything they did was performed for the good of the whole working class.

The eight-hour movement was sweeping the country. The I.W.P.A. and the *Alarm* endorsed the proposed May 1, 1886 general strikes for the eight hour day, with Lucy and Lizzie Swank organizing women's groups. The goal was to have the entire working population of the city attain the eight hour day by that date. Many manufacturers did change to an eight hour work day before May 1, including the packinghouse owners. On April 25, Albert, Michael Schwab, Oscar Neebe, Sam Fielden, August Spies and John A. Henry spoke to a large rally sponsored by the Central Labor Union and spoke on the eight hour day.

By May 1, 1886, several hundred thousand workers had gained the right to an eight hour work day. The city was shut down, the factories empty, due to strikers still attempting to gain this right. Nearly 80,000 people gathered for a parade on Michigan Avenue promoting the eight hour day. Lucy, holding little Albert's hand, and Albert, holding Lulu's hand, marched at the head of the parade. Although violence was

⁵ *The History of the Haymarket Affair, A Study in the American Social-Revolutionary and Labor Movements*, Henry David, Ph.D., Russell and Russell, N.Y., 1936, p. 113-114.

predicted by the press, none took place. On May 3, Lizzie led a march of several hundred seamstresses in support of the eight hour day. That same day, August Spies spoke to a meeting of lumber shovers locked out of their jobs since February, at which the police and the Pinkertons showed up, attacked the crowd, and killed six.

On May 4, Lucy, Lizzie, Albert and the Parson's two children left to attend a meeting of the group of seamstresses Lizzie had led the previous day. The meeting was progressing when a friend rushed in and asked Albert and Sam Fielden, who was attending the meeting, to come and speak at a meeting at Haymarket Square, protesting the murder of the lumber shovers the day before. The seamstress meeting was adjourned and the group left for Haymarket Square. Although the organizers had hoped for a crowd of 20,000, only 2-3,000 had shown up for the protest meeting. August Spies was just finishing his speech when Albert took the podium. He spoke against inciting violence, and instead used statistics to back up his claims of the oppressive conditions experienced by working people. Samuel Fielden followed Albert as speaker.

The weather was becoming threatening, and Lulu and little Albert were cold and tired. Albert, Lucy and the children left. The mayor of Chicago, Carter Harrison, was also at the meeting, overseeing it to make sure there was no violence. Seeing how peaceful the 200-300 remaining spectators were, the mayor left about 10:00 p.m., first telling the police captain to send home his 176 policemen monitoring the meeting. Once the mayor was gone, the police captain, John Bonfield, acted. The police were marched into the square and the crowd was ordered to disperse. Samuel Fielden said he was almost done, and that it was a peaceful meeting. As he stepped down from the podium, someone threw a bomb into the crowd of police. The explosion was terrific. The mayor heard it at home, as did the Parson's. Lucy and her friends assumed it was the police attacking the people, and immediately advised Albert to leave town, afraid that the police would next come after and murder him. Albert left, going to Geneva, Illinois. He waited there, hearing all kinds of wild rumors, not knowing what was actually going on in Chicago, but fearing the worse for Lucy and his family. He attempted to return, but his friends convinced him to stay in hiding a while longer.

Meanwhile, the newspapers were blaming the anarchists for the bombing, and specifically, August Spies, Sam Fielden and Albert Parsons. The *Chicago Tribune* did report, however, that immediately after the bomb went off, the police went wild, firing into the crowd, and killing and wounding many, including other policemen. A telegraph pole at the scene was so filled with bullet holes that it was quickly removed and destroyed to hide the evidence of the extreme reaction of the police. An interviewed policeman reported that the whole affair could be blamed directly on Bonfield. Seven workers and seven policemen died of their wounds, with an unknown number of workers who had been wounded, but were afraid to report their injuries.

The morning of May 5, Lucy and Lizzie went to the *Alarm* office, to be joined by Oscar Neebe. Suddenly, a band of police detectives, and the mayor of Chicago burst in, demanding that the paper be shut down. After demanding the shutdown, the group of policemen and the mayor left. Soon afterwards, another group of police arrived. One grabbed Lizzie, and when she protested, told her "Shut up, bitch, or I'll knock you down!" Another grabbed Lucy and shook her, saying, "You black bitch! I'm going to knock you down, too!" By noon, August Spies, Michael Schwab, Oscar Neebe, Lizzie and Lucy had all been arrested. Lucy was released in the hope that she would try to meet her husband. She was arrested two more times that day, but released each time. For the next six weeks she was constantly watched. They broke into her home and ransacked her possessions, stealing any valuables, rolling little Albert up in a rug, spinning him around on the floor and taunting him by saying, "Where's your daddy? We're going to string him up

when we get him!" Albert meanwhile moved to Wisconsin and disguised himself, waiting to see what would happen. It was reported that the principally Irish Catholic police were telling the public that Lucy and the others arrested did not believe in god, in an attempt to further elicit public sympathies for the police and against the anarchists.⁶

By May 10, the police had arrested hundreds of people suspected as being socialists, anarchists or sympathizers. On May 14, tipped off by his roommate, police raided the home of Louis Lingg and found bombmaking materials. The leaders of the I.W.P.A. did not know Lingg, who had recently moved to the U.S. Lingg's father had been the victim of a greedy boss, and Lingg hated the whole system of capitalism as a result. Lucy had never heard of him.

A grand jury was impaneled on May 17, and on May 27, announced that it had indicted 31 men, including August Spies, Albert Parsons, Adolph Fischer, Michael Schwab, George Engel, Samuel Fielden, Louis Lingg, Oscar Neebe, Rudolph Schnaubelt and William Seliger. William Seliger turned state's evidence and Rudolph Schnaubelt escaped capture.

A defense committee was formed, with Moses Saloman, Sigismund Zeisler, Captain William Perkins Black and William A. Foster defending the accused. The case was given to Judge Joseph E. Gary.

Meanwhile, the police were frantically searching for Albert. Every time Lucy received a letter from out of town, they thought they had a lead, but Lucy and Albert had devised their own method of communication. Albert wrote Lucy asking if she would see the defense attorneys and ask if he should return for trial. He would be led by her advice in the matter. The defense attorneys disagreed with each other, but finally an agreement was reached that Albert should return. Further, it was agreed that Albert would appear with Captain Black on June 21, the opening day of the trial, to surrender himself. That day, Albert was able to spend a few hours alone with Lucy before appearing in court with Black.

It took until July 15 to fill the jury panel, which included no working men. When the trial began, the courtroom resembled a circus. Judge Gary was surrounded by women with whom he chatted, ignoring much of the testimony. He had already made his decision in the case before the trial began. The jury played cards. "Witnesses" paid to lie were produced by the prosecution. When Mayor Harrison took the stand, he testified that all had been peaceful, and it was established that of all the defendants, only Spies and Fielden were at the scene when the bomb was thrown, and that they had certainly not thrown it. Still, the prosecutor, Julius S. Grinnell, told the jury, "These men have been selected, picked out by the grand jury and indicted because they were leaders. They are no more guilty than the thousands who follow them. Gentlemen of the jury; convict these men, make examples of them, hang them and you save our institutions, our society."

The defendants were allowed to speak in their own behalf, and as part of his statement, Albert said, "There is but one God - Humanity. Any other kind of religion is a mockery, a delusion and a snare." He lashed out at the christian ministry, whom he included among "those pious frauds who profess their faith in the power of God, while they employ the police, the militia and other armed hirelings to enforce their man-made laws and maintain their power over their fellow man."⁷

⁶ *The History of the Haymarket Affair, A Study in the American Social-Revolutionary and Labor Movements*, Henry David, Ph.D., Russell and Russell, N.Y., 1936, p. 225-226.

Letter in the *Detroit Labor Leaf*, May 12, 1886; "The Haymarket Atheists," Joseph Jablonski, *Haymarket Scrapbook*, edited by Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont, Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, Chicago, 1986, p. 107.

⁷ "The Haymarket Atheists," Joseph Jablonski, *Haymarket Scrapbook*, edited by Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont, Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, Chicago, 1986, p. 107.

On August 20, when Lucy arrived at the courtroom, she was not allowed to sit near Albert, as she had in past days. The jury filed in and announced its decision: death for all except Neebe, who would receive a 15 year sentence. Lucy was furious. She thought Albert's voluntary return and surrender would help him, and instead he was sentenced to be hanged. The newspapers were jubilant.

On October 1, Judge Gary began hearing arguments for a new trial. The condemned spoke in their own defense, with Albert speaking last, his speech lasting eight hours. When he was done, Judge Gary sentenced the men to be hanged December 3, 1886. Lucy had very little time to take the case to the American people.

The Parsons children were sent to stay with friends, and Lucy began a speaking tour, telling the tale of capitalist outrages against workers and collecting money for Albert's appeal. It was estimated that it would cost \$12,500 to appeal the case, and Lucy was collecting \$750 a week through speaking. Although to the general public, the word "Anarchist" represented violence and bombs, Lucy used the word frequently in her speeches. She thought that the Haymarket bomb signaled the beginning of a workers rebellion, and encouraged it. Her effect was so great on her audiences, that one New York paper suggested releasing Albert just to get Lucy to stop speaking. On November 27, the Chief Justice of the Illinois Supreme Court granted a stay of execution. Lucy continued to travel and lecture, and by February had made 43 speeches in 17 states.

The Freethought community offered support to the radicals, with D.M. Bennett's *Truth Seeker* denouncing the Haymarket verdict as "judicial murder." Moses Harman of *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer* condemned the Haymarket legal proceedings with a lengthy investigative study. Robert Ingersoll sympathized with the victims, but when asked to take on their defense, said he thought his presence would hurt them more than help, as his notoriety as an Atheist would only add to their burden of negative public opinion. Voltairine de Cleyre became an Anarchist because of the Haymarket affair.⁸

In September, 1887, the Illinois Supreme Court upheld the verdict of the lower court. Albert wrote an "Appeal to the People of America," reviewing the events which had led to this fate. The U.S. Supreme Court was appealed to, but on November 2, 1887, released their decision to refuse to hear the case. The execution was scheduled for November 11.

On November 2, Lucy brought the children to visit their father. Lucy and Albert talked. They had known all along that this was the probable outcome, and refused to plead for clemency from the governor, as had Schwab, Fielden and Spies. Fischer, Engel, Lingg and Parsons felt that they would not want to go on living if their equally innocent friends were to die, and so demanded freedom for all or none. Although the families of the other men fought to convince them to plead for their lives, Lucy did not question Albert's decision to die with his comrades rather than live to see them hanged.

November 3 found Lucy selling the pamphlet "Was it a Fair Trial?" on the streets for a nickel each, with crowds as large as 5,000 gathering around her, out of curiosity and sympathy. The police told her to move on, but where she moved, the crowd followed. At the end of the day, exhausted, she found she had sold 5,000 pamphlets and raised \$250. Lucy continued each day to sell the pamphlets. On November 5, the *Alarm's* first issue since April, 1886 was printed, edited by Dyer Lum. On the front page was Albert's farewell to his friends and sympathizers. On November 6, the prisoners were searched, and when Lucy came to visit Albert, she was searched also. George Francis Train, who had worked with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, said that if seven men had to be executed, it would be better to execute the seven justices of the Illinois Supreme Court than the prisoners. He sent each prisoner a basket of fruit and \$5.

⁸ "The Haymarket Atheists," Joseph Jablonski, *Haymarket Scrapbook*, edited by Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont, Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, Chicago, 1986, p. 107.

In the November 4, 1887 edition of the *Chicago Tribune*, a letter to the editor from Albert was published in which he reiterated the religious views he presented at the trial. He wrote:

Cook County Bastille, Cell No. 29

Chicago, November 3, 1887

Editor of the *Tribune*:

In your issue of today on the "People's Page," and column headed "Voice of the People," a correspondent asks: "To settle a dispute please state what religion Anarchist Parsons has, or has he any religion?" To which you reply, "No."

To settle a dispute concerning my religious belief, which will doubtless arise after my judicial assassination, when it will be beyond my power to speak, I desire you to say to your inquirer, and to all others, that religion in the sense now understood and practiced by those who profess it is merely a blind faith of the honestly superstitious, or a cloak of designing knaves.

If there is a Supreme Being, or Almighty God, who rules the universe, the sphere as well as the actions of puny men, then why do those who profess allegiance to Him cast aside and violate His laws and impeach His integrity and insult His beneficency by erecting man-made governments and enacting man-made laws, and use the bloody weapons of war to prop up and maintain these man-made laws and Government?

My religion - if it can be called such - is *viz.*: Who so lives right dies right; there is but one God - Humanity. Any other kind of religion is a mockery, a delusion, and a snare.

Respectfully,

Albert R. Parsons⁹

On November 8, Lucy paid her last visit to the jail. She was thrown out, along with the other women who had come to visit the prisoners. 41,000 names were collected on petitions for clemency in Chicago between November 2 and 9, 150,000 names came from New York, and 10,000 from St. Louis. On November 10, the day before the execution was to take place, a blast rang through the jail. Lingg was found with his face partially blown away, and remained conscious until his death later that day. It was never known if he committed suicide or was murdered. That evening, the governor made his decision: Fielden and Schwab would receive life in prison, but Parsons, Spies, Fischer and Engel would die the following day.

After hearing the governor's decision, Lucy went to the jail. She was refused entry.

Albert, meanwhile, was at peace with himself. He sang the Marseillaise and Annie Laurie and joked about not being able to sleep due to the sound of the men hammering on the gallows.

On November 11, 1887, the rooftops surrounding the jail were covered with riflemen to prevent an escape attempt. Lucy arose, washed and dressed little Albert and Lulu and hurried to the jail to see Albert one last time, accompanied by Lizzie. At each doorway into the jail, she was told to move on. The children were cold and crying as the police played with her, not refusing her entry, but telling her to enter at some other door. At last, she asked if at least the children could see their father. She was told they could not. "Oh, you murderous villains!" she screamed. "You will forbid me to see my husband, whom you are about

⁹ *Chicago Tribune*, November 4, 1887, "The Haymarket Atheists," Joseph Jablonski, *Haymarket Scrapbook*, edited by Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont, Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, Chicago, 1986, p. 108.

to kill, and not let him take a last look at the children whom you are about to make orphans!" When she continued to berate the police and refused to keep quiet, she, Lizzie and the two children were thrust in a patrol wagon and taken to another jail. A male officer watched with amusement as a matron stripped all four, searched them, then locked them in a cell, naked.

Meanwhile, the prisoners turned away an uninvited Methodist minister who had come to see them. At 11:30 the Sheriff came in and read the death warrants to them. They were then prepared for the gallows, their hands tied behind them and white shrouds and hoods placed on them. A crowd of 200 watched in the small area behind the jail. Suddenly Spies said, "There will come a time when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you are strangling today!"

Engel shouted, "Hoch die Anarchie!" to be followed by Fischer, who cried, "Hurrah for Anarchy! This is the happiest moment of my life!"

Parsons, his head covered in a hood, cried, "Will you let me speak, Sheriff Matson?" There was silence. Albert began, "Let the voice of the people be heard. O--"

The trap had been sprung. The four men were silenced.

At 3:00 a policeman came into Lucy's cell to tell her Albert was dead and that she could now go. As soon as they were released, Lucy and Lizzie went to claim Albert's body. Taking the body home, Lucy laid a red flag across him. By 8:00 a.m., 5,000 people stood outside Lucy's apartment. The police drove the people out of the street and made them form a line so as not to obstruct traffic. When the apartment doors opened, the people began filing through to take a final farewell. By 11:30 p.m., nearly 10,000 people had filed through the apartment. The defense committee applied for a permit to hold the funeral, which the mayor granted, between the hours of 12 and 2 on Sunday, November 13, and without the appearance of flags, speakers or music. The committee, however, could not get permission to bury Albert within the city limits, so it was decided to go to Waldheim Cemetery, outside the city limits. The procession would include all five victims in a march to the site. 250,000 to 500,000 people lined the streets through which the procession passed, of which 15,000 would continue to the cemetery. Captain Black spoke at the funeral. He felt especially responsible for Albert's death, as he had been convinced that if Albert returned it would help his defense.

On December 15, 1887, the Pioneer Aid and Support Association was formed with the express purpose of providing support to the families of the Haymarket martyrs, providing \$8 a week plus \$2 for the first two children and \$1 for the third. They continued for eight years to help support the victims families.

By March, Lucy was off speaking again. She was vehemently angry against the police, and when two of her friends were arrested the following summer, said, "They haven't murdered any Anarchists since November last, and they seem to be thirsting for more blood." In addition, Lucy was preparing a volume of Albert's writings, to be called *The Life of Albert R. Parsons*. A young German printer, Martin Lacher, helped her, and moved in with her in 1888. They kept two large watchdogs to warn them of the approach of the police. This arrangement, of course, caused much discussion.

The Haymarket martyrs had included the best voices for the cause of Anarchism, and, once silenced, the movement was divided by those jockeying for position. Some, who had supported Albert and the others, simply were not speakers who could arouse a crowd, while others, interested more in personal power than in worker's rights, stepped into the gap. When Lucy saw her old party supporting the Democratic ticket, she appeared at a meeting of anarchists, listened to their promotion of Democratic candidates, and then stood up and marched to the podium amid cheers. "Have the Democrats committed no sin?" she asked. "Have the Republicans been guilty of everything?...I have seen the Ku Klux Klan in the South myself. I know something about them, and they were every one Democrats. The negroes of the South are no longer in physical slavery, but the Democrats of the South intend to keep them in economic slavery!" she warned.

At the end of October, 1888, Lucy sailed from New York to London to address meetings of the Socialist League of England. She alienated Annie Besant, who had been leading the match girls' strike, and who thought Lucy's support of violence was inappropriate. Lucy talked about the common blood of

humanity flowing through blacks in Africa, workers in Europe and native Americans, all united against the common enemy: poverty.

Meanwhile, the one year anniversary of the hanging was taking place at Waldheim Cemetery. Lizzie took the children and part of the ceremony was the reading of their father's last letter to them, in which he wrote:

To my darling, precious little children, Albert R. Parsons Jr. and his sister, Lulu Eda Parsons. As I write this word I blot your names with a tear. We never meet again. O, my children, how deeply, dearly your papa loves you. We show our love by living for our loved ones; we also prove our love by dying, when necessary, for them. Of my life and the cause of my unnatural and cruel death you will learn from others.

Your father is a self-offered sacrifice upon the altar of liberty and happiness.

To you I leave the legacy of an honest name and duty done. Preserve it, emulate it; be true to yourselves, you cannot be false to others. Be industrious, sober, and cheerful. Your mother - O, she is the grandest, noblest of women - love, honor and obey her. My children, my precious ones, I request you to read this parting message on each recurring anniversary of my death, in remembrance of him who dies not alone for you, but for the children yet unborn. Bless you, my darlings, Farewell. Your father,

Albert R. Parsons.

Four thousand people had come to the cemetery to pay their respects.

After Lucy returned to the United States, an announcement was made that she would speak in December, 1888 in Chicago. When the police heard of it, they told the owner of the hall to cancel the speech. At 6:00 p.m. on the evening of the lecture, the police, in plain clothes and uniform, arrived at the hall, secured the key, and waited. At 7:45, Lucy, Lizzie and others arrived and demanded entry. The police refused, despite all arguments and shouting. Lucy blamed her companions, who, she said, should have thrown themselves against the doors and forced their way in, even if it meant death.

In early 1889, two events occurred that effected radicals in Chicago. One was a ruling that anarchists had just as much right to free speech as other citizens, and the other was the disclosure of police corruption, especially of Inspector Bonfield and Captain Michael Schaak, the principal enemies of anarchism. It was proven that the men took bribes to look the other way at houses of gambling and prostitution, that they had stolen and fenced property, including that of the Haymarket martyrs, and Schaack was exposed as a slum landlord. On February 6, the men were removed from the police force.

On January 7, 1889, during a speech advocating the use of voting to secure change, Lucy's voice rang out of the audience, telling them, "The ballot is useless as a remedy, and a change in the present condition of the wage slaves will never be brought about peacefully. Force is the only remedy, and force will certainly be used." She told them to vote if they thought it would do any good, but to take guns to the polls with them.

On January 23, Lucy spoke before the A.R. Parsons Assembly No. 1 of the Knights of Labor. Lucy spoke on "The Religion of Humanity."

Within the ranks, the battle between Lucy's way or the power of the vote was fought bitterly, but Lucy was gaining. It was anarchism vs. socialism, voluntary association between trade unions vs. state control.

Chicago was undergoing more liberal changes than the guarantee of free speech to anarchists: Judge John Peter Altgeld, a liberal, offered reforms, Jane Addams established Hull House, Mary McDowell founded the University of Chicago settlement house and Graham Taylor, a minister, founded the Chicago Commons, all aimed at helping the poor.

Lucy canvassed the city, selling pamphlets and talking to the people, moving on when the police began to close in. She walked picket lines with strikers. In October, 1889, Lucy's little daughter, Lulu, died of lymphadenoma. Lucy had lost half her family in less than two years.

By 1890, Chicago's population had tripled from the time Lucy and Albert had arrived, reaching one million, of which 80% had been in the United States less than one generation. In addition, 14,000 black citizens had moved north in search of work, and Russian Jews by the thousands arrived to escape the pogroms against them in Russia. This growth caused terrible sanitation problems. The city pumped its sewage into Lake Michigan, then drew it back in to be used as drinking water.

Lucy, Hugh O. Pentecost and Johann Most were scheduled to speak at a memorial to the Haymarket martyrs in Newark, New Jersey in November, 1890. Instead, police blocked their way to the hall, refusing to allow them entry. When Lucy attempted to speak in the streets, the police used clubs to disperse the crowds, arresting eight people and taking Lucy to jail. At her trial, she defended herself and was acquitted of inciting to riot.

In July, 1891, Lucy's and Martin Lacher's relationship exploded in a courtroom. Lucy, sporting a black eye, and Martin, a bruised arm, fought each other in court, she saying he had broken up her furniture, he defending his right to do so as the rightful owner of the property. Not surprisingly, Martin was fined, but Lucy suffered most, being labeled a loose woman.

Also that year, Lucy and Lizzie began editing *Freedom, A Revolutionary Anarchist-Communist Monthly*. In addition to writing of the workers plight, Lucy furnished articles for the paper concerning racism. Although slavery had been legally abolished, blacks in the south were still being sold into slavery. In the March 30, 1892 issue of the *Chicago Tribune*, it was reported that three men had been convicted under vagrancy laws and had been sold on the auction block in Fayette, Missouri because they were unable to pay the fines. One man was sold to a farmer for \$25, another to a stock-dealing firm for \$5 and the third to a cattle feeder for only \$1. The A.F. of L. formed segregated locals when it organized black workers at all. Lucy wrote against this outrageous practice.

1892 saw major defeats for the working class as government teamed with industry to put down strikes. In the silver mines at Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, one thousand federal troops were dispatched to imprison hundreds of strikers in a barbed wire concentration camp, where they were ill-fed, ill-clothed and beaten. At the Carnegie steel mills in Homestead, Pennsylvania, workers were locked out and the owners declared they would not negotiate with the union. Pinkertons were called in, but were defeated in a fierce gun battle with workers.

On June 25, 1893, the monument to the Haymarket martyrs was unveiled at Waldheim Cemetery to a crowd of 8,000.

In 1892, John P. Altgeld was elected governor of the state of Illinois. Known as a liberal, it was thought he might censure the conduct of the judge and the verdict in the Haymarket case. In 1893, lived up to the hopes of the anarchists by unconditionally pardoning Samuel Fielden, Michael Schwab and Oscar Neebe, and condemning the trial which had convicted all eight men. Retribution against him by the press was harsh. He was called a blood-thirsty anarchist.

Whereas 1892 had seen defeats for striking workers, 1893 saw workers without jobs at all. Four million people were out of work due to the failure of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad, thousands of homeless families lived in tent colonies in Chicago and two thousand slept in the corridors of City Hall while the rich of the city put on a show of opulence for the world at the Columbian Exposition. Workers were bitter and angry and saw government aiding rich capitalists more and more. They turned to socialism and anarchism to attempt to solve their problems. On August 21, 1893, Lucy spoke to thousands of unemployed workers at Metropolitan Hall, urging them to act. "You must no longer die and rot in tenement houses," she told them. "Shoulder to shoulder with one accord you should rise and take what is yours.... Let our streets run with gore but let us have justice!" she cried.

The Chicago anarchist leaders met in 1893 at the office of Honoré Jaxon in the *Times* building. Honoré was a Native American who, like the Haymarket martyrs, had been condemned to die for his activities in Canada, but his feeling was that he could do nothing to help the workers if he was dead, and so he fled. Lucy, of course, disagreed with him, saying that the death of the Haymarket martyrs had done much to galvanize the workers and enlist many to the anarchist ranks. Lucy Parsons, Voltairine de Cleyre, Lizzie and William Holmes, and others attended the meeting.

In 1892, Eugene Victor Debs came to the forefront of the movement by organizing a new union. He was the type of man who frequently gave his last dollar to a tramp and who would hand his coat to a poor person who he thought needed it more than himself. Although his union, the American Railway Union, won a victory in 1893, in 1894 they were defeated in a Pullman strike. President Grover Cleveland was instrumental in their defeat, ordering troops back from South Dakota (where they were fighting Native Americans) to Chicago, where Governor Altgeld's orders for them to stay away were ignored. Eugene Debs was imprisoned for six months, and Clarence Darrow joined the fight to become an attorney for the Union. The strikers, who often had as little as 3¢ left after rents and fees had been deducted in the company town in which they lived, lost to the combined effort of big government and big business. Debs noted that Cleveland, a Democrat, was no better than Benjamin Harrison, the Republican president who had crushed the Coeur d'Alene strike. Lucy was impressed by Debs leadership.

In 1895, Lizzie and Lucy had a falling out when William Holmes became an attorney. Criticized by comrades for doing so, Lizzie defended her husband by saying that had the Haymarket martyrs had good attorneys, the outcome might have been different. Lucy argued vehemently that since the trial reflected a class struggle, nothing could have been done to make the verdict different. Lizzie and William were becoming more and more intellectual in their arguments, while Lucy stayed with the mainstream workers and followed leaders such as Eugene Debs and Bill Haywood. While Lizzie wrote theoretical essays, Lucy wrote on women's rights issues.

In 1896, Lucy's house burned, and with it, much of her literature, which she had been selling as a way to provide herself with an income. She was able to save some slightly damaged books which she sold at reduced rates.

Over 1,200 people gathered at Waldheim Cemetery for the 1896 commemoration of the Haymarket tragedy. Lucy spoke, telling her audience, "I am the widow of Albert R. Parsons and the mother of his son. I charge the police and the court with murdering my husband. I live to bring up his son to take up the work which was stricken from his father's hand." A police captain promptly arrested her before she could go on. There was some action in the crowd, but the leaders insisted on continuing and Lucy was released. The police had prevented her from speaking further.

Lucy and Emma Goldman first met at the June, 1897 convention in Chicago which initiated the Social Democracy, led by Eugene Debs. The Social Democracy advocated colonizing Washington state as a Cooperative Commonwealth. Mother Jones served on the Executive Committee. In addition to their hopes for the state of Washington, the group wanted a shorter working day, public works projects for the unemployed, public ownership of all utilities and monopolies. Eugene Debs said at the convention "The cheapest commodity in this whole country is human flesh and blood." Reality proved him correct.

Lucy did not ignore the woman question. She had written on rape, for which she said society punished the victim more than the perpetrator, and on women's wages and divorce. In 1895, Lucy wrote the "Cause of Sex Slavery" for the *Firebrand*. "I hold," she wrote, "that the economic is the first issue to be settled, that it is woman's economical dependence which makes her enslavement to man possible... How many women do you think would submit to marriage slavery if it were not for wage slavery?" Lucy, unlike Emma Goldman and others, did not support "Free Love." She was afraid that if the fatherhood of a child could not be determined, it would fall to the woman to fully support the child, and she felt that was terribly unfair. In addition, she saw venereal disease and pregnancy as threats to a free love lifestyle. For Lucy, the woman question was part of the class question, and would be solved only when capitalism was abolished.

Emma's star was on the rise, while Lucy's was fading, thus, when Lucy criticized Emma's free love advocacy, she not only ended any hope of working together for the cause of the workers, but she also lost much of her power in leading the workers movement. At the November 11, 1897 commemoration of the Haymarket event, Emma spoke but Lucy, although present, did not. Emma became good friends with the Holmes, whose changing ideologies had removed them from Lucy's sphere.

When the Spanish American War began in 1898, Lucy bitterly opposed it, but her son, Albert Jr., now 18, enlisted despite her protests. Lucy held street demonstrations to discourage other young men from enlisting. On July 27, 1899, Lucy committed her son to the Illinois Northern Hospital for the Insane. In court to testify to her son's insanity, Lucy said that he had become listless and dreamy. Albert Jr. countered by bringing in witnesses who testified to his sanity. He said he had defied his mother by enlisting and by attending church services and becoming involved in Spiritualism. Lucy told the court he had pulled a knife on her. The court declared Albert Jr. insane and committed him to the asylum. Lucy must have known what she was sending him into for Dorothea Dix was exposing conditions at mental health institutions. Although a doctor examining Albert Jr. less than a month after his incarceration found him perfectly sane, he remained in custody. The guards, knowing his parentage, accused him of being an anarchist, which he denied. He died of tuberculosis in 1919¹⁰, his mother never having seen him since their days in court in 1899. Lucy was criticized heavily for her treatment of him. As with his father and herself, she had never seen him as an individual, but rather as a part of the mechanism to free the wage slave. All his life she had dragged him to meetings, pointing him out to her audiences as being the son of a slain martyr whom she was raising to avenge his father's death. Albert had a rough life, terrorized as a young boy by the treatment and murder of his father, then, still at a young age, presented as the next martyr to the cause. He simply wanted his own life. Lucy, however, did not see it that way. Just as she was willing to sacrifice Albert and herself to the cause, she was willing to sacrifice her son, and could not understand or sympathize with his desire to simply be left alone to live his own life. Not being an individualist, Lucy refused to allow him to go his own way. The second half of his life was lived in torment in the institution, and, although he wasn't insane upon entering the asylum, he was driven insane.

In 1901 the Social Democratic Party, led by Eugene Debs, became the Socialist Party of America, with Lucy as a member. Lucy was writing for *Free Society*, and reported that the century did not begin well for workers, with the cost of living rising 25 to 33% while wages rose only 12 to 15%. 45,000 building trades workers were locked out in Chicago, as well as the piano makers and the custom tailors, while the united machinists were demanding reduced hours and increased pay.

On September 6, 1901, Leon Czolgosz shot President McKinley at the Buffalo Exposition. Newspapers immediately reported a link between the assassin and the "Haymarket Gang" and reporters were sent to interview Lucy. "Nothing could be worse for the cause of anarchism," Lucy told them. "What is the use to strike individuals? That is not true anarchy. Another ruler rises to take his place and no good is accomplished." Not gaining the fiery comments for which they wished, the press turned from Lucy and began hunting for Emma Goldman, whom the police said inspired the assassination. Still, in the hysteria that followed, the police smashed the presses of *Free Society* and arrested members of the *Free Society* publishing group. When Emma was finally apprehended, she was threatened by one policeman that "If you don't confess, you'll go the way of those bastard Haymarket anarchists."

The public linked the Haymarket affair to McKinley's assassination, and states began passing anti-anarchist laws. The newly made President Theodore Roosevelt, who had urged that the Haymarket martyrs be shot without trial in 1886, now urged Congress to suppress anarchism. The result was the Anarchist

¹⁰ It is interesting to note that although the children were listed as "Negro" and "Nigger" on their birth certificates, both death certificates list them as "white."

Exclusion Act, passed in 1903, providing the deportation of alien radicals and the exclusion of those with anarchist beliefs from entering the country.

Lucy, meanwhile, had raised enough money to have *The Life of Albert R. Parsons* reprinted and she traveled east with copies of the book for sale. She lectured alongside Emma Goldman and others.

In June, 1905, Lucy sat on the platform listening to Big Bill Haywood call to order the founding convention of the Industrial Workers of the World (known as Wobblies), joined by Mother Jones and Eugene V. Debs. Mother Jones was the first woman, and Lucy the second, to join the new group. Lucy addressed the convention on the problems of women, who, she correctly reported, were unfairly paid by the capitalists. She wanted to ensure that women who made far less than their fellow male workers, would be able to join the I.W.W.

Lucy defended women's rights in the *Liberator*, first writing a column on "Famous Women in History," including Louise Michel, Jenny Lind, and Florence Nightingale, among others. She supported the right of divorce and remarriage, and the right to birth control information. She came to the defense of Moses Harman when the editor of *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer* was arrested for sending "obscenity" through the mail. By arresting Harman, the government showed that through their power "... the young shall be kept in dense ignorance of the laws governing the reproductive sphere of life," Lucy wrote. "The sooner men learn to make companions and equals of their wives and not subordinates, the sooner the marriage relation will be one of harmony," she warned. She wrote to Harman:

I have just this minute learned of your sentence to one year in prison. To say that I am shocked and saddened by the prospect of your threatened incarceration is to use language too mild to express my real feelings. It matters not how we may differ as to which must be first secured - economic freedom or sexual freedom - we know that both are necessary and must come, and those who suffer in the cause of either must not be allowed to suffer without enlisting the sympathy and support of the other. I inclose \$1 now and will try to do more later on. Dear old comrade in the cause of woman's emancipation, I had hoped that you would be able to pass your few declining years in freedom, but it seems that it must be otherwise.¹¹

In 1908, Lucy toured the western United States, and her speeches were so successful that upon her return she decided to reprint the *Famous Speeches* of the Haymarket Martyrs. She sold these, along with pamphlets written by Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, Kropotkin and her own "The Principles of Anarchism." When Lucy attempted to secure a permit for a lecture on religion in Chicago in 1909, she was refused, with the papers reporting, "Mrs. Parsons was considered the real brains of the anarchist gang and the police are taking no chances with her."

By November, 1911, Lucy had made two successful trips from Los Angeles to Vancouver to New York and all points between, speaking and selling her pamphlets. She had sold 10,000 copies of the *Speeches* alone.

In 1912, Lucy joined William Z. Foster in forming the Syndicalist League of North America. That winter Foster traveled 6,000 miles as a hobo, organizing local Syndicalist Leagues throughout the country. Lucy added Syndicalist literature to her pamphlet list and wrote for the *Agitator* and the *Syndicalist*. In

¹¹ *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, No. 1043, 7/6/1905.

addition, she also supported the I.W.W. She wrote that the fight to secure the eight hour day was as antiquated as the craft unions, and that now all should be agitating for the five hour work day.¹²

From 1909 to 1917, the I.W.W. members led free speech rights activities in the western United States, speaking freely and getting arrested, only to be followed by more Wobblies who spoke and were arrested. They organized in the west and the south, and led textile strikes in the east.

In 1909 the National Women's Trade Union League held "The Uprising of the 20,000" in New York for the rights of garment workers. The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire of 1911, killing 146 women, exposed the horrors of life as a garment worker to the public. Women workers attempting to escape the flame threw themselves out windows, some impaling themselves on the spikes of decorative fencing below; bodies were found in heaps around blocked exits. The public reaction to the tragedy resulted in compulsory factory inspection and safety laws.

Still, attacks were still being made against striking workers. In 1914, gunmen fired into the Ludlow tent colony of the strikers from the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. When that did not kill all the strikers, the gunmen poured oil and kerosene on the tents and set them on fire, then machine-gunned everyone who ran out. Thirteen children and a pregnant woman burned to death, and six other people were killed in that one night. This massacre also caused a public uproar and the government established the Committee on Industrial Relations to investigate.

Lucy concentrated on organizing the unemployed. Wherever she traveled, the police were informed of her presence, and she was frequently arrested. In 1913, Lucy was arrested for peddling literature without a license in Los Angeles. She was stripped by a jail matron and held incommunicado for 24 hours. When the case finally came to court, the judge dismissed it. Lucy then moved on to speak in San Francisco and Seattle.

In Seattle, Lucy found a mass trial in progress in which 99 socialists, including one child, were being tried for speaking in the streets. A resolution had been passed around the streets opposing the court order which prohibited free speech in Seattle's streets, and when Lucy went to the courtroom to listen to the trial, she heard the judge say, "The signers of this resolution of defiance to the court may be held liable, in case of murder, just as Parsons was. You know he came into court and said, 'I didn't do anything; I just wrote an editorial,' but they hanged him for it. Now you fellow -"

A voice rang out from the back of the courtroom: "My husband was no murderer," Lucy demanded.

"Widow or no widow, you had better keep quiet or you'll find yourself down in the county jail," the judge countered. A charge was made that Lucy had threatened the judge with dynamite, but the charge was not substantiated and the judge was censured by the Washington State Bar Association for his conduct during the trial.

Lucy attempted to enter Canada to speak, but was stopped by immigration authorities. She returned to San Francisco and witnessed the desperation of the unemployed. Over two thousand men were sleeping in one stinking, vermin-infested building there, and thousands more men, women and children slept wherever they could, in boxes, amid the garbage, in abandoned buildings, waiting in soup lines during the day for a bowl of thin soup. Hospitals turned away those in need because they had no money. It was estimated that 65,000 people were unemployed in San Francisco at the time.

When Lucy attempted to speak to a crowd of unemployed in San Francisco, she was first turned away from the hall which had been reserved, then, when she attempted to speak in the street, she was arrested. Four more leaders were arrested. The crowd, infuriated, moved to another location, but the police were determined to break them up. A riot resulted, with windows being smashed. Lucy was charged with inciting to riot. The judge dismissed the charge against Lucy, but before she could even leave the

¹² *The Industrial Worker*, May 1, 1912, *Haymarket Scrapbook*, edited by Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont, Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, Chicago, 1986, p. 183.

courtroom, she was re-arrested for rioting. The same judge threw out this charge too, saying Lucy had been in custody when the rioting occurred, and had not participated in it.

When Lucy and other I.W.W. leaders took over the Unemployment Committee, the city and state officials were so frightened by what they might do that they appointed a committee to investigate conditions among the unemployed. The state hesitated as long as it could, but finally inaugurated a state public works project. The supervisors of the public works project refused to deal with the Unemployment Committee, resulting in a march of 10,000 unemployed workers, which unemployed women organized. Lucy was one of the women who addressed the marchers. A militant committee marched into an expensive restaurant and asked for donations for starving women. The rich patrons, frightened at the sight of the ragged, hungry women, dug into their pockets. Although starving, the unemployed refused to work for less than \$3 for an eight hour day's work.

By January, 1915, many factories had closed down due to reduced orders from the European market, currently engaged in war. The scandal of rising bread prices stirred even the government to investigate, and marchers were demanding bread in the streets. Lucy was arrested in Chicago for marching and demanding bread. In Chicago, families were living under bridges and in parks. In January, Lucy met with others at Hull House amid banners reading, "We Want WORK, not Charity," and "Why Starve in the Midst of Plenty?" Lucy kept her own speech peaceful, for she knew that the police had infiltrated the hall and she did not want the meeting disrupted. She encouraged the participants to march after the speeches ended, and the audience filed out onto the streets to march to the financial district. Police lined their route and all at once attacked them, using clubs and brass knuckles on men and women alike. The police shot the marchers. The crowd fought back, with Lucy fighting off an attempt to grab the marchers banner. The marchers fought their way eight blocks, when the police finally succeeded in breaking up the procession. Lucy, along with 21 others, were arrested. Jane Addams, along with many liberals, denounced the police brutality and arranged bail for Lucy and the other women. Although much criticized for her actions, Jane helped secure jury trials for the demonstrators and arranged for attorneys. The unemployed issued a statement about the event, warning, "If the police of this city think they can repress the hungry with club, blackjack and bullet they are wrong. Hunger knows but one law - the law of self-preservation. Violence breeds violence."

When the marchers won in court, the stage was set for another confrontation. At the next meeting of the unemployed at Hull House, Jane Addams told the audience to content themselves with the victory they had won, but Lucy urged them to march in the streets. Lucy's arguments won, and 600 people set out. Mounted police lined the parade route, and seven policemen tried at one point to stop it, but the march continued on, victorious.

In the summer of 1916, Lucy went to agitate among striking iron miners in Minnesota. Strikers, their supporters, and I.W.W. organizers were in jail there, charged with murder. The defendants plea bargained and were soon released.

In 1916, Woodrow Wilson was re-elected, partly because of his role in keeping the United States from joining the war raging in Europe. Still, "preparedness" was the word of the day, and at a Preparedness Day parade in San Francisco that July, a bomb exploded, killing ten. Tom Mooney, who organized streetcar workers the year before, was blamed and given the death sentence. An international protest resulted against the sentence, which was then commuted to life in prison.

In April, 1917, the United States joined the European war.

In June, 1917, Congress passed the Espionage Act and in May, 1918, the Sedition Act. The Espionage Act was designed to punish anyone who interfered with the draft or encouraged "disloyalty." The Sedition Act went further, with penalties for insubordination, obstruction of the sale of government bonds, encouraging any curtailment of production for the war effort, and for willfully uttering, printing, writing, or publishing "any disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language" about the American form of government, the flag, military uniforms, or the Constitution.

Lucy was not arrested, but her friend Cassius Cook was jailed. He pleaded with Lucy to put her house up to cover his bond, which she did, although it meant that if the bond was seized, she would not have a roof over her head. Frank Little, chairman of the General Executive Board of the I.W.W. was lynched for opposing the war. Bill Haywood and 100 Wobblies were tried in 1918 for conspiracy to commit crimes against the state, and all were convicted and sentenced to prison. The entire executive committee of the Socialist Party was indicted, although never brought to trial. Eugene V. Debs was convicted for an anti-war speech and sent to a federal penitentiary. The Post Office refused to mail radical publications, and many editors were jailed or deported. Many states outlawed the I.W.W., with mass trials of members taking place in Kansas and California in 1920. Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman were deported to Russia in 1919. When woman suffrage was gained in 1920, it seemed a hollow victory by the radicals, for they felt it was achieved by leaders in the women's movement who had aided the government in destroying civil rights during the war years. In 1920, two Italian anarchists, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were arrested for distributing radical propaganda. They were charged with robbery and murder, and although Sacco proved he had been elsewhere, the state condemned the men to death, accomplished because the men were immigrants and radicals.

By 1920, Lucy was beginning to despair at the destruction and disintegration of the movement for workers' rights. She had given everything she had to further the cause, and now she saw her future as being shaky and her dreams for worker equality destroyed.

Writing of the Haymarket martyrs in 1926, Lucy said:

Parsons, Spies, Lingg, Fischer and Engel: Although all that is mortal of you is laid beneath that beautiful monument in Waldheim Cemetery, *you are not dead*. You are just beginning to live in the hearts of all true lovers of liberty. For now, after forty years that you are gone, thousands who were then unborn are eager to learn of your lives and heroic martyrdom, and as the years lengthen the brighter will shine your names, and the more you will come to be appreciated and loved.

Those who so foully murdered you, under the forms of law - lynch law - in a court of supposed justice, are forgotten.

Rest, comrades, rest. All the tomorrows are yours!¹³

In the Russian Revolution, Lucy saw the victory of the working masses, and worked with the Communist Party of the United States, although not officially joining it. She was always available to speak, and was always warm and friendly. She wrote for the *Daily Worker* and was one of the Communist Party's May Day speakers in Chicago in 1930. She marched in the parade held after the speeches. It was reported that 25,000 joined the march. The stock market had crashed not long before, and disenchanted workers were joining the Communist Party in droves.

In 1932, she wrote discouragingly that the radicals met in small groups, talked, then departed, without much action being taken. She concluded that "Anarchism is a dead issue in American life today." She saw Hitler's rise as a threat to radicalism. "Radicalism is at a low ebb today," she wrote a friend. "Despotism is on horseback, riding at high speed. The worker is helpless."

Lucy still traveled and lectured in the 1930's, and spent her days in Chicago walking six or seven miles to the Chicago Loop selling pamphlets and talking to people. If there was a demonstration, a picket line, or a radical meeting to be found, she was there. She worked for the defense of Angelo Herndon, a black man who had led a march of 10,000 in Atlanta, protesting the conditions caused by the depression.

¹³ Lucy Parsons, *The Labor Defender*, November, 1926; *Haymarket Scrapbook*, edited by Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont, Charles H. Kerr Publishing Co., Chicago, 1986, p. 184.

She did not give up in the fight to free Tom Mooney, who had been in prison 20 years. When Nina Spies, the widow of August Spies, died in 1936, Lucy delivered a tremendous oration.

On November 11, 1937, the 50th anniversary of the execution of her husband, Lucy spoke before radical groups of all philosophies, gathered to honor him. Lucy wrote:

Once again on November 11 a memorial meeting will be held to commemorate the death of the Chicago Haymarket martyrs. 1937 is the fiftieth anniversary, and this meeting bids fair to be more widely observed than any of the forty-nine previous ones...

On that gloomy morning of November 11, 1887, I took our two little children to jail to bid my beloved husband farewell. I found the jail roped off with heavy cables. Policemen with pistols walked in the inclosure.

Then I said, "Let these children bid their father good-bye; let them receive his blessing. They can do no harm."

In a few minutes a patrol-wagon drove up and we were locked up in a police station while the hellish deed was done.

Oh, Misery, I have drunk thy cup of sorrow to its dregs, but I am still a rebel.¹⁴

In 1939, she finally joined the Communist party. Lucy experienced rough economic times during the depression, and secured a blind pension. She did not want her friends to know just how destitute she was, and kept her house clean and neat. Friends sent her money, and neighbors sometimes brought over food.

On February 23, 1941, Lucy spoke to strikers at International Harvester, emphasizing the history of police brutality since 1886. On May 1, 1941, she rode as guest of honor in the May Day Parade.

On March 7, 1942, her wood stove caught fire. Lucy, virtually blind, was trapped and burned to death. A friend, seeing the smoke, tried to rescue her, and died the following day of burns and smoke inhalation. Although there was smoke and water damage, many of Lucy's collection of books and writings were intact. When Irving Abrams went to the house the next day to take possession of Lucy's books, he found them all gone. A policeman on duty told him that the F.B.I. had taken them. Irving called the F.B.I. and the Chicago police, but none would admit to taking them, even though he explained that he wanted them to go into a library collection. Even dead, Lucy Parsons was feared by the police and F.B.I.

Three hundred people turned out for Lucy's funeral and the burial of her ashes along with those of her son at the Waldheim monument. The site of her home was sold in 1943 for \$800, the money being designated in her will to go to the maintenance of the Haymarket Memorial at Waldheim Cemetery.

¹⁴ Lucy Parsons, *The One Big Union Monthly*, November 1937; *Haymarket Scrapbook*, edited by Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont, Charles H. Kerr Publishing Co., Chicago, 1986, p. 184.



*Sincerely Yours,
Lulie Monroe Power.*

LULIE MONROE POWER

LULIE MONROE POWER

1850 - April 21, 1895

Lulie Monroe was born into a definitely Atheist family. Her father, Dr. Jasper Roland Monroe, was editor of "the only straight atheistic paper now or ever printed in the world or out of it," called first *The Seymour* [Indiana] *Times*, then *Monroe's Ironclad Age*, subtitled *The Evoluted Seymour Times*, and finally, by the simple title *Ironclad Age*. The front page of each issue depicted "The Dead Past," "The Darkness of Superstition" on the left side of the title, with a preacher pointing to tiny figures of devils dancing in the flames of hellfire, captioned by "Theology at Work." On the right side of the title, a picture of a woman helping the poor, captioned by "Humanity at Work," and representing "The Light of Reason," and "The Living Present." In the center, between these two images, was that of a family - mother, father and child - with the caption "Our Trinity" and below the title appeared the words "Justice, Mercy, Truth and Forbearance." The *Ironclad Age* described itself as "A Paper With Few Principles," and "A Weekly With Few Wants," and as its motto, declared "In the Brief Day-Time of Life, Love; In the Long Night of Death, Oblivion."

It is difficult to separate Lulie's life from the *Ironclad Age*, as its' publication seems to have been a family affair, with different members setting type, preparing the editions for mailing, writing articles, etc. In the time before J.R. Monroe's death, there were several columns written by "Baby Monroe," but whether this was Lulie's work or that of a relative is unknown.

Lulie's father was a dynamic personality. Born in New Jersey, he was the son and grandson of revolutionary war soldiers. Dr. Monroe was educated by his mother, and, as with many children at the time, he was taught to read the bible, a book he was later to declare "a cunningly devised fable."¹ His parents emigrated west to Louisville, Kentucky in 1838, and in 1845, he began studying medicine in Indiana under the tutelage of Drs. Stage, Wallace, and Henderson. By 1848, he was a practicing physician, and was already publishing political articles in the local papers. Wishing to express his opinion more openly than was acceptable by the local press, he established his own paper in 1855, calling it the *Rockford* [Indiana] *Herald*, which was principally a political sheet, and in which he derided the Democratic party enthusiastically.

In 1857, Dr. Monroe moved to Seymour, Indiana, taking his paper with him and changing its' title to the *Seymour Times*. Shortly thereafter, however, he left the paper in charge of Samuel Holmes while he and his family moved temporarily to Louisville to enable him to pursue his medical studies. He graduated with distinction in 1858 from the Kentucky School of Medicine.

In 1861, Dr. Monroe was commissioned into the U.S. army as a surgeon, joining his unit at Cumberland Ford. He worked so strenuously with scanty supplies and help, that finally his own health broke down, and apparently, he suffered a stroke, for it is reported that his left side was paralyzed, and that his mind was affected, as well as his senses of hearing and taste on the left side. Nevertheless, he continued to work, while awaiting a reply to his submission for resignation, until, still waiting, his commanding officer sent him to the hospital in Lexington, Kentucky, where he remained until his resignation was officially, if reluctantly, accepted. Recovering slowly, he was sent on special surgical duty to Murfreesboro after the battle of Stone River, and after the Perryville battle, and labored until no longer needed.

In 1863, he suffered another stroke, which was more severe than the first. It was not until 1869 that he revived the *Seymour Times*, which until this time had been published by others, and reestablished his medical practice.

Although J.R. Monroe's life was chronicled for the *Ironclad Age*, little is said of his wife, Adaline Monroe, excepting the mention of her death in November, 1884. We know that Lulie had sisters, and at least two brothers, Bernard and V.H., the former born in 1859 and dying in 1885, and the latter becoming a physician, like his father, and outliving them all. V.H. Monroe contributed to the *Ironclad Age* while

¹ *Ironclad Age*, Vol. 36, No. 36, 11/14/1891, p. 4-5.

maintaining his anonymity for social and business reasons, evidently sympathizing with his father's philosophy, but not wishing to endanger his practice. Bernard, before his early death, helped typeset the paper, and worked as a speaker for the temperance movement.

With Dr. Monroe's death in November, 1891, the newspaper passed to the only family member brave enough to continue it, namely his daughter, Lulie. She was described as the only woman editor of an Atheistic paper, a claim which was not precisely true [see Etta Semple]. In addition to small articles, hardly more than passing commentary, she did not write fully researched, extensive articles, nor, apparently, did she participate in public speaking, for surely her speeches would have been printed in the *Ironclad Age*, whether under her father's editorship or her own.

Lulie married R.H. Power sometime before 1873, for we know that in that year, their son Erie Monroe Power, was born. A bereaved mother printed a long biography of her only son, written by her brother, V.H. Monroe, when Erie died, at only 19 years of age, in 1893, in which it appears that Erie was what would be termed a "mama's boy." Described as a studious boy who did not participate in sports, but rather stayed home with his mother, with whom he shared a relationship "so intimate, so intricate, so delicate... that it would almost appear the same breath of life, breathed from common lungs, sustained the two. Where either wept, the other saw but tears: a joy warmed each alike, or not at all."²

Lulie also had a daughter, apparently quite a bit younger than Erie, named Pearl. Little is mentioned about Pearl, however, except an interesting comment by a relative printed in the paper as a letter to Pearl upon her mother's death, in which the writer states that Pearl's home is now without love,³ seeming to indicate that perhaps R.H. Power was not very affectionate toward the girl. Lulie herself does not mention Pearl, but then, she did not mention Erie until such a momentous occasion as his death, so her omission might not be indicative of any lack of affection toward Pearl.

In 1894, an attempt was made to burn down the *Ironclad Age* offices, and was very nearly successful. The *Ironclad Age* was located on the ground floor of a large building, with families renting apartments on the floors above it. Apparently, several unknown persons entered the offices one night through the cellar of the building, and removed the pipes from the stoves, locked the doors and windows, and closed a dumbwaiter, effectively sealing the ground floor. They then turned on the natural gas to the two stoves, and lit a lamp. Luckily, although it was late at night, Lulie had some work to do at the office, and came in before the explosion could occur. Quickly shutting off the gas, and opening the doors and windows, she prevented the disaster which would have not only destroyed the uninsured presses and materials in the *Ironclad Age* offices, but would probably have killed at least some of the residents on the floors above it. The event was published in liberal and general newspapers alike, and as a result, Lulie found herself deluged with requests for free sample copies of the *Ironclad Age*, so much so that she requested, through the paper, that those requesting copies at least enclose enough money for postage, and that liberals subscribe, to help cover the costs incurred by having to print large editions of which the majority was being given as free copies to interested parties.

Lulie did not hesitate to blame the incident on those following the christian religion, but it seemed so evident that this was the case, that even unsympathetic newspapers concurred, the major paper in Indianapolis writing, "The paper [*Ironclad Age*] is bold in its denunciation of all forms of the christian religion, and it is

² *Ironclad Age*, Vol. 38, No. 9, 5/6/1893.

³ "My Dear Little Pearl: ...I pity you beyond all words to express; and I want you to know farther that I love you above all others with the exception of Jay, who is in the same fix you are in - he, too, is motherless. But as fate has decreed *he has* a good home and kind and good relatives - a thing, unfortunately, you have not...I am certain no one ever had a better or kinder mother than you did - no one ever will." - Harry C. Monroe, *Ironclad Age*, Vol. 40, No. 10-11, 5/18/1895, p. 1.

believed that the attempt to blow it up was made because of its editorial policy."⁴ Lulie reported that her own reaction was an "appalling depression" and using the editorial "we," stated, "We have been outspoken, and maybe, too daring, on our denunciations of this priestly power that is encroaching so rapidly on our republican institutions...We are not aware of having a personal enemy in the world. We are a woman, and none but miscreants war upon women."⁵ With the surge of requests for sample copies resulting from the attempt, Lulie reported that "The trials and tribulations accompanying the current and last issues of the *Ironclad* have been such as to make one feel that their sphere was back in the secluded and quiet home - far away from the turmoil."⁶ In the midst of having to suddenly print hundreds of extra, free copies of the paper, one of the *Ironclad* employees had an accident in which a finger had to be amputated, and thus was put out of action. Then several members of the family, who also served as employees of the paper, became ill. Lulie pleaded with her readers "We ask the kind consideration of our generous friends for the delay of paper, and all other shortcomings."⁷

Later that year, in August, Lulie herself became very ill, her worse complaint being a loss of vision, depriving her of "her greatest pleasure - reading." She stayed with her brother, Dr. V.H. Monroe, to convalesce.⁸ Apparently, she only became worse, for the following April, 1895, Lulie Monroe Power died at the young age of 45. The *Ironclad Age* printed letters of sympathy from many of its friends and subscribers, including Ella E. Gibson, who reported "Why, she [Lulie] wrote me only three weeks since, and though she complained of ill health, etc., yet I had no thought she was in immediate danger."⁹ Mrs. M.A. Freeman wrote that Lulie was "The brave little woman, [who] remained faithful to the cause of freedom to the last."¹⁰ Lulie was eulogized by the freethought press, the *Philosophical Journal* calling her "a woman of ability, a vigorous writer and very courageous in the expression of her radical views on religion."¹¹ George Macdonald of the *Truth Seeker* mentioned her in his 1931 publication of *Fifty Years of Freethought*, although his description of her is sadly brief.¹² The *Ironclad Age* was continued for a few brief months after Lulie's death, until December, 1895, but without the dynamic leadership of the outspoken Lulie Monroe Power, it ceased publication.

⁴ *Ironclad Age*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 3/24/1894, p. 4.

⁵ *Ironclad Age*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 3/24/1894, p. 4.

⁶ *Ironclad Age*, Vol. 39, No. 9, 5/5/1894, p. 5.

⁷ *Ironclad Age*, Vol. 39, No. 9, 5/5/1894, p. 5.

⁸ *Ironclad Age*, Vol. 39, No. 25, 8/25/1894, p. 4.

⁹ *Ironclad Age*, Vol. 40, No. 10-11, 5/18/1895, p. 2.

¹⁰ *Ironclad Age*, Vol. 40, No. 10-11, 5/18/1895, p. 2.

¹¹ *Ironclad Age*, Vol. 40, No. 10-11, 5/18/1895, p. 2.

¹² *Fifty Years of Freethought*, Vol. II, George E. Macdonald, The Truth Seeker Company, New York, 1931, p. 114.

Editorial Comments

The church is evidently losing strength with its members. When the remark is made by one of the faithful that the "preacher" said he "couldn't understand it but his church was spiritually dead, no life, no interest," it seems about time for some of these good and over-righteous women to consider the cause. But instead, the younger children are forced to attend Sunday school until they too, grow old enough to seek other places of amusement. When that time arrives, as they have had no "worldly" training, have been taught no distinction, and as limited means compels them to seek the cheaper places of recreation, the temptation is often too strong, and harm results. Religion is of no avail when the real trials and temptations come. When the moral training has been only through the religious channel, it is but a weak barrier. Fear is inculcated, the fear of offending an ever-present, all-seeing God; a being who inhabits a heaven, and is also upon earth, who is only waiting an opportunity to "lay out" the one who dares to even think beyond the limit. That may control some, according more to temperament than any other cause. But when once this that has been taught is proved false, then, with no sound moral teaching as a reserve, restraint is cast aside. Extremes are sought. Then the pious mother blames the "saloon" for throwing out blandishments, enticing allurements to her innocent son. That time has passed, if it ever was, when parents can expect their children to follow precept more than example. This observance of religious ceremony is a sham, and children soon discover it. The hypocrisy extends to the household. The deceit is in the air they breathe. The system is false. Its influence is waning, for the little defenders of the faith are met in every school by brighter minds whose teachings are opposite. That need cause no dissension. Let them mingle. Good will come of it. The thought that is new will prevail over the thought that has become a weary burden to the little mind. The hideousness of the bible God has no terror for the "little heathen" and they are as much missionaries as some of larger growth, who would prohibit this co-mingling of the little christian and the little freethinker.

- Lulie Monroe Power, *The Ironclad Age*, Vol. 37, No. 38, 11/26/1892.

The catholic church has always considered heresy the chiefest of crimes, and whenever and wherever it possessed magisterial power, has punished it as such. The third Council of Lateran (1179) decreed thus against heretics. We have space for only extracts: "We therefore subject to a curse, both themselves (heretics) and their defenders and harborers, and, under a curse, we prohibit all persons from admitting them into their houses, or receiving them upon their lands, or cherishing them, or exercising any trade with them... Let them not receive christian burial." Princes were obliged to take an oath to extirpate heretics to the utmost of their power. If they failed to execute this oath the vengeance of the church was visited upon them. A potentate who neglected to slaughter his peaceful subjects accused of this crime himself became the victim of papal malignity. At his coronation at Rome, emperor Frederick II was compelled by the pope to swear "We shall not suffer these wretches (heretics) to live." He condemned them to death in the flames. In 1208, Innocent III published a bull, declaring "we must not observe faith towards those who keep not faith towards God." Six of the general councils of Lateran commanded the extirpation of heresy, and decreed the punishment of death for the accursed crime. The boast of the church is that it *never changes*. Of course an infallible church *cannot change*. And history does not furnish one instance of the church abrogating its divine right to punish and extirpate heresy. Recent developments oblige us to believe that the same spirit of persecution still slumbers in the bosom of the catholic church right here in the United States, and in Indianapolis, the same spirit that actuated the awful atrocities of an Alva, a Simon De Montfort and Saint Dominic. We believe that the church wants nothing but the power to consign Ironclad heretics to the penitentiary, it having no cells or torture chambers of an inquisition here today.

- Lulie Monroe Power, *The Ironclad Age*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 3/24/1894, p. 4.

We Are Not Intimidated.

One feature of the Ironclad, as a fearless champion of freethought, is its opposition to that old foreign foe of all freedom and all thought, the church of Rome. Whenever and wherever it has exercised its supremacy, thought has been throttled. For a thousand years, during the Dark Ages, when its bloody grip was upon the throat of Europe, no thinker was allowed to live. Liberty lay chained in the inquisition. Kings and emperors were vassals of the vatican. The learned and brave, the good and noble, were burned alive. The midnight of mankind, the woe of the world, was when ecclesiastical Rome held sway. Read history. Five millions of human beings burned on its funeral piles because they were free in thought and belief. And we have regarded it our duty to expose and oppose this common enemy of the race, this Gorgon of the ages. But for heroic freethinkers, but for martyrs who defied the papal maledictions, light and liberty, science and civilizations, would have been obliterated ere this. We have been outspoken, and maybe, too daring, on our denunciations of this priestly power that is encroaching so rapidly on our republican institutions. Of course, we realize what our doom would have been had the catholic church the power today it possessed in the times of the Clements and the Gregories. Well, we don't know, but we are beginning to think, and are startled by our thoughts. We are not aware of having a personal enemy in the world. We are a woman, and none but miscreants war upon women. But this we do know, tender and loving and beautiful women have rotted in the dungeons of the catholic church, that church that burnt babes with their mothers, because of the religious beliefs of the mothers. Preparations that indicate fiendish premeditation had been made for an explosion that if successful would have sacrificed many lives, and would have been the total destruction of the Ironclad Age. We have simply stated the facts for readers to reflect upon. Meanwhile we shall not falter in our fearless hostility to superstition and priestcraft, both Roman catholic and protestant.

- Lulie Monroe Power, *The Ironclad Age*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 3/24/1894, p. 4.

Not more than one-fourth of the people in any city or community are regular church-goers and not more than half of that fourth believe in the priests and their dogmas. Yet church intolerance and proscription are so active and intense that the remaining three-fourths of the people are afraid of the church-going one-fourth! Men who despise priestcraft; hold the preachers and priests in contempt and never enter a church are so cowed before the supposed influence of the church that they dare not be seen with an infidel paper or book and would not advertise their business in a liberal paper on any terms. Nay more. These very skeptical cowards are the main stay and support of the church. Many such men are in business and their wives belonging to the church, are its best patrons. For business considerations these men think it prudent, not only to conceal their hatred and contempt for the church, but to contribute largely to its support annually. We know infidels who give hundreds of dollars to the churches every year that do not take a liberal paper or contribute one cent in any way to encourage or support their own convictions. The name of this class of well-to-do business infidels is legion. They are the true supporters of the tottering church - the clogs upon the wheels of liberal progress. In every official position, also do we find infidels as sound and unfaltering in their convictions as the veriest atheist. We do not believe it necessary for every infidel to parade his infidelity or even speak of it unless some manifest emergency requires him to refute priestly slander or fraud. But he should have sufficient manhood to speak his convictions and with-hold his support from the humbugs and frauds that are robbing the people in the name of God and pretending to have power to save souls. And they should claim their right to buy liberal literature and to read it at their homes and places of business - a right now that hundreds and thousands of "brave" infidels do not and dare not claim.

- Lulie Monroe Power, *The Ironclad Age*, Vol. 39, No. 22, 8/4/1894, p. 4.

Christianity may be watched down the great highway of time by the trail of chains with which it has shackled human limbs and by the fields it has fertilized with human blood, whilst its mile stones are the charred stakes where it has burned human beings to ashes in the name of God. What humane man or woman who is familiar with the cruel and bloody career of the so-called christian religion can do otherwise than hate and loathe its very name?

- Lulie Monroe Power, *The Ironclad Age*, Vol. 39, No. 22, 8/4/1894, p. 4.

A decorative rectangular border with rounded corners, featuring stylized floral motifs at the top and bottom corners.

No Picture Available

HATTIE A. RAYMER

HATTIE A. RAYMER

The following intriguing little description is the only mention I have ever found of Hattie A. Raymer. I have not been able to locate the *Crucible*.

The *Crucible*, "a red-hot Agnostic newspaper," published monthly at Seattle, Washington, at 25 cents per annum, with Hattie A. Raymer as editor, and a considerable list of well-known Rationalists as associate editors, has reached its fourth number and ventures to print the picture of its business manager Charles D. Raymer, who is also president of the Seattle Rationalist Society and proprietor of Raymer's Old Book Store. It is a readable paper of excellent appearance. In number 4 the editor is brought under criticism in a letter from Alexander Berkman for advocating Prohibition, and in another from J.B. Wilson for recommending compulsory education, but she replies with spirit.

- *Fifty Years of Freethought*, Vol. II, George E. Macdonald, The Truth Seeker Company, New York, 1931, p. 458.



MARILLA M. RICKER

MARILLA M. RICKER

March 18, 1840 - November 12, 1920

"Because man doesn't know is no reason why he should believe what is false."¹

Marilla Young was born March 18, 1840, in New Durham, New Hampshire, to an oddly matched couple. Her father, Johnathan B. Young, was a freethinker and woman suffragist, and a distant relative of Brigham Young. Her mother, Hannah D. Stevens, on the other hand, was a Free Will Baptist, and was very devout. The relationship between Marilla and her mother must have been chilly, to say the least, with Marilla calling her mother by her first name, Hannah, rather than "Mother" when speaking to her. Of the couples four children, Marilla was the only one with the temperament to reject her mother's authority and follow her father's ideology. Indeed, she was so determined, even at a very young age, to avoid attending church with the other three children and their mother, that she absolutely refused, and instead stayed at home with her father.

In the summer, while the others wasted their time pleading with imaginary beings in the sky, the father and daughter would spend the "Lord's Day" salting the cattle, looking after the fences, and performing other farm chores together. Marilla was encouraged by her father in living an athletic life, and she said of herself that as a child she could run faster, climb trees quicker, and make more noise than any other boy or girl in the neighborhood. She rode all the horses bare-back, loaded hay, dropped corn, beans, potato and pumpkin seed. Her father always said "a girl was a good as a boy and a little better."

When Marilla's mother wanted all the children to kneel and pray at night, Marilla sat bolt upright in her little chair, and looking her mother in the face with a determined look, said "I will not pray, Hannah." As a growing child when Marilla would refuse to pray or go to church, her mother would say to her, "Marilla you are exactly like your father," and she would reply, "Yes Hannah, but you gave me my father and I am entirely satisfied with him."

She was passionately fond of books and when only four years old she cut the large letters out of the newspapers and followed her father around the farm asking him what they were. She could read at five. Her books were her joy and delight and every evening she sat by the kitchen table and by the light of a whale oil lamp or tallow dip gathered the knowledge that later made her a leader in the world of thought.

She became a teacher at sixteen, while still attending school herself. At that time, it was common practice to have the children read from the bible each morning, but Marilla had her pupils read from different books. The school committee was upset by this, and came to see her. They told her she must have the children read from the bible. In typical Marilla style, the next morning she said to her pupils, "We will now read the startling and truthful account of Jonah whilst he was a sojourner in the sub-marine hotel." She came quite close to losing her school several times.² In 1861, she graduated from the Colby Academy in New London, and continued teaching until 1863.

While teaching, she met John Ricker, a local farmer and real estate investor who was quite wealthy. In May, 1863, they were married. They were as unlikely a couple theologically as Marilla's parents had been, for John Ricker was a Congregationalist, and Marilla was later to say of him, "My husband was a Congregationalist. Their creed is complex from a mathematical standpoint. They seem to think that three gods are one, and one god is three gods. I, having been taught that figures didn't lie, couldn't understand it until I thought of a boy who said to his teacher when she explained to him that figures didn't lie, 'You should see my sister's at home and then on the street. You will find that figures do lie.'"³ Mr. Ricker died in 1868, leaving Marilla a childless and wealthy widow. She was never to marry again.

¹ *I Am Not Afraid-Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

² "Marilla M. Ricker," Josephine K. Henry, *Blue Grass Blade*, 7/12/08.

³ "Mrs. Marilla M. Ricker on Ye Olden Thyme," Marilla Ricker, *The Blue Grass Blade*, 11/30/02.

In January of 1869, Marilla attended the first Woman's Rights Convention to be held in Washington, D.C. This was the famous convention at which the argument between factions supporting the idea that woman's rights should take a back seat to the rights of freed male slaves and those who said they would not support male rights apart from female rights reached a point that split the group in half. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and other Pioneers said that unless all citizens could vote, they would not support the Amendment pending in Congress, while Lucy Stone, Abby Kelley Foster and others felt women should step aside and support the suffrage of male black citizens. Marilla favored the Pioneers, and met and talked with Susan B. Anthony at this convention about the issue.

From the time of the death of her husband, Marilla expanded her work in politics and woman's rights activities. In 1870, she joined other women in New Hampshire in attempting to vote for electors, an attempt which failed. Marilla's speech of protest before the selectmen of Dover after being denied the vote was cited in woman suffrage literature for years because of the excellence of its arguments. In 1891, she attempted to vote for city officials in Dover, New Hampshire, failing once again. She reported in 1905 that she was among 45 women who voted in Dover, N.H.'s ward 2.⁴

A widow with wealth, Marilla was able to live quite independently, without a male ruler telling her what she could and could not do with her time and money. In 1872, she traveled to Europe, staying for two years and becoming fluent in speaking, reading and writing German. Returning home, she kept a home in New Hampshire at which she usually spent her summers, and spent her winters in Washington, D.C., when she wasn't traveling to other states.

She took up the study of law, influenced, no doubt, by her woman's rights interests, and worked at her studies from 1879 to 1882. On May 12, 1882, she was admitted to the bar of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia, after a thorough grilling by a panel of judges, who commented favorably on the extent of her knowledge. It was reported that she surpassed in legal knowledge the twenty-five young men who were examined with her. This same year President Arthur appointed her a notary public for Washington, D.C.

She was known as the prisoners friend, working without pay for the indigent in many cases. When she was unable to work for the poor because of other commitments, she would pay their legal fees herself to have them properly defended by a competent attorney. She frequently visited the jails to check on her clients, and secured reading and writing materials for them, as well as fighting for their pardon.

Marilla worked diligently to have practices overturned which she deemed unfair and inhumane. The one activity for which she felt most proud in ending was that of the imprisonment and fining of citizens for debts, known as the "poor convict's act," in the District of Columbia. It had been the practice of several judges and especially the judge of the police court, to sentence petty offenders to a short term in jail, and supplementing it with a fine. The pauper criminal could not pay the fine, of course, and was therefore held in jail for an indefinite length of time. Marilla succeeded in getting a judgment from the District of Columbia Supreme Court, declaring the fine illegal, and, after she had been appointed a commissioner in chancery in 1884, was instrumental in setting many a poor convict at liberty, and finally broke up the custom altogether.

She made a test case on a rule established by the district commissioners, under the old Sunday law closing barber-shops on Sundays, having a prominent black barber as a client, in which she pleaded that shaving was necessary work, and that her client had been employed to shave President Arthur.

⁴ *The Woman's Tribune*, 1/7/1905, p. 2.

Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the Sunday closing law was sustained both by the court below and the court above.⁵

In July of 1890, Marilla was accepted to the bar of New Hampshire, but her crowning achievement in her career as an attorney was when she was accepted to the bar of the United States Supreme Court on May 11, 1891, after which she ably argued cases before that august body. By 1896, she had also been accepted to the bar of the state of Utah.

In 1884, Marilla served as one of the electors for New Hampshire on the Equal Rights ticket, on which Belva Lockwood, another woman attorney, ran for president of the United States. She was to work with Mrs. Lockwood on several projects, including the formation of the National Legislative League in 1900, a group which included women protesting the handling of legislative action in the National American Woman's Rights Association [See Josephine Henry]. She wrote of the formation of this League, "I think we should organize the National Legislative League at once. In my opinion we need to labor with the lawmakers. The manner in which laws favorable to women disappear from the statutes in many states shows that they will all bear watching and many need it. I think that in legislative effort our hope of success lies. By work and watching we can have new laws passed in our favor and keep what we have. I will heartily cooperate with the League and will assist it financially according to my means, or in other words, will add the widow's might and 'mite.'"⁶

Aside from her brief affiliation with the Equal Rights Party, Marilla was a staunch and outspoken Republican, and worked unceasingly for the Republican party. The Republican party at that time was seen as the party of liberalism, in that it had been the Republican party which had been in power when the slaves were freed, and many women's rights members, being former abolitionists, felt that their best chance at securing suffrage was through this party. Elizabeth Cady Stanton had been seen as a traitor to many for her support of the Democratic party, saying that she would sanction any party that advocated women's rights, and would not continue to give her endorsement to the Republican party if they would not going to promote woman's enfranchisement. Old line Republicans such as Marilla never waived, however, but rather remained confident that the Republican party would be their ticket to equal rights.

In looking at Marilla's life, it would seem that the Republicans were quite willing to accept her physically and financially exhausting efforts on their behalf, but were nonetheless unwilling to accept that the woman who campaigned so successfully for their male candidates could herself be an effective candidate for office, or that women in general should be seen as equal citizens with the male population.

She traveled to California in 1887 stumping for Republican candidates, and worked diligently in Iowa in 1892 for her party, arguing for the Republican view of the tariff question. In Iowa, as in other locations, she formed a Women's Republican Club to carry on the work of promoting Republican ideologies once she had left the state. Marilla possessed great wit, which shown through in her writings and speeches, and did not hesitate to use religion to the advantage of the Republican party. In Iowa, she wrote that a discussion of the tariff question was fine, for the first disciple called to follow Christ was a custom-house officer. She said she thought Matthew must have been a Republican, not only because he was a good man, but because she had never known a Democrat to resign his office to become a preacher.⁷

⁵ *A Woman of the Century, 1470 Biographical Sketches Accompanied by Portraits of Leading American Women in All Walks of Life*, edited by Frances E. Willard and Mary A. Livermore, Charles Wells Moulton Publisher, 1893, republished by Gale Research Company, Book Tower, Detroit, 1967.

⁶ *Champion of Women, The Life of Lillie Devereux Blake*, Katherine Devereux Blake and Margaret Louise Wallace, Fleming H. Revell Company, London and Edinburgh, 1943, p. 208.

⁷ *The Woman's Tribune*, Vol. IX, No. 29, 11/12/1892, p. 1.

At the 1894 Woman's Rights Convention, her outspoken Republicanism led *The Woman's Tribune*, in reporting the events of the meeting, to make a disclaimer for the organization, saying that Marilla was not a delegate, but rather a guest, and that her comments should not be seen as reflecting partisanship by the association itself.⁸

Throughout 1896, she traveled in New Hampshire stumping for Republican candidates, speaking along with Senator Gallinger in Concord on October 8 of that year. She spoke in Boston and in other parts of the northeast to groups of women about the rules of banking and how it effected them, educating them in the handling of their money.

In 1897, a position in government became open for which Marilla seemed eminently qualified: that of foreign minister to Colombia. Letters of recommendation were written by such luminaries as Robert Ingersoll and the Hon. Henry Blair, urging her appointment. Many of the woman's rights groups of the country wrote official letters to President McKinley urging her appointment, stating that she had shown her dedication to the Republican party, and proven that she possessed the intelligence and legal knowledge to properly perform the duties of a foreign minister. All the pleas, although much publicized, were ignored by the president, and Marilla was not appointed to that or to any other government position. Nevertheless, she continued working for the Republican party, undeterred by the lack of appreciation she received from them.

1901 found Marilla travelling by train to California, and describing her trip to the papers. Although the journey only took four days, she had time enough to survey briefly the cities through which she passed, and described New Orleans, El Paso and other towns to her readers.

Marilla was not only a "woman's rights woman" and a Republican party worker, but an extremely active Freethinker. Throughout the years she had written for Freethought newspapers such as *The Truth Seeker*,⁹ *The Philistine*, and *The Blue Grass Blade*, and spoken before Freethought groups, writing several books on the subject, including *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?* and *I Don't Know, Do You?* Among the topics on which she spoke was "Women's Position under Common and Canon Law."¹⁰ A champion of Thomas Paine and Robert Ingersoll, she frequently spoke and wrote about the accomplishments of both men, and was a regular speaker at activities commemorating their achievements.

An invited speaker at a Woman's Christian Temperance Union meeting in California in 1902, called to eulogize the recently deceased Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Marilla was astounded that the preceeding speakers made Mrs. Stanton out to be a devout Christian. "You really would have thought," she wrote, "that 'our Elizabeth' had been a teacher in a Methodist Sabbath School!" She went on to report "I was the last person called upon to speak and I changed the aspect of the meeting somewhat. I read Elizabeth's views on the bible and something of her work in the Freethought line. I was the only person present who had ever seen her and I spoke 'whereof I knew.'" The group then tried to argue about religion with Marilla, which was always a big mistake, and Marilla cut them down to size quickly and efficiently, citing the changes that had occurred in society, and relating them to changes that should occur in the creeds of religionists. One woman

⁸ *The Woman's Tribune*, 2/19/1894.

⁹ *Fifty Years of Freethought*, Vol. II, George E. Macdonald, The Truth Seeker Company, New York, 1931, p. 228.

¹⁰ *The Woman's Tribune*, 6/2/1900, p. 42.

asked Marilla, "Did you ever have a creed?" to which she responded, "No, except to pay one hundred cents on a dollar, but I know all about creeds," and proceeded to illuminate them on her upbringing by her Free Will Baptist mother and her life with a Congregationalist husband. It is doubtful that the group ever invited Marilla to speak before them again.¹¹

In 1903, she responded to claims by Samuel Scovell, Jr., grandson of Henry Ward Beecher, that his grandfather had prayed and talked with Abraham Lincoln in 1862 in Brooklyn, New York, concerning the war. The article, printed originally in the *Sunday School Times*, March 22, was widely copied in other papers. Marilla pointed out that even the Rev. Dr. J.M. Buckley, of the *Christian Advocate*, took issue with the claim, proving in an editorial that Lincoln never left Washington for New York in 1862, using the testimony of those close to Lincoln. Marilla wrote that even Henry Ward Beecher himself, although devout, had enough sense that when asked to pray for rain, he observed the sky and said the wind was in the wrong direction for rain. Although the story was disproven, Marilla intelligently foresaw that "the 'pious' frauds will still continue to tell the story of Lincoln and Beecher wrestling in prayer. The most of the pious people evidently think that a lie well 'stuck to' is better than the truth told waveringly."¹² She referred to this incident again in her 1916 publication of *I Don't Know, Do You?*, in which she stated, "The churches claim all the distinguished people, especially after they are dead and hence can not deny their claims. They have many times claimed that Abraham Lincoln was a churchman. The Honorable H.C. Deming, of Connecticut, an old friend of Lincoln, said it is false. Lincoln belonged to no church, and at one time said, 'I have never united myself to any church, because I have found difficulty in giving my assent without mental reservation to the long, complicated statements of Christian doctrine, which characterize their articles of belief, and confessions of faith.' But still they claim him."¹³

Marilla called a convention of the New Hampshire Secular Union to meet in Dover, New Hampshire in August of 1906, to celebrate Robert Ingersoll's birthday anniversary. Anson G. Osgood, president of the New Hampshire Secular Union, Lemuel K. Washburn, formerly of the *Boston Investigator* and now working for the *Truth Seeker*, Carl Burell, a noted botanist, Frank W. Coburn of New Durham, and Marilla were the speakers at the celebration.¹⁴

In 1906, Susan B. Anthony died, and Marilla wrote of her that "she was born a Quaker and was always a Freethinker." Although her body lay in state at the Central Presbyterian church in Rochester, New York, Marilla wrote that "she was never cumbered with creeds." She said that, along with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Matilda Joslyn Gage, the three women "could see no Providence fighting for equal suffrage; no father in Heaven battling for woman's equality. They saw injustice triumph, and wrong sustained by the votes of men and they did not hear the voice of God setting aside the verdict. They tried to do what Providence neglected to do: tried to bring more justice, more life, more kindness into the world. They were not assisted by priest or parsons. The churches fought them 'tooth and claw,' as they always have all reforms and reformers."¹⁵

¹¹ *The Blue Grass Blade*, 11/30/1902.

¹² *The Blue Grass Blade*, Vol. XII, No. 3, 3/8/1903.

¹³ *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916, p. 45.

¹⁴ *Fifty Years of Freethought*, Vol. II, George E. Macdonald, The Truth Seeker Company, New York, 1931, p. 262.

¹⁵ *The Blue Grass Blade*, 4/22/1906.

In 1906 and afterwards, she paid her taxes under protest, but not only, as former women had done, because of her position as a woman to "taxation without representation," but also to protest her tax money being used to finance religious institutions.¹⁶

Marilla not only had to protect the good names of her Freethought friends in the woman's rights movement at the time of their deaths, but responded indignantly when untrue claims were made against them at any time. In 1910, she wrote protesting the claims of Emma Goldman that the woman's rights pioneers were religionists, citing Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Matilda Joslyn Gage, Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony, Paulina Wright Davis, and Ernestine L. Rose as examples of pioneers who were Freethinkers, and listing Josephine K. Henry and Lydia Kingsmill Commander as more recent outspoken Freethought woman's rights advocates. She goes on to blast Emma for saying that the vote will not help women achieve equality, saying that it already has, as far as it has been allowed by individual states, and listing examples in which women had gained protection of self and property, and gained admission to professions in those states in which they were allowed to vote on such measures. Agreeing that the modern woman's rights movement had been taken over by religionists, Marilla offered the following resolution for the next national woman suffrage meeting: *Resolved*, That a steeple is no more to be exempted from taxation than a smoke stack.¹⁷

In 1910, at the age of 70, Marilla once more ran for a political office, this time as governor for the state of New Hampshire. In her behalf one of the Concord papers related that Mrs. Ricker was a publicist, litterateur, platform orator, and thoroughly equipped for public office. The *Truth Seeker* called her "the intellectual equal of any man ever elected to the office of governor of New Hampshire." In opposition to the opinion of former United States Senator William E. Chandler, the New Hampshire attorney-general ruled that being a female, and hence not a qualified voter, Mrs. Ricker could not lawfully be named on the ballot.¹⁸

In November of 1920, Marilla Ricker died, one of the few early Pioneers of the women's rights movement to finally see her dream of enfranchisement come true.

Quotes

The only thing that ever came back from the grave that we know of was a lie.

- Marilla Ricker, *The Philistine*, Vol. XXV, c. 1901; *The New Quotable Woman*, edited by Elaine Partnow, Meridian, Penguin Books Ltd., Middlesex, England, 1993, p. 210.

We hear much about woman's influence, but experience has taught me that *influence* isn't in it with *affluence*. There is no sex about it.

- *The Woman's Tribune*, 2/14/1903.

¹⁶ *Fifty Years of Freethought*, George E. Macdonald, Vol. II, The Truth Seeker Company, 1931, p. 351-2.

¹⁷ *The Truth Seeker*, 2/19/1910, p. 114.

¹⁸ *Fifty Years of Freethought*, George E. Macdonald, Vol. II, The Truth Seeker Company, 1931, p. 351-2.

"Mrs. M.M. Ricker, Pioneer in Fight For Suffrage, Dies," *New York Tribune*, 11/13/1920.

I think I can say without fear of successful contradiction, that no man in these enlightened days can be a great man or a great leader who believes in myth and miracle. He is either a hypocrite or he has a "powerfully" weak spot in his head.

- *The Blue Grass Blade*, 1/5/08.

From 'creed' comes 'credulous' and 'credulity.' And they [religious organizations] have filled the world with their kind. In the United States alone, there are about one hundred forty types. Each is a system of credulity pitted against a hundred and thirty-nine others. They all rest on authority. They all denounce investigation - unless it has for its end the support of their authority.

Hence, with the exception of two or three denominations, to become a professed Christian means to accept credulously and without question a system of belief about Nature and man and the world which you would deny in toto if you reasoned as you do about other things, and which you do practically deny by re-explaining and refining it into anything but what is stated. Down deep in your heart you do not, and never did, believe it in the same honest way in which you form your other opinions."

- *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916, p. 16.

Why do you talk about the infallibility, the inerrancy, or even the moral unity of a volume written by many hands at widely different times? Are such people so ignorant that they have not read the Book they are swearing by? Are they moral idiots and do not know the plainest right and wrong? Are they scoundrels and have some deceitful reason for urging such a book as an authority? Or are they the dupes of their own credulity, clinging without thought to the beliefs in which they have been reared? They are evidently not using common-sense in an honest way.

- *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916, p. 18.

No institution in modern civilization is so tyrannical and so unjust to women as is the Christian church. The history of the Church does not contain a single suggestion for the equality of woman with man, and still the Church claims that woman owes her advancement to the Bible. She owes it much more to the dictionary.

History, both ancient and modern, tells us that the condition of women is most degraded in those countries where Church and State are in closest affiliation (such as, Spain, Italy, Russia and Ireland), and most advanced in nations where the power of ecclesiasticism is markedly on the wane. It has been proved that, whatever progress woman has made in any department of effort, she has accomplished independent of, and in opposition to, the so-called inspired and infallible Word of God; and that the Bible has been of more injury to her than has any other book ever written in the history of the world.

- *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916, p. 45-46.

Teach children that no amount of so-called religion will compensate for rheumatism; that Christianity has nothing to do with morality; that "vicarious atonement" is a fraud, and a lie; that to be born well and strong is the highest birth; that to be honest and pay one's debts spells peace of mind; that the Bible is no more inspired than the dictionary; that *sin* is a transgression of the laws of life, and that the blood of all the bulls and goats and lambs of ancient times, and the blood of Christ or any other man, never had, and never can have, the least effect in making a life what it would have been had it obeyed the laws of life. If you have marred your life, you must bear the consequences. If you have made a mistake, be more careful in the future. Let the thought that the past is irretrievable make you more careful in the present and for the future.

And, above all, teach children that prayer is idiotic. There may be one God or twenty. I do not know or care. I am not afraid, and no priest or parson can make me believe that my title to a future life, if there be one, is defective. And the great and good man Thomas Paine, who wrote the *Age of Reason*, and

said, "The world is my country, and to do good my religion," is a good enough god for me.
 - *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916, p. 53-54.

Nothing grows slower than truth, and nothing faster than superstition. Falsehood was never known to commit suicide.
 - *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916, p. 77.

The first thing for people to do is to get rid of the silly notion that there is anything holy in the name of Jesus any more than in the name of Hercules, Bacchus or Adonis. All the gods of the past are myths to the present. Jesus stands in the way of the world's advancement. The path of civilization is over his grave. The mind has been fettered by worship of this myth. We want to get rid of the Christian superstition.
 - *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916, p. 79.

Any preacher who believes in the geology of Moses, the astronomy of Joshua, and the mathematics of the Trinity, must do an immense amount of 'side-stepping'.
 - *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916, p. 88.

We are living in the Twentieth Century of what is called the Christian Era, and we have not outgrown the superstitions of the First Century.
 - *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916, p. 91.

The world has outgrown Moses and Jesus. It does not take commands from either. This age believes in work, not worship; in deeds, not prayers; in men, not monks; in liberty, not in pious obedience; in human rights, not in submission; in knowledge, not in revelation.
 - *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916, p. 94.

For hundreds of years man was bound by a religious faith, and the priest was his cruel master. He dared not doubt; he dared not rebel; he dared not dream of freedom; but there came a time when religious tyranny could no longer be borne. Then Mankind cried out to the Church: Give back man's brain to man; restore to him the mind you have robbed him of; take from his head and heart the paralyzing fear that makes him a coward and a slave, and leave to him the liberty with which Nature dowered him, that his mind may discover and preserve those mighty thoughts which make man brave, honest, free and happy.
 - *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916, p. 94.

No person under eighteen years of age should be allowed to join a church or consent to a statement of faith. Mental purity should be guarded and protected as well as physical purity.
 - *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916, p. 95.

I believe that this world is hard and dark and cruel enough without borrowing suffering from another world to make darker and harder the road of life and add torture to the nights of pain and misery.
 - *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916, p. 96.

The greatest danger which confronts our nation today is not political but religious, and the preservation of our free institutions does not depend upon our army and navy, but upon the emancipation of the human mind from ecclesiastical slavery. As Thomas Paine well said, "Spiritual freedom is the root of political liberty." You can not have free schools, free speech and a free press where the mind is not free.
 - *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916, p. 98.

A subject that needs to be investigated quite as much as, if not more than, the high cost of living is the high cost of worship. There may be some justice in the criticism of the price of meats. We must remember, however, that we do get something for our money when we buy meat, but let us not forget that we get absolutely nothing for the money spent for worship. Money given to the Church is lost to the world. It is not used to improve homes; to help the poor and needy; to alleviate suffering; to bring hope to the sick or to give a few comforts to old age. It goes into the pocket of ecclesiastical greed.

- *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916, p. 99.

In olden times it was customary for the Church to say, God's light lights the world. Not so today. God's light has gone out. It is man's light that lights the world and the Church too. Our enlightenment is human, not divine. No altar of religion burns with the fire of truth. Science carries the torch of knowledge: liberty is the way and truth is the goal.

- *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916, p. 102.

It is time for the pulpit to stop repeating the old superstitions about God and about what he has done for man. He has never done any more for man than he is doing today; never spoken to man any more than he is speaking today; never revealed himself to anybody any more than he stands revealed to you and me and to every human being everywhere.

- *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916, p. 103.

We are called "infidels" and denounced as "unbelievers" because we will not march in the ranks of hypocrisy, and dance to the music of Orthodoxy. We believe no statement which our reason can not approve; we accept no doctrine which is contrary to commonsense; we have confidence in human nature; we believe in truth, justice and love; we accept life as a blessing, and try to make it so; we believe in taking care of ourselves, in helping others and in being just and kind to all, and we say to the Christian Church, "If this be Infidelity, make the most of it."

- *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916, p. 116-117.

It is time for the reign of commonsense to begin on earth; time for men to elevate morality above religion; and time for us to say, "Millions for the world, not a cent for the Church." The battle between Freedom and Christianity has begun, and I believe that when it ends Christianity will be buried beneath the ruins of its own dogmas, there to remain forever. It possesses no spirit that can rise again from its ashes and mount on wings of flame to a higher life. When superstition dies, it dies to the root.

- *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916, p. 132.

A male trinity is repulsive: Father, Mother and Child is the sacred triad. The Christian trinity is a monster.

- *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916, p. 91-106.

On the idea that Atheists feel obligated to have higher morals than their neighbors:

The most that any man can do who goes through this earthly existence is to use his fellow-mortals right and square; to give them an honest day's work when he works for them and an honest day's pay when he hires them; to say nothing to hurt them and everything he can to assist them; to help them out of trouble and not get them into trouble. If one does this, and does no more than this he has done what beats every religion on earth.

- *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916, p. 105.

Let us live without fear, without superstition, without religion.

There is nothing above, beneath or around you that cares whether you are a Christian or an unbeliever. The real reason why a priest hates an unbeliever is that he can not get a dollar out of him. He damns those who know better than to swallow his say-sos. But it still remains a fact that an infidel can raise as many bushels of potatoes to the acre as can the Roman Catholic. The sun will not wrong an honest man. The stars will not punish a single human being for telling the truth. The sky will not persecute a person who gives his thoughts, his talents, his time, to finding ways to help mankind.

- *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916.

While men believe in God they will continue to gaze idly into the skies; to offer their devotions to a phantom instead of to suffering flesh and blood; to prepare for another world when all their energies are needed in the present one.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

Religious reverence is mental suicide.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

The man who has faith should send at once for the priest and let him do his worst. He is of no use to the world. He is only a religious corpse.... He is dead, but he doesn't know it.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

Not a cent given to the priest is used by him for man's happiness or the world's betterment.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

Why not tell the truth about churches? They are the most useless buildings on the globe.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

We are told that faith is the door to another and better world. Where is that world? Mankind has asked that question for thousands of years, and is asking it today. The poor are asking it. The sorrowing are asking it. The discouraged are asking it. Everybody is asking it, and nobody can answer it.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

It strikes me that believing religious dogmas is a mighty poor way to get the world out of its troubles. I have always said that doing a good deed helped mankind more than believing in a God and in a sweet nowhere.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

In the fairest land on this globe, the land made free by infidels and not by Christians, there is a tremendous struggle going on to overthrow the nation's liberty, to kill the American eagle, and to pull down the grandest flag under which men have marched to victory. The power plotting against our country's liberty and our country's life is the power that made it dark in Europe for a thousand years, the power enthroned upon ignorance and supported by superstition. The power that strangled education and killed every man who had the courage to think for himself. This power has taken up the sword of politics, and it will perish by the sword of politics.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

Get men to think for themselves and they will free themselves from poverty, from slavery, from theological foolishness.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

Men might come and men might go but as long as the priest ruled their destinies, life bore no fruit. It was freedom that changed the heart of the man and the face of the world; the freedom to think, to write, to speak, and the freedom to damn the Church which had damned man.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

The priest with his crucifix stood in the highway of progress and cursed the march of man.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

The highest objects of our human life I hold to be the search after truth, the defence of the right, and, the dearest of them all, the possession of liberty.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

Faith is a field in which man is always planting, but never reaping. It yields no crop. There is no harvest in the field of faith, nothing but weeds and dust and stubble. Man goes forth with his sickle, but comes back with no grain. The sheaves he gathers are straw. The man who lays down all the powers of his brain on the steps of the Church and says, "I believe," will get up robbed of what he possesses, robbed of his mental independence and robbed of his manhood.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

Look back and see what faith did for man. It made him a cringing, crawling creature, who trembled at the words of a priest. It made him a coward, a sneak and an ignoramus.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

Human progress has been wrought by men and women whom the Roman Catholic Church condemned, by men and women whom no church would fellowship, by men and women so grand and so true that there was no church on our earth large enough to hold them, by men and women who must save man if they denied the God who damned him.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

There was no religious faith put into our national Constitution, and no such faith should be allowed in our Government.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

There can be no progress where there is no freedom, and there can be no freedom where there is a throne protected by religious faith.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

It is an indisputable fact that wherever the missionaries carried the gospel they also carried disease and crime, or it followed closely in their wake.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

You can not defend the Christian religion today without defending a lie. It is not true that the Bible is the Word of God.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

Faith is the smallest measure of man. A man can believe who can not do much of anything else. The person who stands up today in a church and says, "I believe," comes dangerously near being an idiot. You don't have to believe in the sun and the myriad stars, in the earth with its grass and trees and beautiful

flowers; in man, woman and child; in anything that exists. You have to believe only in what does not exist; in what no one knows anything about; in what can not be demonstrated.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

If you must believe in anything, believe in yourselves, in your senses and in your minds. To accept a religious creed is to accept another's mind in place of your own, and generally contrary to your own.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

When religious belief comes in brains go out. There is nothing religion hates more than brains. Brains ask questions. Brains and religion mix like oil and water.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

When a person tells me that he believes the Christian dogma of the Trinity, *I* believe *him* an idiot. I have read numerous religious creeds, but I have never read one that had any sense in it.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

Creeds are not guide-boards; they are tombstones. On every creed can be read these words: "Here lies" - and such lies!

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

Because man doesn't know is no reason why he should believe what is false.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

We shall never have a race of men and women who love the truth, and who tell the truth on this earth, until every vestige of a miracle is swept from the pages of our literature.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

Man has asked for *truth* and the Church has given him *miracles*. He has asked for *knowledge*, and the Church has given him *theology*. He has asked for *facts*, and the Church has given him the *Bible*. This foolishness should stop. The Church has nothing to give man that has not been in cold storage for two thousand years.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

Not a religion in the world stands upon historical facts. They all stand upon miracles and falsehoods.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

We do not want pious dealings between man and God, but honest dealings between man and man.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

A religious person is a dangerous person. ... He carries with him many foolish and harmful superstitions, and he is possessed with the notion that it is his duty to give these superstitions to others.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

Nothing is so worthless as superstition.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

Religion has always been the enemy of science, of investigation and thought.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

Religion has never made man free. It has never made man moral, temperate, industrious and honest.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

To those who believe in the uniformity of Nature, religion is impossible. Can we affect the nature and qualities of substance by prayer? Can we hasten or delay the tides by worship? Can we change winds by sacrifice? Can we cure disease by supplication? Are not the facts in the mental world just as stubborn, just as necessarily produced, as the facts in the material world? Is not what we call mind just as natural as what we call body? Has man obtained any help from Heaven?

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

I am a free-thought missionary, and I am doing my "level best" to drive superstition, alias Christianity, from the minds of mankind.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

I know of no good reason why the name of Jesus should be so much in the world's mouth. If we were never to hear it spoken again, the rain would still fall, the flower would bloom and breathe its sweet message to the loving hearts of men, the sun's warm hand would be laid in blessing on the earth, and all the god there is in Nature and all the bad would be good and bad to those who live.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

No one can find a spot on this great earth where one single hour of the life of Jesus was passed. What has been written about him is merely the fiction of a pious dream. In him has been incarnated all the love and all the hate of religion.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

Ignorance of science and ignorance of history are the two great bulwarks of religious error.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

There is no idea so pernicious in its results as the doctrine of individual immortality. It has formed a leverage for the enslavement of mankind. It has filled the world with gloom and made of man a crawling coward. It has given chains and whips of nettles into the hands of priests and parsons since time began. And they have used their weapons for the suppression, repression and degradation of humanity.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

...so long as man is taught that he has an immortal soul that can never die, he will fear the future and speculate on his destiny in another world.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

To become a professed Christian means to accept without question a system of belief about nature and man and the world which you would deny if you reasoned as you do elsewhere.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y.

**Pioneer Suffragists Were Freethinkers -
There Are No Pious Predecessors to Be Found
Along the Line of Woman's Progress.**

by MARILLA M. RICKER,
Suffrage Candidate for Governor of New Hampshire.

I saw in the New York *Sun* that Emma Goldman asserted that the vote would not help women; that the suffragists were fetich [*sic*] worshippers like their conservative predecessors, who were martyrs to the church. I take issue with Emma. I knew all their predecessors - there was not a church woman among them. The founders and leaders of the Equal Suffrage movement had all outgrown the churches. Everyone knows that Elizabeth Cady Stanton was a pronounced Freethinker and her speeches and lectures which are still extant are witnesses to that effect. Matilda Joslyn Gage's book, "Woman, Church, and State," is a rabid Freethought work from start to finish, and one of the best books ever written. I advise Emma to read it, and all others who have not done so. It can be found at 62 Vesey street, office of THE TRUTH SEEKER, New York city, New York. Lucretia Mott, that beautiful Friend, or Quaker, as they are sometimes called, was a Freethinker and a free speaker - no church ever controlled her. Susan B. Anthony, brought up among the Friends or Quakers, was also a Freethinker, and spoke as she thought. She had her own views concerning all churches and hit them straight from the shoulder, both off and on the platform. Paulina Wright Davis was an Agnostic, and her voice gave no uncertain sound in that direction. Ernestine L. Rose was also an Agnostic and worked for Freethought. I am something of a predecessor myself, and have for more than fifty years worked for equal suffrage and Freethought - not even my enemies ever twitted me of being a martyr to, or even affiliating with a church. Emma, you cannot find a "pious" predecessor anywhere along the line from Hell Gate to Yuba Dam!

Among the younger suffrage women comes our great, good and brilliant Josephine K. Henry, with Freethought speeches "galore" to her credit. Her "Woman and Christianity" will live in history, so will many other articles from her versatile pen. Lydia Kingsmill Commander, that militant suffragist and militant Agnostic, is to the front in every good work. Some of the latter-day suffrage women are churchy and all the sessions of their conventions are opened with prayer, and an outsider might think that they had degenerated into "prayer meetings," but not so - the conventions are educators and the "girls" are doing excellent work; and when they stop to think about it they must *know* that no prayer was ever answered. Consequently, no harm is done. I am inclined to think it a politic thing to invite the parsons of the different churches to "lead in prayer"; they never lead in anything else, and it brings them to the convention where they may absorb some knowledge. There seems to be great depression in matters ecclesiastical these days, even in puritanical New England. The Andover Theological Seminary was "up against it." When it was dismantled it was found that it had an endowment of \$850,000 in productive funds, with fine buildings and equipments. The annual income was \$350,000. There was a library of fifty-six thousand books. The school consisted of seven instructors and twelve students. I heard it was to be transferred to Cambridge and become a part of Harvard University. With all the money it seemed more of a liability than an asset! And it plainly shows that the young men of the present day are not anxious to wear the "dog collar of Christianity." Let the "girls" pray - no one asserts that they spell it with an "e."

I fail to see why Emma should fight Mrs. Belmont or Mrs. Mackay because they are rich; they seem to be doing good work with their money. Emma, you must know that we all want to be rich. People do not wish to be poor, and why should they? The penalty for being poor is - hard labor for life. I also saw in the New York *Sun* that Mrs. Harper and Mrs. Belmont were making it lively for the Rev. Charles H. Parkhurst, who twenty years ago visited the establishment of Hattie Adams in New York city and played "leap frog" with her girls and then reported them to the police. If a man in any other walk of life had done so scandalous a deed, he would have been ostracized. It is not worth while to waste ammunition on an apology for a man like him. I am reminded of a story concerning a Mohammedan who told a friend of mine that he

knew most women went to hell because Mohammed visited that Presbyterian winter resort and found it full of them. That brilliant writer, Grier Kidder, said: "Until lately no woman could claim her rights and man's respect; find out what belongs to her without losing what he owes her. She could own nothing. Her fate was robbery, piety, patience, submission and motherhood. Her husband stole everything she had but her children and her God; everything, in short, worth stealing." I am aware that the Christian Bible teaches that woman is a "side issue," but I think she is a prime factor.

I saw that Margaret Deland, who has been before the public for many years, and whose *Old Chester* tales are to be made into a comedy, came out with that "classical phrase": "It is not expedient for women to vote." So versatile a writer as Margaret ought to be able to give a better reason. "Inexpedient" has been thrown at us for lo, these many years. From New Hampshire's legislative halls we heard it, so I feel competent to inform Margaret what "inexpedient" means. The dictionary says: Inexpedient, not expedient - not suited to the purpose, or the circumstances, not judicious, improper in many respects. Also, what is inexpedient at one time may be expedient at another." Consequently, persons of sound judgment are alone qualified to discriminate between inexpedient and expedient. No one but an absolute ruler can say this is inexpedient and give no reason, no valid reason, therefor. What is an absolute rule? The dictionary says: "One unrestrained by law or constitution, or a person who exercises unlawful authority, or lawful authority in an unlawful manner, or one who by taxation or injustice imposes burdens and hardships." There you have it in a nutshell. The women are taxed without representation, are put into prison and hanged under the laws and have no voice in making them. "Equal rights to all and special privileges to none" is the principle which must be at the foundation of a just system of government. Whether suffrage be a right or a privilege, it belongs to women equally with men.

I saw in the *New York Times* not long since that the pope in receiving a delegation of Catholic women made a speech opposing equal suffrage. He was quoted as saying: "Woman can never be man's equal and cannot therefore enjoy equal rights. Few women would ever desire to legislate, and those who did would only be classed as eccentrics."

I want to say to the pope that if it were true that but few women wish to vote, it would be no reason why those who do should be denied. If a right exists, and only one in a million desires to exercise it, no government should deny its enjoyment to that one.

I saw what Federal Judge Peter S. Grosscup told the women of the Ossili [*sic*] Club of Chicago that women could not be theologians because they had not the power of analysis. The dictionary says that analysis is the tracing of things to their source and the resolving of knowledge into its original principles. It must take an immense amount of analysis and synthesis to understand and talk intelligently of the geology of Moses, the astronomy of Joshua, and the mathematics of the Trinity. The judge also said that women could not be lawyers, because they are devoid of the reasoning faculty, and that the only woman lawyer he ever knew who was successful commenced her career by throwing a pitcher of water at a judge. I presume he had in mind Kate Kane, a bright young Irishwoman whom I knew twenty-five years ago. I cheerfully admit that some judges need that kind of discipline and Kate was the girl to do it.

Judge Grosscup reminds me of another modern Solomon on the bench, and the story runs in this wise:

The case was that of the wife of a fisherman and coastwise sailor, who was deserted by her husband shortly before the birth of their child. The woman complained to the authorities, and the police were ordered to keep a lookout for the husband. They "run him in" after a few months, and he was taken before the court and confronted with his wife, who carried the baby in her arms. The facts in the case were undeniable; the defendant did not attempt to deny them. It seemed as if nothing remained for the judge but to assess the amount of money the wife should have. He paused and reflected solemnly for some time. Then he asked the woman, "What was your occupation before you married this man?" "I was a servant girl," she replied. "And what did you earn in those days?" "Ten dollars a month." "How have you supported yourself since your husband deserted you?" "Since the birth of my child, I have taken a situation as a wet nurse."

"And what are your wages now?" "Thirty dollars a month." "Ah, so! Well, it seems to me the merits of this case are very plain. In becoming the husband of this young woman the prisoner has trebled her capacity for earning a livelihood. He has plainly conferred a great benefit upon her, for which it is only fitting that he should be compensated. I therefore rule that she shall pay him \$10 every month by way of honorarium. This still leaves her twice as well off as she was before marriage! Next case."

I saw in the *Examiner* that Anne Morgan, daughter of J. Pierpont Morgan, made a speech to some navy yard workmen in whose behalf she had planned a restaurant. Among other matters which she discussed she said, "Many of us women do not need the ballot to make us loyal and competent citizens of the United States." Anne evidently had not heard that conundrum, "When is a citizen not a citizen?" Answer - "When she is a woman." Anne is young and her father being prosperous, she has not been obliged to go out and hustle for her living, consequently, she has no idea how much power the ballot would give working women. For instance, I have a bright girl friend in my state who is a bank clerk. She wants to be appointed notary public. If she could be she could add several dollars per month to her small salary, but the attorney-general of the state has declared that the law doesn't allow a woman-"citizen" to be a notary public. Anne, how long do you suppose that law would obtain if the women of New Hampshire had the ballot? How long would the whiskey dealers rob the drinking men of the pittance they earn and send them home to their families with empty pockets, if the women had the ballot?

I am aware that disfranchisement is not the only cause of the distress of working women, nor will giving them the ballot immediately set all things right, but it will be a great help in that direction. The ballot does not make men happy, respectable, rich, nor noble; but they guard it for themselves with sleepless jealousy. Why? Because they know it is the golden gate to every opportunity, and precisely the kind of advantage it gives to one sex it would give to the other. It would arm women with the most powerful weapon known to political society. It would maintain the natural balance of the sexes in human affairs and secure to each fair play within its sphere.

...[missing] herited - unless it is money. We frown upon the entrance of a new truth as we discourage the presumption of a precocious child. The taste for truth is acquired." We should all cultivate it. Woman suffrage is truth, and thousands of women who have been assisted by equal suffrage advocates do not seem to realize it, but I, being conversant with ancient history, remember how few avenues of labor were open to women sixty years ago. And to the early advocates of equal suffrage, the predecessors, we owe everything in the way of starting the ball in motion for reform in that direction. To-day women have full suffrage in Wyoming, Colorado, Utah and Idaho; municipal woman suffrage in Kansas; tax suffrage in Montana, Louisiana, Iowa, Michigan and throughout all the towns and villages of New York state, and school suffrage in Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Oregon, Massachusetts, New York, Vermont, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, Montana, Arizona, Mississippi, New Jersey, Indiana, Illinois, Connecticut, Washington, Ohio, Delaware and Wisconsin. So when Emma Goldman asserts that the vote will *not* help women, I assert that it *has* helped women. And when she asks, "Do the women exercise any greater moral force in the states where full suffrage obtains?" I cite her and all concerned to the *facts* of the case.

Laws for protection of women. - In states where women vote, the wife's earnings and personal property, not received from her husband, are in her sole control. Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Idaho.

Spouses' interest equal in each other's real estate. - Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Idaho.

Equal pay for equal work, regardless of sex. - Wyoming, Utah (by custom); in Colorado and Idaho.

Professions and all public offices open to women. - Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Idaho.

Jury service open to women. - Utah, Idaho. (No prohibition in Wyoming and Colorado, and women there act as jurors.)

Wife and minor children entitled to homestead and to a certain allowance out of husband's estate, which has priority over ordinary debts. - Wyoming, Colorado, Utah and Idaho.

Women privileged to make a will at eighteen. - Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Idaho.

I remember distinctly one of the resolutions written by that great predecessor, Matilda Joslyn Gage at one of our conventions:

"Resolved, That we seek the truth, come whence it may and lead where it will. With the Greek Plato we deem nothing so beautiful as truth. With the Hindu maharajah, we believe no religion can excell the truth; and with the American Lucretia Mott we accept 'truth for authority and not authority for truth.'"

I suggest to the "girls" who are to hold their next suffrage convention at Washington, D.C., in April, that immediately after the opening prayer this resolution be offered:

Resolved, That a steeple is no more to be exempted from taxation than a smoke stack.

MARILLA M. RICKER

San Jose, Cal., February 8, 1910

- *The Truth Seeker*, 2/19/1910, p. 114.

An Irreligious Discourse

We are living in the Twentieth Century of what is called the Christian Era, and we have not outgrown the superstitions of the First Century. And worse than this, we have not had the courage to abandon the fictions of the Book of Genesis for the truths of modern science. Just what the world is afraid of, that it fears to trust its senses, its reason, its knowledge, surpasses my understanding.

One of the first things that men and women should learn is, that there is nothing in the universe to be afraid of; that all the malignant deities are dead; that the ancient gods that presided over the destiny of earth and of earthly things have all fallen from the sky; that in the realm of Nature everything is natural, and that no man is pursued by a god of wrath and vengeance who would punish him for his unbelief. Every god that can not hear the truth without getting mad should be dethroned. Every priest who can not join in singing the songs of civilization should be warned to look out for the engine while the bell rings.

This world of ours is a world to be enjoyed, but it can not be enjoyed if we fear every manifestation of Nature and if we put a cruel god behind every cloud.

Let us live without fear, without superstition, without religion.

There is nothing above, beneath or around you that cares whether you are a Christian or an unbeliever. The real reason why a priest hates an unbeliever is that he can not get a dollar out of him. He damns those who know better than to swallow his say-sos. But it still remains a fact that an infidel can raise as many bushels of potatoes to the acre as can the Roman Catholic. The sun will not wrong an honest man. The stars will not punish a single human being for telling the truth. The sky will not persecute a person who gives his thoughts, his talents, his time, to finding ways to help mankind.

Everything that man believes in that can not be found, that can not be proved, that can not stand the test of commonsense: everything that contradicts Nature, that is opposed to established facts, that is contrary to the laws of the universe, must be given up.

We must have a new man: the man born of woman, not the man made by God; the man who has been growing better ever since his advent on earth, not the man who has been growing worse; the man who started with nothing and has conquered the earth, the sea and the air; not the man who began perfect and has not got halfway back; the man who made the telescope, the steam-engine, the power-loom, the telephone and the wireless telegraph; not the man who made the thumbscrew, the rack, the ducking-stool and the stocks; the man who has carried the torch of liberty to enlighten the world, not the man who has carried the crucifix to enslave mankind.

It is quite common to be told what Moses said or what Jesus said. Now, if all that these two Hebrew gentlemen (who in my opinion never lived) said, is preserved in the Bible, I appeal from what they said to those who know more. I assert that Moses said a lot of stuff that isn't so, and a lot more that never was so, and that all that Jesus is said to have said is practically worthless to the world today; that there is not in all of his utterances a single word that will help man to get a living, a single word that will aid man in his struggle

for knowledge; that there is not a statement of a single scientific fact, or a plea for human liberty in all his language. He told his generation nothing that was not already known, except a mess of superstitious nonsense about angels and devils, heavens and hells. His so-called gospel of salvation was to follow him, and he landed on a cross.

The truth is this: the world has outgrown Moses and Jesus. It does not take commands from either. This age believes in work, not worship; in deeds, not prayers; in men, not monks; in liberty, not in pious obedience; in human rights, not in submission; in knowledge, not in revelation.

For hundreds of years man was bound by a religious faith, and the priest was his cruel master. He dared not doubt; he dared not rebel; he dared not dream of freedom; but there came a time when religious tyranny could no longer be borne. Then Mankind cried out to the Church: Give back man's brain to man; restore to him the mind you have robbed him of; take from his head and heart the paralyzing fear that makes him a coward and a slave, and leave to him the liberty with which Nature dowered him, that his mind may discover and preserve those mighty thoughts which make man brave, honest, free and happy.

That cry was heard far. It was heard by glad ears, and liberty sprang from the ground like the warriors from the fabled dragon-teeth of Cadmus. The war between liberty and tyranny, between fact and fable, between truth and falsehood, between man and priest, was on, and for centuries this war has raged, nor is it yet over. Freedom still lies bleeding, but victory for the right will sooner or later be won.

That victory will not be complete until every man will dare to say: Let come what will come, no man, be he priest, minister or judge, shall sit upon the throne of my mind, and decide for me what is right, true or good. I am my own master, my own teacher, my own guide. I will keep my reason free from control and will never surrender my own convictions to the dictates of another.

Nature has made every man commander of his own destiny.

But we are yet victims of ecclesiastical villainy. The priest is still the worst enemy of mankind. His church is like that monster of fiction which lived on little children. In the name of the children I protest against the action of the Church in stealing their tender brains, in making them slaves of superstition before they are old enough to know to what they are doomed.

The age of consent to a religious faith should be determined by law, if necessary. Today any boy or girl may be the victim of a designing priest or clergyman, or of a designing religious system.

No person under eighteen years of age should be allowed to join a church or consent to a statement of faith. Mental purity should be guarded and protected as well as physical purity.

While the Church is powerful in numbers and while its religion is supported by wealth and fashion, the world is becoming more and more emancipated from its pernicious influence. The light that truth gives is still ahead of us, but *it is there*, and some day the world will grow warmer under its rays and men become better and kinder to one another.

A hundred years ago the God worshiped in orthodox churches went about drowning little boys and girls who went skating on Sundays. Those were the "good old days" when men and women had religion for breakfast, dinner and supper, and took it to bed with them. It takes a long time to get such a horrible religion out of the system.

Men and women still have a mean faith, a faith which can see others damned with satisfaction if they can only be saved. Nothing but a mean religion could make men and women as mean as that.

I would rather starve than preach the doctrine of endless pain for a human being - or even for a dog. I believe that this world is hard and dark and cruel enough without borrowing suffering from another world to make darker and harder the road of life and add torture to the nights of pain and misery.

A church must be sunk pretty low when it lives on the fears and tears of mankind; but what lower depths of degradation does it sound when it can deliberately create fears and tears that it may live and thrive in its vile and cruel business! A human being without pity should be shunned and despised; but a human being who can fill the heart with terror should not be allowed in a civilized community.

The mind today wants to get out into the open, into the free daylight, wants to walk the earth, look at the stars and sky, feel the warmth of the sun and smell the odor of the ground; it has become tired of being shut up in a faith, in a creed, in a church; tired of being kept in the darkness of the past, in the tomb of dead thoughts, in the moldy caskets of unreal things, and in the dungeon of fear.

The mind is striving to break the chains of the priest and be free from the bonds of the Church.

You can not have men free where the priest demands and claims their obedience. The greatest menace to our national institutions is the power that controls men; that controls their thoughts, their actions and their destinies. Liberty can survive only where men are free: free to think, free to read, free to speak and free to act. The mind must not be bound by any vow of obedience. One man, no matter what his office, what his position, what his rank, has no right to compel another's obedience. This is the worst oppression on earth.

What is needed in this country is more men who dare think and speak for themselves; who dare belong to no church; who dare work for the right as they see it, and speak the truth as they understand it; who dare live their own lives independent of fashion's demands of society's usages; who dare put liberty above conformity, and who dare defy customs, law and religion in their zeal to help their fellow-beings.

There is more than one liberty - more than the liberty to do right - that is partly won for every civilized being. There is another liberty that is dangerous and that persists even where civilization exists - the liberty to take another's liberty from him. This liberty is usually taken from another in the name of God and what is called holy; but there is nothing on earth so holy as liberty, and he who takes it from another robs him of the dearest right possessed by man. Binding a human being with the chains of faith before that being is old enough to judge whether the faith is reasonable or true is the assassination of freedom.

The greatest danger which confronts our nation today is not political but religious, and the preservation of our free institutions does not depend upon our army and navy, but upon the emancipation of the human mind from ecclesiastical slavery. As Thomas Paine well said, "Spiritual freedom is the root of political liberty." You can not have free schools, free speech and a free press where the mind is not free.

There is too much faith in this country and too little sense. Men have given up about everything they possess to be saved; but it is more necessary, and more commendable in the workingmen of this nation, to save their dollars than to save their souls.

A subject that needs to be investigated quite as much as, if not more than, the high cost of living is the high cost of worship. There may be some justice in the criticism of the price of meats. We must remember, however, that we do get something for our money when we buy meat, but let us not forget that we get absolutely nothing for the money spent for worship. Money given to the Church is lost to the world. It is not used to improve homes; to help the poor and needy; to alleviate suffering; to bring hope to the sick or to give a few comforts to old age. It goes into the pocket of ecclesiastical greed.

This country just at present is suffering from those twin curses of humanity - religion and Bull-Mooseism. The priest and Bull-Mooseism are the two worst trouble-makers in this country. To get rid of this precious pair of knaves would be to bring peace on earth and hasten the dawn.

I don't know which is the bigger knave, the priest of the Bull-Mooser, but I do know that the priest is engaged in the meaner business of the two.

When a man tries to sell me a mouse-trap to catch elephants, I am suspicious of his mental sanity; and when a man tells me that eternal happiness can be won by enlisting in his salvation army, I question his moral sanity. I know that religion is offered at cut rates, but there is no discount on morality. You can not have the reward of god behavior unless you behave. You may save your soul by saying, "I believe," but you have to *do* something to save your body.

There is too much of this "believe-in-me" business. You don't want to believe in any one you know nothing about. The faith of a little child in its parents is beautiful, but the faith of a grown-up man in a priest is idiotic. Faith has ruined more than it has saved. With faith goes obedience, and he or she who obeys is lost.

There is no honest call today to believe, because there is no opportunity to know. Faith is hatched in the nest of imposition. He who yields obedience is a fool, and he who demands it is a scoundrel.

In this age, as in the past, a lie made "holy" is allowed to assassinate the truth. Nothing is cursing this nation; nothing is cursing human life; nothing is cursing honest effort and brave striving so much as what is called holiness. It is holy to believe all you are told; holy to wear the robes of hypocrisy; holy to rob the poor in the name of God, and holy to put the poison of faith to the lips of a child. It is holy to repudiate Nature and make a lie of your body, your mind, your life. To purify the dwelling-place of man, it is necessary to drive from the earth everything that religion has made holy.

The only really sacred things were holy before a church was ever built, before there was a priest on the globe.

Human love and the home which human love built for its offspring were the first holy things which men and women know, and it is this human love of ours which is holier than mosque, temple of church; holier than priestly robe or ecclesiastical rite; holier by far than all the holy things of faith.

The Church has always lived by robbing the home; the priest has always lived on the wages of the toiler. The gods of religion have never done aught to lighten the heavy load on the shoulders of labor. The priest has said to mankind that his Lord left this consolation to the world: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest."

What the priest really means is this: Come unto me and I will do the rest; and by the time he has done it, there is nothing of manhood left.

The priest also teaches that his Lord and Master said, "Ask and ye shall receive," and adds, "The Lord will provide." How many poor wretches have believed these words; but their outstretched hands withered away day by day, and at last dropped empty by their sides. There they lay white and cold, holding not the bread they fondly expected, but holding the hand of death.

It may be pious and it may be beautiful to say, "The Lord will provide," but it is a lie just the same. When, the other day, the bodies of a mother and her two children were being carried to the grave with the words, "starved to death," written on their faces, but not written on their caskets, it was a sufficient refutation of the religious teaching that "The Lord will provide." It is the plain, unvarnished truth that the Lord will *not* even provide the coffin for the poor victim of such a false, deceptive, religious faith.

In olden times it was customary for the Church to say, God's light lights the world. Not so today. God's light has gone out. It is man's light that lights the world and the church too. Our enlightenment is human, not divine. No altar of religion burns with the fire of truth. Science carries the torch of knowledge: liberty is the way and truth is the goal.

On our earth gods no longer make their homes. It was not safe for them to live any more. Their sons may once have married the daughters of men, but they can not get a license to do so today. Parents will not stand for it. So the gods have gone, bag and baggage. Where they have gone, no one knows. The skies give no sign that they are hiding up there. The telescope has found *seventy million stars, but not one god*.

It is time for the pulpit to stop repeating the old superstitions about God and about what he has done for man. He has never done any more for any man that he is doing today; never spoken to man any more than he is speaking today; never revealed himself to anybody any more than he stands revealed to you and me and to every human being everywhere.

Every word that ever came from the mouth of God man put in his mouth, and every book revealed by God was written by man.

Half the work of man for the next one hundred years will be to kill the lies told about what God has done.

Whether there is in all the vast universe a higher and nobler being than man, I don't know. Whether there is in all the vast universe a better place for man to live than on this earth, I don't know. And no one knows any more about these matters than I do.

We have found out much that is not so; now we want to find out all we can that is so. And it is of no use to go to the Church to learn anything. The Church is only a place where falsehoods are kept in cold storage. The man who thinks and studies is the man who is helping the world most, not the man who preaches and prays. To find the truth one needs to get as far from the Church as possible. Christians of all denominations have lots of pity for the man without a church. Let me assure these persons that the man without a church doesn't want one. As a rule, he is satisfied with what he has. He has a home, which is better than a church. If those persons who are pitying men and women for not having a church would, instead, pity the man without a home, and pity him enough to help him get one, they would show much better sense and manifest a truer sympathy with their fellow-beings.

I can not see any good in painting a thing white that is black, or calling a thing beautiful that is ugly. There are persons who talk as though they believed that a Northeast storm was sunshine. I am not made that way. I am as ready and as willing as anybody to acknowledge the good in Nature, or the good in life, but I do not believe in lying, in saying that wrong is right, or that suffering is to be enjoyed. There are lots of hard things in our life, and it does not alter facts to call them by some other name. A man dying with a cancer can not be made to believe that he is having a good time.

The most that any man can do who goes through this earthly existence is to use his fellow-mortals right and square; to give them an honest day's work when he works for them and an honest day's pay when he hires them; to say nothing to hurt them and everything he can to assist them; to help them out of trouble and not get them into trouble. If one does this, and does no more than this he has done what beats every religion on earth.

We have got to deal with men and women as they are and where they are. The man who is natural; the man who has not been made a fool of by a priest or parson; the man who has not swapped his commonsense for a foolish belief; the man who has not had his mind stuffed with religious dope, knows that this life on earth is the important life, and that it is a higher work to determine his fate here than anywhere else.

There is not a person living who would not be well and strong and happy here rather than hereafter. I would rather have the power to make every cripple straight and whole; every poor, unfortunate man and woman prosperous and contented; every sick person well, every bad person good, and every slave to vice master of his appetite and passions, in this life on earth, than to save the human wrecks, the human unfortunates, the human victims of vice and crime, for another life somewhere else.

What men and women want is happiness, not Heaven. They want a good home on this globe, not a loafing-place in Abraham's bosom. They want the opportunity to enjoy the good things of this life, not the promise that they will hear the angels sing. They want better wages for their work, better treatment from their employers, and better things to eat and drink and wear. They want better things here, not hereafter. They want to be happy while they are living on earth, not have the assurance of happiness after they are dead.

If I ever attempt to write my creed, I shall say: I believe in so much that I can hardly expect to express all of my faith in one statement. I am all the time believing in something new. But there is one thing that I most heartily believe in now and have believed in ever since I was a child, and that is, SUNSHINE - external and internal and eternal sunshine.

Sunshine is the joy of the universe, and joy is the sunshine of the human heart. Let us be bright and cheerful. Let us be happy. Let us give to the world the sunshine of our hearts.

- *I Don't Know, Do You?*, Marilla M. Ricker, Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., 1916, p. 91-106.

I Believe in Neither God Nor the Devil And I Am Not Afraid!

In my opinion the belief in everlasting life is a most selfish and harmful doctrine, and by turning man's attention from this world to another has blocked progress at least a thousand years. Without this belief there could have been no demonology, no persecution, no hot opposition to science, no fighting of progress at every step, and no continuance of a superstitious dogma into a scientific age.

There is no idea so pernicious in its results as the doctrine of individual immortality. It has formed a leverage for the enslavement of mankind. It has filled the world with gloom and made of man a crawling coward. It has given chains and whips of nettles into the hands of priests and parsons since time began, and they have used their weapons for the suppression, repression and degradation of humanity. And all based upon the idea that man has a personal existence after death.

So long as that dogma is preached there will be men who pretend to be able to control your place and condition in another world. Let an insignificant little priest in a little city, or a village, withhold the rite of holy communion, absolution, or extreme unction from this one or that, and if they die tonight, their souls will wander in torment during all eternity. To unhorse the priest we do not have to prove that there is no life after death, all we need do is to stand strong on the living truth - that we do not know anything about it, and that he knows no more than we do. We can then live our lives as if we were to live always, and if death is an endless sleep we have made no mistake. Right living here and now is the part of wisdom, and if there is life to come, honesty and truth are a good preparation for it.

Just so long as man is taught that he has an immortal soul that can never die he will fear the future and speculate on his destiny in another world. We can adjust ourselves to the known and cope with any difficulty we can see, even to going down heroically and gloriously before it in fair fight, but thought fixed upon a fog that conceals the unknown is a perpetual source of misery and dire unrest.

Fear is the worst thing in the world. Apprehension paralyzes man's best efforts and makes of a demigod a cringing cur. Good work can be done only by people who have abolished fear - sublime thoughts come only as we put fear behind. Fear is the prompter of hate, untruth, duplicity, and is the very base and essence of jealousy. The dogma of personal immortality with its concomitant uncertainty as to your future has flooded space with quaking fear, filled the sky with nightmares inexpressible and horrors that are beyond speech. And especially has it clouded the sky of childhood and polluted the days of innocence with black despair.

But the worst feature of a belief in immortality is that it has given millions of rogues a lever by which they have worked both upon the fears and loves of mankind. The entire dogma of endless punishment that was preached for nearly two thousand years has become so repugnant to humanity that even the orthodox of the orthodox have abandoned it, and are willing to say "We do not know." And many of them say that hell was only a theological necessity devised to make bad men good - and also to *make them pay*. In my opinion we want a religion that will pay debts, that will practise honesty in business life; that will treat employees with justice and consideration; that will render employers full and faithful work without grudging or scrimping; that will keep bank-cashiers true; office-holders patriotic and reliable; citizens interested in the purity of politics and the noblest ideals of the country. Such a religion is real, vital and effective.

But a religion that embraces vicarious atonement, miraculous conception, regeneration by faith, baptism and other monkey business; a religion that promises a heaven of idleness for all those who agree with us, and a hell for those who do not, I regard as barbaric, degrading and unworthy. The curse of existence is the belief in immortality. Everything that makes no growth is immortal and continues immortal until evolution rolls it into forgetfulness. Orthodoxy of all kinds means immortality - the ignoramus is an immortal man. While men believe in God they will continue to gaze idly into the skies; to offer their devotions to a phantom instead of to suffering flesh and blood; to prepare for another world when all their energies are needed in the present one.

Men have walked under a cloud long enough. They have said "Lord and Master" and bent the knee far too long. What have they done that they should ask any one in the sky above or the earth beneath for leave to stand erect and be a man? They should throw off every chain of mental servitude and assert their independence in the mental and moral world as boldly as they have in the physical.

All the evangelical churches have persecuted to the extent of their power - the evangelical alliance made up of all orthodox denominations met not many years ago and here is their creed. They believe in the divine inspiration, authority and sufficiency of the holy scriptures. They believe in the unity of the godhead and the trinity of the persons therein. They believe in the utter depravity of human nature. They believe in the eternal blessedness of the righteous, and the eternal punishment of the wicked. They believe that God so loved the world that he made up his mind to damn the most of us. Amen.

- *I Am Not Afraid, Are You?*, Marilla Ricker, 1917, The Roycrofters, East Aurora, N.Y., p. 13-17.



ERNESTINE ROSE

ERNESTINE ROSE

1/13/1810 - 8/4/1892

Ernestine Potovsky¹ was born of an Orthodox Jewish father and mother in Piotrkow, Poland.² Ernestine's mother died while she was still a child, and her education was left to her father, a rabbi, who by all accounts, educated her well.

Even as a little girl, she questioned her father concerning religion beyond his power to reply. Catching her combing her hair one Sabbath, he scolded her, telling her that she was committing a sin. Little Ernestine, with the innocence of youth, told her father she would go to her room and ask God if combing her hair on the Sabbath was a sin. A few minutes later, the little girl returned, telling her father truthfully that although she had asked God's opinion, he had not replied to her.

Later, observing her father becoming weak and sick from his practice of fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, she asked him why he must do this, to which he replied that it was to please God. Ernestine promptly told her father that he must be a very cruel god if making oneself sick pleased him.

She asked her father for explanations of passages she found confusing and unjust in the bible, and was told by him, "You must believe, for it is the word of God."

"Well, father," Ernestine replied, "what proves that God said such things?"

"Tradition, my daughter," the rabbi explained, going on to tell her, "A young girl does not want to understand the object of her creed, but to accept and believe it."

As Ernestine moved away from religious beliefs, her life at home became tortuous, for her own principles dictated that she resist the father she loved, while her father's religious beliefs made him torment his daughter because he desired her salvation.³

Ernestine's father, watching her intellectual growth away from his faith, decided that he might be able to force her to behave as a good Jewish wife if she was married. So, when Ernestine was sixteen, she found herself betrothed, without her knowledge or consent, to a much older man. In addition to gaining Ernestine's sizable inheritance from her mother upon marriage, her father had agreed to bestow this wealth on the man if Ernestine refused to marry him. Ernestine went to the man and begged to be released from the agreement to which her father had pledged her, but the man, seeing the money Ernestine was to inherit ready to pass into his hands, refused her pleas, knowing that whether she married him or refused him, according to the contract with her father, the money would be his.

¹ Ernestine's birth name is given in many ways, such as:

"Ernestine Louise Lasmond Potovsky" - *A Biographical Dictionary of Modern Rationalists*, Joseph McCabe, London, Watts & Co., 1920, p. 679.

"Ernestine Louis Lasmond Potorsky" - *A Rationalist Encyclopædia*, Joseph McCabe, Watts & Co., 1948, p. 508.

"Ernestine Potowsky" - *Pioneer Women Orators*, Lillian O'Connor, Columbia University Press, New York, 1954, p. 74.

"Ernestine Louise Siismondi Potowski" - *Ernestine L. Rose, Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, NY, 1990, "Author's Note." The author indicates that we do know her true birth name, but that certainly a Jewish girl in Poland would not be named "Ernestine Louise."

"Ernestine Louise Susmond Potowsky" - "Ernestine L. Rose," Jenny P. d'Hericourt, *Agitator*, Chicago, 6/25/1869, reprinted in *The Revolution*, 9/16/1869.

² *Ernestine L. Rose, Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, New York, 1990, p. 3.

³ "Ernestine L. Rose," Jenny P. d'Hericourt, *Agitator*, 6/25, 1869, reprinted in *The Revolution*, 9/16/1869.

Ernestine then performed her most rebellious act to date: she took the man to court to fight the pledged marriage.⁴ No daughter of an Orthodox Jewish rabbi would think of protesting her father's decisions in arranging her marriage, much less take the matter to court to be decided. She was adamant, however, and surprisingly, won her case, and the right to her freedom and her inheritance.

Returning home from the city in which the court was housed, she found her father had taken a wife, who was about Ernestine's age, and her opposite philosophically. She felt she could not remain in the home longer.

She kept the freedom the court had given her, but gave the inheritance to her father and left his home to strike out on her own in 1827, at the age of seventeen.

Alone and friendless, Ernestine traveled to Berlin. There she found that those of Jewish heritage were profoundly discriminated against. A Jew could not stay in Berlin without the sponsorship of a citizen of Berlin, and could not conduct business in Berlin.

Ernestine asked for an audience with the King of Prussia, and received it. She argued her case so well with him that he granted her permission to stay in Prussia as long as she wanted and to engage in whatever business she desired. Although this answered her personal needs, he made the ruling exclusive to her, and she was disappointed that she had not convinced him to extend the same rights to all of Jewish heritage. Still, she stayed and began a business selling scented papers that, when burned, scented the rooms of many a Berliner's home.

In 1829, Ernestine left Berlin for Holland. Once again her desire for what was right caused her to speak out. She learned of a woman unjustly imprisoned, and asked for an audience with the King of Holland. Once again, at only 19 years of age, her persuasiveness convinced a king, and the woman was released.

In 1830, she was in Paris when revolution broke out in Poland. She attempted to return to her homeland to work for liberty, but was turned back at the border after being given the choice of leaving or being committed to an Austrian prison.⁵

That year she came to London, being shipwrecked on the journey and saving only her life and a very small amount of money. She earned a living by giving lessons in Hebrew and German and by selling her perfumed papers.

In London she met the great social crusader, Robert Owen, who came to call her his daughter.⁶ Owen was a successful businessman despite his radical treatment of employees. While other giants of industry foretold his doom for such practices as refusing to lay off workers when work was slow, and building homes for them; refusing to hire children under 10 (while common practice worked 5- and 6-year-olds 14-15 hours a day), and making those older than 10, but not yet adults, work only 6 hours a day; and building schools for his employee's families. Owen's business flourished, much to the disappointment of his more ruthless competitors. He had tried his idea in the United States, starting a colony of workers based on his plans, but by the time he met Ernestine, this plan had failed.

⁴ *World's Sages, Thinkers and Reformers*, D.M. Bennett, Liberal and Scientific Publishing House, New York, 1878, p. 949, among numerous other sources.

⁵ "Ernestine L. Rose," Jenny P. d'Hericourt, *Agitator*, 6/25/1869, reprinted by *The Revolution*, 9/16/1869; *A Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers of All Ages and Nations*, J.M. Wheeler, Progressive Publishing Company, 1889, p. 282-283.

⁶ *A Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers of All Ages and Nations*, J.M. Wheeler, Progressive Publishing Company, 1889, p. 282-283.

Appreciating the plucky young Pole, Owen asked her to speak to groups of workers, which she did successfully. He soon after inaugurated the Association for All Classes of All Nations, in which Ernestine participated from its inception.

While in London, Ernestine met a young man three years her junior named William Rose, a metalsmith and watchmaker who was to be her greatest supporter, and lifelong partner. The couple were married by a civil magistrate, for both were Atheists, and considered marriage to be a civil contract, founded on mutual esteem and love, rather than a religious ceremony.⁷ Soon afterward, Ernestine and William traveled to New York city in 1836 to establish themselves, where they quickly met with the likes of Emerson, Thoreau, and other members of an intellectual group called The Symposium.

Ernestine was appalled, however, to learn of the actual conditions of slavery, and, when she began to learn that the rights she had heard existed in America did not extend to women, she could not sit silent and inactive any more than she could ignore the injustice she had encountered in Poland, Prussia, Holland or England.

She discovered that in this free country, a working wife's wages belonged to her husband, not she who had performed the labor to earn them; that if the couple divorced, the children automatically became the husband's property; that women could not sue, and were seen legally as the equal of idiots and minors.

Ernestine began to speak out against slavery and for women's rights.

The accusation of being an "Infidel" could ruin a man or woman socially and economically. Still, Ernestine braved the charge to join and to speak before the Society of Moral Philanthropists, a group called the Tammany Hall Infidels by many. Begun by Abner Kneeland, who in 1829 had started openly speaking on Atheism, the society charged \$1 for membership, required "moral conduct" of its members, and offered lectures and debates by leading Freethinkers. When Kneeland left for Boston, Benjamin Offen assumed leadership of the organization. In response to religious revivals, the Moral Philanthropists held revivals of rationalism. These so interested the public that the hall, built to seat 2,000, was too small to hold the crowds seeking admission. It was noticed in an article written in 1837 that the audience was composed of an increased number of women, and, perhaps in response to negative publicity, made a point to mention that the majority of the audience were very well dressed. In addition to Benjamin Offen, Gilbert Vale, George Purser, John Ditchett, and Ernestine were frequent speakers.⁸

The religious sector was alarmed by the popularity of the meetings, and action was taken to portray the Moral Philanthropists negatively to the public. One of the many enemies of the Moral Philanthropists was James Gordon Bennett, editor of the New York *Morning Herald*. Since the leaders of the group were of middle-class origin - a bootmaker, a veterinarian, a lodging-house keeper, etc. - Bennett attempted to portray them as uneducated, unkept idiots. He described the members of "this Infidel crew" as a "little knot

⁷ *Heroines of Freethought*, Sara A. Underwood, Charles P. Somerby Publisher, New York, 1876, p. 255-281.

⁸ *Popular Freethought in America, 1825-1850*, Albert Post, Ph.D., Columbia University Press, London, 1943, p. 91-93.

of ignorant blockheads" who "have the folly of wishing to subvert the Christian system with the weapons of coarse ignorance, stale small-beer witticisms, ridiculous farce, and contemptible folly."⁹ "What trash! what blockheads! what genuine asses!" Bennett concluded after attending a meeting.¹⁰

The Freethought press, of course, had a different opinion. H.D. Robinson wrote in the April 13, 1833 edition of *Free Enquirer*, that the Moral Philanthropists "believe that the people of this country are horribly *priest-ridden*; that they are spell-bound by the successful efforts of a host of lazy drones ... who live on the fat of the land at the expense of the labouring part of the community..."¹¹

The economic depression known as the Panic of 1837 led to the end of the society. Often appealed to liberals for funds, expenses were cut, yet the end seemed near. The society managed to continue meeting, however, until May, 1839.

Meanwhile, Judge Thomas Herttell, of the New York legislature, was battling for women's rights through law, introducing a bill entitled "An Act For the Protection and Preservation of the Rights and Property of Married Women." Herttell was branded an infidel for challenging the biblical teachings of the precedence of men over women, was accused of wishing the ruin of the American family and and it was predicted that the bills' passage would lead to the decay of morals. Nevertheless, Herttell's idea appealed to many of the men in the legislature, who had daughters to whom they wished to leave money, yet who did not want it all lost by a profligate son-in-law to the detriment of their daughters and their grandchildren. Even with this interest, however, it was to take Judge Herttell twelve years to convince his fellow-legislators to pass the bill.

He did not fight for its' passage alone. In 1836, Ernestine began a virtual one-women crusade to get the bill passed. She walked from door to door, pleading the case of women, asking for signatures, yet in that first year, received only five signatures and countless insults.

Learning that Paulina Wright Davis was trying the same measures on the western side of New York State, Ernestine teamed up with her, to be joined later by Elizabeth Cady Stanton.¹² Lucretia Mott urged Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Ernestine to be as moderate as possible in pressing for married women's rights, but later she too joined their ranks in the fight for the rights of married women.¹³

In December, 1837, Ernestine read of a meeting that was to take place to address the issue of improving public education. Like Frances Wright, Ernestine's interests lay in many areas of public improvement, including education, and she felt lucky to obtain a seat in the gallery. The first speaker

⁹ *Morning Herald*, June 22, 1835.

Popular Freethought in America, 1825-1850, Albert Post, Ph.D., Columbia University Press, London, 1943, p. 98.

¹⁰ *Morning Herald*, June 24, 1835.

Popular Freethought in America, 1825-1850, Albert Post, Ph.D., Columbia University Press, London, 1943, p. 99.

¹¹ *Popular Freethought in America, 1825-1850*, Albert Post, Ph.D., Columbia University Press, London, 1943, p. 90.

¹² Document I, "Preceding Causes," Matilda Joslyn Gage, 1881, *The Concise History of Woman Suffrage* by Stanton, Anthony, Gage and Harper, (1881, 1886, 1887, 1902, 1922), edited by Mari Jo and Paul Buhle, University of Illinois Press, p. 64, among other sources.

¹³ *Eighty Years and More, Reminiscences 1815-1897*, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Northeastern University Press, Boston, 1993 (originally published 1898), p. 216-217.

addressed the issue, but the second, a Presbyterian minister, quickly turned his speech into an attack on infidelity to religion, reviling Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* as a work of the enemies of religion.

When he had finished speaking, a voice was heard from the gallery: "Will the chairman permit me to ask the gentleman who has just closed a question in relation to his remarks on infidelity?"

All eyes turned toward the voice and the young woman with black ringlets framing a handsome face. "Infidel! Infidel!" "Throw her out!" they audience cried, while the chair attempted to regain order.

Through it all, Ernestine stood silently, waiting for calm. The audience was surprised when the fiery minister encouraged the young woman to speak, no doubt with the knowledge of having the audience's full support and wishing to put her in her place by her own words.

Ernestine spoke. She asked if the reverend gentleman was earnest in his challenge to infidels. Reverend Breckenridge replied that his Christian principles forbade him to fight a woman. The audience roared its approval and disappointed, Ernestine had to yield the day, the minister effectively enforcing his views on the inferiority of women in their ability to argue with men by not allowing an argument to take place. She was denied the duel privilege of asserting women's intellectual powers and in defending infidelity.¹⁴

Robert Dale Owen, son of Ernestine's friend Robert Owen, was a member of the Indiana State legislature in 1837. He presented a Married Woman's bill at the State Constitutional Convention. The bill was close to successful passage when a clergyman rose and, using biblical quotes, convinced the legislature to reverse its' opinion. The law giving married women some rights over their own lives would take another fifteen years to pass in Indiana, thanks to that persuasive clergyman.

For household economy, William Rose worked at silversmithing and watchmaking, and Ernestine, when she could, sold her scented papers to help pay the bills. Her time at home, however, became less and less frequent, as she began a tour of New York State in 1843 to speak on women's rights, five years before the Seneca Falls Convention.

In 1844, she spoke at a meeting of the New York Social Reform Society. A reporter who was present unfortunately found himself to be "so interested in the chastisement that Mrs. Rose gave [Mr. Goodnow of Rhode Island] that he [the reporter] failed to take note of her remarks." Later, at the same meeting, Ernestine spoke for two hours.¹⁵

Ernestine traveled with John Collins to promote the Skaneateles Community, a utopian commune, lecturing at meetings gathered to raise money for the experiment. One such meeting was held at the home of Lucretia and James Mott.¹⁶

In 1845, the First National Infidel Convention was held in New York City. Ernestine was there, of course, accompanied by such luminaries as Judge Herttell, Robert Owen, Josiah P. Mendum, Dr. Charles Knowlton, Benjamin Offen, and Gilbert Vale, as well as an assembly of about five hundred Freethinkers. She spoke up when the discussion of a name for the group caused some to suggest the word "Infidel" be omitted, due to negative public reaction to it. She said it was a name to which one should be proud to be labelled. The convention finally decided on the title "The Infidel Society for the Promotion of Mental Liberty." Unfortunately, the convention was marred by constant bickering over matters such as the name for the group and whether the names of those attending could be published. This atmosphere was relished by an

¹⁴ Ernestine L. Rose, *Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, New York, 1990, p. 69-72.

¹⁵ *Pioneer Women Orators*, Lillian O'Connor, Columbia University Press, New York, 1954, p. 74-75.

¹⁶ Ernestine L. Rose, *Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, New York, 1990, p. 80.

unsympathetic press, who portrayed the audience as being composed of ignorant lunatics, thus explaining their Freethought attitudes. Thomas Herttell was elected President of the group.

The press, in reporting the Convention, was brutal. In one article, presented by the *New York Herald*, Ernestine was presented as a "celebrated Polish lady" and one of her speeches was published in dialect. Although the intent of the author was to demean her, his efforts could not diminish the power and sincerity of her words. Inadvertently, the author of the article has given us the opportunity to obtain a glimpse of how Ernestine must have sounded. Ernestine commented on her accent herself when speaking before groups, and in the absence of audio records of her speeches, a dialectic representation is the closest we can now come to knowing how she must have spoken.

As printed by this author, Ernestine's speech read, "Mine Frents - it is wid unfane pleasure dat I behold so large an assembly from different States, all assembled wid von great object - an object as broad and universal as de globe itself. An object no less dan universal freedom of opinion as unbounded as air and space. As man is obliged to receive his ideas involuntarily, he ought to have perfect liberty to express dem - and any system vich represses dem is slavery of the vorst kind. No mattare how much oders differ from us, dey have the same right to give dere opinions as we have - freedom of opinion is the only ting dat will become de salvation of man. As to our name it is noting. Infidel does not belong to us - dey are infidels who believe one ting and profess anoder. De term infidel is generally understood to mean a disbeliever in divine revelation. Dere never was a sect but vat in dere turn have been called infidels. I glory in de name, so far as it signifies dat I have gone away from de superstition in fashion called religion. Universal freedom is our object. Let us den take de name Universal Mental Liberty Society; however, as I am much better dan any name dey can apply to me, I vill not shrink. De eyes of all de vorld, not only New Yor-rok, but de whole country are looking at de results of dis convention. Let every one reflect vell on de means of carrying out our object." The report ended: "Mrs. Rose concluded, and sat down amid thunders of applause."¹⁷ The *New York Herald* printed the speech without dialect.

The *Daily Tribune*, reporting on the same event, concluded that "Mrs. Rose of this City followed, with some remarks of a similar tenor to those of Mr. Owen. Her accent (Polish) is unfamiliar, and she speaks too oratorically and too rapidly, so that we have not retained any very distinct conception of her harangue."¹⁸

In June, 1846, the convention reconvened, reelecting Thomas Herttell as president. The second convention was much like the first in that it was notable for the disagreements which occupied most of the hours of the meeting. Only thirty-four members remained and it was obvious that the society would not last long. By the time of the third convention in May, 1847, Samuel Ludvigh, the editor of *Die Fackel*, mournfully noting the lack of attendance, recorded that "the valuable words of the speaker Mme. Rose [were] spoken in the empty spaces of the hall."¹⁹

¹⁷ *New York Herald*, 5/5/1845.

¹⁸ *The Daily Tribune* [New York], May 5, 1845, p. 2.

¹⁹ *Die Fackel*, June 19, 1847.

Boston Investigator, June 23, 1847

Popular Freethought in America, 1825-1850, Albert Post, Ph.D., Columbia University Press, London, 1943, p. 169.

In 1846 she traveled to Michigan, and her speeches on the "Science of Government" and "Antagonisms in Society" drew such praise from the Michigan House of Representatives that they passed a special resolution praising her oratorical skill, eloquence and grace of delivery.²⁰

In what began as a restful vacation in 1847, Ernestine was almost tarred and feathered, and had to flee for her life. She traveled to South Carolina for her health, which had been weakened due to her efforts for women's rights, and was so appalled by the conditions of slavery she witnessed there that she rented a hall right in the heart of Dixie, and spoke against the practice. Luckily, friends helped her narrowly escape the fate the angry mob of Southerners wished for the interfering foreigner. She was to have the same experience in New Orleans.

1848 marked the year of the famous Seneca Falls Convention, in which Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and other leaders met in the first formal woman's rights convention. The reaction of the press and the clergy was vicious, with predictions being made such as "the order of things established at the creation of mankind, and continued six thousand years [for biblically, the earth was only 6,000 years old], would be completely broken up..." The convention, it was said, was filled with blasphemers, who dared usurp woman's rightful place - far below man - as dictated by biblical law. Although Ernestine was not present at this first convention, she was recognized, along with only a very few other women, as a pioneer who had been speaking out for women's rights while all others were too timid.

In May, 1850, the 16th Anniversary of the American Anti-Slavery Society was held in New York city, with Ernestine as one of the featured speakers. The public had been raised to fever pitch by the papers, which extolled them to "go on Tuesday May 7th to the Tabernacle and there look at the black and white brethren and sisters fraternizing, slobbering over each other...blaspheming and cursing the Constitution of our glorious Union." A mob was formed, headed by Captain Rynders, a notorious bigot who paraded as a savior of the Union and protector of society against infidels and abolitionists, much like Rush Limbaugh, Pat Buchanan or Pat Robertson today. The mayor conveniently ordered the police away from the meeting, giving Captain Rynders full rein. As each speaker attempted to begin, the mob hooted and howled to such an extent that continuance was impossible. When Ernestine's turn came, she stood a full fifteen minutes while bedlam reined around her, waiting for the crowd to calm down. Finally she gave up and sat down.²¹

Ernestine and William both attended the annual celebration of Thomas Paine's birthday in 1850, which took place in Boston. Ernestine would continue to speak at the annual event for many years.

The First National Woman's Rights Convention, held in Worcester, Massachusetts that year, saw Ernestine as a speaker.²² She was the first woman to indicate the contributions of the Pilgrim Mothers as opposed to recognizing only the Pilgrim Fathers.²³ Ernestine was elected the chairperson of the Committee of Civil and Political Functions, and was joined in this group by Lucy Stone, Wendell Phillips, Abby Kelley Foster, William Lloyd Garrison, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and others.²⁴

²⁰ Ernestine L. Rose, *Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, New York, 1990, p. 82.

²¹ Ernestine L. Rose, *Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, New York, 1990, p. 107-108.

²² "Women's Rights Convention," Parker Pillsbury, *The Anti-Slavery Bugle*, Vol. 6, No. 9, Whole No. 269, 1850, p. 30.

²³ *Pioneer Women Orators*, Lillian O'Connor, Columbia University Press, New York, p. 74-75.

²⁴ *The Anti-Slavery Bugle*, Vol. 6, No. 10, Whole No. 270, November 16, 1850, p. 36.

Although the press was still hostile two years after the Seneca Falls Convention, the clergy was even more bitter towards the rights of women. What began as attacks on women in the pulpit now moved into the conventions themselves, with clergymen attending and shouting such biblical quotes as, "Let your women be silent in the churches" (Corinthians I, 14:34), "If they [women] will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (Corinthians I, 14:35), "but I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man but to be in silence; for Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression" (Timothy I, 2:12-14), and "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands" (Peter I, 3:1).

When Ernestine spoke in 1852 against the U.S. policy of nonintervention towards the struggle of European revolutionaries against the Czar, her speech was printed in its entirety in the New York *Herald*, and other papers wrote positively of it, but of course the religious papers called it "absolutely disgusting."

Ernestine argued against Abby Kelley Foster at the Woman's Rights Convention held in 1851. Abby raised the question of woman's duty versus right. "When woman shall feel her duty, she will get her rights," Abby told the audience. She even introduced a resolution for the vote, "*Resolved*, That woman lacks her rights because she does not feel the full weight of her responsibilities."

Ernestine then spoke. "We are told that if woman would only do her duty she would have her rights," she said, "implying that our rights spring from our duties. If we reflect a moment on the subject we will find this an error, a very prevalent error, and therefore the more necessary to be corrected. Our duties spring from our rights, our rights from our wants. The child, when it comes into existence, possesses rights arising from its necessities, but as yet it owes no duty to anyone; while the parents, having exercised certain rights and privileges, they owe certain duties to the child which when grown up to understand the relation it sustains to its parents and to society then owes in return duties in accordance with the rights and privileges it enjoys. The more rights we enjoy the greater the duty we owe. And he who enjoys most rights, owes in return the most duties. And therefore we say to society, you who enjoy all the rights, are in duty bound to protect every individual member in his rights. But as it is, while man enjoys all the rights, he preaches all the duties to woman. And hence we say to man - not in the spirit of censure, but charity and kindness, yet firmly do we say to him that instead of writing and preaching so much about the duties of woman, it is high time, as the elder brother, to set us the example in the performance of your duties. And in no way can you evince your earnest desire to do so than by giving woman her rights. And depend upon it she will not fail in the performance of her duties, not only as wife and mother, but also as a free, enlightened, rational member of the great family of man, highly conducive to the elevation and happiness of all."²⁵

Ernestine again joined a great controversy at the 1852 Syracuse National Woman's Rights Convention in 1852. When Antoinette Brown, the first female ordained minister in the United States, proposed that the bible be brought forth as an argument for womans' rights, Ernestine protested vigorously, arguing "For my part, I see no need to appeal to any written authority, particularly when it is so obscure and indefinite as to admit of different interpretations. When the inhabitants of Boston converted their harbor into a teapot rather than submit to unjust taxes, they did not go to the Bible for their authority; for if they had, they would have been told from the same authority to 'give unto Caesar what belonged to Caesar.' Had the people, when they rose in the might of their right to throw off the British yoke, appealed to the Bible for authority, it would have answered them, 'Submit to the powers that be, for they are from God.' No! on Human Rights and Freedom, on a subject that is as self-evident as that two and two make four, there is no need of any written authority."

The argument continued for two days, with Susan B. Anthony emphatically supporting Ernestine, using writings of Elizabeth Cady Stanton to support her case, and, on the other side, Reverend Junius Hatch,

²⁵ Ernestine L. Rose, *Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, New York, 1990, p. 118-119.

a Congregational minister from Massachusetts, questioning the officers of the Convention as to their belief in the paramount authority of the bible, saying the impression had gone abroad that the Convention was infidel in character.

Ernestine argued that belief does not depend upon voluntary inclination, and said that although it was a person's right to interpret the Bible as he or she thought best, no particular interpretation should be set forth as the doctrine of the Convention, as, at best, it was but mere opinion and not authority.

Lucretia Mott finally rose to present her opinion. A highly respected woman among the men and women present, she spoke in opposition to the Brown resolution, and related her anti-slavery experience upon the bible question; one party taking great pains to show that the bible was opposed to slavery, while the other side quoted texts to prove it of divine origin, thus wasting their time by bandying scripture texts, and interfering with the business of their meetings. The advocates of emancipation soon learned to adhere to their own great work - that of declaring the inherent right of man to himself and his earnings - and that self-evident truths needed no argument or outward authority. She concluded by moving that the resolution be laid on the table, which was unanimously carried.²⁶

By 1853, Ernestine had been lecturing for seventeen years. When William Lloyd Garrison, who opened every anti-slavery meeting by reading a portion from the bible, and who had been largely responsible in 1840 and 1848 in organizing the anti-sabbath conventions in Boston, called for a Bible Convention to critically examine that book, Ernestine could not resist attending. As an Owenite she believed that man was the victim of error and superstition and that the bible fostered both; and as a woman's rights advocate she knew from personal experience how obstinately the clergy, using the bible as their authority, opposed woman's demands for equal rights.²⁷ She was the only female speaker before a crowd of 2,000.

A professional at dealing with opposition, she took it in stride when the seven hundred divinity students who attended the meeting only to disrupt it hooted and stamped their feet, and even succeeded in turning off the gas so that the hall was plunged into darkness. When the lights was relit, Ernestine blithely stated, "When the lights were extinguished, it reminded me of one of the true things we find in the Bible, that some there are 'who love darkness better than light.'" The audience, despite their opposition, broke into laughter, and she went on to speak for an hour, and spoke the next day for an hour and a half.

The newspaper coverage of the convention was, naturally, in vicious opposition, saying that its participants' and organizers' goal was to destroy all of "Christian civilization," an oxymoron to be sure. Writing of Ernestine, the *Hartford Courant* wrote "Shame then to the woman who will so unsex herself...amid an assembly of male Infidels and scoffers..." and the *Boston Bee* stated that "...worse and more melancholy than all, was Mrs. Ernestine L. Rose of New York, her heart saturated with the fiery liquid of infidelity, and her tongue uttering sentiments too shockingly wicked to repeat."²⁸

When Ernestine spoke on married women's rights at a Woman's Rights Convention in New York City in 1853, her friend Lucretia Mott was the chairperson. The heckling was so loud that even the stenographers sitting in the front row could not hear the speakers. Lucretia Mott, sworn to pacifism, could

²⁶ *The Concise History of Woman Suffrage* by Stanton, Anthony, Gage and Harper, (1881, 1886, 1887, 1902, 1922), edited by Mari Jo and Paul Buhle, University of Illinois Press, 1978, p. 130-135.

²⁷ *Ernestine L. Rose, Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, New York, 1990, p. 134-137.

²⁸ *Ernestine L. Rose, Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, New York, 1990, p. 134-135.

not in good conscience call the police to oust the rowdies, but she knew that Ernestine could, and so turned the chair over to her. Ernestine promptly called the police, who just as promptly refused to help the ladies. The meeting had to be adjourned.

Only one month later, Ernestine spoke before the 4th National Woman's Rights Convention held in Cleveland, Ohio. In Rochester, New York, Ernestine appeared that year to discuss strategies to approach the New York legislature with woman's rights measures, speaking alongside such other giants as Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, Antoinette Brown, Amelia Bloomer, and Matilda Joslyn Gage.

The strategy they selected ensured Ernestine's presence the following year for two weeks in Rochester, New York, at which time she spoke repeatedly before different committees of the New York legislature, attempting to convince them that married women should not only be allowed to own the property they alone had inherited, but that they should own the property they had earned while married, and that women should have the same right to sue as men, and the same right to their own children, as well as the right to be tried by a jury of their peers, rather than by all male juries. She also spoke for women's rights to vote and to run for office.

The response of one assemblyman to the two week blitz was to say, "We know that God created man as the representative of the race; that after his creation, his Creator took from his side the material for woman's creation; and that, by the institution of matrimony, woman was restored to the side of man and became one flesh and one being." The legislature concluded that "A higher power than that from which emanates legislative enactments has given forth the mandate that man and woman shall not be equal." So much for logic and rationalism in the legislative minds.

The women regrouped. Susan B. Anthony was given charge of organizing meetings, and Ernestine traveled with her to these meetings to speak on women's rights. Traveling to Washington, D.C., Ernestine was denied the right to speak because she was known as an Atheist. Even the Smithsonian, endowed by a Freethinker, James Smithson, had forgotten its' Freethought roots, and denied her space to speak.

Susan B. Anthony kept a diary of this trip, and wrote of their trials. Reporting on her attempts to secure Ernestine the right to speak in the Capitol building on a Sunday morning, Susan wrote, "Asked the Speaker of the House for the use of the Capitol on Sunday A.M. He referred me to Mr. Milburn the Chaplain. Called on him. He could not allow her to speak there because she was not a member of some religious society. I remarked to him that ours was a country professing Religious as well as Civil Liberty and not to allow any and every faith to be declared in the Capitol of the nation, made the profession to religious freedom a perfect mockery. Though acknowledging the truthfulness of my position he could not allow a person who failed to recognize the Divine, to speak in his place..."²⁹

Later on that same trip, Susan described an event revealing Ernestine's feelings as an Atheist in a religious world when she wrote "...I observed tears in her [Ernestine's] eyes. Said I Mrs. Rose, have I been wicked and hurt your feelings? She answered, no, but I expect never to be understood while I live. Her anguish was extreme. I too wept, for it filled my soul with anguish to see one so noble, so true (even though I felt I could not comprehend her) so bowed down, so overcome with deep swelling emotions. At length she said, no one knows how I have suffered from not being understood. [I said] I know you must suffer and heaven forbid that I should add a feather's weight to your burdens.

"Mrs. Rose is not appreciated, nor cannot be by this age. She is too much in advance of the extreme ultraists even, to be understood by them."³⁰

²⁹ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches*, edited by Gerda Lerner, Schocken Books, New York, 1981, p. 70-77.

³⁰ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches*, edited by Gerda Lerner, Schocken Books, New York, 1981, p. 70-77.

Whereas Susan B. Anthony was at the beginnings of her religious enlightenment, Ernestine had long thought on matters of religion. According to Susan's description of Ernestine's ideas on religion, she seemed to have followed the philosophy of Marcus Aurelius, in that she told Susan that "all things in Nature die, or rather that the elements of all things are separated and assume new forms." If the "soul", she explained, the "vital spark of man lives eternally so must the essence of the tree, the animal, the fern and the flower." Susan concluded that "There certainly is no argument to be brought against such reasonings. But if it be true that we die like the flower, leaving behind, only the fragrance...while the elements that compose us go to form new bodies, what a delusion has the race ever been in, What a dream is the life of Man..."³¹

At the Fifth National Woman's Rights Convention held in 1854, members raised the question of whether Ernestine should be allowed to represent them, arguing, "You would better never hold another convention than let Ernestine L. Rose stand on your platform."³² After all, they argued, her outspoken Atheism hurt the movement. Susan B. Anthony immediately argued for her friend, reminding the participants of Ernestine's unfailing, unflinching devotion to women's rights, long before any of her listeners had braved social conventions to speak up for their own rights. Elizabeth Cady Stanton remembered that "We were severely criticized for having Ernestine Rose, an atheist, and Lucretia Mott, a Hicksite Quaker, on our platform. We paid no attention to such carping, but said, if our movement cannot stand two such grand women as advocates it is not worth saving."³³ As a result of the arguments raised for and against Ernestine's presence within the movement, a resolution offered by William Lloyd Garrison and unanimously passed at the convention recognized the bible and the clergy as the worst enemies of woman's rights. More amazingly, Ernestine was elected President of the group and served as vice president the following year.³⁴

In 1855, at 45 years of age, Ernestine spoke more than at any other time in her life. In January of that year alone, she spoke at fifteen meetings in fifteen different locations. Considering the hardships to be endured in traveling at the time, it shows her amazing strength of purpose and will.

While traveling and speaking in 1855, one of Ernestine's engagements took her to Cincinnati, Ohio. She paused while there to visit the grave of her friend Frances Wright, with whom she had shared the podium. The visit evoked "deep thoughts, earnest feelings and a stronger devotion to the cause of freedom and of right for which she [Frances Wright] had to suffer so much."³⁵

Traveling to Maine to speak against slavery, two prominent ministers undertook, through the pages of the *Bangor Mercury*, to attack her, saying, "it would be shameful to listen to this woman, a thousand times below a prostitute." She was accused of being a president of an infidel club in New York; of making

³¹ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches*, edited by Gerda Lerner, Schocken Books, New York, 1981, p. 70-77.

³² Susan B. Anthony, "The Woman's Bible Repudiated," *The Woman's Bible, Part II*, New York, European Publishing Company, p. 215-217.

³³ "Mrs. Stanton's Letters: Character Glimpses from Personal Letters to the Editor of the Woman's Tribune," *The Woman's Bible*, 11/8/1902, p. 118.

³⁴ *Pioneer Women Orators*, Lillian O'Connor, Columbia University Press, New York, 1954, p. 74-75.

³⁵ *Ernestine L. Rose, Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, New York, 1990, p. 173.

speeches at Thomas Paine birthday celebrations "at which Christ is uniformly treated with the choicest blasphemies..." She was referred to as "a *female Atheist*"; and such a one is so bad that "we hold the vilest strumpet from the stews to be by comparison respectable."³⁶

After that strenuous year, she and William took a long deserved vacation for six months to Europe in 1856, where they visited, among others, their old friend, Robert Owen. In their meeting, Robert discussed the ideas of spiritualism, which he espoused. Although many of her companions in the woman's rights movement had adopted spiritualist ideas, Ernestine did not believe in the efficacy of the claims of mediums and rappers.³⁷ Robert Dale Owen, the son of Ernestine's mentor, would later say of her that she was "a skeptic as to any future beyond the grave, greatly opposed to Spiritualism." It would be the last meeting for Ernestine and Robert Owen, for he would be dead in 1858. Ernestine would hold a memorial service for him in her home in New York when hearing the news, gathering his friends and followers for a final tribute to this grand philanthropist.

In addition to visiting England, the Rose's journeyed to Paris, where they met with Madam d'Hericourt, who wrote a biography of Ernestine in French which was translated into Italian. Ernestine was introduced to all the leading reformers in France, and honored by them for her work.

Madam d'Hericourt wrote that during Ernestine's career of speaking in various cities in the United States, William Rose had "joyfully labored to pay all the expenses necessary to her numerous journeys through the country; for, be it remarked, that never did she receive one cent from anybody for delivering any address, and that she often paid the rent of the hall in which she delivered her lectures."

Madam d'Hericourt described the reaction Ernestine received for her attempts to gain equal rights regardless of race or sex by saying, "The reward of this devotion was hatred and calumnies. Because she did not accept the creeds of churches, she was called an atheist, a dangerous woman, a hellish spirit, and a paper of Bangor, Maine, stated, 'that it would be shameful to listen to this woman, *a thousand times below a prostitute*.' In Charleston [S.C.], the clergy forbade their parishioners to listen to 'the female devil, so bold as to contest the right of the South to hold their own slaves.' Notwithstanding, men went to hear her addresses, and sometimes women went also."

Ernestine, Madam d'Hericourt explained, "contributed a great deal toward inspiring Americans with respect for intellectual freedom. She holds only to rational principles, is firm, courageous, disdainful of the attacks of narrowness, prejudice and bigotry. Like all great characters, she loves mankind in spite of their faults and ingratitude, and serves them faithfully. Never has she felt bitterness against her slanderers, never has spoken for fame, never has refuted the slanders against her. She does not care that her services are forgotten by those she has preceded in the difficult path of reform, or to see them take the foremost place among the leaders. She is satisfied to smile at this weakness."³⁸

Back in the United States in 1857, Ernestine met with Walt Whitman, who, knowing that she had once shared the platform with Frances Wright, talked at length to her about his admiration for Frances.

At the Free Convention held in Vermont in 1857, many subjects were addressed, including government, Free Trade, Slavery, Women's Rights, Marriage, the Sabbath, Spiritualism, Land Reform, Maternity, the Bible, Immortality, Shakerism and more. Ernestine, a vice president of the assembly, spoke

³⁶ Ernestine L. Rose, *Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, New York, 1990, p. 173-174.

³⁷ Ernestine L. Rose, *Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, New York, 1990, p. 179.

³⁸ "Ernestine L. Rose," Jenny P. d'Hericourt, *Agitator*, 6/25/1869, reprinted by *The Revolution*, 9/16/1869.

on slavery and woman's rights and was accused of supporting Free Love, which was, of course, a lie against a woman who loved and had been married to the same man for over twenty years.

Finally, in 1860, after nearly a quarter century of effort, Ernestine could rejoice in the passage of the Act Concerning the Rights and Liabilities of Husband and Wife in New York. This Act made women the sole owners of inherited property and the property they gained after their marriage, and allowed them to sell said property without their husbands' interference. In addition, married women could invest, engage in business, sign contracts, sue and be sued and had equal control of their children.

Celebrating this victory at their annual National Woman's Rights Convention, Elizabeth Cady Stanton moved that the gathering next propose changes to the legislature designed to liberalize divorce laws. Antoinette Brown, the clergywoman, opposed her, and convinced many other participants against Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Only Ernestine and Susan B. Anthony wholeheartedly supported the measures their friend had proposed, to be later joined by Lucretia Mott, but then, they were the most forward looking women at the Convention.

At this same convention, Ernestine spoke glowingly of the efforts of her friend Frances Wright. Now Ernestine was being called the new Frances Wright, and the Queen of the Platform.

When Lincoln was elected, Ernestine and her abolitionist friends wanted the Republican party to go further than its campaign promises of not extending slavery into new territories, wishing instead to abolish it altogether. The abolitionists mobilized their speakers, with Susan B. Anthony in charge of the campaign to convince the voters to grant full emancipation to the slaves. Mobs met them everywhere, seizing the platform, turning off the gas, and usually preventing the meeting from proceeding. In Albany, the last city on their tour, the Democratic mayor, although unsympathetic to the views of the abolitionists, was a strong advocate of free speech. He took a seat on the platform along with Ernestine, Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott, William Lloyd Garrison, Gerrit Smith, Frederick Douglass and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and, placing his pistol across his knees while confronting the audience, told the speakers to proceed. Ernestine spoke in the afternoon and evening sessions.³⁹

Ernestine promoted her friend Elizabeth Cady Stanton's liberal ideas on divorce in speeches made the following year. She also spoke against slavery, for the preservation of the Union, and for Atheism.

At this time, the labels "Infidel," "Atheist," and "Free Love Advocate" could ruin a person's career, social standing and effect their whole life. Much as the label "Communist" was used in the 1950's without substantiation, and only for negative effect, these labels were placed on many who did not follow these philosophies. By undertaking the task of forwarding legislation for married women, and for women in general, all of the leaders of the Woman's Rights movement were, at one time or another, labeled as "Free Lovers," or at least, of having "Free Love" sympathies. To the public the term "Free Love" meant sexual abandon, prostitution, wife swapping, and the end of civilization, but those labeled Free Lovers could be anyone who espoused legal equality for women. It is not surprising, then, that Ernestine should be accused of being a "Free Lover." In response, she stated in 1860, "The question of a Divorce law seems to me one of the greatest importance to all parties, but I presume that the very advocacy of divorce will be called 'Free Love.' For my part (and I wish distinctly to define my position), I do not know what others understand by the term; to me, in its truest significance, love must be free, or it ceases to be love. In its low and degrading sense, it is not love at all, and I have as little to do with its name as its reality." Ernestine Rose and Susan B. Anthony, both critics of the legal inequalities in marriage, felt it was an insult to bother denying that suffragists were connected with free love.⁴⁰

³⁹ Ernestine L. Rose, *Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, New York, 1990, p. 211.

⁴⁰ *Free Love & Anarchism: The Biography of Ezra Heywood*, Martin Henry Blatt, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1989, p. 102-103.

In 1861, Ernestine presented her famous "A Defense of Atheism" speech in Boston, contained herein. Just as when a child she felt she must speak her principles although she knew it would hurt her relationship with her father, she felt she must be true to her principles of Atheism despite the opposition it would cause within the woman's rights ranks.

The ladies suffered a setback the following year, when, in 1862, the New York legislature reversed part of its woman's rights bill passed in 1860, taking away equal control by the parents of their children, and returning the power to the husband.

During these Civil War years, the nation's attention was understandably more on war than on women. In 1863, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and others formed the Woman's National Loyal League. Ernestine served on the Business Committee of the group, and encouraged the passage of an amendment to free the slaves in all of the states of the country, not just in southern states, as the Emancipation Proclamation proposed. With the formation of the League, the tenor of the newspapers against the women changed. No longer were they harpies bent on destroying home and nation; instead they were portrayed as saviors of the union. Suddenly, Elizabeth Cady Stanton (president), Susan B. Anthony (secretary) and Ernestine L. Rose were found to have wisdom, virtue, loyalty, and patriotism.

In 1866 the war was over, and abolition groups turned their efforts toward gaining the vote for black men. The leaders of the woman's rights movement were furious that black and white women were ignored by abolitionists who had succeeded in part due to the dedicated years of toil on the part of women for their cause. When the question of extending voting rights was raised, most abolitionist leaders predicted that an attempt to argue for women's equal rights while arguing for the rights of former slaves to equality would hurt the chances of success for either group, and so they told the ladies to wait, and let the effort be first for the rights of black males, with women, they were assured, being next to achieve equality in the space of only a few years. This "short time," of course, would turn out to be over fifty years, and almost all of the abolitionist men and the woman's rights women arguing the issue would be dead before women were recognized as being human enough to be trusted with the vote.

Ernestine joined the Universal Peace Society in 1866, and spoke at several of its meetings. Her pacifism, however, was not inclusive of those who used military power to rule as tyrants over oppressed citizens.

By 1869, Ernestine was addressing working women's groups, speaking for workers rights as well as women's rights. At the American Equal Rights Association Convention held in May, in New York City, Ernestine was found sitting on the platform in a place of honor with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Madam d'Hericourt, Mary A. Livermore, Phoebe Couzins, Madam Anneke, Matilda Joslyn Gage, Frederick Douglass, Josephine Griffing, Paulina Wright Davis, Amelia Bloomer, and Sarah Norton (of the New York Working Women's Association). At this meeting, Ernestine proposed changing the name of the group to the National Woman's Rights Association.⁴¹ Lucy Stone argued against the name change, saying that until the former male slaves were ensured the right to vote, the name should remain Equal Rights, indicating male and female rights. The argument continued until Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who was filling the seat of the absent president, Lucretia Mott, said with her usual good humor that the issue would have to wait, for their constitution required a month's notice previous to the annual convention before a name change could take place.⁴²

At this Convention, Ernestine was elected to a seat on the Committee of Resolutions as well as being voted Vice President, along with Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Lucretia Mott retained her presidency of the organization.

⁴¹ *The Revolution*, Vol. III, No. 21, Whole No. 73, 5/27/1869.

⁴² *The Revolution*, Vol. III, No. 20, Whole No. 72, 5/20/1869.

That year, Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote a brief description of her friend Ernestine Rose, saying that historically, Ernestine had been second only to Frances Wright in speaking throughout the United States for women's rights. She called her "a woman of great beauty, refinement, and cultivation, - or generous impulses, liberal views, and oratorical power."⁴³

Later in 1869, Ernestine and William left for a well-deserved restful vacation to England. Only seventeen days before their departure, Ernestine had finally become a citizen of the United States, a move William had made in 1845. Since citizenship gave William the vote, but meant little to Ernestine politically, it is understandable why she was in no hurry to establish her citizenship in the United States.

Ernestine, through years of unending labor for the rights of all, independent of religious views, race, sex, or economic social level, was tired and ill from neuralgic and rheumatic pain. Susan B. Anthony arranged a farewell party for her old friend, presenting, among other gifts, a substantial sum of money raised by her admirers. Shortly after their departure, Wyoming became the first state to make their female citizens the legal equals of their male counterparts.

In London, Ernestine and William were reunited with their old friends George Jacob Holyoake and Charles Bradlaugh. After visiting London, the Rose's traveled to Germany and Switzerland, but were expected back in the United States within the year by their friends left behind.⁴⁴

Instead, the Roses returned to England. Settling finally in Bath, Ernestine complained in letters to her friends in the United States of her loneliness, saying, "Every denomination can be found in Bath, but I greatly fear *not one* Freethinker."⁴⁵

Although in a weakened condition, when she and William noticed placards announcing a meeting for the nomination of women to the local school board in Bath, Ernestine could not resist attending. Sitting quietly in the audience, expecting to be a spectator rather than a participant, Ernestine noticed that although this meeting was being held to elect women to the school board, no women were on the platform. When a paper written by Miss Burdett Coutts was read against women holding any public offices, and remarks solicited from the audience in response, Ernestine could sit quietly no longer. Ascending the platform, she faced the audience and said, "...I have all my life-time been interested in the education of all parties, particularly in the education of my own sex. Had I not heard just read that little paragraph coming from a lady who presumes to oppose the nomination of ladies on the School Board, I should not have ventured to ask permission to say anything, first, because there are enough present to say all that had need be said on the subject; and secondly, as I am here only for my health, I am hardly strong enough to be heard or to say what I ought to say on this all-important and interesting question; but if I ever had been in doubt that the world moves, that doubt has been removed by what I have heard to-day. Yes; the world moves. Woman is actually beginning to be considered as a human being - as a human being who has influences beyond the boudoir, the ball-room, and the theatre, for those, until very recently, have been the only places assigned to her except the kitchen and the cradle. Now, in all these places it is very desirable that the influence of woman for good should be felt, particularly so in the kitchen and at the cradle; but woman can have influences beyond all these. Indeed, I should like to ask the question, if I thought it possible to receive an answer - where is it, as far as the welfare of society is concerned, that woman cannot have an influence for better or for worse, and above all things where the education of the young is concerned? Why, woman, in her capacity as nurse and as mother, is the educator of society. She lays the first fundamental principles in

⁴³ "The Woman's Rights Movement and Its Champions in the United States," Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Eminent Women of the Age*, S.M Betts & Company, Hartford, CT, 1869, p. 362-363.

⁴⁴ "Mrs. Ernestine L. Rose in England," *The Revolution*, Laura Curtis Bullard, editor, 7/13/1870.

⁴⁵ *Ernestine L. Rose, Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, New York, 1990, p. 257.

the mind of the child which are hardly ever eradicated; and yet men, and sometimes women - I mean unthinking women - (and Miss Burdett Coutts, with all respect to her) - have never been capable of diving down to the very utmost roots of this great and important question, that of having women on the School Boards, and, indeed, on every committee formed for the training of human beings - men and women. I have come to the continent of Europe from beyond, as it is sometimes termed, 'the great pond' - from the other side of the Atlantic. I am a resident, if not a native (which I presume by my foreign accent you may probably discover) of the United States of America. Well, now, the son always learns a great deal from the parent, but sometimes it is just possible that the parent may learn something of the child. We, over there, have all the advantages which the parent can give to a child, but we have also the advantage of being younger, though we are growing old now. Being younger, we have more energy, and at times, I am happy to say, that energy has shown itself among my sex as much as among the other. There it is almost a settled fact that woman is a human being; that she has a mind, and that the mind requires cultivation; that she has wants and needs, which wants and needs require assistance. Hence, we are over there - don't be frightened at the name - a 'woman's rights' people - and if ever that should stare you clearly in the face in this country, remember that 'woman's rights' simply means 'human rights,' and that no woman, earnest enough to claim those rights, would for one moment have them based upon the wrongs of any human being. When we claim the right of woman to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, we claim that she shall be able to bring up our children, to lead our youth, to assist our manhood, and to aid the great family of man to become healthy, intelligent, and happy members of society. I thank you, my friends, for the privilege you have given me to address you, and will not further abuse it." She then retired from the platform amidst enthusiastic applause. Due to her efforts, two women were elected to the school board in Bath that election year.⁴⁶

As her strength returned, Ernestine once again began speaking on her favorite issues, traveling to Bath, Bristol and London, but most of the invitations she received to speak were denied because of her weakened condition.

A few of the invitations she did accept however, included speeches on Robert Owen, in front of audiences of over 1,000 in 1871, a protest meeting held after the House of Commons rejected the Woman's Disability Bill in 1872, and the National Society for Woman Suffrage meeting held in Edinburgh in 1873.

In 1873 the Rose's decided to make England their final home, and the couple returned briefly to the United States to liquidate their property.

In 1874, Ernestine and William returned to the United States for the express purpose of attending the annual anniversary meeting of the National Woman Suffrage Association. Ernestine again sat on the platform with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Paulina Wright Davis. Weaker than of old, she slowly approached the rostrum, but once she had begun to speak, she reclaimed her title as Queen of the Platform by delivering a powerful speech.⁴⁷

Ernestine continued speaking once she returned to England. On one occasion, out of curiosity, she and William attended a missionary meeting held in Brighton. When the minister preached against women's rights and infidelity, accusing the women of France of cutting off the arms and legs of men and eating them, due to Infidelity and Women's Rights, Ernestine could no longer remain silent. She rose and said, "You thought there was not a single woman's rights woman in this hall. Well, sir, you were mistaken. I plead

⁴⁶ "Mrs. Ernestine L. Rose in England," *The Revolution*, Laura Curtis Bullard, editor, 7/13/1870.

⁴⁷ *Ernestine L. Rose, Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, New York, 1990, p. 260.

guilty to being a woman's rights woman; and listening to you I wondered why you had not also ascribed the Massacre of St. Bartholomew to Infidels and Woman's Rights." She held the floor for fifteen minutes and to her great surprise was well received by the audience.⁴⁸

In 1878, although enduring a winter of severe illness, Ernestine accepted an invitation from Moncure Conway to address a General Conference of Liberal Thinkers. In her speech, she said, "My friend, Col. Higginson... had no pocket for the old definition of religion. My pocket is so full of humanity alone that I have no pocket for anything else. I go for man... All the emotion we can possibly possess, all the feeling of which human nature is capable, all belongs to man. If there be one God or ten thousand gods, they do not need it, but man does and woman does, and to me it is stealing from man what belongs to man to give to a god, and to render to him things that cannot benefit him.... Our life is short and we cannot spare an hour from the human race, even for all the gods in creation."⁴⁹

William and Ernestine traveled to the World Exposition in Paris in August, 1881, and stayed for the September gathering of the International Peace Congress. To her surprise, Ernestine was asked to address the congress as a representative of the New York Peace Society. She spoke in French and only for several minutes. After mentioning some of her own and her husband's activities in the peace movement both in America and abroad, she concluded with these words: "In every country, in every nation, I have concerned myself with those subjects which touch upon reform and the improvement of mankind."⁵⁰

In 1882, tragedy struck. Ernestine's lifelong partner and most enthusiastic supporter, died of a heart attack. Ernestine was devastated. Their friend, Charles Bradlaugh, delivered the eulogy.

The following year, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony visited Ernestine in England, asking her to come back to the United States, where she had spent so many years and was loved by so many, but Ernestine refused to leave the place in which her dear husband was buried, wishing to be buried next to him rather than thousands of miles away.

Susan wrote home that Ernestine was "vastly more isolated in England because of her non-Christian views than she ever was in America. Sectarianism sways everything here more now than fifty years ago with us."⁵¹

Although Ernestine did not return to the United States, neither did she retire from active participation in the women's rights movement in England. At the age of 76, she was "as outspoken and faithful to her recognition of truth, as she was half a century ago."⁵² She attended the British National Society for Woman Suffrage meetings, and addressed its members on women's rights.

A letter reporting on Ernestine's state was received by the *Woman's Tribune*, in 1891. It was revealed that "Mrs. Rose spent her birthday in her drawing room, sitting in her arm chair, looking very cheerful, her black eyes at times sparkling with interest or fun. She has still a very fresh complexion. Her memory at times somewhat fails, but she always rouses when I ask her about old times. One day I asked her about New Orleans and she brightened up and told me with great spirit of the day she was lecturing against slavery, and some of the audience threatened to tar and feather her. Mrs. Rose asked me to say she sincerely wished she could be in America and see some of her old friends as she feels lonely in England. She sends

⁴⁸ Ernestine L. Rose, *Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, New York, 1990, p. 261.

⁴⁹ Ernestine L. Rose, *Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, New York, 1990, p. 265.

⁵⁰ Ernestine L. Rose, *Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, New York, 1990, p. 266.

⁵¹ Ernestine L. Rose, *Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, New York, 1990, 269.

⁵² "Ernestine Rose," Richard Mott, *The Woman's Tribune*, August, 1886.

her best wishes to the Convention and says, 'tell them they can get her speech on Woman's Rights at Mendum's, Boston, and that she still agrees with everything in the speech, not subtracting nor adding anything.'⁵³

When Ernestine thought of death approaching, she told her friends, "It is no longer necessary for me to live. I can do nothing now. But I have lived...I have lived." She did not fear the burning hell of a believer, but rather, that when in a weakened state, confused by a final illness, the ghouls of religion might descend upon her and, quite without her being aware of it, cause her to retract those ideals which she had upheld all her life. She was a known Atheist, and false claims had been made of other Atheists repenting their Atheism on their deathbeds. Ernestine did not want anyone ever quoting her as a repentant of her truest knowledge. She therefore asked her young, publicly Atheistic friend, Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner, daughter of Charles Bradlaugh, to please speed to her in all haste whenever she heard of her becoming dangerously ill, and ensure her last hours were peaceful ones, standing guard against buzzards in cassocks who, she feared, would circle her death bed.

Hypatia reported that Ernestine died in Brighton, August 4, 1892, at the age of 83. "Her last hours passed away peacefully and were quite untouched by any thoughts of religion," Hypatia confirmed. She was laid with her loving partner William, her body not taken into any chapel or church for a ceremony, and her friend George Jacob Holyoake presenting her funeral oration, following her wishes.

As reported in the United States, "to the very last moment she never wavered [in her Atheism] and there is no record anywhere of any aspersion from pulpit or pew where she is even believed to have recanted in her views. This is a tribute in itself, for the custom of orthodoxy is not to permit any Freethinker to die without asserting some such change."⁵⁴

At the 1893 Convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association meeting, Ernestine was remembered by Susan B. Anthony. "For half a century, as a public speaker her eloquent voice was heard on both continents, she having taken an active part in all the great progressive movements of our day, associated with the most influential classes of thinkers and reformers in both Europe and America. All through those eventful years Mrs. Rose fought a double battle, not only for the political rights of her sex, but for their religious rights as individual souls, to do their own thinking and believing. How much of the freedom we now enjoy may be due to this noble Polish woman, cannot be estimated, for moral influences are too subtle for measurement. Those who sat with her in bygone days on the platform will remember her matchless powers as a speaker, and how safe we all felt when she had the floor that neither in manner, sentiment, argument nor repartee would she in any way compromise the dignity of the occasion. She had the advantage of rare grace and beauty, which in a measure heightened the effect of all she said. She had a rich, musical voice, and a ready flow of choice language; in style she was clear, logical, and at times impassioned. I visited her during her last sad days in London, after the death of her husband, when she was stricken with the disease that terminated her life. She talked with deep feeling of her eventful life, and with a lively interest in what was still passing, familiar as she was with every step of progress in our movement both in England and America. 'I am happy,' she said, at parting, 'that I have helped to usher in the dawn of a new day for woman, even in [a] humble capacity...' Of death and the future life she said nothing. I had often heard her say in former days that of the future she knew nothing, and seldom thought of that subject as she had always found enough in this life to occupy her time and thoughts. She had no fears of death and passed away calmly, sustained in her last days by the same philosophy that inspired her noble, unselfish life."⁵⁵

⁵³ *The Woman's Tribune*, 4/11/91.

⁵⁴ "Ernestine Louise Rose," *The Blue Grass Blade*, 6/14/1908.

⁵⁵ *The Woman's Tribune*, 1/17/93.

Truly, as Samuel Porter Putnam reported, Ernestine never lost her intellectual ardor; until death she was a champion of Freethought.⁵⁶ The *Blue Grass Blade* said of her "Ernestine Louise Rose lived and died a Freethinker. Her passage across the stage of human life was marked with a brilliancy seldom equalled by man or woman and the Freethinkers of this day and age can well afford to ponder upon this sublime character and find therein an inspiration for greater and more serious efforts themselves."⁵⁷

On October 5, 1996, Ernestine was inducted into the Women's Hall of Fame, located in Seneca Falls, New York, joining her old friend Elizabeth Cady Stanton in the honor. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the newspaper reporting the event mentioned her women's rights and abolition activities, but made no mention of her Atheism.⁵⁸

A Defence of Atheism

**Being a Lecture Delivered in Mercantile Hall, Boston, April 10th,
1861, by Mrs. Ernestine L. Rose.**

MY FRIENDS: - In undertaking the inquiry of the existence of a God, I am fully conscious of the difficulties I have to encounter. I am well aware that the very question produces in most minds a feeling of awe, as if stepping on forbidden ground, too holy and sacred for mortals to approach. The very question strikes them with horror, and it is owing to this prejudice so deeply implanted by education, and also strengthened by public sentiment, that so few are willing to give it a fair and impartial investigation, - knowing but too well that it casts a stigma and reproach upon any person bold enough to undertake the task, unless his previously known opinions are a guarantee that his conclusions would be in accordance and harmony with the popular demand. But believing, as I do, that Truth only is beneficial, and Error, from whatever source, and under whatever name, is pernicious to man, I consider no place too holy, no subject too sacred, for man's earnest investigation; for by so doing only can we arrive at Truth, learn to discriminate it from Error, and be able to accept the one and reject the other.

Nor is this the only impediment in the way of this inquiry. The question arises, Where shall we begin? We have been told, that "by searching none can find out God," which has so far proved true; for, as yet, no one has ever been able to find him. The most strenuous believer has to acknowledge that it is only a belief, but he *knows* nothing on the subject. Where, then, shall we search for his existence? Enter the material world; ask the Sciences whether they can disclose the mystery? Geology speaks of the structure of the Earth, the formation of the different strata, of coal, of granite, of the whole mineral kingdom. - It reveals the remains and traces of animals long extinct, but gives us no clue whereby we may prove the existence of a God.

Natural history gives us a knowledge of the animal kingdom in general; the different organisms, structures, and powers of the various species. Physiology teaches the nature of man, the laws that govern his being, the functions of the vital organs, and the conditions upon which alone health and life depend. Phrenology treats of the laws of mind, the different portions of the brain, the temperaments, the organs, how to develop some and repress others to produce a well balanced and healthy condition. But in the whole animal economy - though the brain is considered to be a "microcosm," in which may be traced a resemblance

⁵⁶ *400 Years of Freethought*, Samuel Putnam Porter, The Truth Seeker Company, p. 795.

⁵⁷ *The Blue Grass Blade*, Editor Charlesworth, 6/14/08.

⁵⁸ "Eleven illustrious women take their place in Hall of Fame," Mary Bridgman, *The Columbus Dispatch*, 10/4/1996, p. 1C.

or relationship with everything in Nature - not a spot can be found to indicate the existence of a God.

Mathematics lays the foundation of all the exact sciences. It teaches the art of combining numbers, of calculating and measuring distances, how to solve problems, to weigh mountains, to fathom the depths of the ocean; but it gives no directions how to ascertain the existence of a God.

Enter Nature's great laboratory - Chemistry. - She will speak to you of the various elements, their combinations and uses, of the gasses constantly evolving and combining in different proportions, producing all the varied objects, the interesting and important phenomena we behold. She proves the indestructibility of matter, and its inherent property - motion; but in all her operations, no demonstrable fact can be obtained to indicate the existence of a God.

Astronomy tells us of the wonders of the Solar System - the eternally revolving planets, the rapidity and certainty of their motions, the distance from planet to planet, from star to star. It predicts with astonishing and marvelous precision the phenomena of eclipses, the visibility upon our Earth of comets, and proves the immutable law of gravitation, but is entirely silent on the existence of a God.

In fine, descend into the bowels of the Earth, and you will learn what it contains; into the depths of the ocean, and you will find the inhabitants of the great deep; but neither in the Earth above, nor the waters below, can you obtain any knowledge of his existence. Ascend into the heavens, and enter the "milky way," go from planet to planet to the remotest star, and ask the eternally revolving systems, Where is God? and Echo answers, Where?

The Universe of Matter gives us no record of his existence. Where next shall we search? Enter the Universe of Mind, read the millions of volumes written on the subject, and in all the speculations, the assertions, the assumptions, the theories, and the creeds, you can only find Man stamped in an indelible impress his own mind on every page. In describing his God, he delineated his own character: the picture he drew represents in living and ineffaceable colors the epoch of his existence - the period he lived in.

It was a great mistake to say that God made man in his image. Man, in all ages, made his God in his own image; and we find that just in accordance with his civilization, his knowledge, his experience, his taste, his refinement, his sense of right, of justice, of freedom, and humanity, - so has he made his God. But whether coarse or refined; cruel and vindictive, or kind and generous; an implacable tyrant, or a gentle and loving father; - it still was the emanation of his own mind - the picture of himself.

But, you ask, how came it that man thought or wrote about God at all? The answer is very simple. Ignorance is the mother of Superstition. In proportion to man's ignorance is he superstitious - does he believe in the mysterious. The very name has a charm for him. Being unacquainted with the nature and laws of things around him, with the true causes of the effects he witnessed, he ascribed that to false ones - to supernatural agencies. The savage, ignorant of the mechanism of a watch, attributes the ticking to a spirit. The so-called civilized man, equally ignorant of the mechanism of the Universe, and the laws which govern it, ascribes it to the same erroneous cause. Before electricity was discovered, a thunder-storm was said to come from the wrath of an offended deity. To this fiction of man's uncultivated mind, has been attributed all of good and evil, of wisdom and of folly. Man has talked about him, written about him, disputed about him, fought about him, - sacrificed himself, and extirpated his fellow man. Rivers of blood and oceans of tears have been shed to please him, yet no one has ever been able to demonstrate his existence.

But the bible, we are told, reveals this great mystery. Where nature is dumb, and man ignorant, revelation speaks in the authoritative voice of prophecy. Then let us see whether that revelation can stand the test of reason and of truth. - God, we are told, is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, - all wise, all just, and all good; that he is perfect. So far, so well; for less than perfection were unworthy of a God. The first act recorded of him is, that he created the world out of nothing; but unfortunately the revelation of Science - Chemistry - which is based not on written words, but demonstrable facts, says that Nothing has no existence, and therefore out of Nothing, Nothing could be made. Revelation tells us that the world was created in six days. Here Geology steps in and says, that it requires thousands of ages to form the various strata of the earth. The bible tells us that the earth was flat and stationary, and the sun moves around the earth.

Copernicus and Galileo *flatly* deny this *flat* assertion, and demonstrate by astronomy that the earth is spherical, and revolves around the sun. Revelation tells us that on the fourth day God created the sun, moon, and stars. This astronomy calls a moon story, and says that the first three days, before the great torchlight was manufactured and suspended in the great lantern above, must have been rather dark.

The division of the waters above from the waters below, and the creation of the minor objects, I pass by, and come at once to the sixth day.

Having finished, in five days, this stupendous production, with its mighty mountains, its vast seas, its fields and woods; supplied the waters with fishes - from the whale that Jonah swallowed [*sic*] to the little Dutch herring; peopled the woods with inhabitants - from the tiger, the lion, the bear, the elephant with his trunk, the dromedary with his hump, the deer with his antlers, the nightingale with her melodies, down to the serpent which tempted mother Eve; covered the fields with vegetation, decorated the gardens with flowers, hung the trees with fruits; and surveying this glorious world as it lay spread out like a map before him, the question naturally suggested itself. What is it all for, unless there were beings capable of admiring, of appreciating, and of enjoying the delights this beautiful world could afford? And suiting the action to the impulse, he said "Let us make man." "So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them."

I presume by the term "image," we are not to understand a near resemblance of face or form, but in the image or likeness of his knowledge, his power, his wisdom, and perfection. Having thus made man, he placed him (them) in the garden of Eden - the loveliest and most enchanting spot at the very head of creation, and bade them (with the single restriction not to eat of the tree of knowledge,) to live, to love, and to be happy.

What a delightful picture, could we only rest here! But did these beings, fresh from the hand of omnipotent wisdom, in whose image they were made, answer the great object of their creation? Alas! no. No sooner were they installed in their Paradisean home than they violated the first, the only injunction given them, and fell from their high estate; and not only they, but by a singular justice of that very merciful Creator, their innocent posterity to all coming generations, fell with them! Does that bespeak wisdom and perfection in the Creator, or in the creature? But what was the cause of this tremendous fall, which frustrated the whole design of the creation? The serpent tempted mother Eve, and she like a good wife, tempted her husband. But did God not know when he created the serpent, that it would tempt the woman, and that *she* was made out of such frail materials, (the rib of Adam,) as not to be able to resist the temptation? If he did not know, then his knowledge was at fault; if he did, but could not prevent that calamity, then his power was at fault; if he knew and could, but would not, then his goodness was at fault. Choose which you please, and it remains alike fatal to the rest.

Revelation tells us that God made man perfect, and found him imperfect; then he pronounced all things good, and found them most desperately bad. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thought of his heart was evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." "And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created, from the face of the earth; both man and beasts, and the creeping things, and the fowls of the air, for it repenteth me that I have made them." So he destroyed everything except Noah with his family, and a few household pets. Why he saved *them* is hard to say, unless it was to reserve material as stock in hand to commence a new world with; but really, judging of the character of those he saved, by the descendants, it strikes me it would have been much better, and given him far less trouble, to have let them slip also, and with his improved experience made a new world out of fresh and superior materials.

As it was, this wholesale destruction even, was a failure. The world was not one jot better after the flood than before. His chosen children were just as bad as ever, and he had to send his prophets, again and again, to threaten, to frighten, to coax, to cajole, and to flatter them into good behaviour. But all to no effect. They grew worse and worse; and having made a covenant with Noah after he had sacrificed of "every clean beast and of every clean fowl," - "The Lord smelt the sweet savour: and the Lord said in his heart, I

will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth: neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done." And so he was forced to resort to the last sad alternative of sending "his only begotten son," his second self, to save them. But alas! "his own received him not," and so he was obliged to adopt the Gentiles, and die to save the world. Did he succeed, even then? Is the world saved? Saved! From what? From ignorance? It is all around us. From poverty, vice, crime, sin, misery, and shame? These abound everywhere. Look into your poor houses, your prisons, your lunatic asylums; contemplate the whip, the instruments of torture, and of death; ask the murderer, or his victim; listen to the ravings of the maniac, the shrieks of distress, the groans of despair; mark the cruel deeds of the tyrant, the crimes of slavery, and the suffering of the oppressed; count the millions of lives lost by fire, by water, and by the sword; measure the blood spilled, the tears shed, the sighs of agony drawn from the expiring victims on the altar of fanaticism; - and tell me from what the world was saved? And why was it not saved? Why does God still permit these horrors to afflict the race? Does omniscience not know it? Could omnipotence not do it? Would infinite wisdom, power, and goodness allow his children thus to live, to suffer, and to die? No! Humanity revolts against such a supposition.

Ah! not now, not here, says the believer. Hereafter will he save them. Save them hereafter! From what? From the apple eaten by our mother Eve? What a mockery! If a rich parent were to let his children live in ignorance, poverty, and wretchedness, all their lives, and hold out to them the promise of a fortune at some time hereafter, he would justly be considered a criminal, or a mad man. The parent is responsible to his offspring - the creator to the creature.

The testimony of Revelation has failed. Its account of the creation of the material world is disproved by science. Its account of the creation of man in the image of perfection, is disproved by its own internal evidence. To test the bible God by justice and benevolence, he could not be good; to test him by reason and knowledge, he could not be wise; to test him by the light of truth, the rule of consistency, we must come to the inevitable conclusion that, like the Universe of matter and of mind, this pretended revelation has also failed to demonstrate the existence of a God.

Methinks I hear the believer say, you are unreasonable; you demand an impossibility; we are finite, and therefore cannot understand, much less define and demonstrate the infinite. Just so! But if I am unreasonable in asking you to demonstrate the existence of the being you wish me to believe in, are you not infinitely more unreasonable to expect me to believe - blame, persecute, and punish me for not believing - in what you have to acknowledge you cannot understand?

But, says the Christian, the world exists, and therefore there must have been a God to create it. That does not follow. The mere fact of its existence does not prove a creator. Then how came the Universe into existence? We do not know; but the ignorance of man is certainly no proof of the existence of a God. Yet upon that very ignorance has it been predicated, and is maintained. From the little knowledge we have, we are justified in the assertion that the Universe never was created, from the simple fact that not one atom of it can ever be annihilated. To suppose a Universe created, is to suppose a time when it did not exist, and that is a self-evident absurdity. Besides, where was the creator before it was created? Nay, where is he now? Outside of that Universe, which means the all in all, above, below, and around? That is another absurdity. Is he contained within? Then he can be only a part, for the whole includes all the parts. If a part, then he could not be its creator, for a part cannot create the whole. But the world could not have made itself. True; nor could God have made himself; and if you must have a God to make the world, you will be under the same necessity to have another to make him, and others still to make them, and so on until reason and common sense are at a stand-still.

The same argument applies to a First Cause. We can no more admit of a first than a last cause. What is a first cause? The one immediately preceding the last effect, which was an effect to a cause in its turn - an effect to causes, themselves effects. All we know is an eternal chain of cause and effect, without beginning as without end.

But is there no evidence of intelligence, of design, and consequently of a designer? What is

intelligence? It is not a thing, a substance, an existence in itself, but simply a property of matter, manifesting itself through organizations. We have no knowledge of, nor can we conceive of, intelligence apart from organized matter; and we find that from the smallest and simplest insect, through all the links and gradations in Nature's great chain, up to Man - just in accordance with the organism, the amount, and quality of brain, so are the capacities to receive impressions, the power to retain them, and the abilities to manifest and impart them to others, namely, to have its peculiar nature cultivated and developed, so as to bear mental fruits, just as the cultivated earth bears vegetation - physical fruits. Not being able to recognize an independent intelligence, I can perceive no design or designer except in the works of man.

But, says Paley, does the watch not prove a watchmaker - a design, and therefore a designer? How much more then does the Universe? Yes; the watch shows design, and the watchmaker did not leave us in the dark on the subject, but clearly and distinctly stamped his design on the face of the watch. Is it as clearly stamped on the Universe? Where is the design, in the oak to grow to its majestic height? or in the thunderbolt that rent it asunder? In the formation of the wing of the bird, to enable it to fly, in accordance with the promptings of its nature? or in the sportsman to shoot it down while flying? In the butterfly to dance in the sunshine? or its being crushed in the tiny fingers of a child? Design in man's capacity for the acquisition of knowledge, or in his groping in ignorance? In the necessity to obey the laws of health, or in the violation of them, which produces disease? In the desire to be happy, or in the causes that prevent it, and make him live in toil, misery, and suffering?

The watchmaker not only stamped his design on the face of the watch, but he teaches how to wind it up when run down; how to repair the machinery when out of order; and how to put a new spring in when the old one is broken, and leave the watch as good as ever. Does the great watchmaker, as he is called, show the same intelligence and power in keeping, or teaching others to keep, this contemplated mechanism - Man - always in good order? and when the life-spring is broken replace it with another, and leave him just the same? If an Infinite Intelligence designed man to possess knowledge, he could not be ignorant; to be healthy, he could not be diseased; to be virtuous, he could not be vicious; to be wise, he could not act so foolish as to trouble himself about the gods, and neglect his own best interests.

But, says the believer, here is a wonderful adaptation of means to ends; the eye to see, the ear to hear, &c. Yes, this is very wonderful; but not one jot more so, than if the eye were made to hear, and the ear to see. The supporters of Design use sometimes very strange arguments. A friend of mine, a very intelligent man, with quite a scientific taste, endeavored once to convince me of a providential design, from the fact that a fish, which had always lived in the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky, was entirely blind. Here, said he, is strong evidence; in that dark cave, where nothing was to be seen, the fish needed no eyes, and therefore it has none. He forgot the demonstrable fact that the element of light is indispensable in the formation of the organ of sight, without which it could not be formed, and no providence, or gods, could enable the fish to see. That fish story reminds me of the methodist preacher who proved the wisdom and benevolence of Providence in always placing the rivers near large cities, and death at the end of life; for Oh! my dear hearers, said he, what would have become of us had he placed it at the beginning?

Everything is wonderful, and wonderful just in proportion as we are ignorant; but that proves no "design" or "designer." But did things come by chance? I am asked. Oh! no. There is no such thing as chance. It exists only in the perverted mind of the believer, who, while insisting that God was the cause of everything, leaves *him* without any cause. The atheist believes as little in the one as in the other. He knows that no effect could exist without an adequate cause; that everything in the Universe is governed by laws.

The Universe is one vast chemical laboratory, in constant operation, by her internal forces. The laws or principles of attraction, and repulsion, produce in never-ending succession the phenomena of composition, decomposition, and recomposition. The *how*, we are too ignorant to understand, too modest to presume, and too honest to profess. Had man been a patient and impartial inquirer, and not with childish

presumption attributed everything he could not understand, to supernatural causes, given names to hide his ignorance, but observed the operations of nature, he would undoubtedly have known more, been wiser, and happier.

As it is, Superstition has ever been the great impediment to the acquisition of knowledge. Every progressive step of man clashed against the two-edged sword of religion, to whose narrow restrictions he had but too often to succumb, or march onward at the expense of interest, reputation, and even life itself.

But, we are told, that religion is natural; the belief in a God universal. Were it natural, then it would indeed be universal; but it is not. We have ample evidence to the contrary. According to Dr. Livingstone, there are whole tribes or nations, civilized, moral, and virtuous: yes, so honest that they expose their goods for sale without guard or value set upon them, trusting to the honor of the purchaser to pay its proper price. - Yet these people have not the remotest idea of a god, and he found it impossible to impart it to them. And in all ages of the world, some of the most civilized, the wisest, and the best were entire unbelievers, only they dared not openly avow it, except at the risk of their lives. Proscription, the torture and the stake, were found most efficient means to seal the lips of heretics; and though the march of progress has broken the infernal machines, and extinguished the fires of the Inquisition, the proscription, and more refined but not less cruel and bitter persecutions of an intolerant and bigoted public opinion, in protestant countries, as well as in catholic, on account of belief, are quite enough to prevent men from honestly vowing their true sentiments upon the subject. - Hence there are few possessed of the moral courage of a Humboldt.

If the belief in a god were natural, there would be no need to teach it. Children would possess it as well as adults, the layman as the priest, the heathen as much as the missionary. We don't have to teach the general elements of human nature, - the five senses, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling. They are universal; so would religion be were *it* natural, but it is not. On the contrary, it is an interesting and demonstrable fact, that all children are atheists, and were religion not inculcated into their minds they would remain so. Even as it is, they are great skeptics, until made sensible of the potent weapon by which religion has ever been propagated, namely, fear - fear of the lash of public opinion here, and of a jealous, vindictive God hereafter. No; there is no religion in human nature, nor human nature in religion. It is purely artificial, the result of education, while atheism is natural, and, were the human mind not perverted and bewildered by the mysteries and follies of superstition, would be universal.

But the people have been made to believe that were it not for religion, the world would be destroyed; - man would become a monster, chaos and confusion would reign supreme. These erroneous notions conceived in ignorance, propagated by superstition, and kept alive by an interested and corrupt priesthood who fatten on the credulity of the public, are very difficult to be eradicated.

But sweep all the belief in the supernatural from the face of the earth, and the world would remain just the same. The seasons would follow each other in their regular succession; the stars would shine in the firmament; the sun would shed his benign and vivifying influence of light and heat upon us; the clouds would discharge their burden in gentle and refreshing showers; the cultivated fields would bring forth vegetation; summer would ripen the golden grain, ready for harvest; the trees would bear fruits; the birds would sing in accordance with their happy instinct, and all Nature would smile as joyously around us as ever. Nor would man degenerate. Oh! no. His nature, too, would remain the same. He would have to be obedient to the physical, mental, and moral laws of his being, or suffer the natural penalty for their violation; observe the mandates of society, or receive the punishment. His affections would be just as warm, the love of self-preservation as strong, the desire for happiness and the fear of pain as great. He would love freedom, justice, and truth, and hate oppression, fraud, and falsehood, as much as ever.

Sweep all belief in the supernatural from the globe, and you would chase away the whole fraternity of spectres, ghosts, and hobgoblins, which have so befogged and bewildered the human mind, that hardly a clear ray of the light of reason can penetrate it. You would cleanse and purify the heart of the noxious, poisonous weeds of superstition, with its bitter, deadly fruits - hypocrisy, bigotry, and intolerance, and fill it

with charity and forbearance towards erring humanity. You would give man courage to sustain him in trials and misfortune, sweeten his temper, give him a new zest for the duties, the virtues, and the pleasures of life.

Morality does not depend on the belief in any religion. History gives ample evidence that the more belief the less virtue and goodness. Nor need we go back to ancient times to see the crimes and atrocities perpetrated under its sanction. We have enough in our own times. Look at the present crisis - at the South with 4,000,000 of human beings in slavery, bought and sold like brute chattels under the sanction of religion and of God, which the Reverends Van Dykes and the Raphalls of the North fully endorse, and the South complains that the reforms in the North are owing to infidelity. Morality depends on an accurate knowledge of the nature of man, of the laws that govern his being, the principles of right, of justice, and humanity, and the conditions requisite to make him healthy, rational, virtuous, and happy.

The belief in a God has failed to produce this desirable end. On the contrary, while it could not make man better, it has made him worse; for in preferring blind faith in things unseen and unknown to virtue and morality, in directing his attention from the known to the unknown, from the real to the imaginary, from the certain here to a fancied hereafter, from the fear of himself, of the natural result of vice and crime, to some whimsical despot, it perverted his judgment, degraded him in his own estimation, corrupted his feelings, destroyed his sense of right, of justice, and of truth, and made him a moral coward and a hypocrite. The lash of a hereafter is no guide for us here. Distant fear cannot control present passion. It is much easier to confess your sins in the dark, than to acknowledge them in the light; to make it up with a God you don't see, than with a man whom you do. Besides, religion has always left a back door open for sinners to creep out of at the eleventh hour. But teach man to do right, to love justice, to revere truth, to be virtuous, not because a God would reward or punish him hereafter, but because it is right; and as every act brings its own reward or its own punishment, it would best promote his interest by promoting the welfare of society. Let him feel the great truth that our highest happiness consists in making all around us happy; and it would be an infinitely truer and safer guide for man to a life of usefulness, virtue, and morality, than all the beliefs in all the Gods every imagined.

The more refined and transcendental religionists have often said to me, if you do away with religion, you would destroy the most beautiful element in human nature - the feeling of devotion and reverence, ideality, and sublimity. This, too, is an error. These sentiments would be cultivated just the same, only we would transfer the devotion from the unknown to the known; from the Gods, who, if they existed, could not need it, to man who does. Instead of reverencing an imaginary existence, man would learn to revere justice and truth. Ideality and sublimity would refine his feelings, and enable him to admire and enjoy the ever-changing beauties of Nature; the various and almost unlimited powers and capacities of the human mind; the exquisite and indescribable charms of a well cultivated, highly refined, virtuous, noble man.

But not only have the priests tried to make the very term atheism odious, as if it would destroy all of good and beautiful in nature, but some of the reformers, not having the moral courage to avow their own sentiments, wishing to be popular, fearing least their reforms would be considered infidel, (as all reforms assuredly are,) shield themselves from the stigma, by joining in the tirade against atheism, and associate it with everything that is vile, with the crime of slavery, the corruptions of the Church, and all the vices imaginable. This is false, and they know it; atheism protects against this injustice. No one has a right to give the term a false, a forced interpretation, to suit his own purposes, (this applies also to some of the infidels who stretch and force the term atheist out of its legitimate significance.) As well might we use the terms episcopalian, unitarian, universalist, to signify vice and corruption, as the term atheist, which means simply a disbelief in God, because finding no demonstration of his existence, man's reason will not allow him to believe, nor his conviction to play the hypocrite, and profess what he does not believe. Give it its true significance, and he will abide the consequence; but don't fasten upon it the vices belonging to yourselves. Hypocrisy is the prolific mother of a large family!

In conclusion, the atheist says to the honest, conscientious believer, Though I cannot believe in your God whom you have failed to demonstrate, I believe in man; if I have no faith in your religion, I have faith, unbounded, unshaken faith in the principles of right, of justice, and humanity. Whatever good you are willing to do for the sake of your God, I am full as willing to do for the sake of man. But the monstrous crimes the believer perpetrated in persecuting and exterminating his fellow man on account of difference of belief, the atheist, knowing that belief is not voluntary, but depends on evidence, and therefore there can be no merit in the belief of any religions, nor demerit in a disbelief in all of them, could never be guilty of. Whatever good you would do out of fear of punishment, or hope of reward hereafter, the atheist would do simply because *it is* good; and, *being so*, he would receive the far surer and more certain reward, springing from well-doing, which would constitute his pleasure, and promote his happiness.

- *The Ironclad Age*, Volume 34, No. 24, 8/24/1889, p. 1.

- *American Atheist*, February 1988, p. 20-25.



No Picture Available

ANNE ROYALL

ANNE ROYALL¹

6/11/1769 - 10/1/1854

Anne Newport was a poor child, raised in the frontier of Pennsylvania. She withstood the terrors of frequent Native American raids, and later, when the Revolutionary War began, the threat of the British enemy. She lived with her mother, Mary, father and little sister, also named Mary, in an 8 by 10 cabin, far from neighbors, and even more distant from any source of education. While in the frontier, her father died, and her mother hired herself out to work at the homes of her neighbors. Anne's mother remarried and bore a son, James, only to have her second husband killed in another Native American raid. That was enough for her. She packed up Anne and James and moved back to Virginia, leaving Mary with another family. The two sisters would only meet twice in the next forty years.²

Anne and her mother moved to the Anderson farm in Virginia, where Mary worked as a servant. This was the first time young Anne was treated differently because of social status, and she hated it. She also hated the all-day Sunday sermons at the Presbyterian church, where she sat with the servants. She hated the hypocrisy of the rich parishioners who extolled the "christian virtues," then, at the end of the services, refused to speak with their fellow parishioners of the servant class.

As an escape from her situation, Anne began reading, and was soon lost in books. She was still lonely, however. Then, one day, she met Mrs. Anne Lewis, a neighbor who was actually both wealthy and kind. One of the stories Mrs. Lewis told Anne was of a courageous Revolutionary War hero, William Royall, who, during seven and a half years of service during the war, had never collected any pay, nor even claimed his daily ration. He had so admired the bravery of the frontier fighters that now he chose to live on the edge of the frontier rather than in "civilized" Virginia. When Mrs. Lewis and her husband, a former Colonel in the Revolutionary army, moved to land adjoining Major Royall's, Anne and her mother followed, and began their employment with the Major.

Major Royall and the Lewis's lived on the edge of a site called Sweet Springs, promoted as a health-producing spring. There, William had built a manor reminiscent of mansions to the east. As people moved to the area to enjoy the healthy water there, William helped the new settlers, and served his community by sitting on the circuit court grand jury, and obtaining government grants for public improvements to the area.

William was somewhat disappointed that more sweeping changes had not occurred after the war, for he abhorred that his cousin Thomas Jefferson's attempts for a public school system were rejected, and that voting was still restricted to land owners, and, worse yet, that the votes of those in western Virginia were not "worth" as much as votes of the gentry to the east, with one thousand western votes equally one hundred eastern votes.³ In addition, there was still an established church in Virginia, with special privileges. Still, William was optimistic that the American people would come around to true democratic policies.

William was delighted that Anne took an interest in his library, and began educating her. They both rejoiced the day a newspaper arrived from Philadelphia stating that Thomas Jefferson's "Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom" had been enacted. The Anglican Church was at last stripped of its privileges in the state. William disliked organized religions, preferring Freemasonry, a brotherhood which had included George

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Most of the information for this sketch was found in *Anne Royall's U.S.A.*, by Bessie Rowland James, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1972.

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Anne Royall's U.S.A., Bessie Rowland James, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1972, p. 21.

³

Anne Royall's U.S.A., Bessie Rowland James, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1972, p. 32.

Washington, Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock and Mozart. William felt the Freemasons "lived" the christian ideals about which preachers only talked. Organized religion, William thought, existed only to collect money and fill minds with intolerance for others.

On November 18, 1797, Anne and William were married. Anne was twenty-eight; William in his mid-fifties. Their marriage brought Anne into the company of many of the "privileged" classes, including her husbands eastern relatives. As William aged, he began drinking, and sometimes became violent while drunk, but Anne saw that he did not hurt himself or others during these times. On December 12, 1812, William died. Anne was 43 years old.

William left Anne his estate, which should have allowed her to live in comfort for the rest of her life. First, she placed the estate for sale and moved to Charleston, where she had a tavern built, and became its' proprietor. Anne was looking forward to a happy ending to her life. Little did she anticipate the hateful steps taken by her husbands eastern relatives.

In 1814, the relatives petitioned the court to annul William's will, calling it a forgery written by Anne. They demanded the money be given to them, and that, while the court was deciding, any money in Anne's control be taken from her.

Anne was suddenly in a panic. She leased the tavern out with the stipulation that she be given a room in which to live. Anne began traveling to obtain depositions from neighbors who had known William, to support her claim to his estate. For two years she waited for the court to decide her fate, without money and living on credit. Finally, she sold the one piece of land she owned that was not disputed, and paid her debts, leaving her little in reserve.

Finally, in 1817, the case came to court. When Anne won the first round, William's relatives appealed. While waiting for the case to come to court, Anne traveled to Alabama. During the trip, she wrote letters to an old friend, attorney Matt Dunbar, who was representing her gratis in court.

When Anne returned to court in 1819, it was to suffer defeat. William's relatives had broken the will, leaving Anne with one-third the estate due her as a widow, of which all was taken in attorney fees and "iniquitous costs." Once she had lost this suit, she was bombarded by suits from those to whom she owed money, who had been waiting for the results of the case. When it reached the point that Anne was threatened with debtors prison, she escaped to Alabama, where she stayed four years.

Traveling through the state, Anne wrote her friend Matt, "There is a great deal of preaching here and a great many ill-natured remarks pass between the Presbyterians and Methodists. It appears the Methodists have braved every danger, and preached to the people gratis, in the settling of the country. Now that the people have become wealthy, those sly fellows, the Presbyterians are creeping in to reap the harvest." Of this, she commented, "Wherever I turn, I see ignorance the most besetting crime. When our reason is cultivated and our minds enlightened by education, we are enabled to strip off that disguise which knavery, bigotry, and superstition wear."⁴

Hearing from Matt that the few possessions she had left behind had been confiscated and sold for debt, and that she had absolutely no money from the estate, Anne wrote back that she was considering a bold plan - writing for a living. She requested he bundle up the letters she had written him, and published them under the title *Letters from Alabama*. At the same time, she wrote a novel called *The Tennessean*. She then planned a book on travel, for which she would offer subscriptions, or money advanced before the publication of a book, to finance her trip. She would call the book *Sketches of History, Life and Manners in the United States*.

Matt, meanwhile, was elected a state representative, and attempted to obtain a pension for Anne due to William's military service. When the Pension Bureau answered that it could find no record of William

⁴ Anne Royall's U.S.A., Bessie Rowland James, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1972, p. 86-87.

having served in the military, the shock drove Anne to her bed, but only for a short while. She determined to go to Washington City herself and find the records proving her husband's service, and thus obtain a small pension. She arrived penniless, but a hotel proprietor who happened also to be a Mason, heard her story and provided bed and board for free.

After a second search by the bureau revealed no record of William's service, it was suggested that it may have been destroyed by a large fire a decade previous. In such a case, the bureau advised, Anne could gather affidavits from William's fellow soldiers as to his service.

Anne had absolutely no money. By panhandling, she managed to travel to Richmond, where she knew some of the men who had served with her husband. Only by begging on the streets could she travel or eat. Returning to Washington City with the papers, she chanced to be caught in a spring shower, and took shelter in a vestibule. Luckily for her, a friendly woman saw her and invited her into the house. As it turned out, the woman, Sally Dorrett, ran the home as a boardinghouse, and so Anne found a place to live and a friend to last a lifetime.

The next day, when Anne took her affidavits to the Pension Bureau, she was told that although they substantiated her claim, the law stated that only widows married prior to 1794 were entitled to a pension. Anne was three years too late.

Still, Anne had another avenue. During the war, when General Washington was having difficulty maintaining a troop count, the government offered all soldiers who would serve until the end of the war either full pay for five years or half pay for life. William had never collected this payment. Unfortunately, Congress had decided not to fulfill the promise it had made during its' time of need, and so once again, Anne's efforts were thwarted.

Anne was so poor at this time that she only owned one dress. One day, a catholic priest walked up to her in the street and handed her a dollar, saying, "Madam, go and buy something to wear."⁵ Anne took to begging, using her husband's name as entry to Masonic lodges. Most of the helpful Masons she met were catholics, leading her to write, "How much have I heard said about these Roman Catholics! I have heard them accounted little better than heretics. But I must confess, I never was amongst people more liberal, more affable, condescending, or courteous."

Anne was always collecting material for her proposed book. In a manner quite unchanged in 200 years, she wrote of the five presidential candidates that "it [is] impossible to learn the truth, either from the parties or the papers," about their opinions on important questions. One candidate with whom she was especially impressed, however, was John Quincy Adams, who not only subscribed to her books, but paid in advance and invited her to his home, an invitation she accepted. Mrs. Adams graciously gave her a shawl to protect her against the cold winters she would find on her travels.

When Lafayette visited the United States, Anne arranged an interview with him, reminding him that her husband, like Lafayette, had served without pay in the army, and recounting William's battles by Lafayette's side. Rather than beg for money, however, Anne asked him for a letter detailing his experiences with William, which Lafayette promptly produced. This letter was to serve her well as an introduction to many homes.

Beginning her travels, Anne first went to Baltimore, where she met a Mason, James Curry, and his wife, who took her into their home. The first thing Mrs. Curry did was to collect money from members and make Anne a new dress. Unsuccessful at raising money for her books, however, Anne moved on to Philadelphia, with four pennies in her pocket.

Once again, Anne was able to find an accommodating family to provide lodging. She began her "rounds" of trying to raise money, but after several days, reported that "the skin of my toes bursted, my heels

⁵ *Black Book*, III, Anne Royall, p. 130; *Anne Royall's U.S.A.*, Bessie Rowland James, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1972, p. 107.

completely rubbed off, and both bled freely." Exhausted, she went to bed without undressing, and "Next morning shoes, stockings, and my feet, were all glued fast together by the blood!"

One residence Anne visited in Philadelphia was that of Rev. Dr. Ezra Stiles Ely, a Presbyterian whose mission was to unite all Presbyterian churches so that they would wield political power in the government. He had organized the American Tract Society, and demanded the end of Sunday mail services and travel. When Anne visited him, he took one look at her subscription list and turned her away. He had seen the first name on the list was John Quincy Adams, whom he considered an infidel, and he thenceforth would have nothing to do with Anne.

In the time she spent in Philadelphia, Anne only secured one subscription for her proposed book of travels, but continued writing about each encounter she had, to be included in the book later.

Next, she was off to New York, after panhandling the 50¢ she was short of the fare. She walked New York first as a tourist, taking in the sights, then began examining the people she found. She soon discovered a bookshop where she became a favorite with the authors and editors that met there.

One man who befriended Anne was Major Mordecai M. Noah, editor of the *National Advocate*. Having been a diplomat, playwright, politician, attorney and editor at one time or another, he had known his share of prejudice. Elected sheriff of New York in 1822, he allowed all of the prisoners out of Debtors' Jail during the yellow fever epidemic, telling them to save themselves. For this, the clergy "not only denounced him, but represented to the municipal fathers that god had sent the plague to the community for having named a Jew as sheriff." He was not re-elected. A favorite project of Mordecai's was to organize an American colony for Jews of all nations, which he did in 1826 with the establishment of "Ararat, City of Refuge" on the Niagara River. Ararat failed.

The Masons were most helpful to Anne in New York, not only supplying her with money, but the encouragement she badly needed. They organized a benefit for her, which raised \$180 to begin her tour of New England.

When Anne arrived at her first stop, Albany, New York, the Masons had introduced her to the public via an advertisement of her purpose for the trip. Calling her "a female of respectability ... the widow of ... an officer of the revolution," who had "fallen into distress," they asked the readers to purchase subscriptions to her books.

During her New England trip, Anne interviewed General Stephen Van Rensselaer, whose vote assured the election of Adams as president over Jackson; Governor DeWitt Clinton, father of the Erie Canal; Emma Willard, famous for her women's school; David and John Ames, known for revolutionary methods in manufacturing; Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, founder of the Asylum for the Deaf; and Lydia Sigourney, a popular author. She was moving in higher social circles now that the Masons had given their support to her. In Boston, she wrote that the "Unitarians and Universalists [were] the most humane and benevolent sects I have met with." Anne visited as many sites connected with the Revolution as she could find, and as many people, including the widow of John Hancock, reduced from living in a mansion while her husband was alive, to a small house. And she visited John Adams, who, at eighty-nine was "very feeble," but ambulatory. She met with Hannah Adams, whose *Dictionary of Religion*, *History of the Jews* and *Summary History of New England* had made her "probably the first woman in America to make writing a profession."

Although she was becoming quite adept at begging money, she still frequently found herself destitute, and reported having but one dress, and that unpresentable.

Anne found a publisher willing to print her book on credit, and *Sketches of History, Life, and Manners in the United States* was published. Now all she had to do was sell it!

Although sales in New York were disappointing, sales in Boston of *Sketches* were doing very well. Anne began another book, entitled *The Black Book*, which, she stated, would expose the "black deeds of evil doers."

During this time, churches were involved in a long-term plan to gain political control of the country. The public was told the Freemasons were a "rich man's club" filled with sinister, secret rituals, maybe even

orgies. The harshest critics were, of course, the evangelical churches, who saw the lodges as competition for control of the public mind and pocketbook. The Presbyterians "condemned the Masonic institution as unfit for christians," and were soon joined in this opinion by the Methodists, the Congregationalists and the Dutch Reformed Church.

In addition to denigrating the Masons, the churches attempted to unite to bolster their strength, and formed such multisect groups as the American Bible Society, American Sunday School Union, and the American Tract Society.

Since Anne wrote of the kindness she had observed in Freemasons and catholics, she and her book suffered from religious editors. When Anne boldly tossed out religious pamphlets she found sitting on her stagecoach seat, or in her hotel room, and argued against the religious propaganda, she became a target of the churches. She frequently found herself shut out of society in some towns, and staunchly defended in others. Still, *Sketches* was selling, and between 700-800 books had been sold to this time.

As Anne's fame grew, it led people to either avoid her (even by running out a back door when she entered through the front), or court her opinion. Those who avoided her were sure to appear very unfavorably in her next book.

In 1827, *The Tennessean*, Anne's novel, was published. Traveling to Washington City, she immediately began stalking the halls of Congress for sales. She had already gained fame to the point where some men bought her book simply to avoid a bad personal review in her books.

As she traveled the east coast selling her book, she kept notes for upcoming books about the people and places she visited or revisited. Her opinion of the evangelical movement remained hostile. "Under the name of *foreign* missions, *home* missions, *Bible* societies, *children's* societies, *rag-bag* societies, and *Sunday School* societies," Anne wrote, "the missionaries have laid the whole country under tribute."

In the meantime, the protestant churches petitioned Congress to forbid Sunday mail and all transportation. The Third Presbyterian Church even stretched a chain across the street in front of their church to prevent citizens from traveling on Sunday. Luckily, the Senate voted down the proposals.

July 4, 1827, the same Reverend Ezra Stiles Ely whom Anne had visited, one of the most influential of the revivalists, preached a sermon in which he stated, "I propose, fellow citizens, a new sort of Union, or if you please, a Christian party in politics, which I am exceedingly desirous all good men in our country should join; not by subscribing to a constitution and the formation of a new society .. but by adopting religious principles in civil matters... All who profess to be a Christian of any denomination ought to agree that they will support no man as a candidate for any office, who is not professedly friendly to Christianity ... Let us all be Christian politicians. Let us choose men who dare to acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ for their Lord in their public documents."⁶

Anne's response was to write, "The missionaries have thrown off the mask. They are preaching to the people to elect none but godly men to represent them in the State Assembly and Legislature. They think to get these godly men into the Federal government; get two-thirds of the states to alter the Constitution and then come out with their national religion. One of two things is inevitable. Either the country must put down these men, or they will put down the country. Their object and their interest is to plunge mankind into ignorance, to make him a bigot, a fanatic, a hypocrite, a heathen, to hate every sect but his own, to shut his eyes against the truth, harden his heart against the distress of his fellowman and purchase heaven with money. This is the business of those *pious* young men who scour the country, range regularly through every street, enter every house, beg every individual for money. 'You will go to Hell if you do not give money to spread the gospel.' This is downright blasphemy against God as if He could be thwarted for want of money."

This is exactly the tactic being used today, so nothing really has changed. The religious right,

⁶ Anne Royall's U.S.A., Bessie Rowland James, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1972, p. 192.

finding they lacked power to demand laws directly from Congress, have worked for over ten years at the "grass roots" level, concentrating on electing their members to school boards, city councils, and other lesser posts. Now their scions are U.S. Representatives and Senators, as they had planned, and legislation is going their way more and more, reducing the religious liberties desired by Jefferson, Madison and Adams to ashes. Yet today, there is no Anne Royall, bravely fighting the enemy of Freedom.

Indeed, Anne became even more involved in fighting the evangelical movement. On a boat trip, she found boxes of religious tracts, and threw them overboard. During a coach ride, when she observed a woman reading a religious pamphlet which included Ely's speech, she stood up and shouted, "Treason!" Both acts reaped publicity for her. Still, she was badly outnumbered. When Anne reached West Point, a friend took her aside and whispered, that "parade music was laid aside, as offensive to God's people, and the cadets were on their knees praying, the Bible on one side of them and the sword on the other." Anne wrote her friends in Congress, demanding an investigation, which eventually took place.

Anne had some hilarious adventures too. When visiting Portsmouth, New Hampshire, she passed the Unitarian minister on the street. Ordinarily, the Unitarians were kind to her. Recognizing him, she turned to catch up to him, but the Reverend Mr. Parker knew who she was, and began walking more quickly away from her, ignoring her call. Anne picked up her pace, although "he had a great advantage over me in the length of his legs." As she was gaining on him, he took off in a full run, and so did Anne! Picture the long-limbed minister and the fifty-plus little lady running down the street! Anne finally gave up the chase, having been seized by a fit of laughter over the spectacle.

Although Anne had an excellent reception during her journey through Maine, friends warned her against traveling to Vermont, where the religionists held strong power. Of course, Anne went next to Vermont. At Waterbury, a landlord asked her not to stop at his establishment, next she went to Burlington. Calling on the owner of the general store, Mr. Hecock, she informed him who she was, to which he replied that he had heard of her.

"And now you see me," Anne rejoined.

"Yes, I see you ought to be put in the workhouse," was Mr. Hecock's answer.

"And pray, sir," Anne asked, "What have I done to consign me to the workhouse?"

Mr. Hecock didn't answer. He seized her by the shoulders and threw her off the porch, which was ten feet above the street. She lay there, completely helpless from her injuries, with Mr. Hecock ignoring her. Luckily, passersby rescued her, taking her by sled to a nearby tavern. Three doctors were called, and it was decided Anne had suffered "a contusion, a dislocated ankle, a fracture of the larger bone of the leg, a smaller bone broken above the ankle, knee badly sprained and the flesh much bruised." While recovering, Anne wrote of her adventure, and of her opinion of Mr. Hecock, for the third volume of her *Black Book* series. Her attorney threatened to sue, and a settlement was made, but Mr. Hecock really won in the end, for Anne retained a fear of "religion-crazed blueskins" the rest of her days.

It is not surprising to learn that Anne was a poor patient. She was so impatient to be out of bed and on her way that she snuck out of the inn at two in the morning, and, in great pain, made her way by coach and steamboat to Washington City, where a friend undertook her care. While recovering, she constantly pestered the doctor attending her to allow her to hire a litter to carry her to Congress to observe what progress the religionists were making in destroying the Constitution. "I'll drill an army of women and shoot every Presbyterian I can find!" she shouted. The doctor was afraid she really might do just that.

While she was waiting to heal, her *Black Book* Volume I was published. She eventually was able to return to the halls of Congress and the streets of Washington. Some old acquaintances greeted her warmly, others criticized her for her attacks on the churches. Buying matches from a druggist, she asked him, "Are these matches good?" to which he replied, "I expect they are, but if they should not light quick enough, Mrs. Royall, just look at them and they will be sure to take fire."

In describing Washington City, Anne deplored the plight of the poor there, explaining, "The godly people have raked and scraped every cent from the poor, instead of relieving them. If there is a place of

punishment hereafter, every one of these blackcoats will be found in it - if it will hold them. The missionaries now issue two newspapers in the capital. They have also built a large splendid church in the heart of the city. Well, they have enough money to build a church on every square of the Capital. Hail Columbia, happy land!"

Meanwhile, the Anti-Masonic Party was making great strides in Pennsylvania. Religious disputes among protestants helped the Party, for by toadying to all sides they gained adherents determined to defeat their opponents. Liberal readers of Anne's *Black Book* urged her to visit Pennsylvania, to see that "justice is done." Still limping and in pain, Ann set off.

The Anti-Masonic Party was opposed to Andrew Jackson's election as president, and, as it happened, the election took place while Anne was visiting Pennsylvania. She was well-treated by many for her support of Jackson, and after he won the election, shared in the celebration. Newspapers commented that everyone "admired the great conversational powers of which she is possessed - the witty attack - the prompt repartee."⁷

When Anne traveled to Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, all the doors and windows were locked against her. She learned that "many of the Presbyterians said they would consider themselves disgraced to have me speak well of them," so they avoided her. She wrote to Mr. Wightman, editor of the *Carlisle Gazette*, the only newspaper who would recognize her presence, "...

The vilest hypocrisy! Do they learn this out of the Bible? This outrage upon the rights of hospitality is disgraceful. It will not sound well to the world because it shows the danger of those religious tyrants. Not an editor in the place, I am told, with the exception of yourself, has the courage to publish any liberal sentiment! - so much so are they afraid of incurring the displeasure of the priest-ridden gentry. But I hope my friends the editors will sound the alarm from one end of the Union to the other to put our country on its guard against religious tyranny. I was told in Carlisle, that many who did not, would have visited me, but were afraid of the blue-skins! [religionists] - Mark this, ye who prize your liberty! It savors of church and state."⁸

The "Carlisle Letter" was published throughout Pennsylvania.

Hearing that Frances Wright was to speak at Wheeling, Anne hurried there, only to miss her by two days. Anne wrote that Frances "attacked religion, the influence of the church in politics, the existing system of education based on authority, and defended equal rights for women." Still, Anne continued, "Miss Wright goes farther than I do," referring to woman suffrage, which Anne did not support.

Next, Anne visited her sister, who met her coldly. Her sister had become a missionary, and "a mighty pious Methodist." Her husband, however, was a Mason, and greeted Anne warmly.

Anne was honored with a banquet when she visited the Pennsylvania State Senate and House. The toast she gave to the assembled legislators was, "Blue-skins - may all their throats be cut!"

Returning triumphantly to Washington, she finished up *Black Book III*, and began *Mrs. Royall's Pennsylvania or Travels Continued in the United States*. Attending Andrew Jackson's inauguration, she was

⁷ *Anne Royall's U.S.A.*, Bessie Rowland James, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1972, p. 237.

⁸ *Anne Royall's U.S.A.*, Bessie Rowland James, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1972, p. 238.

surprised to see Reverend Ely, a staunch enemy of Jackson's. As time passed, she learned that Ely's "religion in government" forces were gaining great strength in Washington.

One morning, she awoke to stones rapping against her window. Looking out, she saw a group of children. She learned they were protestant children whose parents urged them to break her windows. Windows were broken day after day, by christian children and adults, combined with prayer sessions for her "salvation," and bundles of religious tracts left at her doorstep. Knowing her personality, it is not surprising that she yelled out the window at them, calling their leader a "damned old bald headed son of a bitch!" Soon the stone throwing and loud praying was joined by yelling and horn blowing.

Seeing that she was not being "redeemed," the leader, John Coyle, decided Anne had to be "removed." They decided that "A civil presentation is our only hope. Some slight crime that will put her in the workhouse. Our business is to find the evidence; for instance, drunkenness." Unfortunately for Coyle, not one witness could be found who had ever seen Anne take an alcoholic drink. The religionists had to find another pretext.

On June 1, four members of the Coyle family presented testimony which led to a Grand Jury indictment of Anne on three counts, including "being an evil-disposed person, a common slanderer and disturber of the peace and happiness of her quiet and honest neighbors," of being "a common scold," and of continuing her evil ways while the grand jury investigated her behavior.

The Justice, appointed by Thomas Jefferson, promptly threw out the first and third charges. Anne's attorney argued that there was no punishment for being a "scold" except in New England, in the form of the outdated "ducking" chair, in which a woman was tied in a chair that was lowered into water until she was submerged. The public went wild in anticipation of this event! At the Navy Yard, a ducking stool was built.

In this atmosphere of excitement, one of Anne's witnesses presented a hilarious defense of her character. When asked if he knew of any time she had slandered anybody, he answered, "Yes, sir - she has slandered *me*." Pressed for details, he continued, "...she has said, and printed it too, in her book, that I am very clever - and to that I make no objections; in fact, I believe, on the whole, it is true... But she adds - and a very *exemplary* man. Now that's a slander!" The court exploded in laughter. Looking around, the witness said, "Why there is Mr. Waterston, she says in the same book that he and Joe Gales are the handsomest men in Washington; now I leave it to all the world if *that* is not a slander." It was some time before the trial could continue. Anne's witnesses included the Secretary of War and other notables, while the opposition witnesses mainly came from the Coyle family.

Finally, the time came for Anne to speak for herself. She stated to the jury that "as they loved liberty and their country, not to sacrifice both in her person. They stood not only for the present age, but were the guardians of posterity. This prosecution was but one branch of the general conspiracy of the blue and black-hearted Presbyterians, the priests and missionaries, against the freedom of speech and of the press. If they were to succeed ... nothing would be safe - bigotry and all the horrors of the inquisition would overwhelm the land; nothing would be left of all for which her husband and other worthies of the revolution had shed their blood."

Unmoved, the jury returned with a "guilty" verdict. The Justice fined her \$10, and ordered her to post a bond of \$100 to guarantee that she would keep the peace for a year. She did not have even the \$10! She asked for time to raise the money, but before the judge could grant or deny it, Secretary of War Eaton, Major William B. Lewis, Doctor William Jones, Washington City's postmaster, and two newspaper reporters, all rushed the entire amount to the court.

The religionists had actually helped Anne, for her book sales increased. At sixty, she set out again for New York, this time riding for free on stages and steamboats.

Anne's next information-gathering journey led her through the southern United States. On her first sighting of alligators, Anne wrote, "The captains of the steamboats generally carry a gun, powder, and shot, and the passengers amuse themselves shooting alligators. Our young gentleman went into action. He must

have killed from 60 to 70."⁹ Traveling mostly by steamship through Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, she always took time to throw loads of religious tracts overboard when the chance arose. Anne had letters of introduction to the leaders of each city through which she passed, and frequently her board was paid by them. What a change from her earlier journeys!

In Pittsburgh, Anne was attacked again. A bookstore clerk, not liking what she had to say, beat the sixty-one year old about the head with a cowskin. The padding in her new hat saved her from more than scratches and bruises.

Anne later wrote, "they [religionists] have made THREE attempts on our life - way-laid us like assassins, and at one time left us for dead, from which we were unable to walk for 10 months. The monster, who did this, is an Elder in the Blue-skin Church, and is at the head of the Gospel-spreaders, in Burlington, Vermont, and the richest man in the State! His name is Hickkoke - every one knows the man."¹⁰

Arriving back in Washington City, Anne set to work organizing her travel notes for a three volume book entitled *Southern Tour*. They were to be her last books.

After publication of *Southern Tour*, Anne's interest in politics led her down a new path. She began raising money to begin publication of a newspaper. She collected a discarded press and type, and hired a printer. On December 3, 1831, the first edition of *Paul Pry* was printed. A gossipy, personal paper, Anne promised it would "expose all and every species of political evil, and religious fraud, without fear or affection... We shall advocate the liberty of the press, the liberty of speech, and the liberty of conscience."

Anne's first issue attacked several government employees, calling for their dismissal and explaining the reasons - "a habitual gamester," dispensing favors for money, employing family members, and so on. She did correct herself when she was mistaken concerning a government official, however. "Speaking of Attorney General B.F. Butler," Anne wrote, "we were made to call him 'a detestable reptile.' It ought to have read 'detestable hypocrite.'"

Reviews depended upon the individual editor's viewpoints. *Paul Pry* contained "scum" and "political filth," while Anne was an "Old Hag." Others wrote that the paper was fearless, and that Anne was remarkable and should be patronized. One editor wrote, "Mrs. Royall has a rare knack of castigating an enemy. If they think she has no power to hurt them, they deceive themselves, for she cuts deep as any of the Washington editors."

One of Anne's first targets was the post office. Branches offices which she had criticized in the past had refused to deliver her mail, while some postmasters allowed the free delivery of religious tracts. She criticized the policy of hiring some postmasters who could not read and failing to dismiss those who refused to follow postal regulations. Her attacks caused a postal worker to appear in *Paul Pry's* office with a gun, but no harm was done. Anne, meanwhile, was greeted with increasing hostility when she visited the post office. Eventually, the postmaster was fired because of the clamor.

Anne supported the Workingmen's Party, an association supported by Frances Wright. "Let them cast an eye over the country and mark those massive buildings rising up in every part of the land: colleges, churches, &c., &c., all in the hands of our deadliest foes, the church and statesmen," she wrote. She also supported trade unions, writing, "These unions will form an era in the history of the world. We find them attracting great attention throughout our own country, and in Europe and look upon the trade unions to burst

⁹ *Anne Royall's U.S.A.*, Bessie Rowland James, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1972, p. 279.

¹⁰ *Paul Pry*, 12/31/1831, Vol. I, #5.

the chain of ignorance and set us free from the monster money craft."¹¹

One column always included in her issues of *Paul Pry* was "Church and State," in which she reported on the latest impositions of the "blueskins." She often quoted whole articles from other newspapers, then commented briefly on them. She very rarely capitalized the word "christian," and called preachers "traitors," "knaves," "miscreants," "base tyrants," "abominable hypocrites," "beastly," "worse than pirates," "monsters in human shape," and more. She would sarcastically describe them by using italics: "the *pious* gentlemen" did this or that atrocity, for example. When some particularly ominous event had taken place, Anne would write, "It is just as we predicted," always using the royal "we."

Those of like mind would write Anne of their experiences with religion, which she would print and to which she would respond. "People of America!!!" wrote one anonymous reader, after describing his experiences with the blueskins, "awake from your slumbers, and look to your rights, before it is forever too late."

Anne responded, "Is this not exactly what we have already said? Have we not for this seven years warned the people of this? Did we not say that this money, raked from land and sea, was not intended to convert the heathen, if indeed money could save souls, but to seize upon our liberty by force?"¹² Other times, she warned her readers, "THEY ARE THE ENEMIES OF OUR GOVERNMENT, our LIVES, and our LIBERTY!"¹³

In *Paul Pry*, Anne repeatedly disproved the common arguments against the dangers of religion, writing, "It has been said by several intelligent people, that there was no danger of a union of Church and State in this country - there being, such a variety of SECTS. We have had good reasons to doubt this conclusion for some time back. The Temperance plan[,] Sunday school union, and all their infamous swindling, with the efforts of these pious people of all sorts, to monopolize the mercantile, the mechanics calling, is a proof of this. But if any doubt yet, an article below will convince them of the fact," and then she would reprint an article proving the sects were forming a united group for the purpose of raising money.

She was, of course, criticized for her writings on religion. "'Let the christian religion alone!!!'," Anne quoted, "We can easily do that. ... if this religion can be hurt by mankind, at all - not to say an old woman, it is not worth a copper. ... But the religion they charge us with "*abusing*," (to use their own elegant language,) being nothing more than a money getting scheme, to get church and state united, and stir up strife and bloodshed, to accomplish it, we will not spare them."¹⁴

When clergymen wrote to Anne, she answered within the columns of *Paul Pry*. "But your object you say is to 'elicit my views on the subject of Bibles, tracts and missionary societies.' I view all those schemes as vile speculations to amass money and power, (for money is power) which, and the Sunday mail plainly proves your object is to unite Church and State. I am opposed to those schemes, because the money is taken from the poor and ignorant, as no man of sense would pay for the gospel, which I understand, is to be had without money and without price. I know you will say, this money is to spread the gospel? and what is the gospel? What I understand of it, is, that it comes from God - some of his laws perhaps. Now, I would not give a fig for a God that could not spread his own gospel, or any gospel, without money. I would rather have a God of wood or stone, than a God who robs the poor and ignorant, under a cloak. - But to come to the point at once;

¹¹ *Anne Royall's U.S.A.*, Bessie Rowland James, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1972, p. 328.

¹² *Paul Pry*, 1/26/1833, Vol. II, No. 9.

¹³ *Paul Pry*, 7/24/1835, Vol. IV, No. 33.

¹⁴ *Paul Pry*, 12/31/1831, Vol. I, #5.

God made the heaven, and the earth, sun, moon and stars, &c. Now I am a poor ignorant heathen, as I told you before, and would merely ask, if the God who made all these things could not make money, if he wanted it? But the fact is, *that* money is laid up in Bank to overturn our government. Every Bible given away last year, cost the poor (see the report,) the modest sum of \$17,57, this proves your 'practice,' and tracts the same. Now these tracts, you say, are to save souls. What became of the souls of all who died before tracts were invented?"¹⁵

Clergymen were not the only critics of *Paul Pry*. Anne published the letters of other detractors, with her response:

"Newborn, N.C. July 18, 1833.

My Deer Lady,

I take this opportunity of righting to you though I hate but I am bound to tell you something which I hope may be very paneful. I am requested to tell you that your paper is the most ridiculus thing I ever herd in my life and ridiculus as your paper I have seen your papers five or six times and it have almost made me thro up. Mr. Nested and Mr. Lent proposes to quite after this year your abomable paper. I have herd that you have no more sense than an ediot. It is an abomable shame Mrs. Royal for you thus to empose upon us. I have almost detirmined to publish you. Madame it is a fact I say to you to stop Paul Pry that paper of yours or else consume your press in an unquinchable fire. Madame I would rite more to you but I am now waisting my time upon you, I hope next I hear of you to hear that you have gone to the shades of Eribi.

Your most,

JAMES KAY."

"Can such ignorant brutes as this teach others," Anne responded in print.

"These are the fellows whom gentlemen's wives and daughters follow - these are the people that are going to convert the VALLEY, and call themselves 'decent society.'" Thus Priestcraft has prostrated society in the United States. It is a pity the gentleman '*waisted*' any of his time in this way. What christian language! We would advise the gentleman to learn how to spell. Did the brute find this in the gospel? Gentlemen of the Union, be warned by the savageness of this man (or woman probably) for their object is blood depend upon it."¹⁶

Anne reported on the money the tract and bible societies collected, disproving their claims of poverty:

"The POOR Tract Society - We frequently hear the 'pious ones' talking about the *poor* American Tract Society, whose very worthy members are so kind and benevolent that they print and distribute thousands of their tracts for *nothing*! The following slip, which we cut from an exchange paper, will show how far these declaration accord with truth -

Receipts into the Treasury of the American Tract Society, during the month ending September 15th, 1833.

Whole amount of donations,	\$4,018.28
Received for Tracts sold,	3,024.05
Total,	7,042.33

"FOUR THOUSAND DOLLARS received *gratis in one month*, besides the *profits on four thousand*

¹⁵ *Paul Pry*, 2/4/1832, Vol. I, No. 10.

¹⁶ *Paul Pry*, 7/27/1833, Vol. II, No. 35.

dollars worth of tracts! And *every month* in the year produces similar results! So far from the American Tract, Bible, and other similar societies being 'losing concerns,' they are constantly amassing large fortunes, which will one day be used for the purpose of enslaving the people. Let those who wish to join in purchasing *fetters* for posterity give their money to these societies and their wishes will be abundantly gratified." - *Herald of Freedom*.

Anne continued, "It is not worth while after this to inquire what causes the scarcity of money - this swindling, too, by people calling themselves Christians, whilst the poor are in want of bread, would cause a savage to shudder. No wonder at suicides and murders! there is neither sense nor virtue in the land! Agreeably to MATHEW CAREY'S statement, a poor woman in Philadelphia, at her utmost exertion, when in health, from the lowness of wages, can only earn 80 cents per week - out of which she has to pay house-rent, and find her wood, clothes, food, and candles - while those unfeeling she-monsters can bestow one thousand dollars, probably the labour of those indigent females, upon some idle, wealthy hypocrite, who does not need it. Shocking! this cannot last."¹⁷

She reported that "the amount of church property exempted from taxation in this state is about \$40,000,000," in 1834.¹⁸ Anne lamented, "What an immense amount of good might have been achieved in our own land by the millions that have been sent away (via missionary funds), and that have accomplished - what?"¹⁹

"And what does all those Synods, societys [*sic*] and boards, and revivals amount to? - Why they are 'seasons of refreshing, to the ministers and Elders of the church.' In this they speak truth. It puts about \$5,000,000 annually into their pockets. But is mankind made better by this flood of Gospel spreaders? We say not - we say they grow worse every day - nor is it intended to make them better. Falsehood and hypocrisy [*sic*] may sink our country into ignorance and crime, which it has done, but will never improve it."²⁰

This age of evangelicalism included tent meetings that sometimes lasted for days. Newspapers reported frequently on people who had been driven insane by them (see the experience of Elizabeth Cady Stanton with revivals). Anne reported that "Since our last, wherein 113 suicides are mentioned, we have the mortification to record three more.... The cases are too appalling to enumerate. Fathers dashing out the brains of their children, beautiful girls staining their hands with their own blood, others hanging on beams and trees like so many dogs."²¹ "... a lady residing at Somersworth, N.H. attempted to cut her throat, under the influence of religious insanity. She was about to join the church, but was told she was not good enough, and her reason left her."²²

¹⁷ *Paul Pry*, 1/18/1834, Vol. III, No. 8.

¹⁸ *Paul Pry*, 3/1/1834, Vol. III, No. 14.

¹⁹ *Paul Pry*, 9/4/1835, Vol. IV, No. 35.

²⁰ *Paul Pry*, 3/29/1834, Vol. III, No. 18.

²¹ *Paul Pry*, Vol. I, No. 27.

²² *Paul Pry*, 6/30/1832, Vol. I, #31.

Anne's opinion of women was very low. She saw them as the manipulated dupes of religionists. She repeatedly referred to them as the culprits in spreading the "money gospel," as she called it. "We may blame our women for this," she wrote of the success of the "money-christians."²³ In other articles, she referred to them as "she-monsters," and said that women who caused their own families to starve by giving their food budget to the church were "not women, they are brutes!"²⁴

²³ *Paul Pry*, 1/26/1833, Vol. II, No. 9.

²⁴ *Paul Pry*, 9/4/1835, Vol. IV, No. 35.

In 1832, Anne reported on the case of a fellow editor, Phineas T. Barnum, of Bethel, Connecticut, who was imprisoned for sixty days for libeling a church deacon.²⁵ The editors wrote to each other, and later, P.T. visited Anne in her office.

²⁵ It is but little more than one year since first I undertook the arduous and expensive task of publishing a periodical, the columns of which should be free and accessible to all sects and parties, with a view to let *reason*, God's best gift to man, determine who was right and who was wrong. You cannot but be aware, my friends, with whom and with what I have had to contend during the last year. You all know that I have grappled with the lion in his den; I have been obliged to contend with all the pride, pomp, and circumstance of power, popularity, and wealth, with error, ignorance and superstition, and with that which is worse than all these combined - the hidra[sic]-headed and powerful monster, PRIESTCRAFT. - Had it not been for the numerous friends of civil and religious liberty which are daily springing up in all parts of our country, my press would long ere this have been as still as death, and hypocrisy, fanaticism, and 'wickedness in high places' would have been permitted to roll on unmolested, sweeping all that was beautiful before it into the vortex of destruction, insanity, suicide, and murder, originating in religious fanaticism, would have claimed more victims than 'the pestilence which walketh in darkness and destroyeth at noonday[']; and the small black speck which appeared on our moral horizon at the first approach of '*four days*' and other fanatical *protracted meetings*, would have increased to a large and darkening cloud, which would suddenly have burst upon us, consigning all that was near and dear to man to the dark tomb of everlasting ruin, had not the friends of undefiled religion boldly stepped forward and encouraged the exposition of this anticipated dreadful calamity. It has been publicly boasted that the time was fast approaching when the 'priests should bear rule' by means of the *ignorance* of the people, and that they would 'love to have it so;' but that boast was made too soon, for, thanks to God! I feel proud to say that, through the assistance of the friends of '*truth, liberty, and justice*,' there are a few editors who have been able, like good Aaron of old, to take the censer [sic] in their hand and go about among the living and the dead, that the plague might be stayed which was raging among the people. With the assistance of power, the criminal common law, and '*management*,' a blow was levelled at the *freedom of the Press*, which it was intended should prove fatal; but this great up gathering of freemen, together with the unprecedented additional patronage which my press has received during the last *sixty days*, authorize me to say, that the blow has been repelled with a dreadful violence upon the heads of its originators. The meeting of the friends of civil and religious liberty on this occasion, have declared, in a voice of thunder, that the press which will at all times boldly and fearlessly publish the *truth* from good motives and for justifiable ends, *shall be sustained*, - and with this assurance, I gladly hail the 5th of December, 1832, as the proudest day of my life. The voluntary and deafening acclamations which followed the pronunciation of the last sentiment amply repay me an hundred-fold for all the unhappiness I ever experienced in being torn from the sweet embraces of a family and friends, and incarcerated in a gloomy dungeon; and they serve as an incentive which spurs me *onward* in the glorious cause of intellectual emancipation, with the determination never to shrink from doing my duty as a sentinel upon the watchtower of liberty.

I propose to you, gentlemen, the memory of THOMAS JEFFERSON, the untiring friend of liberty, the strenuous advocate of the freedom of the press, and the patriot who 'swore upon the Altar of God, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.'

[P.T. Barnum]

- *Paul Pry*, Vol. II, No. 4, 12/22/1832.

She published letters showing Benjamin Franklin's religious views, and praised the work of Jefferson and Girard. Anne printed the Blue Laws of Massachusetts, passed in 1658, showing the effects of a theocracy upon a minority, in this case, the Quakers.²⁶

When the Panic occurred in 1837, Anne lost the free housing to which she had become accustomed. When she thought she had found a new place to live, her old enemies, the Coyles, persuaded the landlord not to rent to her. In addition, she was ill. Luckily, a friend found her lodging, to which Anne was carried on a litter. Anne began writing small notes in *Paul Pry* soliciting financial aid in these hard times. Although the recipients of her kindly intended words may not have been pleased, Anne printed information for her readers such as, "Those who have no money ... can buy on credit at Parker's. Mr. John Lynch is also very generous ... His grocery is on Capitol Hill, opposite the Market. Messrs. Stetinius .. will credit till times are better."

In these years of poverty, Anne applied for funds with everyone, selling single copies of her paper and even begging when needed. The Marine Corps even contributed to her cause, as the widow of a soldier.

²⁶ 'Whereas there is a pernicious sect (commonly called Quakers,) lately risen, who by word and writing have published and maintained many dangerous and horrid tenets, and do take upon them to change and alter the received laudable customs of our nation, in giving civil respect to equals, or reverence to superiors, whose actions tend to undermine the civil government, and also to destroy the order of the churches, by denying an established form of worship, and by withdrawing from orderly church fellowship, allowed and approved by all orthodox professors of the truth, and instead thereof, and in opposition thereunto, frequently themselves, insinuating themselves, into the minds of the simple, of such as are least affected to the order and government of church and commonwealth, whereby divers of our inhabitants have been infected, notwithstanding all former laws, made upon the experience of their arrogant and bold obtrusions, to disseminate their principles among us prohibiting their coming in this jurisdiction, they have not been deterred from their impetuous attempts to undermine our peace and hazard our ruin.

'For prevention thereof, this court doth order and enact, that every person, or persons of the *cursed sect of Quakers*, who is not an inhabitant of, but is found within this jurisdiction, shall be apprehended without warrant, where no magistrate is at hand by any constable, commissioner, or select man and conveyed from constable to constable, to the next magistrate, who shall commit the said person to close prison, there to remain, without bail unto the next court of assistants, where they shall have a legal trial; and being convicted to be of the sect of Quakers, shall be sentenced to be banished upon pain of death; and that every inhabitant of this jurisdiction, being convicted to be of the aforesaid sect, either by taking up, publishing, or defending the horrid opinions of the Quakers, or the stirring up mutiny, sedition, or rebellion against the government, or by taking up their absurd and destructive practices, viz. denying civil respect equals and superiors, and withdrawing from our church assemblies, and instead of there [*sic*] holding frequent meetings of their own, in opposition to our church order; or by adhering to, or approving of any known Quaker, and the tenets and practices of the Quakers, that are opposite to the orthodox received opinions of the godly, and endeavouring to disaffect others to civil government, and church orders, or condemning the practice of this court against the Quakers, manifesting thereby their complying with those, whose design is to overthrow the order established in church and state, every such person, upon conviction before the said court of assistants, in manner as aforesaid, shall be committed to close prison for one month, and then, unless they choose voluntarily to depart this jurisdiction, shall give bond for their good behaviour, and appear at the next court, where continuing obstinate, and refusing to retract and conform to the aforesaid ordinance, they shall be sentenced to banishment upon pain of death; and any one magistrate, upon information given him of any such person, shall cause him to be apprehended, and shall commit any person to prison, according to his discretion, until he come to trial, as aforesaid.'

- *Paul Pry*, Vol. II, NO. 6, 1/5/1833.

But Congress would not relent and allow her a pension as the widow of a Revolutionary War soldier, even though John Quincy Adams presented the case every session. Finally, Congress did pay her one-half the pay due to her husband for his five of his years of service. Anne immediately caught a train to do some traveling.

While in Philadelphia, Anne visited the school for orphans funded by Stephen Girard's will. Since Stephen Girard had mandated that "no ecclesiastic, missionary, or minister of any sect shall ever have, hold, or exercise any station or duty whatever in the college," nor be allowed on school grounds, editors said he was "now in hell," and "opposed to the Christian creed." Anne answered that the editors who wrote such garbage "belonged to the most wicked and dangerous class of men in the U.S.A." "Had Mr. Girard left his estate to the tract and bible societies, his will would not have been such a 'QUEER thing,'" Anne wrote, refuting another editor's estimation of Girard's gift to the city. "Those hypocrites must be cut to the core," she continued, "to find themselves excluded by name, in the face of the world, even from *visiting* the inside of the Seminary, this great and good man has so liberally endowed." Anne concluded, "What are all the missionary, bible and tract societies in the world, compared to the good done by this *one* man?"²⁷ Anne found that the trustees of the will wished to spend all the money on the building of the college, and in fact, it did not open until twenty-seven years after Girard's death, and found a way to countermand Girard's wishes.

Returning to Washington in time for the opening of Congress, Anne found to her amusement that she received two votes for chaplain of the House of Representatives. "We have advised Congress to do their own praying," she replied.²⁸

In 1836, Anne decided to quit printing *Paul Pry*, beginning instead a new paper entitled *The Huntress*. The goals of *The Huntress* would be to work "against the untiring strides of the Church and State Party to dissolve our Republic and establish a religious despotism upon its ruin. ... The only difference between *The Huntress* and *Paul Pry* will be the introduction of amusing tales, dialogues, and essays upon general subjects."

Although having frightening experiences as a child with Native Americans, their plight now elicited Anne's sympathy. After the tribes had been thrown out of Iowa and Georgia, Anne wrote, "The people of the United States pretend to sympathize with the Poles, and deplore the barbarity with which they have been treated. Look at home! There never was such barbarity as that practised toward the Indians."

In addition to panhandling on the streets, Anne found a new method to raise revenues - advertising. This helped stretch her meager income, and allowed her to write about such points of interest as her visit to watch Samuel Morse demonstrate his invention. She asked him to report to his correspondent that she was present, and was delighted when the reply returned stating, "Mr. Rogers respects to Mrs. Royall."

Among her famous visitors, Anne received Robert Owen and Ernestine Rose. "Mr. O.," seventy-four year old Anne wrote, "is seventy-five years of age, but does not look so old. He is a stout man, at least six feet in height, with a good figure and proud athletic limbs." Owen was visiting his son, Robert Dale Owen, recently elected to Congress and struggling to persuade his fellow Congressmen to fund the building of the Smithsonian Institution. A Freethinker, James Smithson, had already donated the funds in his will, but Congress argued about the mechanics of setting up the foundation. Anne attended the laying of the cornerstone May 1, 1847. Another time, she was visited by Jefferson Davis, just returned from battle in the War with Mexico.

In July, 1848, Congress finally voted a pension for Anne, thirty-six years after her husband's death, allowing her \$40 a month. Unfortunately, it came too late for her to thank John Quincy Adams for his efforts in obtaining it - he had died the previous February.

²⁷ *Paul Pry*, 1/21/1832, Vol. I, No. 8.

²⁸ *Anne Royall's U.S.A.*, Bessie Rowland James, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1972, p. 336.

Anne continued to report on the growing nation, writing, "There are two dangerous parties in our country: Church and State, alias Free Soilers, and the Demagogues, alias office-seekers. The Free Soil men are doing their utmost to annihilate the constitution and put an end to freedom." Of the annual celebration of the Plymouth Rock landing by the Pilgrims, Anne wrote, "The tortures these human beings [women accused of witchcraft] endured from the hands of these fiends to make them confess their dealings with the Evil One, no language can express. These are the wicked barbarities they commemorate annually. They are getting ready for the onset against 'heretics.' Look at them at this moment rearing their snaky heads in our town under the name of 'Free Soil.'"²⁹

As Anne grew older, her health deteriorated. In the summer, she stayed indoors, and was frequently in bed. At eighty-five, in June, 1854, Anne was publishing *The Huntress* as a pamphlet, but it only lasted three issues.

During this time, she received another visit from Ernestine Rose, this time accompanied by Susan B. Anthony. The two women were on a speaking tour which included a stop in Washington. They found her hard at work, unconscious and probably uncaring of the dilapidated condition of her room or her person. While this shocked them, Susan told Anne, "What a wonderful woman you are." "I know it," Anne barked back at her, with characteristic bluntness.³⁰

Anne finally had to set aside the paper - poverty, ill health and age had at last stopped her writing. In the last issue of her paper, she admitted that she had only thirty-one cents to her name.³¹ She died October 1. The Masons took responsibility for her burial in an unmarked grave in the Congressional Cemetery.

In her long, eventful life, Anne had published *Sketches of History, Life and Manners in the United States, by a Traveler* (1826), *The Tennessean* (1827), *The Black Book; or, A Continuation of Travels in the United States* (three volumes, 1828-29), *Mrs. Royall's Pennsylvania* (2 volumes, 1829), *Mrs. Royall's Southern Tour* (3 volumes, 1830-31), and *Letters from Alabama* (1830), as well as publishing two newspapers, *Paul Pry* and *The Huntress*.³² She spent her life attempting to defend democracy, against those who would strip freedom from her fellow citizens. Although her methods were sometimes eccentric, the integrity of her motives cannot be questioned.

Quotes

No chaplain will pray for you without money - we believe in no God who would not grant a prayer unless it were paid for - we believe in no God who cannot spread his gospel without money. If his blessings are to be purchased by money, they are not worth having.

- *Paul Pry*, 12/24/1831, Vol. I, #4.

We are no respector [*sic*] of sects, we belong to none: we are a heathen, being raised amongst them, (the Indians) and have only to say that we do not call robbing the poor under a cloak, and abandoning the sick

²⁹ *Anne Royall's U.S.A.*, Bessie Rowland James, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1972, p. 376-7.

³⁰ *Ernestine L. Rose, Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, New York, 1990, p. 163.

³¹ "From Founders to Fugitives: The Strange Odyssey of Freethought in America," Fred Whitehead, 1993.

³² *Famous American Women, A Biographical Dictionary from Colonial Times to the Present*, edited by Robert McHenry, 1980, G.&C. Merriam Company, Springfield, MA, p. 357-358.

and wretched to perish, piety, or benevolence.

- *Paul Pry*, 11/3/1832, Vol. I, No. 49.

Say what you please of Nullification, it is not by half so dangerous to our liberty, as those LEGIONS of vipers who now over spread our land.

- *Paul Pry*, Vol. II, No. 26, 5/25/1833.

...of all Tyrannys that of the Priesthood is the most horrid, and revolting. The bloody massacres [*sic*], racks, tortures and flames that has ever marked the power of the clergy, ought to make every citizen of this Union, shudder, when they see the height these sacrilegious monsters have attained.

But it is one part of this object and the most material, in getting hold of our schools to keep the people in ignorance of their former barbarities [*sic*]. Not one of these under their influence either know or believe the history of their butcheries, whenever, and wherever they have had the power!!! We except no sect of Christians but the Quakers and they have begun it. All sects have slaughtered their fellow men!! And have inflicted upon them the most shocking tortures.

- *Paul Pry*, Vol. III, No. 21, 4/19/1834.

...we find the most despotic governments in those countries, where the most ignorance prevails. Ignorance is the parent of prejudice - which is alone the foundation of despotism.

We find too, that in all despotic governments, the ruling despot is at the head of the church; the clergy is always on the strong side. They are the right hand of tyrants, and mutually sustain each other against the people.

- *Paul Pry*, Vol. III, No. 41, 9/6/1834.

Religion has ever been the grand lever of tyrants.

- *Paul Pry*, 12/26/1834, Vol. IV, No. 2.

I'll drill an army of women and shoot every Presbyterian I can find!

- *Anne Royall's U.S.A.*, Bessie Rowland James, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1972, p. 215.

The missionaries have thrown off the mask. They are preaching to the people to elect none but godly men to represent them...One of two things is inevitable. Either the country must put down these men, or they will put down the country. Their object and their interest is to plunge mankind into ignorance, to make him a bigot, a fanatic, a hypocrite, a heathen, to hate every sect but his own, to shut his eyes against the truth, harden his heart against the distress of his fellowman and purchase heaven with money. This is the business of those *pious* young men who scour the country, range regularly through every street, enter every house, beg every individual for money. "You will go to Hell if you do not give money to spread the gospel." This is downright blasphemy against God as if He could be thwarted for lack of money.

- "From Founders to Fugitives: The Strange Odyssey of Freethought in America," Fred Whitehead, 1993.

It is apparent to all that something is fundamentally wrong, either in our institutions, or in the administration of them. Corruptions, frauds, impositions of the clergy, and the treachery of political aspirants have become the base instruments of contending parties, whose antagonism against each other would lead us to suppose they would sacrifice half the United States, provided they could reign over the other.

- "From Founders to Fugitives: The Strange Odyssey of Freethought in America," Fred Whitehead, 1993.

Church and State (I)

Every week and every day brings with it intelligence of increasing alarm of those dangerous people who seem bent upon subjecting these United States. Their power carried into effect in the late decision of the Supreme Court of Ohio in adjudging certain public lands in Ravenna to the Presbyterian church, has thrown the whole state into a flame of resentment. The facts and proceedings of the court will be found in this paper. This is the HEATHEN these traitors have had in view all this time.

Having devoted a few of our late numbers exclusively to politics and the Bank, which last, we trust, has received its death blow, we turn our attention to this *christian party* in politics, *church and state*, which begins to assume a fearful attitude. These church people are the same over the world. We see them butchering and banishing the Poles, and seizing upon the presses of Germany! We see them in Ireland arming themselves with military power, and seizing upon the property of the people by force to support what they call the gospel! We see the labor of the poor man, and even to the clothes on his back, and those of his children, seized by those monsters, who wallow in their thousands, in idleness, riot, and gluttony! We see them in these U. States spread over the land in large bodies, headed by officers in our army and navy, a thousand times more dangerous than the raging pestilence [cholera]! We see them on board of all our vessels! We see them at the polls to sustain that monster of corruption the Bank! We see them stealing into gentlemen's houses like thieves, in the absence of the men, to seduce their wives and daughters! We see a number of females, some of them known to be abandoned, steal into people's houses in this city, usually after dark, and insist upon young girls going with them to night meetings, nor will they be discouraged by refusals; they repeat their visits until they either succeed or desist from threats. In Georgetown and Alexandria we understand it is the same thing; an infamous old beldame, one Anne Serl, if we do not mistake the name, a great gospel spreader in Georgetown, has seduced many young girls to leave their parents' houses in the night and gad to those meetings, and the citizens are about to put a stop to it by banishing the old saint. Finally, this gospel has become a lucrative trade to which their avarice sets no bounds. We see the unmarried females of our country under the guidance of these men, lost to all sense of shame, to say nothing of modesty, in open market, selling baby-caps to spread the gospel! We see other connections between them which are not fit to name! We see them violate the constitution when sitting as judges, by requiring religious tests contrary to the law of the land! We have seen them crush the liberty of the press by fine and imprisonment.* We have seen our seminaries destroyed, and turned into sectarian tract schools, by which means the rising generation are more savage than the Indians! We have seen them pocketing vast sums to convert the heathen of the valley and other places, while neglecting to teach the people honor and honesty where they have preached money religion for years, they have annihilated society, and the most abandoned riots, thefts, robberies, forgeries, and incendiaries are now daily witnessed in the towns and cities. If they can convert the heathen, why have they not converted these? So far from it they are the first to set the example by their insatiable thirst for money. But none are more abandoned than these men. We have seen them guilty of murder and outrages on women too shocking to name. We have seen them (the antimasons are all orthodox, and go against Georgia,) plotting [*sic*] the disfranchisement of a large portion of our citizens. We see them deaf to the cries of the dying! We have seen them blind to the tear of the widow and the orphan! We have seen them desert their flocks during the late pestilence, and leaving them to the care of the infidels, as they call the Catholics! We have heard them stigmatize those Catholics by every opprobrious name, who, instead of flying from their fellow creatures in the hour of sickness and death, flew to their relief, and fell victims in the cause of humanity!!! They have heaped all manner of falsehoods and bitter invective upon them! We have seen them distrain the last cow of the widow for pew rent, like their brother savages of Europe, nor do they stop here! We have seen them very busily engaged for the last 18 months establishing temperance societies over the whole United States, which, as we said, was their last scheme, for we now hear them advocating a law that "dealing in spirituous liquors ought to be declared PIRACY!!" Let them once establish this court inquisition and we may prepare for death, the punishment of piracy.

As we were the first to unmask these hypocrites - though they are afraid to meet us openly, they have succeeded in destroying most of our books, to an amount which would have kept us comfortable for life. Since that they have robbed the mail, as we have the best reason to believe, of our money and stole our papers. They are moreover stealing over the country, endeavoring not only to put down every liberal paper, but especially ours. These are all fact which we challenge them to deny; the evidence is in our possession.

A few days since we received a letter from a friend in Lexington, N.C. stating that some off our patrons have joined the church, and request their papers discontinued at the end of the year. Much to the credit of N.C. this is the only village or town in the State where we have been converted out. This is quite a sudden change, they must have had a revival. But to our friend; he states that "two of the gentlemen, though men of the world, dislike our politics and *abuse* of the christian religion." We find this word ABUSE is very popular with our christian party in politics, which, when applied to us, is false. We defy them to put their finger on ONE SENTENCE in all our writing which casts the most distant reflection upon the christian religion or the bible - upon its professors we do, because they profess what they do not practise [sic]. No *honest* or *virtuous* man makes professions of such virtues; he proves what he is by his practice. Our friend says,

"Mr. W. one of the most profligate young men in the state, in times past, has not taken out your paper for some time; and has lately, with wife, sister, and all, joined the "Blueskins," as you call them."

Here then is the mystery unravelled; the blueskins first converted his wife and sister, and by that means got hold of the man, (which, we presume, was no hard matter.) Herein lies their success; their power over women, their gold beads, rings, and pearls, (if they had any) are doubtless all gone by this time. We would merely remind our friend W. of Arnold, down cast, and sundry other we could name. Our friend adds:

"Now I, on the contrary, have been a *blueskin* twenty years; an original Jackson man; like your politics in several respects; differ with you about genuine christianity as widely as the poles; oppose hypocrites with zeal wherever I find them; wink at no pious frauds among professors; and wish as heartily as you do, there was not so much to censure and blame among professors in the orthodox churches.

["I believe that the "people of God," or followers of Christ in his church do, directly or *indirectly*, all the good which the Almighty approves in this dark world. You perhaps believe I am fool for my folly. Be it so. You are my sister for all that, in spite of you; therefore don't quarrel with me.

["]Lady, you say you are not an infidel, and sometimes quote from the Holy Scriptures, but is it a fact or not, that you abuse through prejudice or mis-information, and rather favor those sects who won't go any thing like the whole hog in piety and benevolence? If you loved the Son of a Jewish Virgin, like poor W. and 21 others, lately joined here in his service, as is the case weekly all over the country, with your talents in aid, a different account of human action, in future details might shine more brightly unto the perfect day.

Very respectfully,

---."

Let him be a blueskin or not, he is a good man, as his actions so far towards us have proved; not because he is a blueskin, but because he is, doubtless, one of *us*. He says, however, that "we differ about GENUINE christianity." It would be as hard to make that appear as it would be to find this genuine christianity itself. We rather think we should agree exactly. But where is this "genuine christianity?" The theory we should agree in, but where is the *christian*? We have never to our knowledge seen one. If our friend has, he has been more fortunate. The Sisters of Charity and Catholic Priests approach the nearest to what is called christianity of any people we have seen, as they feed the HUNGRY, clothe the naked, comfort the sick, the widow and the fatherless. Yet we do not know that they are christians! The Indians, and what is called the wicked men of the world, often do as much. But we never saw a blueskin do it unless they were Masons. We have seen them on the contrary abandon the poor to perish in the street, and take the last cent from aged widows who were paupers in the poor house.

Though we never read the bible we have looked at parts of the New Testament, particularly Christ's sermon on the Mount, which we would recommend to the blueskins. We did not see any tracts in it, nor gold beads, nor revivals, but saw a great many things in it which we have never seen among blueskins. It says "let no one see you give alms." This the gentlemen strictly comply with, as it would be hard to see what they never do. But they publish what they call benevolent acts to the world, and whether there be christians at this day who live up to those ethics or not, is no one's business; it is a matter between them and their God; they are not accountable to man. But when we see men profess RELIGION, who are guilty of every crime, there is no question about its genuineness.

But we will go no further than this same Mr. W. Here we are an aged widow, whose husband fought at the battles of Guilford, Camden, the Cowpens, Eutaw Springs, and spent a large fortune in securing the blessings of liberty (at the hazard of his life) to this same Mr. W. and being stripped of our all by these same blueskins, by which loss we were compelled to take up a paper to procure bread, being divested of every cent by these knaves, and in debt besides to our printer - our paper was popular, and this Mr. W. who was "one of the most profligate young men in the state," stepped forward, with many others, to contribute to our aid and comfort. This was manly, it was noble, it was godlike, and we trust heaven may reward him for his humanity, as we hope it will all our patrons in that state, who are numerous and respectable. But MARK the difference, so soon as he was converted by the blueskins, he withdraws his patronage. This may be religion, but is it genuine christianity?

But to return to our friend, for such we esteem him, judging him not by professions but by his acts, he says, "I believe that the PEOPLE of GOD, or followers of Christ in his church, [mind] directly or indirectly, do all the good which the Almighty approves," (requires perhaps he meant.) And so do we believe the same thing, but show us even ONE of these people! Does God want them to ransack the country for money? Does he require young ladies to gad over the country in company with worthless vagabonds, who are too lazy to work, to beg money and distribute tracts? Is this in the bible? We hope our friend will inform us. Now we do not believe in such a religion as this. We believe that if God could not spread his gospel *without* money, he could make it at once, and thereby save a vast sum which goes to maintain those collectors.

The gentleman asks "is it a fact that you ABUSE through prejudice or mis-information?" We reply neither. We respect ourself too much to use *abuse* agreeably to the meaning of the word, we only represent facts. He goes on, "and rather prefer those sects who won't go any thing like the whole hog in piety and benevolence." We respect benevolence wherever it be found. We are no respecter [*sic*] of sects, we belong to none: we are a heathen, being raised amongst them, (the Indians) and have only to say that we do not call robbing the poor under a cloak, and abandoning the sick and wretched to perish, piety, or benevolence. - We have said before and repeat it, that the Catholics are the most benevolent people we have seen. The Unitarians are also charitable to the poor, as to their tenets and piety we are ignorant; we have no right to concern with them, we only notice their actions; but we presume the tree is known by the fruit.

As to the employment of what our friend is pleased to call our talents, we do not know that they could be better engaged than stripping the mask off of the hypocrites, and putting our country upon its guard against these dangerous and designing men, whose aim is to establish a religious (not christian) despotism in our country.

Here follows a small specimen of Blueskin religion.

From the Magazine and Advocate.

\$1,200 DONATION.

FROM THE CHOLERA TO THE AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY.

Start not at this annunciation - the Cholera has given the Tract Society occasion to make 1200 dollars clear gain by pretended charity. They have issued a tract on the Cholera, addressed to the prepared and the unprepared. Of that tract, 166,000 copies have been published, and nearly all already put in circulation.

These tracts are sold at 1000 pages for a dollar. Suppose the tract to contain, as we believe it does, 12 pages, this would give 1992000 pages, equal at wholesale, to 1,912 dollars for the edition now already published. Did this publication cost as much? Let us examine.

Two copies could be printed on one sheet of medium paper - 174 reams would then suffice for the number - say 175 reams. Their paper is generally of but a middling quality, and purchased in large quantities, could be had for less, probably than \$3 50 per ream - say that sum. With their power presses, the press work can be done at about half price - but allow the common prices of press work, 40 cents per token. - We presume their workmen would be satisfied with less than common prices, if report says true. Their stereotyped plates for the work would cost them about - say \$12. Having made such liberal allowances - more liberal, we venture to assert, than they ever allow - we shall allow nothing for the expenses of stitching, &c which would be but a mere trifle. Let us now see how stands the account:

175 reams of paper	\$612 50
350 tokens press work	140 00
Plates,	12 00
Total	<hr/> \$764 50

This, deducted from the total of the sales, \$1992, would leave for the Charitable American Tract Society, a neat gain of \$1,227 50, made by a single tract on the Cholera! How many more copies the Society may yet publish, remains to be seen. Should public money hold out, and beggars have impudence enough to solicit it, probably a few hundred thousand more may swell their profits to nearly \$3,000 on this single tract. Indeed when we take into consideration their wholesale mode of doing business, and their power presses, we feel satisfied that already they have made a clear gain of \$1,500 instead of merely \$1,200

Had they given this sum to the poor, and the dying Cholera patients, they would have done a genuine christianity act, but not half so genuine as the infidels, as they call the Catholics, have done.

Finally if the Christian religion CANNOT be supported without MONEY it cannot be of God? If it be NOT of GOD it must be a contrivance of men! Therefore let it be vetoed by the people. It is time when it becomes such a monster of unheard of WICKEDNESS as to speculate upon the judgments of HEAVEN!!! Satan and all his angels - all the *pirates, robbers and murderers*, or anti-masons that ever lived, with that worst of all human monsters, the SPANISH *[sic]* INQUISITION, have never dared Heaven with such atrociousness; therefore, down with it. It is not a religion congenial to the American people. It takes too much money, and has too many women attached to it for any honest purpose. Besides, should they get the upper hand, and get it chartered by Congress, (which we have no doubt but they will attempt again,) with their capital from 20 to 30,000,000 dollars,* they might, as they did at the late Philadelphia election, unite with the Bank and establish a holy government in our country.

On the contrary, if this religion, call it by what name you please, be of God, money can have no part in it: He can and will sustain it, not with money or women, but by his Almighty power, in spite of all the powers on earth.

But the LATE CIRCUMSTANCE IN OHIO leaves no doubt of the danger of these Presbyterians, and should they not find themselves strong enough to coerce the people, we have good reason to believe that other money getting *[sic]* sects will unite and make a common cause. Their papers and reports are the same: it is one plan, under the name of Episcopalians, Baptists, and Methodists, all united on the Sunday School Union, Temperance Societies, &c. all have their Missionary Squadrons out, and revivals and protracted meetings, and are identically the same plunderers of the people: money and power is their religion. We trust, however, that the usurpation of the Supreme Court of Ohio may open the eyes of the people, which together with the exertions now making by the Working men, may save our country from religious despotism.

If the Supreme Court can seize the property of the State for religious purposes, it can take the land of an individual in like manner. If it can take the land of an individual, it can b the same parity of reason take the whole State. If it can take the land of one State, the Supreme Courts of other States can do the same. We trust Ohio may make an example of these pious gentlemen, by impeaching them for perjury [*sic*] in violating the constitution which they were sworn to support, and by altering their constitution, put it out of the power of any tribunal to interfere with their rights. Now is the time to meet those dangerous and fearful encroachments. Let them be met promptly. We are not afraid but Ohio will rise in her majesty and teach those gentlemen what it is to meddle with the rights of freemen. Every eye will be on Ohio. Every State is deeply interested in the issue. As the liberty of the Union is involved in the question, it is as much the care of the other twenty-three States as it is of Ohio. This is coming to the point at once.

We adverted to this outrage in a late number, and have inserted in this paper all the information received since. From the Courier, published in Ravenna, Ohio, the following spirited remark appears:

"The time has arrived when the people must act as well as think, or our institutions are swallowed up in the vortex of sectarian supremacy, and our liberties be but a name. Strengthened by this decision of the highest judicial tribunal in our State, all that is wanted to aggrandize the church at the expense of the county, is a majority of the Board of Commissioners favorable to the supremacy of the church, and county land is taken on which to erect churches, and county funds with which to erect them, and a pliant Court to pronounce it "a fit appropriation. ZENO."

This is the voice of independence, and we are proud to hear it from that quarter.

The METHODISTS too have been trying the game. It appears they did not meet with such a complying Court, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, Pittsburg [*sic*], has lately decided a similar case, so far as we have heard. The Judges' opinions are not yet published.

"The opinion of the Court," however, "as announced by the chief justice, and concurred in by all the judges, was, in substance, that so much of the deeds of conveyance as gave to the general or annual conference, or to the preachers of the Methodist Episcopal Church any interest in, or control over, the property in question, or its revenues, is illegal and void. And that the property belonged to those who purchased and paid for it.

The chief justice, when he announced the decision, mentioned, also, that the opinion would be drawn up at length as soon as time would permit. And when it is published, if, upon examination, we are persuaded that it would be generally interesting, we will lay it before our readers. - *Monongahelian*.

Let the people keep their eyes upon all those money and women sects. One of those "dear precious (Methodist) men," as these pious ladies call them, has about 20, perhaps 30 young girls, [they stand in such awe of our pen that all the avenues of knowledge are directly cut off between us,] to himself to CONVERT, for which purpose they often meet "to seek the Lord." But THEIR Lord, like the Presbyterians', must have money paid down every week, or off he casts them - no trust. One of those precious "dears" carried his piety so far as to go into one of those ANXIOUS houses so numerous in our city, in open day-light, and the matter was had before a legal tribunal. We do not know how it went with the parson, being then on a tour. He left the country.

But the following thus openly announced in the columns of a newspaper in the face of the American people, proves what we have said:

ABOMINABLE. - We extract the following from a communication signed "A Methodist of more than thirty years standing," published in the Commercial Advertiser of yesterday.

"I am taught by my religion to respect my rulers, and not to speak evil of them. Nor do I think that I speak evil of them in what I now say, because I believe it is the solemn truth. I have never mingled in the politics of the day, nor seldom voted at any election, because I have thought the country was safe, being protected by an excellent constitution: but when I see the President assuming an attitude which places him not only above Congress and the Supreme Court, but also above the Constitution itself, I am alarmed for my

country, and therefore believe it to be my solemn and sacred duty to do all I can to change the administration. - If I live, therefore and am able to get to the polls, I shall give my vote this year, though I never voted but twice in my life - *against* Andrew Jackson.

"But my chief object in sending you these remarks, is to exhort ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH TO WHICH I BELONG, to turn out at once, and vote as I do. I do this because I believe it to be a sacred duty they owe to their God and their country. It is an awful crisis - and it appears to me that the salvation of the country depends on putting down Andrew Jackson. ANY ONE BUT JACKSON - DOWN WITH HIM. - If there be power enough in the arms of the people, I say down with him - and down with his party - and down with his principles.

"I suppose there are many religious people who think, as I have heretofore thought, that there is no necessity for them to trouble themselves concerning party politics - and that to enter into these strifes is inconsistent with their religious profession. I shall lay aside my scruples for once and most ardently hope, and now devoutly pray, that al my brethren will follow my example. It is DUTY. I feel it is a duty. - Rouse! Rouse from your slumbers, and help to bind the monster. DOWN WITH THE TYRANT. I say again, *down with him*. - When our civil rights and religious privileges, and every thing which an American freeman holds dear, is jeopardied - as I believe most religiously is the case now - Shall Christians hesitate? Let them hesitate no longer. It is time to ACT. ACT then, before it is too late."

"The above abominable attempt to make use of religious prejudice and bigotry to prevent the re-election of Andrew Jackson, ought to have been signed "A *Hypocrite* of thirty years standing," for surely the honest members of no religious society can acknowledge fellowship with a writer so unprincipled. He talks of Andrew Jackson having placed himself "above the constitution," and yet he would support *Henry Clay*, who, according to his own showing, would violate the constitution by sanctioning the recharter of the United States Bank, and who actually *attempted* to violate the constitution by inducing congress and the President to recommend a religious ceremony of certain religious sects! He speaks of JACKSON'S having assumed an attitude which placed him above Congress and the Supreme Court, (by supporting the constitution as he has *sworn* to support it,) yet he would support CLAY, who would encourage Congress to violate the constitution."

Is this genuine Christianity? Is it the language of civilized man. Such brutal language toward even a felon, would disgrace the verriest [*sic*] SAVAGE of the forest!! It would disgrace pirates! and could only be used by the members of the members of [*sic*] the Spanish Inquisition. It is the language not of common assassins - not of the midnight ruffian who presents a pistol to your breast while he demands your money, but it is the language of a hellish fiend who would assassinate a world, and could only proceed out of the mouth of one of those malignant vipers, who under a cloak of religion, have long held mankind in slavery, and would cause our streets to flow with rivers of blood. Hear the RUFFIAN: "ROUSE, ROUSE from your slumbers," [so the massacre is to take place in the night,] "and help to bind the *monster*, down with the tyrant. I say [and who is he? a murderer!] again, down with him. We ask the people of the United States what meaning they can resolve this into, if it be not intended to excite to murder and bloodshed? What is it meant for? That it is not the language of a Christian all must agree.

These are the NEROES, the CALEGULAS, and the ROBESPIERES of our country. Blood-thirsty banditti sprung up in the heart of our country; clothed, fed, cherished, pampered and idolized by our whole female population from Maine to Mexico, to the eternal disgrace of our men, who have so shamefully acquiesced in raising up a pious army to cut their throats, and the day does not appear to be distant. We have received this account since we commenced writing our editorial, which exactly confirms what we in the first of the paper suggested, that all those money and women loving Christians would unite to subdue the United States! and from their late success in making converts (under the pretence of Temperance Societies) in our ARMY and NAVY, putting down the militia, disfranchising Masons, imprisoning our editors, uniting with the Bank, &c. It is actually doubtful [from our own knowledge of the country we speak] whether they would

not be too powerful for the people - whose who are unwilling to surrender their liberty to a religious or monied despotism. When this man says, "down with Jackson," he means down with the people; as the people alone [not Jackson] made him President.

- *Paul Pry*, 11/3/1832, Vol. I, No. 49.

Religion and Politics.

A systematic effort throughout the United States is now about to be made to bring every child in the Union under Sabbath school instruction!! So our Presbyterian minister informed the congregation just Sunday, and so we learn from the papers devoted to such objects. This is a great undertaking, and the consequences attending its thorough execution must be enormous, either for good or for evil. While, then this this subject is in aggitation [*sic*], does it not become every citizen who has the good of his childred [*sic*], and of future generations at heart, seriously to consider the nature and object of this great plan, and prepare himself to act on the occasion, as his sense of duty may require.

All great projects must have their originators, who stand at the head and guide the whole machinery; and the object in view is oftentimes concealed in their bosoms. But before we conjecture what these objects are, let us revert to a few circumstances of an extraordinary nature, which transpired within a few years. The strenuous exertions once made to enlist one portion of society against another, in all the business of life - the establishment of pioneer stages, canal boats and taverns - the great struggle to stop the mails on Sundays - the proposition repeatedly put forth by the great and foremost men in the Presbyterian church, to organize a christian party in politics, for the purpose of electing to our civil offices none but professing christians, of either the Presbyterian, Episcopal, Baptist, or Methodist order. these proceedings may be familiar to us all. If they are not, they ought to be; because they afford a ci-e to the persent [*sic*] systematic "simultaneous effort." The measures above alluded to, failed in their object. The people were found to be unprepared to receive the burthen which the clergy designed to lay upon them. The ultimate object - an accumulation of civil power in the hands of professing christians - was consequently put aside for a season, and the whole energy of these designing men was exerted to prepare the people for the contemplated change in their civil condition. Protracted meetings were immediately originated and used for bringing numbers into their ranks - the old plan of preaching and of converting sinners was entirely changed - and the great object seemed to be to enlist in their train a sufficient force to carry their project, without such an overwhelming opposition as had just prostrated their civil scheming. Sunday schools were more generally organized in order to train up the infant mind in the way in which it was designed in maturity to travel. It was boldly declared by Dr. Ely, whom the Presbyterian General Assembly of the United States acknowledged to be their organ, they by means of their numerous societies; bible tract Missionary, Sunday schools, &c. "in less than ten years they would be enabled to control every election in the country!!" The Sunday School Union Reports acknowledged their grand object to be, "to make every child, while he is a child, a believer in the bible." Ah! can they not depend on the mature judgment of manhood, and preach to that their doctrine? No! they must take the infant mind while it is yet tender and capable of being directed any way, well knowing that "just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined." They must take the child, "while he is a child," and, as Dr. Ely says, to their own purpose "mould their minds as wax in the hollow of their hands." And for what: - That they may hereafter organize their "Christian party in politics," and exclude from office all except professors of the christian religion.

True to this end, the plan of bringing every child in the Union under Sabbath school instruction, a delegation of teachers from the principal churches in the United States held last May in Philadelphia, have issued their orders, requiring every minister to urge upon parents and guardians of children, the necessity of co-operating with them and Sunday school teachers, in the religious instruction of children.

- *Paul Pry*, Vol. II, No. 5-, 11/23/1833.

Church and State (II)

The clouds of clerical despotism are lowering over our heads, and soon [sic] the thunderbolts of a hell-inspired bigotry, to fuse the fetters prepared to bind us to the earth, will seal our bondage!! We do say, and with honest sincerity [sic] too, that the time is at hand for the people to arouse from their lethargic slumberings, and canvass this most important and alarming subject. The people themselves must commence thinking and acting too - for we believe the secret workings, and private movements of a set of desperate zealots, are now striving to acquire in the very heart of our country a combination - *a political christian party* - a party whose sweeping ambition grasps at supreme control - whose leaders are endeavoring, by every possible means, to subvert our fair political fabric, and who are straining every nerve in forging chains for our hands and our necks, since they cannot controul [sic] our minds. Every day which passes, furnishes renewed evidence of the advancement of this dangerous combination; it is now making such rapid strides, and looking from its hidden recesses with such an imposing front, that many persons of patriotism and wealth are now in the field to give it battle. We candidly and solemnly put the question to every man who values the liberties of his country - who estimates the freedom of opinion - who wishes to avert the calamity and the chains of clerical despotism from his posterity - to secure them from the rack and the gibbet, ought to come forward boldly, fearlessly, and manfully, and resist those usurpations of the rights of mankind. There is, however, but one alternative, you must conquer or be conquered. Do you wish to see this happy country deluged in blood, caused to flow through every valley by the means of religious intolerance? Do you wish the fair fabric of American freedom extirpated from the earth, and add to the number of clerical victims? Do you wish to be trampled to dust on the pavement of our streets by these half horse and half-alligator christians[sic]? Do you wish to be mean abject slaves, writhing under the agonies of an hierarchy[sic]? Are you aware of the oceans of blood they have spilled? Will you submit to clerical tyranny - suffer yourselves, and your children, and your children's children, to be fettered hand and foot, and give, give, give eternally? Shall this fair clime become the great theatre of religious intolerance and bloodshed? Cannot one small spot of this earth be preserved from the ravages of this fell-destroyer - this *mortal enemy* of mankind?

- *Paul Pry*, 4/18/1835, Vol. IV, No. 19.



ETTA SEMPLE

ETTA SEMPLE

9/21/1855 - 4/11/1914

There were not many women freethinkers as outspoken as Etta Semple. The editor of a Freethought paper known at different times as the *Freethought Ideal*, *Freethought Vindicator*, *Freethought Ideal and Vindicator*, and *New Thought Ideal and Health Vindicator*, Etta also ran a very successful health sanitarium in Ottawa, Kansas. Because of the success of her sanitarium, Etta not only published her thoughts while other Atheist editors were being jailed for their blasphemous writings, but was extremely respected in her hometown by religious and freethinking neighbors alike. In addition to being an outspoken Atheist, Etta served as the President of the Kansas Freethought Association for many years and served as vice-president of the American Secular Union. That she was also involved with the Socialist party, serving as co-editor for a local Socialist paper, *The Commonwealth*, makes the respect shown her by her neighbors even more amazing.¹ Indeed, at the time of her death, the Evening Herald of Ottawa, Kansas, spoke of her as "one of the greatest benefactors for humanity Ottawa has ever had."²

Etta was born on September 21, 1855, in Quincy, Illinois, the youngest child of Joseph Donaldson, a carpenter, and his wife, whose marriage spanned 56 years, until her death. When her father died in 1899, Etta described him as having been born in Kentucky and reared in the Cumberland Presbyterian church. He did not share her freethought; instead "He died as he had lived, firm in the faith of an Infinite God, and an Eternal resting place." His education had been obtained by "reading from the Bible and Testament; and all the arithmetic he ever studied was by counting the leaves, chapters and verses of the Bible. In this way he was taught Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication and Division."³

In relating a family story about her great-grandfather, Etta describes his superstitious nature. Her disgust at his opinion of a female neighbor, whose only faults seem to be age and sex, are clear, although she ends the story enigmatically, almost defending his belief in the superstition because his magical "spell" was successful, rather than explaining in her usual blunt manner how such coincidence, or mental wishfulness, causes the perpetuation of such beliefs. "My great-grandfather was a weaver of fine linen and worked at it long after he came to this country. As age crept over him he grew very superstitious and imagined he was bewitched. The batten, or part of the loom used to beat the cloth up with, became so heavy that he could not move it. Others could move it easily when his hands were removed, but if his hands were on the batten, it was heavy to them also. Friends got together in council and decided that it was a clear case of witchcraft. So they took a piece of silver money and moulded a bullet, then drew the picture of a good motherly old woman in the neighborhood, one who ministered at the bedside of the sick, helped through the rush of spring and fall work, had given of her scant wardrobe to clothe the suffering, in fact had been almost a proverbial guardian angel in the community; yes, they drew her picture on a board and after asking divine aid on bended knees, Grandfather stepped ten paces and fired the silver bullet into the heart of the image. This removed the spell, and ever after his loom worked as smooth as silk."⁴

Etta does not describe how she became a Freethinker, only that she had come from a religious family, and was religious herself as a child.

Married twice, her first husband, Charles Kilemar, left her a widow with two sons to raise. Her second husband, Matt Semple, was very supportive of her activities.

¹ "Etta Semple: A Woman of Mystery," Annie Laurie Gaylor, *Freethought Today*, April/May 1985, p. 10-11.

² *Fifty Years of Freethought*, Vol. II, George E. Macdonald, The Truth Seeker Company, New York, 1931, p. 436.

³ "Father is Dead," *Freethought Ideal*, Vol. VI, No. 1, 6/1/1899.

⁴ *Freethought Ideal*, 3/15/1900.

Starting with a four room sanitarium, Etta was able to enlarge it over the years to 31 rooms. Her concern over the working class led her to accept cases without hope of payment, when the patient was destitute. Etta called herself a doctor, although no evidence has been found of any formal training in medicine. She used what she called the "Natural Cure," including the popular contemporary "water cure" method of soaking the patient in medicinal baths.

She was not afraid to boast of the cures she successfully secured, for example, describing in her paper a case in which a 20 year old woman, whose curved spine, withered and useless right leg, useless and drawn hands, bloated body, prolapsed bowels, lack of menstrual discharge, inability to urinate, sunken chest, humped shoulders, and large tumor on her left side, had made her a total invalid for four years. Etta went to her home on the 24th of June, 1899, and by the 28th, the tumor was gone, and ten days later her spine straightened out. By February 20, 1900, Etta reported the girl was able to get up and walk about the house with help, and sew a quilt, and Etta predicted that shortly a full cure would be made. She even went so far as to have her statement about the treatment of the young lady notarized.⁵

Although she vigorously promoted the Kansas Freethought Association, of which she was President, apparently it was not a very successful group, even though membership was free. Originally, the K.F.A. passed resolutions to the effect that to become a member a fee of fifty cents would be charged, with an additional assessment of one dollar a year. This was embodied in the By-laws in order to meet running expenses, and save the trouble and worry incident to necessary preparations of holding the annual convention. Since this by-law was ignored anyway, it was overlooked by the Association, which allowed any one to become a member who wished, provided he lived up to their principals.⁶ This may have encouraged more participation, but also placed the burden of financial responsibility on Etta and a few other leaders of the Association.

Etta scheduled such Freethought speakers as Moses Harman, Voltairine de Cleyre, John E. Remsburg, Lois Waisbrooker, Lillie D. White, and Mattie Krekel, and included orators on spiritualism, labor, and even ministers,⁷ but attendance was so poor that Mattie Krekel wrote in 1899 to say "if the attendance is no larger than it was last year, I see no use for you again to make the effort."⁸ In her newspaper, Etta reviewed the effort she had made through the years to present a successful program at the annual meeting, and told her readers "If we do not do much, Liberals of Kansas, the fault is yours not ours. For ten years we have held this organization together almost by sheer desperation, so that all could know there was a port in sight where each could steer to in times of danger. This chance is still yours. The K.F.A. exists and is a power that is beginning to be felt. The Convention called to meet at Ottawa this summer is YOURS, will you make it a success, or let it be a failure? Will you not rally and at least hold up the hands of those who have stood by the cause and the K.F.A. so nobly these many years?"⁹ Later that same year, Etta begged the Kansas Freethinkers again for their support, writing, "If money can be raised by the Kansas Liberals, we can have a treat at our annual meeting. Voltarine [*sic*] de Cleyre is coming west this

⁵ *Freethought Ideal*, 3/1/1900.

⁶ *Freethought Ideal*, Vol. VI, No. 2, 6/15/1899.

⁷ *Freethought Vindicator*, Vol. I, No. 1, 8/1895, p. 2.

⁸ *Freethought Ideal*, Vol. VI, No. 5, 8/1/1899.

⁹ *Freethought Ideal*, Vol. V, No. 19, 3/1/1899.

summer, and writes she would like to attend our convention. We know by experience that Miss de Cleyre is a fine orator and logical reasoner. But we must have money if we have any meeting. We are getting very much discouraged and feel like calling the meeting off for lack of funds to carry it on."¹⁰

Not all her writing about the Conventions was critical, for in promoting them, she was quite optimistic, saying "We are going to have a rousing big meeting, a fine time, large crowds, sociability and hospitality. The Park will be lovely and parents will do well to bring their families. The children need an outing, and a whole week is a fine thing in such a beautiful place. We want every one of our readers, especially those in Kansas and adjoining states to tell everybody about this meeting and to shape their business so that they may be able to attend and share with us this great intellectual feast."¹¹

Still, though few Liberals attended the Conventions, Etta managed to get into a controversy because of the bluntness of her style of writing. At the fourth annual Convention, meeting in Topeka September 6 through 9, 1894, the participants were tired and bored, and as a joke, wrote mock resolutions to President Cleveland, never intending to send them. The preamble to these resolutions stated that "we, the undersigned, do humbly beg, pray, entreat, nay demand that you take off your crown, vacate your throne, lay down your sceptre and take yourself away from the sight of human eyes forever."¹² The text was picked up and sent out over press wires as being actual resolutions set forth by the Kansas Freethought Association, and were taken at face value. The editor of the Freethought newspaper *Truth Seeker*, Samuel Putnam, denounced them, causing Etta to bitterly remark that as a fellow Freethinker, he should have defended and understood his fellow Freethinkers, rather than attack them. She told him to "tend strictly to your own business," as the Kansas Freethought Association was independent and could manage for itself.

Like many midwesterners, she had little love for the eastern Freethought associations, who were considered as snobs trying to dictate policy to the whole country. In 1901, Etta proposed having two American Secular Unions, saying that the Conventions held by the present organization had "always avoided the west, never reaching beyond Chicago," thus making it financially impossible for many interested Freethinkers to attend. "There need be no contention, no antagonism between the two," she went on, "but simply a friendly competition, which would throw vim and life into each."¹³ Although critical of the A.S.U.,¹⁴ Etta served as Vice President of the organization, at least in 1901.¹⁵ In addition, there was a western branch of the National Secularists that Etta supported.

In addition to her disagreement with the eastern Freethought leaders, Etta scolded J.B. Wilson, elected president of the American Secular Union and a Cincinnati, Ohio resident, for resigning his post, saying, "We do not approve of this step - *most decidedly not*. J.B. Wilson was elected by a large majority, and his place is at the helm until something is done to right the craft....As a member of the A.S.U., we,

¹⁰ *Freethought Ideal*, Vol. V, No. 24, 5/15/1899.

¹¹ *Freethought Ideal*, Vol. VI, No. 2, 6/15/1899.

¹² *A Concern About Humanity: Notes on Reform, 1872-1912 at the National and Kansas Levels of Thought*, James C. Malin, Edward Brothers, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1964, p. 123.

¹³ *Freethought Ideal*, 7/27/1901, p. 4.

¹⁴ *Freethought Ideal*, 10/19/1901.

¹⁵ *Freethought Ideal*, 10/19/1901, p. 5.

personally, vote against the resignation of President Wilson being accepted."¹⁶ Josephine K. Henry of Kentucky assumed the post, but resigned almost immediately, much to Etta's dismay.¹⁷

Undaunted by the criticism she received for the Cleveland resolutions, Etta printed the resolutions passed by the Kansas Freethought Association in response to a set of resolutions printed by the First Baptist Church of Ottawa, Kansas, which had condemned the Santa Fe railroad company for running their trains on Sunday. Obviously tongue-in-cheek, the Association resolved that:

WHEREAS, The rights of the great engineer of this universe (God) aided by his fireman, Jesus Christ, and conductor, the Holy Ghost, is considered holy enough, wise enough, omnipotent enough to run his train upon the holy day known as Sunday, will allow his sun to shine, his rain to fall, his vegetation to grow, nay, even the entire universe, sweeping, whirling, thundering through space on each and every Sunday. Therefore be it

Resolved, That, as a body advocating free thought, free speech and free press, we offer to the managers of the Santa Fe system our sympathy in their christian persecution. And

Resolved, That we wish to accord to the managers of the Santa Fe system the same privilege as the church now possesses, namely, the right of running their own trains on Sunday, providing the people want to travel. And be it further

Resolved, That the taking off of the Sunday trains would be an insult to the traveling public as well as an abridgement of personal liberty.¹⁸

Etta wrote of her unconventional writing, "Some of the Illiberals are deserting the Ideal because the editor says things she thinks is right, regardless of their advocacy [*sic*] of free thought, free speech and free press. This calls for a general outpouring of the liberal spirit. Those who are liberal will take us for what we are, not for what they want us to be. It pains us though very much to find Christians often more generous in their opinions than many so-called Liberals. We find so many Liberals who fail to recognize the distinction between a principle and a man. If we attack a principle some of them roast us saying we have attacked some of their idols and vice versa. Often if we express our opinions of some person's acts, they cry out, 'you are fighting my principles.' By the holy horn spoon, what are we to do? Were we to try to edit our paper to suit everyone we soon would not have even one subscriber. Therefore we'll jog along and at least try to be honest, regardless of illiberals protests."¹⁹

Etta had, however, always been blunt about her philosophy. In an 1891 letter to an Atheist newspaper, *The Ironclad Age*, she had written: "I have gotten to absolutely hate *half-way* people. I asked a liberal lately his views, 'Agnostic,' he answered. That put me to thinking. The word agnostic is simply a compromise, and I am down on all compromises. I have been among spiritualists recently. Most of them have knocked down one God and built up another almost as crude and tyrannical. One liberal said to me

¹⁶ *Freethought Ideal*, 6/22/1901.

¹⁷ *Freethought Ideal*, 7/27/1901.

¹⁸ *Free-Thought Vindicator*, Vol. 1., No. 1, 8/1895, p. 3.

¹⁹ *Freethought Ideal*, 11/1/1900.

lately, 'Oh, you think the teachings of Jesus Christ all right, don't you?' No, I *do not*. Jesus Christ is a great big idol for infidels to compromise themselves before. Call those sayings and proverbs from whom they rightly emanated, then I will respect them."²⁰

The local papers, reporting on the *Freethought Ideal* under Etta's editorship, wrote "a severe arraignment, containing considerable abuse."²¹ It was frustrating for Etta that both the *Ottawa Bulletin* and the *Daily Republican* refused to publish her rebuttal. Later, however, both papers reported favorably about her as a healer, and as a moral guide, as they publicized an article she had written about an excursion sponsored by the M.E. Church of Ottawa, at which all parishioners of the different denominations in town were invited to travel to Leavenworth. When the Black citizens arrived, tickets in hand, they were turned away. The *Leavenworth Times* responded that the freethinking editor had preached a sermon to the church for its "unchristian treatment of colored people."²²

Being President of the Kansas Freethought Association, Etta published the groups activities, including the more serious resolutions they had passed. An example of their philosophy, which surely reflects Etta's thoughts, is this:

DEMANDS OF LIBERALISM.

1. We demand that churches and other ecclesiastical [sic] property shall no longer be exempted from just taxation.
2. We demand that the employment of chaplain in Congress, in State Legislatures, in the navy and militia, and in prison, asylums, and all other institutions supported by public money, shall be discontinued.
3. We demand that all public appropriations for sectarian educational and charitable institutions shall cease.
4. We demand that all religious services now sustained by the government shall be abolished; and especially the use of the bible in the public schools, whether ostensible [sic] as a text-book or avowedly as a book of religious worship, shall be prohibited.
5. We demand that the appointment by the President of the United States or by the Governors of the various States, of all religious festivals and fasts shall wholly cease.
6. We demand that the judicial oath in the courts and in all other departments of the government shall be abolished, and that simple affirmation under the pains and penalties of perjury shall be established in its stead.
7. We demand that all laws directly or indirectly enforcing the observance of Sunday as a Sabbath shall be repealed.
8. We demand that all laws looking to the enforcement of "Christian" morality shall be abrogated, and that all laws shall be conformed to the requirements of natural morality, equal rights, and impartial liberty.
9. We demand that not only in the Constitution of the United States and of the several States, but also in the practical administration of the same, no privilege or advantage shall be conceded to Christianity or

²⁰ signed Mrs. Etta Semple, Ottawa, Kan., March 24, '91. *The Ironclad Age*, Vol. 36, No. 4, 4/4/1891, p. 6.

²¹ *Freethought Vindicator*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 8/1895, p. 3.

²² *Freethought Ideal*, 9/1/1899.

any other special religion; that our entire political system shall be founded and administered on a purely secular basis; and that whatever changes shall prove necessary to this end shall be consistently, unflinchingly and promptly made.²³

In addition to writing for the Socialist press and editing her own newspaper, Etta also wrote at least two books, one of which was *Society*. In 1894, Etta Semple wrote a novel, *The Strike*, published by Home Printing Co., of Atchinson, Kansas, "respectfully dedicated to all working classes, craftsmen, miners and farmers, and especially...to railroad men, because they hold the most precarious of all positions."²⁴

After the death of Freethought giant Robert Ingersoll, Etta, unlike the majority of the Freethought community (which was her typical position), opposed the proposed statue to commemorate him. She used Mattie Krekel, Lois Waisbrooker and Rachel Campbell as models of hardworking Freethinkers who had given the best years of their lives to Freethought, but who were now destitute, and suggested that the recommended \$200,000 to be raised for the statue be instead used to construct and perpetually fund a rest home for elderly, indigent Freethinkers.²⁵

In 1898, Etta ran for State Superintendent of Instruction in Kansas on the Socialist Labor ticket, emphasizing equal taxation for all properties, including those owned by the churches, and a guarantee of equal liberty of conscience for all. Predictably, she lost.²⁶

In addition to writing several long articles, Etta loved to write the little thoughts that came to her mind concerning Freethought, religion, women's rights, and other areas. Her newspaper was peppered liberally with little bits of her thought and wisdom, as is seen in the "Quote" section below.

Charles C. Moore, editor of *The Blue Grass Blade*, encouraged his readers to subscribe to the *Ideal* when Etta and Laura Knox first began working together to publish it. Originally, Etta had been publishing a small paper called the *Freethought Vindicator* in 1895 in Ottawa, Kansas, while Laura Knox published the *Freethought Ideal* in Portland, Kansas, being called "a first-class writer" by the *Ottawa Republican*.²⁷ Unable to continue financially, Laura sold the little paper to James Pontius in 1896. Mr. Pontius, due to the demands made upon him to care for his elderly and ill mother, sold the paper in 1898 to Etta Semple, who then convinced Laura to move to Ottawa to work as assistant editor, chiefly in charge of typesetting and the physical production of the paper. For a short while, the paper was called the *Freethought Ideal and Vindicator*, but quickly reverted back to the *Freethought Ideal*. In addition to Moore's recommendation of the paper, the two women were aided by the editors of *Lucifer*, the *Light-Bearer* and *Freethought Magazine*. Laura left the paper in 1899 after marrying, leaving Etta as sole editor.

When Moore was sent to prison in 1899 for sending obscene literature through the mails, under the Comstock laws, Etta said that although she thought he had perhaps been "a trifle hasty," still "he was carrying out one of the noblest principles of mankind, searching after truth." She reported that Moore did not take sides in the controversy over obscene literature, but rather printed both sides of the argument in his

²³ *The Freethought ideal*, Vol. 4., 3/1/1898, p. 1.

²⁴ Annie Laurie Gaylor, *Freethought Today*, April/May 1985, pages 10-11.

²⁵ *Freethought Ideal*, 9/15/1899, 1/15/1900,

²⁶ *Freethought Ideal*, Vol. V, No. 16, 1/15/1899, reprint of article in *Lucifer*, the *Light-Bearer*.

²⁷ Annie Laurie Gaylor, *Freethought Today*, April/May 1985, pages 10-11.

paper, and it was the writings of others that landed him in jail. "Those who led him into the controversy," she advised, "should now, that he is in the meshes of the law, put their shoulders to the wheel and by their united effort keep his banner waving."²⁸

In 1900, Etta finally met Charles C. Moore, at the Twenty-fourth Annual Congress of Free Thinkers in Cincinnati. Her reaction was to write for the *Ideal*, "One is rather surprised when they meet Mr. Moore. He is one person in person and another on paper; has all the old southern gallantry and a broad southern accent which is quite charming. For a man of his years, he is well preserved and vigorous."²⁹

Moore, for his part, was hardly complimentary to Etta in describing her, writing, "The first time I saw Mrs. Etta Semple, at Cincinnati, I said, 'Why, I thought you were one of these little women.'

"She said, 'Not much; I weigh 203 pounds and I am one of the very few perfectly healthy women that you ever saw. See my teeth?'

"And she showed me a set of Kansas corn grinders that were as perfect as these you see in the dental departments at the national expositions.

"I said, 'Yes, they are very fine; good job; how much did they cost you?'

"And she said, 'They ain't store teeth.'"

Etta's reply was short, "As will be noted in this issue, Bro. Moore has advertised to the Liberal world that we are uneducated."

Moore responded with a column in which he states: "I never said it, and if you will only read my words that she gives in full in that same issue of her paper you will see that I never said it, and I can whip her husband if she says I did. (Don't believe I could whip her.)

"I used that two dollar circus tent umbrella of mine ... to keep enough rain off that woman to make good steamboating from Cincinnati to New Orleans, and now if she sticks to that statement I shall never have any more faith in anything that wears petticoats, and I had lost all faith in breeches long ago."³⁰

Two years later, Etta wrote a column blasting Moore for his comments concerning Anarchists, resulting from the nationwide scare after the assassination of President McKinley. Moore followed national sentiments, advising the prosecution of anyone calling himself an anarchist. This was a time of high emotional response to the murder, and reports were made in the papers of people who had been beaten by mobs simply for voicing opinions that others took to be in any way a defense of Czolgosz or the philosophy of anarchy in general.

Known anarchist speakers went into hiding. Voltairine de Cleyre, in response to the scare and the offer of Senator Hawley of one thousand dollars to have a shot at an anarchist, published an open letter to him saying he could have a shot at her for free, if he wished. Emma Goldman was arrested and held for a month, before being released for lack of evidence as to her complicity in the assassination.

Etta was one of a group that kept their heads through the scare, and bravely published against the national sentiment. She pointed out that Czolgosz was a murderer and an anarchist, but that because of the deeds of this one individual, not all calling themselves anarchists should be punished. She wrote "A few persons scattered over this country, were a few years ago nicknamed anarchists, not because they believed in bloodshed, riots, mob rule, despotism, tyranny or intimidation of any kind whatever, but because they believed that our country could live, flourish and grow in strength, wealth and prosperity, if we were utterly without a president or a chief ruler of any kind. This plank, therefore, in a laboring man's platform, started the idea that all laboring men were banded together in a chain of red-handed anarchism, nor was this theory

²⁸ *Freethought Ideal*, Vol. V, No. 19, 3/1/1899.

²⁹ *The Freethought Ideal*, Vol. VII, No. 11, 12/1/1900, p. 4.

³⁰ *The Freethought Ideal*, 2/1/1901.

gainsaid by pulpit or capital. Instead, the press and the pulpit and the money power did all they could to keep this cry of anarchy well before the people."

At the turn of the century, it was the factory workers, farmers, lumberjacks and other workers earning the lowest pay who were the enemies of capital, for they wished for more rights, such as an eight hour workday, five days a week, rather than 10-14 hours six days a week, adequate pay, healthy work conditions, the end of child labor, educational opportunities and healthcare for their children, and other demands we take for granted as being simple human rights.

Etta sympathized with the working people's goal, and pointed out that the cry of "Anarchy" had become a symbol, much like the cry of "Liberal," or "flag burner" today, used by the right to arouse a purely emotional, nonintellectual response from the populace against its enemies. She insisted that if "Any one who commits violence outside of law is an anarchist," then those citizens who were beating others simply for voicing opinions were themselves anarchists, in that they were taking the law into their own hands. She added that "The Press, the Pulpit, and the Power - any Power that advocates or abets or upholds" the principle of taking the law into its own hands were Czolgosz' "colleagues in anarchy, riot and bloodshed."

Describing who were the true "Anarchists," Etta wrote that it was "The lawmakers, the senators, the congressmen, the judges, the governors of the various states, the preachers'[,] the priests, the mayors of cities, the councilmen, all the employers, be they over a few men or many, all, everybody, who at this time, when sadness and sorrow should fill all our hearts, instead of hatred and murder, all these we say, who now of all times, are urging, nay, committing violence, upholding mob laws, intimidating citizens, shutting off free speech, tar-and-feathering people who speak that which one month ago, some of these same loud-mouthed patriots would have gloated over having been said. These are the anarchists of today. Men who denounce persons and doctrines, without having ever heard or seen one word of their doctrines. Men who heap abuse, nay, set blood hounds and hell hounds on the track of [sic] people who are as innocent as themselves in this awful murder, or perhaps more so. *These are the anarchists.* Are they to be feared? They are. No one's life or property is safe with such a reign of anarchy and dastardly outrages."

Becoming more specific in her charges, she attacked the press in particular with a charge of anarchy, writing, "Who are the anarchists? The press that uphold this reign of terror here in our midst, that so far out-reaches anything that a few loud-mouthed ranters can do, as day surpasses night. The press that should try to be fair in all its dealings with men, because of its far-reaching influence. And what incentive can the press have to thus incite anarchy and bloodshed by infuriated and blood-thirsty Americans? Paul said the love of money is the root of all evil. The more riots, the more papers sold." Specifically, she cited the case of Charles Moore's *Blue Grass Blade* as an example of a paper following the mob mentality of the day: "Of all the cold, cruel, traitor-like anarchists we can now recall, are editions of a little two-by-four, throughout this 'land of the free and home of the brave' who cower and cringe and fawn before this band of intimidators, simply because they fear their scalps on account of parts they have played in the past. One of these belongs here in southeastern Kansas, another is published in Lexington, Ky., by C.C. Moore, called the *Blue Grass Blade*. A few years ago, Mr. Moore was arrested, tried (?) and thrown into jail and was sent to the penitentiary. He made a mighty fight over the freedom of the press here in free America. He quoted verbatim, constitutional laws, statutory laws and moral laws to prove that he had a right to publish anything that he saw fit to pay the typo for setting up. He posed before the Liberal public as a martyr. He asked for financial aid and moral aid and mental aid to help him defeat his enemies. His appeal was not in vain; his many friends rallied to his support manfully, feeling that he was being persecuted instead of being prosecuted. They stood by him in his fight for free speech, Freethought and free press. Now he turns anarchist along with the rest. No, no, not that, *not that*, he turns *traitor* to his friends, and without even stopping to consider how Judas betrayed his master, how Brutus killed Caesar, he plunges his knife to the hilt in the bosom of the very ones who helped him in his fight for free press and makes a loud-mouthed

demand to *destroy their press*, imprison the editors, nay, he wants to hang them all, and wants Kentucky to be the state selected to furnish the hemp. All this without ever considering or inquiring into the facts of whether his friends were ever in sympathy with the murderer who killed our late president."

She reminded her readers, and other Freethought editors, that "We who set ourselves up to be leaders, inasmuch as we try to send out thoughts to educate the masses, should study carefully each sentence and see if we are aiding our enemies or aiding our friends and our principles. Among no class, in no creed, have we ever found such humanitarian and peaceful principles promulgated as those sent out by a true and honorable Freethinker. They do not uphold murder of any kind; they cannot bear the thought of torture; they love harmony and lend their aid in trying to bring about an era of the reign of natural laws, while christianity upholds all the past tortures of the awful inquisition, and did we remain silent soon we would have those old laws again in operative force.

"The pulpit stands ready today, with one accord, to crush out Freethought even by the rack, the stocks, the screws, the stake or the gallows. But some of our most blatant, loud-mouthed erstwhile Liberals (?) rush pell-mell into the trap set - yes a horrible trap baited with the life blood of a man, and taking up the cry of the christian fanatic, want to burn, hang, nay tear out the tongues and gouge out the eyes of a few who would aid them if they could. Avaunt Traitors! The time to try our true worth, is when a terrible crisis is at hand, not when everything is working smoothly and calmly."³¹ For her thoughtful and calm interpretation of current events, she was blasted by her fellow editors.

Moore, typically, laughed off her earnest indignation, thus belittling it. Instead of responding with a thoughtful defense of his actions, he simply wrote, "If Sister Semple thinks she can knock me out with any such 'love licks' as that she thinks a large mistake. If, by any kind of dispensation of divine providence, her husband and my wife should die about the same time, I am going to her house, with matrimonial intentions, just as soon as I can beat the railroads out of a ticket to get there, if she don't get another fellow before I can get there. I am not going to have all the new washed off a two-dollar umbrella, keeping that woman out of the rain, at the Cincinnati Congress, as I did, to have the whole galley pied by a little scrap, like this, over a gang of damned anarchists."³²

Etta expressed these sentiments in September of 1901. She was writing in October of the need for money to continue publishing, and the last issue of the *Freethought Ideal* appeared December 28, 1901, when Etta, giving herself the title of "Doctor Etta Semple," announced that she was moving to a new location at which she had established a health facility, and would thenceforth publish a sheet called the *New Thought Ideal and Health Vindicator*. Moore responded to this in triumph, accusing her of following the philosophy of nonmedical cures found in Christian Science, and writing, "It started in her blasting me because I am agin the Anarchists, and it has gone on and on until it has come to this. It's a God's truth that I never knew of anybody going up agin me, that something didn't happen to them. I am sorry for Sister Semple: she just got rattled, I've been there 1,000 times, Best Beloved, and it's awful. I've felt so miserable that I wished I was in heaven, and you know a man of my kidney is in a bad shape when that is the case."³³

Indeed, Etta had looked into the philosophy of Christian Science and found it wanting, writing in 1900 that "While in Topeka we attended a Divine Science meeting. This branch of purities [sic] is a split from the regular Christian Scientists. When Mrs. Eddy set herself up as a goddess and forbade her subjects to read anything save her works and the bible, some minds were too broad to be thus confined, so the Divine

³¹ *The Freethought Ideal*, 9/28/1901.

³² *The Blue Grass Blade*, Sunday, October 27, 1901.

³³ *The Blue Grass Blade*, 1/5/1902.

Scientists were called into birth. They used to be quite liberal ... but number makes a difference, and we could see the arrogance and superstition in them as readily as in any other creedists. The man who lectured took for his text: 'I am the way, the truth and the life.' Much of the lecture was the regulation Jesus and Devil sermon; he professed a higher plane creed and talked on cures for poverty and sickness, but it was all done in the name of a crucified savior and in the blood of the lamb. He said first get healed by christ, then all bodily and financial troubles will disappear. We cannot quote his words, nor depict his etherial style, but he impressed upon his hearers that unless they believed in christ and performed cures by the aid and power of christ it was a total failure."³⁴

In response to Moore's claims that she had failed because she crossed him, she wrote, "Oh, no, Bro. C.C. I have not gone way back and set down, as you so gloriously flaunt to the world. I am still in the same, though grown tired of fighting. My paper will soon be read by dozens who before would not look at it. What is the use of catering to the 'saved' alone? The enemies turn their Gatling guns to the sinners leaving the ninety-and-nine who are saved and go out after the one that is lost. Now if I think I can do more good by leaving, for a short time, freethinkers and going out after those who never thought upon these lines only with horror and fear why should I be the butt of Liberal (?) papers? Is this Liberalism? Should I be censured for doing with my own that which my conscience tells me is strictly right, just and honorable, and still not taking back one principle that I have long promulgated? If my paper could no longer flourish as a radical exponent, did I not do the next best thing, seeing I do not like to give up the fight?

"Three years of my life were given to the cause without a cent of remuneration, but, on the contrary, many dollars of my earnings went for its support.

"Now when I begin publication again upon a new line of thought my paper will be larger and I hope better, in as much as I shall try to teach harmony.

"No, I have not 'gone back' nor have I 'set down.' One of my temperament can not set down."³⁵

It would be unthinkable that any endeavor Etta attempted would be done half-heartedly.

Apparently, she remained outspoken, for there is a report that in 1904, a woman was killed in a bed usually occupied by Etta at the sanitarium, and the common thought was that Etta was the intended victim. The murderer was never found.³⁶

A happier relationship existed between Etta and fellow Freethinker Moses Harman. Harman, who edited *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer* in Valley Falls, Kansas, was described by Etta as a man who "may have some 'very peculiar' views but [who] never intrudes. As to honesty of purpose and loyalty to his convictions he stands shoulders and head above the majority."³⁷ In 1900, Etta visited the Harman's while on a vacation, saying of the few days spent there, "The hospitality of the family can never be forgotten."³⁸ The Kansas Freethought Association had been born of the idea shared by Etta and a few friends to raise money to help

³⁴ *The Freethought Ideal*, 3/1/1900.

³⁵ *The Blue Grass Blade*, 2/2/1902.

³⁶ *Freethought Today*, April/May 1985, pages 10-11.

³⁷ *Freethought Ideal*, Vol. VI, No. 5, 8/1/1899.

³⁸ *Freethought Ideal*, 12/1/1900.

Harman fight the censorship laws which had landed him in jail more than once.³⁹ Harman's outspoken views on sex, divorce and marriage were far ahead of their time and he faced constant persecution for them. He supported Etta through his paper, defending her during the "Cleveland" scandal.

When Etta died at the age of 59, an extraordinary event took place. So respected was she by the community, for her efforts at curing the sick, that "the largest funeral attendance ever seen in Ottawa" took place, during which even the local court was adjourned so that all could attend.⁴⁰ The citizens of Ottawa had shown Etta their respect for her before, as she reported in 1900, when she reprinted articles from the Ottawa Republican and the Herald concerning the event. Unexpectedly, a crowd of forty to fifty people, all of whom she had cured of various illnesses, descended on her house to celebrate her forty-sixth birthday. Flowers were presented, along with gold rimmed spectacles, a gold fruit spoon and a silver cake basket. The visitors brought cake and ice cream and made little speeches in praise of Etta. Etta, it was reported, was so overcome she was unable to make a response.⁴¹

Etta had once written, in a short biography of herself, that her tombstone should say "something like this": "Here lies a woman, that through her peculiar disposition, lived a life of turmoil, as did all who knew her."⁴² How appropriate this memorial would be to this fiery intellect! Yet, despite her apparent popularity at the time of her death, today one cannot even locate her tombstone.⁴³

Quotes

If I deny the existence of a god - if I deny the idea of a gold paved city with pearly walls and jasper gates somewhere out of knowledge and space and prefer to die and trust to the unfaltering laws of nature - if, in plain words I don't want to go to heaven whose business is it but my own?

- Etta Semple, *The Freethought Ideal*, Ottawa, Kansas, Vol. V, No. 12, 11/15/1898.

It has been claimed by many that Freethought does away with churches, creeds, christs and even a god. So it does to a certain extent, but not as feared by Christians. Freethought has never said pull down your churches, burn up your creeds, crucify your savior or reject your god. No one ever knew a Freethinker to try to make laws to control people. All their efforts have been the other way, trying to tear down laws already made which control by "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not." If those who oppose Freethought did not strive to *force all* to think as they do, accept Christ by faith, believe the bible to be infallible, keep Sunday as a holy day, and work for a future reward, then our fight would be at an end instantly. Liberty of conscience is all we ask - not control of any class, creed or sect.

- Etta Semple, *The Freethought Ideal*, Ottawa, Kansas, Vol. V, No. 12, 11/15/1898.

Freethought, then, means liberty of thought, science, mental activity and justice. It teaches that no written creed is elastic enough to stretch into the next century - it teaches freedom of the mind as relating to religion - it teaches morality - it teaches truth and is willing to go over rough and dangerous paths when in

³⁹ *Freethought Ideal*, Vol. V, No. 19, 3/1/1899.

⁴⁰ *Freethought Today*, April/May 1985, pages 10-11.

⁴¹ *Freethought Ideal*, 10/1/1900.

⁴² *Freethought Ideal and Vindicator*, Vol. VII, 4/13/1901, p. 2.

⁴³ *Freethought Today*, April/May 1985, pages 10-11.

search of it - it teaches its true followers to do good to all, because of the happiness it affords both the doer and the receiver - not for the sole purpose of sunning an endless hell; it offers no reward here or hereafter save the reward of a good conscience.

- Etta Semple, *The Freethought Ideal*, Ottawa, Kansas, Vol. V, No. 12, 11/15/1898, p. 1.

Freethought teaches an entire new life. It strives to do away with selfishness, envy, malice, scandal, gossip, greed, jealousy and backbiting.

- Etta Semple, *The Freethought Ideal*, Ottawa, Kansas, Vol. V, No. 12, 11/15/1898.

Every true freethinker accords to each individual the right to mental freedom. Where this freedom leads is no concern of others so long as it encroaches not upon their rights.

- Etta Semple, *The Freethought Ideal*, Ottawa, Kansas, Vol. V, No. 12, 11/15/1898.

No one has a right to put a limit to the human mind or possibilities. Suppose Edison had been compelled to confine his possibilities to his first invention, do you think he would have yielded meekly? So with progressive reformers, they grow restless when limited in mental growth.

- Etta Semple, *The Freethought Ideal*, Ottawa, Kansas, Vol. V, No. 12, 11/15/1898.

If persons have to be legislated into heaven by codes, rules, creeds and state affairs which force them to do things at variance with their nature and reason what will become of them when turned loose where there is no fear and love rules?

- Etta Semple, *The Freethought Ideal*, Ottawa, Kansas, Vol. V, No. 12, 11/15/1898.

When asked for proof of the existence of a god the answer is "my whole being testifies to the fact, his spirit bears witness with my spirit, all nature proclaims his existence." Let us see. The whole being of the pagan resounds to the spirit of the pagan god or idol. Its spirit cries out for good or ill according to the teaching of the pagan's conscience and last but not least, Nature is the grand teacher of Freethought. The Bible teaches that god is unchangeable and that his laws are as unchangeable as the universe, yet all nature changes; the smallest insect which now infects the growth of herbs is not what it once was. The domestic animals have all changed, the wild beasts are an entirely new kind. Vegetable, forest, flora and grasses have all changed many times in the history of the earth. The earth itself has changed, the mountains, the oceans, and all the surface of the earth - the moon, the sun[,] the stars - all nature proclaims endless change, yet god is unchangeable, so it is claimed.

- Etta Semple, *The Freethought Ideal*, Ottawa, Kansas, Vol. V, No. 12, 11/15/1898.

Why did God make the Devil? If He made him for a purpose that shows Him to be malicious, wrathful and intending harm. If we kill a man in cold blood or by forethought, the crime is greater than if we, in the heat of excitement should murder him. So if God coolly planned and reasoned out the construction of the Devil and Hell, to us it seems far more cruel and unjust. If God did not make the Devil, and he came through some low form of spontaneous growth caused by demand or necessity, why has there not been more Devils? And if this Devil is a spontaneous growth, are we sure all Nature, or at least all thinking things might not be of the same beginning?

- Etta Semple, *The Freethought Ideal*, Vol. V., No. 16, 2/1/1899.

Hell and the Devil were never made for us, but for the "other fellow." No one ever heard a Christian thanking God because He had planned a place of everlasting torment for himself, if he failed to be good; but on the other hand we often hear thanks rendered to God because he has so ordained that the wicked shall be banished into outer darkness where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. No, Hell is

for our enemies, not for us. This then makes us harbor spite, and uphold a Hell, simply for the other sinners not for us.

- Etta Semple, *The Freethought Ideal*, Vol. V., No. 16, 2/1/1899.

If there are persons who do not wish to be Freethinkers, we don't care. We never intend to make law forcing them to be such. We never intend to use authority or by our might, force them to such. We never shall try to scandalize or traduce the character of anyone because they are not Freethinkers. We never shall ostracize or in any way cast obloquy upon any who wishes to be a Christian, solely because they are so. And we shall defend our rights by maintaining that the same treatment be extended to us. Especially do we wage this war against hypocrites who stand on the housetops and cry out "Lord, I thank thee that I am not like other people" and who meekly bow their heads and recite: "Do unto others as you would that they should do to you."

- Etta Semple, *The Freethought Ideal*, Vol. V., No. 16, 2/1/1899.

Freethought condemns any ism or creed that causes its followers to set themselves up as being better than the world at large, but ever seeks to make a universal equality, not based on beliefs or isms.

- *The Freethought Ideal*, 3/1/1900.

Freethought claims the right to express itself openly, regardless of any other's views, without fear of being insulted and abused.

- *The Freethought Ideal*, 3/1/1900.

Freethought respects any person's views and beliefs if they are honest, sincere and devoid of selfishness.

- *The Freethought Ideal*, 3/1/1900.

Freethought measures persons by their actions and principles.

- *The Freethought Ideal*, 3/1/1900.

Creeds are curious things. We are glad we have none. We are against them whenever and wherever found. We see how a creed will not only destroy friendships, but break up the ties of familie's [*sic*] and neighborhoods and spread out all over whole states. This is one reason we like Freethinkers; they have no creed - they shun no one for his or her belief - they slur no one because they do not agree with them. Isms are dangerous things. They at once build up a fence and say to those outside, "believe as I do or be lost." It makes no difference what the belief, if there is an ism or creed to it there you will find two classes, one saved, the other lost. Actions, beloved brethren, are what tell in this world and this world is NOW; and we propose to let the future take care of itself.

Yes, we put our unfaltering trust in nature; if there is a future life beyond this, and those of us who wish to believe there is have oh, such a perfect right to - we say if there is a life beyond this, we will be there. We trust old Mother Nature and we don't propose to harp on deathbed repentance scenes to entice this mother to take us in her arms and "rock us to sleep."

We don't believe in anything which teaches "come ye out from among them;" but if one had a truth let him teach, "go ye out among them and show them the light." Condemn any creed on earth which causes its adherents to feel as if they were better than all outside their creed. We have tested this and found that

wherever this spirit is made manifest there you will find hypocrisy, deceit, gossippers, scandal-mongers and other kindred falsifiers. Why? Because to err is human, and by setting oneself up as perfection their human traits have to be hidden, so hypocrisy is bred, as well as all other errors.

Friends, let us have freedom of thought and utterance, let us teach that none are as yet perfect, let us throw out the idea that we have to be our own judge, jury and witness, that none other can arise to question us and then see if, when robbed of condemnation and the fact of a crucified Jesus, we don't stand forth grand, glorious men and women? But this eternal, hellish, damnable habit of mankind to be always picking faults and tearing one to pieces, away with it! if you have a creed which causes you to set yourself up as better than the rest, throw it away and TRY TO BETTER YOURSELF.

We have no fight to make on any special belief - all we ask is to be let alone in our beliefs, and not be insulted and ostracized because of them. We claim we have reached an age when we ought to know our mind as well as others.

- *The Freethought Ideal*, 3/1/1900.

When superstition and blind credulity are done away with, along with ignorance and stupidity relative to nature and her laws, when gods cease to come down and seduce the daughters of men and beget saviours, then will knowledge aided by a confidence based on science usher in a new era - an era of self-dependence, self-esteem and self-devotion; then will humanity learn to be its own saviour and a bond of full universal brotherhood exist; not a brotherhood of clubs, sects, tribes and societies, but universal.

- *Freethought Ideal*, 3/15/1900.

Freethought.

By Etta Semple, President of the K.F.A.

At the close of the seventeenth century there seems to have been a great strife raised over the terms "Freethought" and "Freethinkers." The excitement reached a higher pitch than has been known since. Letters or papers written upon the subject were written in secret and signed "anonymous." The worst feature was that Freethinkers were unable to tell who their friends were; so much danger was embodied in exposure that brother feared to trust his brother and parents their children.

The word freethought did not mean then what it implies now. Any little doubt or disbelief, or even a desire to investigate the prevailing religion, was then considered Freethought. Many Freethought writers claimed that Protestant religion was one branch of Freethought, or in other words, claimed that the spirit of inquiry had led them out of Catholicism. Years prior to this, however, Protestants were called Infidels, and often those more bigoted by their strict Catholic training called them Atheists. In fact, Polycarp was called an Atheist - now recognized as one of the Christian fathers, and held in high esteem because of his tenacity in clinging to his Infidel or Christian faith. After the period known as the "Dark Ages," namely, the fifth to the fifteenth century, there seemed to dawn gradually upon certain minds that Protestant religion was a step in advance, and if out of a few protests such as Martin Luther and others made there could grow such a broadening of religious views, then there was still room to expand.

Then began Freethought in earnest. Bruno, Anthony Collins, and many others were noted Freethinkers. Bruno paid the penalty with his life, having been burned at the stake at Rome Feb. 17, 1600. Collins did not begin his Liberal writing until after the middle of the same century.

The mode of conducting reform then was quite different from what we see now. Never allowing a member of their own family even to know their opinions, they were nevertheless called Freethinkers. Now one has to be outspoken and not ashamed to face the world before he is entitled to the name.

The Catholic Inquisition, embracing a period of about 200 years, begat many Freethinkers, and now some of our boldest and best Freethinkers come out of the Roman Catholic church. Next came a period of witch burning, which in its turn bred Infidels by the thousands. The Christian faith seemed to harden the hearts of its followers so that they resisted all progress - all mental activity - all things which were "out of faith in Christ and denouncing all pleasure and happiness." [Cotton Mather]

It is not generally known what constituted witchcraft 200 years ago. Personal dislike, jealousy and fear were formidable enemies and used as weapons against witches; but this was not all: if any one (especially women, for they were like women of to-day) possessed intuitive powers a trifle out of the ordinary, he or she were suspected and burned at the stake; hence our occult powers were stunted for 200 years and over. We of this age are just beginning to rally from the blow.

We see the same spirit flash up often yet. Mind reading, clairvoyance, finding lost articles, and the art of what some term "second sight," are all subject to being stunted by the tyrannical spirit which existed then, only the spirit seems somewhat subdued or modified - modified simply because Freethought has spread; and no more do we fear the dungeon, the rack, the guillotine [*sic*], or the burning out of tongue and eyes, nor do we fear arrest as of old, and being burned at the stake.

Freethought, then, means liberty of thought, science, mental activity and justice. It teaches that no written creed is elastic enough to stretch into the next century - it teaches freedom of the mind as relating to religion - it teaches morality - it teaches truth and is willing to go over rough and dangerous paths when in search of it - it teaches its true followers to do good to all, because of the happiness it affords both the doer and the receiver - not for the sole purpose of sunning an endless hell; it offers no reward here or hereafter save the reward of a good conscience. True conscience is being sacrificed every day by a spirit which tends to destroy it, just as our occult powers were destroyed years ago. It is the same tyrannical, bigoted, oppressive spirit. Our consciences are so trained that what is absolutely right is thought of with "fear and trembling." The mandate, "thus far and no farther," "thou shalt not," and "obey my laws," are so constantly before the mind that conscience is almost driven out or crushed. Freethought strives to reinstate conscience - dispel fear - shut out superstition - ease the mind when death comes, and even robs the grave of its terror. It cries out NOW, NOW, NOW! Happiness and joy here on earth now - not waiting until death robs us of our consciousness and nature claims our body to mingle again with the elements as unconscious matter.

- Etta Semple, *The Freethought Ideal*, Ottawa, Kansas, Vol. V, No. 12, 11/15/1898, p. 1.

Did Jesus Christ Ever Exist?

By Etta Semple, President of the K.F.A.

Tacitus the great Roman Historian makes mention of the fact that a strange man - a Jew, lived and taught superstitious and spurious doctrines - that he soon had many followers and they crowded streets and byways to such an extent that they had to be held in check and through this man's teachings such an uproar was raised and such an outcry made against popular religion that Pontius Pilate had to punish him. Tacitus was born not earlier than 20 years after the supposed judicial murder of the supposed Christ and could not have begun his writings until 40 years after said date and the man he referred to was called Yeshua or Joshua. By Tacitus' writings we are lead [*sic*] to suppose that a man really existed forty or fifty years prior to his writing who raised a great tumult and caused a strong excitement among the common people, but by the same authority we find that Yeshua was not then deified but just the reverse. Instead of being mild, loving, resigned and contented, he was preaching spurious doctrines, exciting the people to such an extent that they congregated in mobs; he made threats and tried to dispel their ignorance and get them to reason. The man whom Tacitus wrote of had cause to scourge the money changers out of the temple for they had taken up their abode there, carrying on theft, robbery and fraudulent schemes until the poor could stand it no longer.

The office holders lived either in the temple or near it and held office by inheritance, thus shutting out any other person from ever holding the office or even making an outcry against wrongs inflicted upon them. The whole wealth of the land was being gradually consumed by the Temple of God.

Everybody had to pay enormously high taxes, the very poor having to give one-tenth as well as those who could better spare it. Sometimes it was nothing but a dove but when we consider the poverty which then existed in the very shadow of the temple a dove often meant all. This then gives a faint glimpse of existing conditions at the time when Tacitus made a brief mention of the mob-exciting Jew called Yeshua. Now to a few other noted writers and I will quote from Christian history largely so as to bring all the bearing on both sides possible and to make the opposition points clear also. Hermas mentioned by Paul and supposed to have died A.D. 81 and who wrote many books nowhere mentioned Jesus Christ as a Christ, and in his greatest book "Shepherd of Hermas," never even alludes to any of the gospels.

Josephus never made one single mention of Jesus Christ or anything which could have referred to him even remotely, or his great tumult, or that there was any one man responsible for the unrest among the people. We find in Josephus, however, a few interpolations or sham quotations which have been purposely and fraudulently placed there by perhaps some over zealous monk in copying the manuscript; but all learned commentators of today agree that reference to Christ in any way is the rankest interpolation, made for effect. Clements, who wrote his most noted work A.D. 96 says in his first epistle: "Let us be followers of those who went about in goat skins and sheep skins, preaching the coming of Christ. Such were the Prophets." In his second epistle he says: "Wherefore let us every hour expect the kingdom of God in love and righteousness, because we know not the day of God's appearing." This plainly shows that he knew nothing of Christ but was looking for his coming. Barnabas the man who introduced Paul to the other apostles lived A.D. 71 and in his writings we find these words: "The day of the Lord is at hand, in which all things shall be destroyed, together with the wicked. The Lord is near and his reward is with him." This man was stoned to death by the Jews A.D. 75 and yet he was also looking for the coming of the Lord. All his original writings show that he did not consider that Christ had come, but was earnestly looking for him and that the time was after his writing, not before.

Ignatius, who flourished A.D. 100 and is still considered one of the greatest and most reliable of the Christian Fathers and is also the man that Greek and Syriac writers affirm was the little child that Jesus took in his arms and blessed, seems to be in ignorance that Christ had come. He wrote to Polycarp: "Be every day better than another; consider the time and expect Him who is above all time eternal, invisible, though for our sakes will be visible." Is it reasonable to suppose that anyone would have written in this style of expectation if he had really been held in the arms of a Redeemer and had received his blessing? Could Ignatius have been this child when Historians agree that he began his writings in A.D. 100? Then if there is no discrepancies in the dates would he have been expecting that which he had already gotten? True, our Christian writers make him uphold the gospels and yet we have ample proof that the gospels were not in existence in his day and therefore the part of his writings referring to Christ through the teachings of the gospels is purely interpolations also. We might go on at length but this is enough. At the time the Christian era began there was need for a Redeemer. The old Jewish and Roman ideas had existed and the leaders in each had had full sway for so many years that they had become arrogant, tyrannical and brutal. The poor were driven to the extremes of want, misery and despair. All kinds of sacrifices were made by them. The women were made slaves of or taken as concubines (kept mistresses) for those in authority. The temple of God was a reeking mass of murder, prostitution, theft, usury and money-changing; and men and women were made to take care of it by the application of the lash, but all this foulness was garnished over with silver and gold. Style and grandeur dazzled the people, and they believed [*sic*] it right to keep it up in order to appease God. The time was ripe for a reformer.

Can one man alone claim the title? Human Nature remains essentially the same, could one man now, if he should cry out against such outrages, be called a Christ? No, but in after years some one man, more open in his opinions, and by force of character causes his work to be written in history, his name to be

crowned with an immortal wreath, and he alone will receive all homage which should be shared among the thousands who stood by him and made it possible for him to do his work. So then, the honor does not belong alone to Jesus Christ, but to the common people as well, who stood by him, fed and clothed him, and suffered death for the principles which he is said to have promulgated, and by so doing made it possible for him to bear his cross up Calvary.

I do not believe that Jesus Christ ever existed. History bears me out in my belief. But I do believe that the time, conditions and circumstances produced the nucleus around which Christian sects have built their savior.

- Etta Semple, *The Freethought Ideal*, Vol. V., No. 16, 1/15/1899, p. 1-2.



DR. JULIETTE H. SEVERANCE

DR. JULIETTE H. SEVERANCE

I know very, very little about this lady, which is odd since the small amount of information I have indicates she was a highly considered member of the Freethought movement in the late 19th century.

In 1890, Juliette (sometimes found as Juliet) was living in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and was on the Board of Directors of the American Secular Union. The Annual Congress that year was held in Portsmouth, Ohio, on Friday, October 31, 1890.¹

Proof that she was highly esteemed is found in 1893, when Dr. Severance presided over Woman's Day at the International Congress of Freethinkers, meeting in Chicago, Illinois. Speakers that day included Susan Wixon, Mattie Freeman, Voltairine de Cleyre, and Lillie D. White.²

Juliette spoke at the Freethought Federation and Secular Union Convention held in Chicago on October 26-28, 1894, along with Samuel Putnam, John Remsburg, and others.³

In 1895, she is listed along with Col. Robert G. Ingersoll, Samuel P. Putnam, John E. Remsburg, L.K. Washburn, W.F. Jamieson, Mrs. Mattie P. Krekel, Katie Kehm Smith, T.B. Wakeman, Voltairine de Cleyre, Mattie Freeman, Susan Wixon, and J.D. Shaw as an available speaker for Freethought sponsored by the Freethought Federation of America and the American Secular Union. At this time, she is listed as living in Chicago, Illinois. A Professor A.B. Severance, of Milwaukee, Wisconsin is also among this list of speakers, which makes one wonder if this might be the father or brother of Juliette, since earlier she had been listed as living in Milwaukee.

One more mention is made of Juliette, in 1905, when Lucinda Chandler mentions very briefly having received a letter from her.⁴

Unfortunately, this is all I have ever found of this lady. No speeches or letters from her were ever printed in any of the periodicals to which I have had access.

¹ *The Ironclad Age*, Vol. 35, No. 26, 9/6/1890.

² *The Truth Seeker Annual and Freethinkers' Almanac*, 1895.

³ *The Truth Seeker Annual and Freethinkers' Almanac*, 1895.

⁴ *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, Whole No. 1045, 8/3/1905.



ELMINA DRAKE SLENKER

ELMINA DRAKE SLENKER

12/23/1827 - 1?/1908

Elizabeth (Elmina) Drake was born December 23, 1827 at La Grange, New York; the first of six girls born to a Quaker couple. There is not much information available about Mrs. Drake, but it is known that Mr. Drake was an extremely liberal man, who invited contemporary radicals such as Abby Kelley Foster, Ernestine Rose, Henry C. Wright and Parker Pillsbury to his home, resulting in his expulsion from the Quaker community. Thus the sisters were surrounded from an early age with liberal thoughts and were encouraged to assert themselves as women.

In her book *Studying the Bible* (1870), Elmina writes that at fourteen her mother offered her a dollar to read the bible, which task she undertook, frequently stopping to ask her mother questions concerning the contradictions and absurdities she read. Her mother being unable to answer her questions, Elmina began writing down her questions and comments as she read, with the result being that before she had finished the book, she realized that it was a compendium of "fabulous contradictions, falsehoods, and nonsense ... a book which no one, with any pretensions to a knowledge of Nature and her laws, of man in his best and highest development, could believe to be a revelation from a Being as much superior to the *best* man as that best man would be to the 'vilest sinner on God's footstool,' or the wickedest wretch in the lowest and hottest apartment of his subterranean regions."¹

In addition to reading the bible, Elmina was very impressed by reading Paine, Volney, and Taylor, writing, "Paine had destroyed the last remnant of my faith in the divinity of the Scriptures and led me to Deism. Volney had killed my god and made me an Atheist. Taylor had shown me that there was far more of doubt than certainty, that the man, the reformer, the Infidel of his day, Jesus Christ, ever existed; indeed, he proved to me that he really did not exist. Showing the utter worthlessness and undeniability [?] of all Christian history, he went on and told how Christ and his twelve apostles were but the sun and the twelve zodiac signs, thus destroying the New Testament as a history even. The [Boston] *Investigator* had brought me into communion with living Infidels and Atheists of my own day. But none of them assured me for a certainty that there was no immortality. So, though I had almost come to the conclusion that there was none ... still I wished there was a proof of a future ... Now came the 'last feather that broke the camel's back!' Joseph Treat, of Vineland, sent me a small pamphlet called the 'Oration.' There it was, all in a nutshell. No god, no heaven, no hell, no immortality, and the natural, common sense proofs that there could be none!"²

Rejecting orthodox Christianity, Elmina did not, as many Freethinkers of the time, fall into the trap of Spiritualism, which gained great popularity during this period. The Spiritualists, although a diverse group, shared the common belief that the personality of a person lived on beyond their physical death and that communication with this personality was possible through a medium. Some Christians were Spiritualists, as it fit directly into the other mythologies of their Bible, but surprisingly, many otherwise rational people joined the Spritualist ranks, although they dismissed the other myths of organized religions. Elmina, however, was sensible enough to see that Spiritualism was just another form of wishful thinking, and she chided her public for believing it to be factual. In 1885, she published a brief note in *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, in which she lists several monetary offers for proof of the existence of "spirits," and lightly asked why, if Spiritualism was real, its promoters did not accept the challenge. After all, she asked, "If the spirits or mediums can invisibly make beds, clear off dinner tables, bake biscuits, write autographs of dead

¹ *Studying the Bible*, Elmina Drake Slenker, Josiah P. Mendum, Boston, MA, 1870, p. 2.

² "Elmina Slenker, Infidel and Atheist," Edward D. Jervy, *Free Inquiry*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Winter 1984/1985, p. 41.

people, materialize food, fruit, birds, flowers, diamonds and human beings, why do they not forever settle up the whole question of spiritology by giving us the simple tests asked for and thus win glory, honor, fame and cash for the cause they champion?"³ Needless to say, the challenge was not accepted.

At the age of twenty-six, Elizabeth, deciding it was time to marry, pursued her goal in an extremely unlikely manner for the times, advertising for a husband in periodicals. She received over sixty replies to her advertisement, and married one of her correspondents, Isaac Slenker, in a simple Quaker-style agreement, rather than in a more socially traditional ceremony.⁴

It was reported by an unfriendly press that Elizabeth was an extreme homely woman, with a cleft palate and unstylish short hair, and this perhaps explains why she did not pursue a speaking career. However, it did not stop her from writing voluminously for numerous Freethought journals, in which she adopted the name of "Elmina," and became known as "Aunt Elmina" to many reformers.

She wrote articles and short stories on a variety of topics, and conducted a children's column in *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, edited a department for the *Boston Investigator*, and served as editor for the New York journal *Physiologist and Family Physician*. For a time, she edited the *Plainedealer* of Hastings, Michigan, and also published a children's journal called *Little Freethinker* in 1890.⁵

In addition, she wrote several novels, published serially in the freethought press, including *John's Way* (1878), *The Clergyman's Victims*, *The Darwins* (1879), *Mary Jones*, *The Infidel School-Teacher* (1885) and a children's book *Little Lessons for Little Folk* (1886). The articles by which she achieved the attention of the full public, however, were those dealing with women's rights issues, under which banner she tackled temperance and sexual reform. This latter was to lead Elmina into very serious trouble with the authorities.

Temperance and women's rights were closely aligned, in that married women were legally helpless against the husband who drank and beat them, beat their children, smashed their household objects, or spent the money designated for the necessities of life, such as food and clothing, on drink. A man could be arrested for beating his wife, it was true, but the charge against him was that he failed to "keep the peace" of the community, and usually a small fee could be paid and the man released to continue his actions.

Elmina would not join in the large temperance groups such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union because of their association with religion, as she was a confirmed Atheist. She did, however, write many articles about temperance.

In the department of sexual reform, Elmina early advocated the use of birth control, saying that women should have free access to contraceptives in an effort to give them, as a sex, more freedom without the fear of pregnancy forever coloring their sexual activities.

In her evolution of thought towards women's sexual relationships, she at first advocated that women should be as free as men to pursue sexual interests, but gradually her sexual reform philosophy began to conform to her temperance philosophy, in that abstinence was the best means of improving health and preserving family happiness. She felt that indulging in alcoholic drinking or sexual activities, while giving temporary pleasure, both left the participant drained and exhausted, and would, if pursued intemperately, result in poor health. She wrote that couples should "conserve the life forces and not needlessly waste them in mere momentary paroxysms of pleasure."⁶ It was believed by some doctors at the time that participating

³ *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, Vol. III, No. 2, Whole #92, 3/27/1885.

⁴ *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, June 6, 1907.

⁵ "Elmina Slenker, Infidel and Atheist," Edward D. Jervy, *Free Inquiry*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Winter 1984/1985, p. 41.

⁶ *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, April 14, 1897, Vol. I, No. 15.

in sexual acts too frequently not only weakened the partners but also resulted in deficient children. Elmina wrote that only if sexual activity was performed infrequently and for procreation, could it be safe for both partners.

There was another aspect to her call for abstinence that appealed to many in the women's rights movement, in that both drinking and sexual activities were viewed as pleasures enjoyed more by men than women, and that overindulgence in both activities was demonstrative of man's dominance over women. Women, who society decreed were "above" such base pleasures, were not expected to enjoy, but rather endure sex from their partner, and to endure their partner's activities while drunk, so that by advocating temperance in both areas, Elmina was in fact advocating the woman's right to control her environment.

This doctrine was known as Alphaism, and Elmina began strongly supporting it in the 1880's, when she was in her fifty's and perhaps somewhat past her sexual prime, which may have contributed to her support of this theory. Her readers in *Lucifer* did not support Alphaism, and criticized Elmina for abandoning her earlier promotion of contraception over abstinence. Elmina found herself in the "right wing" of the Social Purity movement, in which many women participated in the late nineteenth century. This movement was an attempt to "purify" society and assert the rights of women as equal partners, with their policies ranging from Elmina's ideas of marriage with no or little sexual activity to sexual activity without marriage, promoted by the so-called "Free Lovers."

It was odd that Elmina would opt for supporting the Social Puritan flank of the Social Purity movement, as this group was most closely aligned to organized religion, whereas the Free Love group was composed mostly of Atheists. However, Elmina's views actually served as a link between the two groups, for her philosophy of abstinence implied the power of the individual to choose whether to engage in sex, or to not engage in sex, which philosophy the Free Lovers supported.

Recognizing that social reality made sexual abstinence impractical, Elmina changed her views from the support of Alphaism to Dianism, a theory that stated that since humans were too "depraved" to cease engaging in sexual activities altogether, sexual activity was permissible to satisfy sexual needs. This was not, however, to be done by penetration, but rather by mutual external sexual stimulation by both parties within a partnership. Writing on this subject, Elmina stated, "We offer health, happiness, purity, and ten thousand other blessings, instead of the one evil of needless sexing." The method by which couples would engage in Dianism were likewise explained, Elmina writing, "By the 'little ways and tricks of Dianism,' I mean the little touches, pats and carressive tokens of love. The clasp of the hand, the glance of affection, the tone of the voice, and all that speaks of genuine kindness and friendliness; this we offer in place of the over much sexing, that is murdering millions of wives, and scattering syphilis all over the world." Dianism would "also stop all abortions, and infanticides and have none but wished for children." This would thus serve the dual purpose of providing an outlet for sexual desire and being a form of birth control. Elmina recognized that women as well as men enjoyed sexual activity, but attributed this to poor education, something that could be "overcome." Still, as society was not prepared for the total abstinence of Alphaism, Elmina recognized that even Dianism would be difficult for many to attain, saying, "We do not expect all to be Dianists at once. The masses must grow slowly towards it."⁷ By changing her emphasis from total abstinence to Dianism, Elmina came into conflict with Anthony Comstock.

Anthony Comstock has been written about voluminously and so I will not attempt to give a thorough portrayal. For those not familiar with him, however, he was appointed postal inspector and given extraordinary and Constitutionally illegal rights in arresting those who he decided were mailing "obscene" literature, a term never fully defined outside of his own feelings when he read the material for himself. Comstock had such power that his arrest of those he deemed "obscene" authors often resulted in instant conviction by sympathetic judges, who trusted his judgement, and Comstock bragged of the people who had

⁷ *Lucifer, The Light-Bearer*, April 14, 1897, Vol. I, No. 15.

committed suicide because of his dogged pursuit of them. An extreme social puritan, Comstock saw the sexual act as innately obscene, and reported that he did not engage in it with his wife except for the express purpose of propagation, and then, one would expect, without much pleasure for either party. Many of the Freethought community were imprisoned during his reign of terror, including many Freethought newspaper editors.

Elmina's entrapment (for that was the favorite method of Comstock to secure arrest) began when vice-society agent McAfee noticed her pamphlets on Dianism in Indiana. Notifying his home office in the Post Office Department, a file was begun on Elmina and material collected for several years, with as many as four detectives working on collecting information on her at one time. McAfee and post-office inspector Barclay together developed a strategy to trap Elmina, using her method of responding to personal correspondence to answer questions concerning Dianism. Using aliases, a method Comstock's troops frequently employed, McAfee and Barclay wrote decoy letters to Elmina, asking for sexual advice, and receiving replies they considered to be incriminating. Barclay even visited Elmina to further collect evidence, and on April 27, 1887, they arrested her in the town of Snowville, Virginia, where she and her husband had moved around 1880, for mailing obscene literature.

Elmina's arrest differed from those preceding her as the charge against her was mailing obscene material in private, sealed letters, whereas previous arrests were of those sending pamphlets, books, or newspapers. An earlier decision by the Supreme Court prohibited the search for obscene literature in sealed mail without a warrant; however, the Comstock Law tended to supercede this ruling, with a federal judge stating that "It is not the form in which the matter is mailed, but the character of the matter itself, which fixes the criminality of the act."⁸

Taken into court, Elmina did not increase the sympathy of the judge or the general public by maintaining her principles by refusing to swear on the Bible, saying she did not believe in the Bible, Christianity, God, heaven, hell, devils, angels, or ghosts.⁹ She stated that her letters had only been sent to private individuals asking for advice, and that they were not obscene, but rather were educational. She was placed in jail for six months as the trial went to district court, with even her husband refusing to raise bail for her.

The Freethought community was in an uproar. The *Truth Seeker* wrote "What shall be said of the dirty agents employed for years in ensnaring an aged woman - inducing her, by pretending to be students of her special hobby, to write such words as should place her in their power? What shall be said of the society that employs these foul creatures? What of the Christians who support this society and urge the prosecution of the miserable work? Their actions sink them beneath the notice of clean and honorable people, and they are best left to fester in their own corruption. No words can express the contempt in which every decent man must hold them."¹⁰ The National Defense Association conducted the defense of Elmina, with *Truth Seeker* readers paying her expenses. Women were her most ardent supporters.

In October, she appeared in court again, with the jury finding her guilty of mailing obscene literature. Her attorney argued to the judge that since the Comstock Law read that "any person who shall knowingly deposit" obscene matter in the mail "shall be deemed guilty," the charges against Elmina should

⁸ *The Sex Radicals*, Hal D. Sears, The Regents Press of Kansas, 1977, p. 215-218.

⁹ *New York Times*, April 29, 1887, p. 5; April 30, 1887, p. 5.

¹⁰ *Fifty Years of Freethought*, Volume I, George E. Macdonald, New York, The Truth Seeker Company, 1929, p. 425-426.

be dropped, for she did not know that the materials were obscene, and deposited them in good faith as educational materials. Surprisingly, the judge agreed, freeing Elmina on November 4, 1887.¹¹

Her arrest did not stop Elmina from pursuing her publication of articles and letters in support of Dianism, with articles appearing at least until the late nineteenth century. Elmina was a woman attempting, in her own way, to secure increased liberties for her sex, by empowering women in the marriage through both alcoholic and sexual temperance, and thus, although considered a sexual reformer, must also be remembered as a woman's rights advocate.

Aunt Elmina died shortly after her 80th birthday, in 1908, at her home in Snowville, Virginia.¹² It was thought by her neighbors that she might repent on her deathbed, and, in a wholly despicable yet not surprising action for christians, a "respectable member" of the community was sent into her room to remain until she died, hoping to report back her cries to a god in which she had never believed. This witness revealed, however, that at no time did Elmina give any sign of repentance, nor did she mention god in any manner. Thus, even at her death, Elmina was denied dignity and peace from religionists. What a lonely death it must have been, in an environment filled with those who not only did not love her, or sympathize with her philosophy, but were hostile to her. She was buried at Graysonville, near her home.¹³

Quotes

Whoever does a noble deed, or gives utterance to a noble thought, raises, elevates, and refines humanity. By associating with the good and pure, we invariably grow better and purer ourselves. By cultivating the beautiful and the artistic, we create tidal waves of the aesthetic which will flow from our own little world into the worlds of those around and about us. To give the lovely and the true from the storehouse of our selfhood adds to the treasures of our neighbor, and yet lessens not our own.
- *The Truth Seeker*, November 2, 1878.

If people could only learn to look upon the Bible, as it is; could see that it is only a collection of the writings of the ancients upon all the principal subjects which most interested them, and that these writings were bound together in one volume simply for convenience and preservation, how soon would their reason and judgment set upon it its true value! It would then be read just as we now read the old mythological stories of Jupiter, Jove, Bacchus, Hercules, Adonis, Venus, Mars, etc. Let the "tub stand on its own bottom," and it will at once become a really valuable relic of antiquity, and, as far as circumstances would justify, an index to that far-off past, so much of which is, to us, forever buried in oblivion, and which the dogged, persistent, fanatical superstition of the churches, and their narrowing and cutting down of all literature and science, so as to make them fit into that one old Bible groove, is rendering still less decipherable as the hand of time is perpetually shoving it farther and farther into the shadows of that by-gone eternity of the past.
- *The Truth Seeker*, February 1, 1879.

If people had not swallowed the creeds, myths, and faiths of to-day with their mother's milk,

¹¹ *U.S. v. Slenker*, in *32 Fed. Rep.*, p. 691-695.

¹² *Fifty Years of Freethought*, Vol. II, George E. Macdonald, The Truth Seeker Company, New York, 1931, p. 317.

¹³ "Elmina Slenker, Infidel and Atheist," Edward D. Jervy, *Free Inquiry*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Winter 1984/1985, p. 43.

nothing could now induce them to accept as holy, divine, and true such a mass of absurdity, cruelty, and wickedness as is embodied in . . . old effete Bible mythology.

- *The Truth Seeker*, January 16, 1897.

Elmina on Prayer

"My Dear Madam: I am afraid you seldom humble yourself in prayer before Jesus. D-"

No, my friend, I certainly do not. I have learned to earn what I want by honest labor, and not beg for it of myths that never had an existence. I can not remember of ever praying, not even when I was a little Quaker girl, save when I would lose my needle and mother would insist on my hunting till it was found. There were six girls of us, and father was a hard working farmer, and it took lots of needles to keep so many little fingers busy, and children are proverbially careless; so when I got tired of looking for one I had lost I've asked God to help me find it, and imagined he did, as it generally made its appearance after the appeal. But now in this age of machines one needle will sew for years, and be always in its place, so I've no need to pray.

The wonder to me is that any sensible grown-up person can have faith in prayer when year after year goes by and they find the gods are deaf and dumb and not a prayer is ever answered or an appeal ever heard. That children believe in its efficacy is no marvel, for a child naturally believes all it is told; and seeing those to whom it looks up to for guidance so earnest in prayer for what they desire, the child is compelled to believe from mere force of circumstances. Those who have closely watched the course of the ones who have been praying for the recovery of Garfield - how, when life was almost gone, they would see "God's pleasure" in removing him "for some wise purpose," and then when favorable bulletins went forth they would claim that the nation's prayers had saved him - must be convinced that prayer never saved life.

If this one life that was prayed for more earnestly than any life ever was prayed for before, and by thousands more people, at home and in churches and everywhere, could not be saved, even when this same God so directed the "not necessarily fatal bullet" that it touched no vital part, what possible reason can there be for believing any other life will ever be saved through its efficacy, or any other asked-for blessing given?

When man becomes self-reliant, self-confident, and truly wise he will cease to pray and learn to work for what he wants. We will take as much care in providing for the generation of wise, good, gentle, and kind Lincolns and Garfields and eliminating from posterity such cool, calculating, selfish, moral idiots as Guiteau [Garfield's assassin].....

The world moves. Let us all rejoice and work on in faith and hope, for the light daily grows brighter and old superstitions are fading away before its brilliancy. We will be too honest to pray.

Too honest to ask for a crust or a cup,
While rain cometh down and grain cometh up.
Too honest to pray that eternal decrees
Be changed as a creature of moments may please.
Too honest to call for a balm from above
While the earth is budding and blooming with love.
Too honest to dream of a life of pure bliss
While workers and helpers are needed in this.
Too honest and brave in the battle of life
To falter while thousands are breasting the strive.
Too honest to think of an armor of prayer
While bravest of bosoms go naked and bare.
Too honest to reach for a crown e'en in thought
While brows that are noblest of laurels have nought.
Too honest to rob Mother Earth of a tear
While human hearts bend o'er the pall and the bier.
Too honest to long for a realm of the blest
While hope is alive is humanity's breast.

Too honest to cry for a savior to save
While brothers go down 'neath the tide and the wave.
Too honest to cringe 'neath the lash of the priest;
Too human to tremble like the fear-stricken beast.

- *The Truth Seeker*, November 26, 1881.



KATIE KEHM SMITH

KATIE KEHM SMITH

1868 - 9/15/1895

Katie Kehm Smith was one of the most energetic, enthusiastic workers involved with the Freethought movement in Oregon. Born in Warsaw, Illinois in the fall of 1868, Katie attended public schools there until it was time for college, when she went to Ottumwa, Iowa to obtain her degree, graduating with honors in 1885. After graduation, at the age of seventeen, Katie took up teaching, and worked with middle and lower class children.

She had become a Freethinker before graduating, due to her quest for knowledge and hard study, but now, seeing the poorer segment of society being threatened with eternal damnation and torture unless they sacrificed a portion of their hard-earned wages to the representative of a mythological god, she resolved that education was the way in which these people could be turned from a view of a false future life to their present lives, and thus improve their own and others lives around them.

Thus, at seventeen, Katie lectured for the first time on Freethought. She was, of course, opposed by bible believers, but this only made her work harder.

When Katie arrived in Oregon, there were already vocal Freethinkers leading activities in the state. Henry Allen, a relative of the noted Revolutionary War hero and Deist Ethan Allen, had moved to Oregon in 1852,¹ Henry Cummins of Eugene had formed a Freethought group, The Pantheon of Science,² and speakers such as Freethought luminaries B.F. Underwood, Samuel Putnam, Mattie Krekel, and Robert Ingersoll visited the state.

In June, 1887, in Silverton, Oregon, ten men joined together to form the Silverton Liberal Union, purchasing a building they called "Liberal Hall." In New Era, Coos Bay, and McMinnville, similar liberal groups were formed. In October, 1889, a state convention was called to form the Oregon State Secular Union. Samuel Putnam, Mattie Krekel, and B.F. Underwood traveled to the convention to assist in the formation of the Union.³ More than 120 people gathered in Portland for the convention, including those advocating Spiritualism, Free Love, and even religionists who supported separation of church and state.

When a second convention was held in 1890, Samuel Putnam returned, joined by Abigail Scott Duniway, both speaking on Freethought. Still, the organization had not done much in its first year - a charismatic leader was needed.

That leader was to be Katie Kehm Smith, "the eloquent girl orator from Iowa." She made such an impact on the audience at the 1890 convention that she was elected assistant secretary of the Oregon State Secular Union. Although Mattie Krekel was the official secretary, the title was honorary only, leaving Katie free to guide the progress of the Union.

Katie moved to Port Townsend, Washington in 1891, where she married Judge David W. Smith, a Freethinker almost as enthusiastic as his wife. Katie retained her maiden name as a middle name, maintaining her individuality and identity.

Katie was an indefatigable worker. She started the First Secular Church of Portland and the Portland Secular Sunday School, lecturing there every Sunday, to between two and three hundred interested citizens, until it was strong enough to hand over to another Freethinker.

¹ *Oregon Statesman* (Salem), 8/9/1908, p. 8 and interview with Dewey Allen, Silverton, Oregon, 1/6/1983, "Organized Free Thought in Oregon: The Oregon State Secular Union," Patricia Brandt, *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Summer, 1986, p. 168.

² "Eighty Years of Occult Religious Development in Oregon, 1856-1936," Herbert M. Works, M.A. Thesis, University of Oregon, 1963, p. 14, quoted in "Organized Free Thought in Oregon: The Oregon State Secular Union," Patricia Brandt, *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Summer, 1986, p. 168.

³ *Oregonian*, 10/13/1889, p. 6, "Organized Free Thought in Oregon: The Oregon State Secular Union," Patricia Brandt, *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Summer, 1986, p. 170.

Since the State Secular Union was managed by an executive committee, Katie free to participate in more direct action throughout the state. Meeting the local Freethinkers, she began to hear from their sympathetic friends in other towns in Oregon, who were interested in her work.

Katie expanded her idea of educating the youth of the state through secular Sunday schools, in which children, under adult supervision, would study religion and nature. Since there was no literature on this topic, Katie wrote the lessons herself, which she then shared with others.

An example of one of Katie's lessons is as follows:

Secular Sunday-School Lesson.
CHRISTMAS.

1. When is christmas?

Ans. On the twenty-fifth of December.

2. What happens on this day?

Ans. The days begin to grow longer.

3. Are we glad to know that the days are growing longer?

Ans. Yes; for we know spring and summer will soon come again.

4. How do we show that we are glad?

Ans. By holding a festival or an entertainment on this day.

5. What do we do at this festival or entertainment?

Ans. We have a merry time; give presents to our friends, and wish joy and good fortune to everybody.

6. Has this festival of christmas been kept very long?

Ans. O, yes; thousands of years ago people were just as glad to have the sun come back and bring spring, as we are.

7. Does everybody celebrate this festival for the same reason?

Ans. O, no; christians do not.

8. What do christians teach about christmas?

Ans. They say Jesus Christ was born on that day.

9. Are they right in saying this?

Ans. They are not; nobody knows when he was born, or if he ever was born.

10. Should we all try to celebrate this day?

Ans. Yes; it will do us good to make of it a joy-day by doing good, and making others happy.⁴

Luckily, she left us an account of how she then went about promoting Freethought throughout the state. She describes how, school being closed due to the extreme heat of summer, she would leave home on her own, or with her husband, if he was available, and simply go to towns in which they knew at least one person, if only through correspondence. This was often not an organized trip, and she would be a surprise guest to her hosts, announcing that the next day she would speak about Freethought, and enlisting their aid in informing the surrounding population. After speaking, she would simply get out a map, look at the location of the nearest town in which she knew someone, and, if she had never been there, off she would go, to repeat her appeal.

Through this method, Katie organized Secular Sunday Schools all over the state, and into Washington. She reported her progress in various Freethought publications in the east, including the *Truth*

⁴ *The Ironclad Age*, Vol. 39, No. 45, 1/12/1894, p. 2.

Seeker,⁵ and *The Ironclad Age*, in which she wrote a regular column called "The Cause in Oregon." She used her column to not only report on her activities, but to flatter those who aided her through extensive compliments, describing each person lavishly with terms such as "noble worker," "fearless champion," "brave young woman," "sweet-faced," "young-looking," "gentle wife," "bright daughter," "stalwart son," and so on.

Katie insisted that each location she visited have a leader who would be approved as a lecturer, and would serve a "circuit" of the surrounding area, speaking regularly. For instance, Mrs. Barker, the leader of the Forest Grove circuit, spoke in Forest Grove the first and third Sunday of every month, and in McMinnville the second and last Sunday, while lecturing at other nearby small towns during the week, "rapidly educating the people there out of religious nonsense."⁶ In addition, Mrs. Barker was responsible for the free reading room, acting as librarian, and supervised the young people's Ethical Society. Katie expected her team to work hard, and apparently, was so full of enthusiasm herself that she inspired them to action beyond that found in most groups. Oregon had its share of Freethinkers before Katie's appearance there, but her contribution was to organize them and inspire them to become active.

In August, 1894, Katie was present at the dedication ceremonies for the Oregon Secular Park. Working together, the secularists of Oregon donated the land, the lumber, and the labor for much of the park, cutting trails, erecting a dance pavilion, speakers stand, providing food for the workers, and generally joining together for the parks creation. In writing of her excitement over the Park, however, Katie reports that this is just one step in her projected plans, and that next, a Pacific Coast Secular University,⁷ in the vicinity of the Park, was to be the groups goal.⁸

As with most groups of this sort, the Oregon secularists had an annual convention and membership drive. Katie reported that for the year 1894 alone, 355 new members had been added, and it must be concluded that much of this increase was due to Katie's own enthusiasm.

Her husband, meanwhile, had purchased a large, imposing house on the Willamette River. When Katie saw the large new home, she jokingly called it "Castle Kehm on the Willamette," which her husband thenceforth called it. Sitting atop a cliff by the side of the river, the house afforded a splendid view of the surrounding countryside.

Katie embraced the philosophy advanced by B.F. Underwood and the American Secular Union, in which a wide variety of Freethought advocates were welcomed to the organization. When Moses and Mattie Hull visited the Spiritualist enclave in New Era, Oregon, Katie invited them to her home and wrote "their brave words attacking theological humbugs, and in behalf of the emancipation of the people from all superstitions, did incalculable good for secularism. Mr. and Mrs. Hull are well known all over the world as thorough secularists, and if more spiritualists were as honest, sensible, and broad as they are, the phenomenon of spiritualism would attract more attention than it now does... While Mr. and Mrs. Hull are on the platform, secularism will have at least two talented teachers."⁹ Nettie Olds was also a guest at Castle Kehm during the Hull visit.

⁵ *Fifty Years of Freethought*, Vol. II, George E. Macdonald, The Truth Seeker Company, New York, 1931, p. 113-4.

⁶ *The Ironclad Age*, Vol. 40, No. 22, 8/11/1894, p. 1.

⁷ The Liberal University was established at Silverton, Oregon on January 6, 1897.

⁸ *The Ironclad Age*, Vol. 40, No. 22, 8/11/1894, p. 1.

⁹ "The Cause in Oregon," Katie Kehm Smith, *Ironclad Age*, Vol. 40, No. 22, 8/11/1894, p. 1.

Katie still studied extensively, increasing her knowledge for use in debates, lectures, and the development of Sunday school lessons. This, plus her lecture appointments, her efforts to build up the statewide organization, maintaining the different circuits she had established, as well as caring for a home, left Katie tired and weak, yet her enthusiasm kept her going. When, in 1895, she became ill from a fever while on a lecture tour, her body, weakened from overexertion, was not strong enough to fight the illness, and suddenly, Katie was dead at the age of twenty-seven.¹⁰

The network Katie had set up survived her, although it suffered from the lack of her enthusiastic, energetic leadership. Nettie A. Olds, who had taken over the administration of the Portland Secular Sunday School during Katie's lifetime, was active in continuing the growth of the Union, at least for awhile (see Olds).

The tenth annual convention of the Oregon State Secular Union was held in 1898 in Wagner, Oregon, near Katie's grave, where a monument to her was unveiled, while speakers praised her efforts.

Katie was eulogized by the eastern press, including the *Blue Grass Blade*, published in Kentucky, which wrote of her in 1908: "Could our cause boast one hundred such women today the god myth and Christian superstition would not much longer enthrall the mind of humanity. Glory to her name. Honor to her memory. Katie Kehm Smith is dead but her works still live and in this she has won an immortality that cannot be obtained by faith."¹¹

The Cause in Oregon.

July and August are the hot months in Portland and the First secular church and secular Sunday-school are closed for the usual summer vacation. This gave Miss Olds, superintendent of the S.S.S.,¹² Mr. Smith and myself a vacation also, and we decided to spend it making a tour of the lower Columbia river, and some of the coast and interior counties, to explain and advocate the objects of the O.S.S.U.,¹³ and the system adopted by it of establishing secular churches and Sunday-schools in every town, grouped in circuits, each circuit placed in charge of a licensed lecturer of the O.S.S.U., who is to deliver lectures regularly, at regular places and have supervision of all S.S.S. in his or her circuit. The O.S.S.U. had no money on hand to guarantee our expenses, and as everybody is affected by "hard times," we had some misgivings about being able to get very far on the contributions to the hat, and if we did, whether or not they would be large enough to get us home again. However, it seems absolutely necessary that if the "Oregon system" of teaching secularism was ever to be understood by the people, some one must go out and tell them about it and we could see no reason why we three could not attempt it at least. The expenses of three would be three times the expenses of one of course, yet none of us wanted to go alone, and none of us wanted to stay at home.

Mr. Smith has a voice but no knowledge of music, and my education has been similarly neglected but Miss Olds is at home with her violin, piano or in a vocal effort. We could all talk, but all talk and no music might not always interest the crowds we expected to entertain, so we practiced a few duet and "three"-ets, and took a lot of membership blanks and our spare change and set out, July 28th, for weal or for woe.

¹⁰ *Blue Grass Blade*, 8/16/08.

Oregonian, 9/28/1895, p. 8, "Organized Free Thought in Oregon: The Oregon State Secular Union," Patricia Brandt, *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, Summer, 1986, p. 173.

¹¹ *Blue Grass Blade*, 8/16/08

¹² S.S.S.: Secular Sunday School.

¹³ O.S.S.U.: Oregon State Secular Union.

That evening we stepped off the cars at Scappoose and took uncle John Price and his son-in-law, Harry West and his excellent wife, by surprise. No one in that rich rural country suspected that a secularist lecturer was within a hundred miles, and the idea of getting together an audience at 2 p.m. the next day filled our friends with wonder. They assured us that other lecturers, although previously advertised, had had audiences ranging from seven to twenty, and perhaps our enthusiasm seemed to them after the Col. Sellers order. Virgil S. Smith, one of the O.S.S.U. lecturers, makes his headquarters at Scappoose, and early Sunday morning, a la Paul Revere rode "far and wide," leaving at every farm-house door a large poster announcing our arrival. The result was that at two o'clock an audience of over one hundred had assembled beneath the giant firs of West's Grove. W.W. West, the wealthiest and most influential man in the neighborhood, was chairman of the first meeting. The audience was enthusiastic and after the meeting we met, among other friends, Mrs. W.W. West, J.F. Dangerfield, Mr. and Mrs. J.P. West, J.M. Gove and others.

A second meeting was arranged for the following evening, and inquiries made as to the neighboring towns. St. Helens seemed to be the only place, but our friends assured us that no lecturer had ever been there, that it was a very orthodox place, that we probably would be unable to get a hall, etc. That was the place we wanted to go. We wanted to preach the gospel to the "heathen." Leaving Miss Olds and I to take charge of Scappoose meeting, Mr. Smith went ahead to bill St. Helens. Another fine audience at Scappoose, a beautiful bouquet from Mrs. Ross, a dance under the auspices of the O.S.S.U. after the lecture, hearty handshakes of many friends and we are off for St. Helens. Mr. Henderson of Milton, meets us with hack, at train. He is one of those sincere men whom it is a pleasure always to meet. Everybody knows of the lecture and we expect a full house. St. Helens is a small, but beautifully located place on the Columbia, and we are glad to learn that among her citizens are quite a number of fine liberals. We could have lectured here gratis in the court house, but having left home with the idea that if we wished nice people to listen to us, it would not do to resort to dingy halls and small and unpopular places, because they were cheap or free, we rented the opera house.

The following incident well illustrates how christians love their enemies: Making inquiries for some one to accompany Miss Olds on the violin - as we always did where an instrument could be obtained - we were directed to Mrs. M. Explaining to her our mission at St. Helens, she assumed the attitude of a statue - one carved from ice - and said: "I am a methodist, and I would not care to do anything which might bring such a society here." We ask her to recommend some one else. She named a young lady and a doctor. The lady is a baptist, also her mother. We were delighted to obtain the daughter's assistance. The mother is a very agreeable, fine looking woman. Though a baptist she said she was willing to listen to all questions, and would certainly not miss the lecture, but while we were pleasantly chatting the methodist's daughter came into the parlor with a note. The mother "changed her mind, she could not "consistently let her daughter play for us," but still she "would come to the lecture." We did not call on the doctor.

We began to think our friends were right in calling this a "christian" community. At the close of our meeting we were informed that the godly Mrs. M. had taken the pains to drive where she had any influence and tell the people to stay away from our meeting. The baptist lady didn't come. But we had an audience of over seventy-five and we felt jubilant. Eight new members joined the O.S.S.U. Dr. Harry R. Cliff was chairman. The doctor is a man of deep thought and original ideas and would make a staunch worker in a secular church. Among others whom we met are A.K. Blakesley, the genial host of the Oriental hotel, Mr. Weed, clerk of the court, Davis brothers, editors of the *Oregon Mist*, E.T. Gore, H.F. Rung, D.W. Richardson and J.H. Swager. We were pleased to again shake the hand of our staunch friend, John Price of Scappoose. The audience, of course, was largely composed of christians. Christians are not to be expected to pay the expenses of secularists, and the result is, we paid the St. Helens people three dollars for the privilege of talking to them. At Ranier, we expected to find staunch friends and we were not disappointed.

KATIE KEHM SMITH

- *The Ironclad Age*, Vol. 39, No. 31, 10/6/1894, p. 2.

Secular Sunday-schools.

WE know that Christian Sunday-schools are numerous and successful. We see them in nearly every country schoolhouse, and we see them conducted with no great effort on the part of superintendents and teachers.

Now, why is this? Perhaps in the answer to the question Secularists can find a method of making Secular Sunday-schools numerous and successful.

Having formerly been identified with the work of the Christian Sunday-schools, I feel certain that their success depends upon two things: First, a splendid working system, evolved from years of experience, and second, the blind devotion or fanaticism of Christian parents.

It has been my observation that any one who can read the English language, and is sufficiently interested, can conduct a Christian Sunday-school.

It therefore seems to me that if we would make Secular Sunday-schools successful, the first thing necessary is to adopt a system so simple that any Secularist who can read the English language, and is sufficiently interested, can conduct one of our schools.

Second, the lessons and program of exercises must be so attractive and instructive that children will want to attend of their own accord, and parents will feel it their duty to send them, as they now feel it their duty to send them to the public school.

Christian parents fear hell. They hope for heaven. They fear punishment in another world if they neglect to fill their children's minds with religious ideas in this one, and they will make all kinds of sacrifices in order to send their children to Sunday-school - even compel them to go.

Secular parents, having no such fears or hopes, cannot be expected to force their children to attend Secular Sunday-schools from such motives. Many of them are so careless or indifferent that they permit their children to go to Christian Sunday-schools, even where Secular Sunday-schools have been provided, giving as their reasons that their child "wanted to go," or "all of my little girl's schoolmates attend the Christian Sunday-school, and she wants to be with them."

Christians, as a rule, are fanatical about their religion, or at least they are so enthusiastic they are willing to make sacrifices in its interest. It is seldom that a Secularist is a fanatic.

Having evolved from Christian creeds, he does not seem to feel the necessity of "bringing others to the light."

In his desire to be a real Liberal and let others choose for themselves he really becomes lax and permits others to mold the religious convictions of his child instead of doing it himself. This has been the great drawback in our work.

Therefore it is necessary to make our schools sufficiently attractive to parents that their interest in their own children will offset the religious zeal of Christian parents.

Bearing in mind the two propositions which I have stated as so conducive to the success of Christian Sunday-schools, we have outlined a plan of work which has been adopted by the Oregon State Secular Union, and is now used in the Sunday-schools established under its auspices.

The order of exercises is such that they are applicable to all schools, city or country, just as the order of exercises in an Odd Fellows' or a Masons' lodge is everywhere the same.

The most important question which confronted us at the outset of our work was, "Where are we to get the necessary paraphernalia?"

Of course the Christian songs, prayers, and lessons would not do; neither would those used by Spiritualists, for they too contained lessons about God, spirit land, angel voices, and other things concerning which people do not agree.

A Secular Sunday-school must be founded on knowledge, not theories; upon facts, not fictions; upon things known, not believed; upon that which pertains to men, women, and children, and not to gods,

angels, or devils; in short, all that pertains to this world and the here and now, and not to some other world "in the sweet by and by."

Every book and lesson examined failed to meet our requirements, either on account of what they taught or because not presented in such a manner that children could readily understand.

There was nothing left for us to do but write new lessons, especially adapted for use in Secular Sunday-schools, and this I did.

As to order of exercises pursued, our methods do not differ widely from those of Christians. They are as follows: Opening song; reading of secretary's report; assembling of groups with their leaders, and inviting strangers to become guests of any group they may wish; distribution of badges and banners; reading Sunday-school poem; twenty minutes for lessons; superintendent's review of lessons and repeating of "Concert Gem of Thought;" calisthenics; recitations, essays, songs, dialogues, etc.; march; return of flags; to seats; deliver badges; closing song.

The opening and closing songs, lessons, concert poem, and constitution and by laws are the same in all Secular Sunday-schools, and are supplied by the Oregon State Secular Union.

Each group has a different colored badge, the Kindergarten or Froebel group wearing white ribbon, the second group blue, etc.

At the side of each group is a banner containing the name of the group and the portrait of the person after whom it is named.

The Sunday-school poem is read each Sunday, in concert, and is as follows:

IF WE KNEW.

Could we but draw the curtains that surround each other's lives,
See the naked heart and spirit, know what spur the action gives,
Often we should find it better, purer than we judge we should;
We should love each other better if we only understood.

Could we judge all deeds by motives, see the good and bad within,
Often we would love the sinner, all the while we loathe the sin;
Could we know the powers working to o'erthrow integrity,
We would judge each other's errors with more patient charity.

If we knew the cares and trials, knew the efforts all in vain,
And the bitter disappointments, understood the loss and gain,
Would the grim external roughness see, I wonder, just the same?
Would we help, where now we hinder? Would we pity where we blame?

Ah, we judge each other harshly, knowing not life's hidden force;
Knowing not the fount of action is less turbid at its source;
Seeing not amid the evil, all the golden grains of good;
Oh, we'd love each other better if we only understood!

Thus far, we have provided work for four groups. Realizing that the play instinct is natural to every child, we use kindergarten work and object lessons for all children from the ages of four to nine.

Full instructions in this work are sent to each teacher who leads the group, so it can be conducted by a person who may never have visited a kindergarten, or who knows nothing about the work.

For the next group, which includes the children from nine to fifteen years, lesson leaflets are provided.

These lessons contain ten questions each, with answers, and are written on subjects which pertain to this world, alternating lessons on ethics with those on science, or perhaps the life of some illustrious man or woman.

It is not an easy matter to write these lessons in words simple enough for children to understand. The more simple the language, the surer the children are to have perfect lessons, and they must be written in a captivating manner. Children do not get interested in dry lessons, made up of big words they can hardly pronounce, much less understand. Children must be able to grasp the ideas contained in the lesson very readily, or they will not care to learn it.

This lesson on "Self-Respect" will give an idea of what the lessons for the second group contain, and the manner in which it is presented:

(Fac-simile of lesson.)

Note. - Please return this lesson to the superintendent of your Secular Sunday-school
Secular Sunday-school Lesson.

SELF-RESPECT.

1. - Q. What does "Self-Respect" mean? A. It means: "I think too much of myself to do wrong."
2. - Q. When do you respect yourself? A. When I do right.
3. - Q. When do you not respect yourself? A. When I do wrong.
4. - Q. Would you rather have self-respect, or not have it? A. I would rather have it.
5. - Q. Why? A. Because if I respect myself, I will have friends.
6. - Q. Do bad people make friends? A. No, not among nice people.
7. - Q. Do you ever lack self-respect? A. Sometimes; when I get angry, or am selfish, saucy or cross, or do anything I know is wrong.
8. - Q. When do you show that you respect yourself? A. When I am gentle, just, kind, and good.
9. - Q. Why should children remember to be gentle, just, kind, and good? A. Because if they are, it will be easier for them to be so when they are men and women.
10. - Q. Why do so many men and women lack self-respect? A. Because they were not taught to respect themselves when they were children.

Concert Gem of Thought: "Those who respect themselves will be honorable; but he who thinks lightly of himself will be held cheap by the world." - *Chinese Proverb*.

A Thought To Be Remembered: A Kiss is worth a Thousand Kicks.

The "Concert Gem of Thought" is repeated in concert by all members of the group. Each lesson has a different "Thought to be Remembered" for each pupil, and the children vie with each other to see who can give their "Thought" the most perfectly.

For the Third Group five questions without answers are provided. These questions being for pupils from fifteen to twenty-one years of age, it was thought best to let them find the answers themselves, which would give a greater opportunity for discussion and interchange of ideas.

The Fourth Group is called the Progressive Bible Class, and it discusses the Bible, Koran, or any of the so-called sacred writings, or any other subject which it may select. This group is for all over twenty-one years of age.

The calisthenic and marching drills are about the same as in other schools, but we make them very interesting. The children look forward with the greatest pleasure to the distribution of the flags and the military drill.

We are quite well convinced that we are modeling our schools in substantially the right way, and that we are solving the question of how to establish and maintain Secular Sunday-schools, but so far our work has been hampered by lack of funds.

It is my opinion that there is no more important question before Secularists to-day than the establishment of Secular Sunday-schools.

If we would cut off the supply which keeps the Christian churches, we must provide Secular Sunday-schools for the children who would otherwise attend Christian Sunday-schools. Just so long as Secularists fail to provide congenial, social societies for their children on Sunday, they will be drawn into the Christian Sunday-schools, and, eventually, into the Christian churches.

KATIE KEHM SMITH.

Secretary Oregon Sate [sic] Secular Union.

- *The Truth Seeker Annual and Freethinkers' Almanac*, 1895, Truth Seeker Office, p. 104-109.

Her Work Still Lives.

The following letter was written by the late Katie Kehm Smith in answer to our inquiry when we first talked of enlisting in the ranks of the O.S.S.U.:

CASTLE KEHM, OREGON CITY, OR.,

May 30, E.M. 295. - M.P. and J.E. Hosmer,¹⁴ Tillamook, Or., Dear friends: I am very glad you wrote to me, and glad that we have such material as I feel sure you are, in Tillamook, to help our valued friend and Secular champion, Mr. C.E. Reynolds, in the cause.

It is my judgment, also, that your conclusions as to who should be admitted to affiliate with us as stated in the latter part of your letter, are right.

People are what they are, and they have to grow to be different: So if we want them different, we must help them to grow and not shun them. If a person gets angry, and you become angry too, that does not grow the anger out of him; rather it grows it in him. If you do not get angry when he does, but remain gentle that helps to grow it out of him. It is so in principle, with all failings of humanity. Force is not the best teacher. Kindness, and conditions to grow different in, is what people want.

With this basic principle to start with, which no doubt you have already thought about, you will understand our position relative to the vices of humanity.

Our objects you will read in the enclosed membership blanks. Now, conditions make ignorance and ignorance is the cause of all wrong. Therefore, to attain our Objects we must improve conditions and dispel ignorance.

Whatever is wrong, therefore comes properly within the scope of our work. By "Temperance,["] I presume you refer in your letter to intoxicants. We do not make a specialty of fighting intemperance more than we do of other ignorances of the people. But when we talk about it, it is always against it of course. We however teach the intemperate to cultivate self and rely on self and not upon a mythical Jesus or God, nor for the sake of either of them, but for his own and his family's sake.

We try to realize that we were not made in a minute but are the product of unknown ages of evolution, and that we will continue to evolve to better or worse conditions, as we make those conditions favorable or unfavorable. The Christian idea that man was made perfect and has degenerated, has done and is doing a great deal of mischief.

It is the idea that gave rise to the use of force to correct bad conduct, when in reality bad conduct, is due largely to heredity, rather than willful desire. The faculty in every individual that is strongest, always predominates. If at the moment, it is the desire to drink the person will drink. The thing, therefore to do, is to find the best means to cultivate that desire out in the shortest time and cultivate the opposite desire in. If in reality, we have evolved from an ancestry which in ages gone, was far below us, perhaps we should be

¹⁴ Mr. Hosmer became the editor of *The Torch of Reason*, published in Silverton, Oregon.

satisfied that we are as far ahead as we are and encouraged over it, not despondent, and go whipping those who are only a little behind us. Give them time and opportunity and they will catch up. That is the idea of Secularism with reference to all reforms. Help the people to grow more perfect.

No doubt you can be of great assistance to us. We want to bend the twigs in Tillamook, that is, the children, and we want a Secular Church and S.S.S. there. Can you not take hold of it? We are sure Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds, and several others whom we had the pleasure of meeting while in Tillamook, will take hold with you. Would be pleased to hear from you again.

Sincerely,

KATIE KEHM SMITH.

Sec'y O.S.S.U.

- *The Torch of Reason*, Vol. 1, No. 5, 12/3/1896.

Additional Illustrations

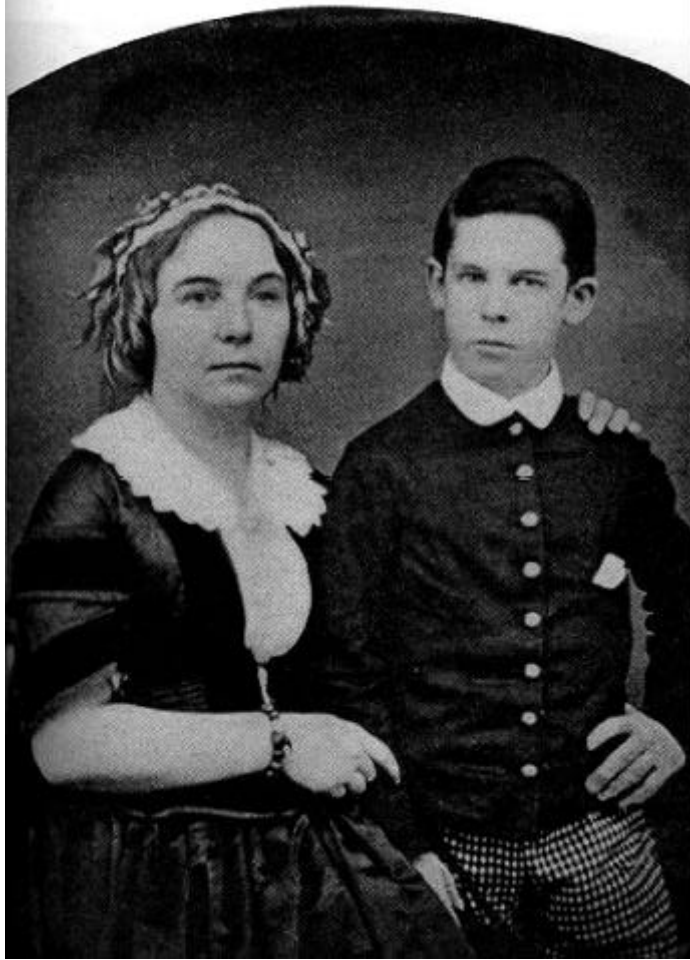


Lucy E. Parsons

LUCY PARSONS



ETTA SEMPLE and LAURA KNOX



ELIZABETH CADY STANTON



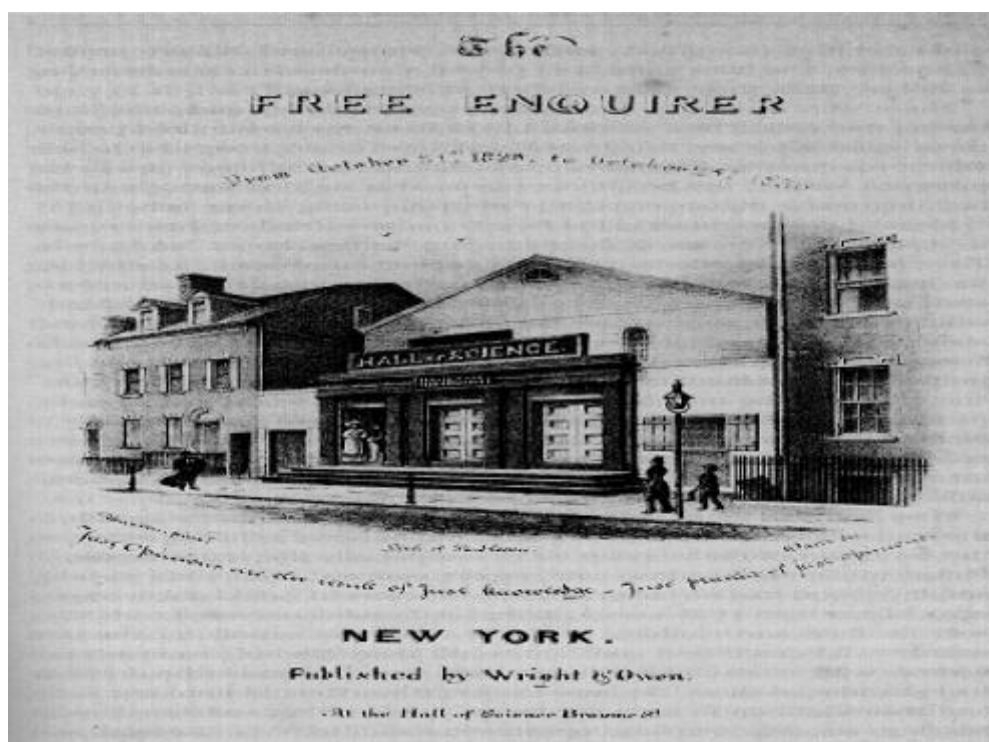
Lucretia Mott



ELIZABETH CADY STANTON



FRANCES WRIGHT





Elizabeth Cady Stanton

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON

11/12/1815 - 10/26/1902

Had Elizabeth Cady Stanton been born male, she undoubtedly would have been a judge, and probably would have attained the position of U.S. Senator. Her knowledge of law, combined with her unceasing pursuit of Justice and Truth, made her the foremost woman of the Nineteenth Century. Lois Banner has called Elizabeth "the foremost American woman intellectual of her generation,"¹ and her journey from fervent belief to skepticism best revealed her great mind.

Elizabeth Cady was born into a wealthy New York family, headed by Judge Daniel Cady and his wife, Margaret Livingston. Not unusual at the time, Margaret was much younger than her husband. Only six of the ten children to whom Margaret gave birth lived to reach adulthood, including Eleazer, Tryphena, Harriet, Elizabeth, Margaret and Katherine.² The stress of managing 12 servants and a family, as well as maintaining the forms expected of the wife of a prominent citizen, may explain why a young woman, as was Margaret, would appear cold and dictatorial to her children, causing her daughter Elizabeth to gravitate toward her more mild mannered father. Elizabeth wrote "Our parents were as kind and considerate as the Puritan ideas of those days permitted, but fear, rather than love, of God and parents alike, predominated. Add to this our timidity in our intercourse with servants and teachers, our dread of the ever-present devil, and the reader will see that, under such conditions, nothing but strong self-will and a good share of hope and mirthfulness could have saved an ordinary child from becoming a mere nullity."³

At an early age, Elizabeth noticed the double standard set on the value of sons and daughters, and worked very hard to obtain her father's praise. Going to the Presbyterian church, she was terrified by the threats of damnation, yet, outside of the formalized sermons, she found the pastor of the church, Reverend Simon Hosack, a sympathetic and helpful mentor. Of her religious upbringing, she wrote, "I can truly say that all the cares and anxieties, the trials and disappointments of my whole life, are light, when balanced with my sufferings in childhood and youth from the theological dogmas which I sincerely believed, and the gloom connected with everything associated with the name of religion, the church, the graveyard, and the solemn, tolling bell....when the thermometer was twenty degrees below zero on the Johnstown Hills, four hundred feet above the Mohawk Valley, we trudged along through the snow, foot-stoves in hand, to the cold hospitalities of the Lord's House, there to be chilled to the very core by listening to sermons on predestination, justification by faith, and eternal damnation."⁴

She spent many hours in her father's law office, making friends with the clerks there, who teased her about her interest in law and her outrage at the injustice suffered by the women clients who visited there.

She witnessed interviews between her father and tearful women who had come to him for legal advice when the law disinherited them upon the death of their husbands. Her father explained to her that the law gave the inheritance to the eldest son, showing her the words in his law books. Being a child, Elizabeth thought if she could just cut these unfair laws from the books, they would be eliminated. Luckily for her, she told the law clerks of her plan to mutilate her father's books, and forewarned, he took her aside and explained why this would not eliminate the laws, thus saving his books from the scissors. Judge Cady told

¹ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 69.

² *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 3.

³ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 3.

⁴ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 26, 27.

her that the only way these laws could be changed was through the legislature, and Elizabeth vowed even at that early age that she would work to have them changed.

When Elizabeth was eleven years old, her only brother, Eleazer, a recent college graduate, came home to die. Elizabeth knew even at that early age that although her father was kind to her and her four sisters, his son, simply for being male, was his pride and joy.

Upon her brother's death, she joined her mourning father, who was sitting in the parlor with the body of his son, and climbed on his lap. Her father said to her, "O my daughter, I wish you were a boy!" She vowed to herself that she *would* be a boy, and do all her brother did, and make her father just as proud of her as he was of his son.

Setting her plan in motion, Elizabeth went to Rev. Hosack and asked if he would teach her Greek. She wanted nothing else but for her father to say, "Well, a girl is as good as a boy, after all!" but when Rev. Hosack came to dinner and reported to her father how well she was doing in her studies, her father only said, "Ah, she should have been a boy!" and Elizabeth would cry.

Entering school, she studied Mathematics, Latin and Greek, winning a prize in the latter for her expertise. Now, she thought, her father would praise her efforts, but once again, he only said, "Ah, you should have been a boy!" Elizabeth threw her prize across the room and cried.

Elizabeth's mentor died when she was 15, but he did provide her with at least one positive religious role model in her life, and she never forgot him.

When Elizabeth graduated from Johnstown Academy, she was at the head of her class, and hoped to be accepted at Union College along with the rest of the boys. Now another blow came to her simply because of her sex - girls were not accepted at Union College. All the work she had done, and the honors she had won, meant nothing, simply because she was female.

She was sent instead to Emma Willard's Female Seminary. Her humiliation and disappointment did not make her attendance there pleasurable. She later wrote, "If there is any one thing on earth from which I pray God to save my daughters, it is a girls' seminary. The two years which I spent in a girls' seminary were the dreariest years of my whole life."

While at the seminary, the Rev. Charles G. Finney, of the old damnation and hell-fire school of religious oratory, visited as a speaker at the local church. The students attended his sermons, and Elizabeth reported that "There we learned the total depravity of human nature, and the sinner's awful danger of everlasting punishment. This was enlarged upon until the most innocent girl believed herself a monster of iniquity, and felt certain of eternal damnation."⁵ Elizabeth, an earnest believer at the time, was so terrified by his words, she was physically affected, having nightmares, and finally being sent home. She later wrote that "my religious superstition gave place to rational ideas based on scientific facts, and in proportion as I looked at everything from a new standpoint, I grew more happy day by day. ... I view it as one of the greatest crimes to shadow the minds of the young with these gloomy superstitions, and with fears of the unknown and the unknowable to poison all their joy in life."⁶

Her father interested her in the study of the law, which she took up eagerly. Joining other young women of upper middle class birth, Elizabeth headed an association of young women who raised money to send a young man to theological school. She was appalled when the young man returned from his training,

⁵ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 47.

⁶ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches*, edited by Ellen DuBois, Schocken Books, New York, 1981, p. 9-13.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 49.

only to deliver a sermon denigrating to women. She led the group of women, who had paid for his education, out of the church in the middle of his sermon. She would refer to this incident frequently later in life.⁷

In 1839, at the age of 24, she was visiting her cousin Gerrit Smith and met a fiery Abolitionist ten years her senior, Henry Brewster Stanton.

Marrying on May 10, 1840⁸ (Elizabeth made sure the word "obey" was omitted from the ceremony), the young married couple left for their honeymoon, first stopping to visit Angelina Grimké Weld and her sister, Sarah Grimké, abolitionists and woman's rights advocates. Traveling next to Europe, the couple stopped in London to attend the World's Anti-slavery Convention being held there.

Henry was a delegate to the convention, with Elizabeth going simply as his wife. She took the opportunity while on her honeymoon to wear the bloomer fashion. There she watched as the women delegates from the United States - Lucretia Mott, Sarah Pugh, Emily Winslow, Abby Kimber, Mary Grew and Anne Greene Phillips - were denied a place at the convention because they were women, even though their own local groups had elected them to be their representatives at the Convention. Elizabeth reported that "The clerical portion of the convention was most violent in its opposition. The clergymen seemed to have God and his angels especially in their care and keeping, and were in agony lest the women should do or say something to shock the heavenly hosts. Their all-sustaining conceit gave them abundant assurance that their movements must necessarily be all-pleasing to the celestials whose ears were open to the World's Convention. ... [The clergymen], Bible in hand, argued woman's subjection, divinely decreed when Eve was created."⁹

When William Lloyd Garrison, Nathaniel Rogers and Charles Lenox Remond arrived a few days late, and heard the verdict that the women had been refused entry, they protested by refusing to participate in the Convention, and joined the women in the gallery,¹⁰ making them heroes to women. This was not the last time they were to fight for women's rights.

The most important historical event of the Convention was not anything that was said by the men participating in it, but was instead the meeting of Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Elizabeth had thought she stood alone in her abhorrence of the treatment of women, and now she found another woman who felt as she did. Although a Quaker, Lucretia was sympathetic to secularism. She had read Wollstonecraft and Paine, knew Robert Owen and agreed with the feminist ideas of Frances Wright. The two women talked long and earnestly about their feelings on the issues, Elizabeth calling Lucretia the first liberal thinker on womanhood whom she had ever encountered. Years later, when asked to recall her honeymoon and her trek through Europe, she was asked, "What most impressed you in Europe," Elizabeth replied, "Lucretia Mott!"

While in England, Elizabeth went to Exeter to see the cathedral there. The sunlight streaming through stained glass windows, the choir practicing and the organ reverberating through the arched roof

⁷ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 15.

⁸ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 58.

⁹ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 77.

¹⁰ *The Grimké Sisters from South Carolina: Rebels Against Slavery*, Gerda Lerner, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1967, p. 294-299.

created a solemnity that caused her to linger and enjoy the sensation. "Can one wonder," she later wrote of the incident, "at the power of the Catholic religion for centuries, with such accessories to stimulate the imagination to a blind worship of the unknown?"¹¹

When the couple returned to the United States, Henry took up the practice of law in Boston, where they remained for five years. In 1843, Elizabeth declared she agreed with the liberal theological ideas of Theodore Parker, a Unitarian theologian.¹²

One experience Elizabeth relates in that time concerned a class of African American children to whom she taught Sunday school. A festival was being held at the church at which all of the Sunday school classes were to participate. When Elizabeth attempted to enter with her class, she was at first asked to keep the children away, then, when she insisted on their presence, the church doors were locked on her and her class, after "the last white child entered." Recalling the incident, she later wrote, "...they were all church members in good standing, and would no doubt have told the little colored children that Christ died to save them, but his followers could not allow them to enter his Holy Temple. Such was American Christianity in 1842."¹³

In 1847, the family moved to Seneca Falls, New York. Elizabeth had become accustomed to the stimulating company of Boston, and to move to a small town, which lacked the intellectual crowd she enjoyed, and be stuck in a house of unruly servants and small children, was very frustrating. Henry could escape into the larger world, but Elizabeth felt trapped in her home.

Elizabeth had met Judge Hurlbut, of New York, in 1844. Judge Hurlbut had written a paper advocating women's rights which had influenced Judge Hertell to introduce a bill into the New York legislature in 1836 to secure property rights to women. Elizabeth added her voice to that of Ernestine L. Rose and Paulina Wright, who had circulated petitions for woman's rights, by speaking to Judge Hurlbut and a large circle of attorneys and legislators about the subject. The property rights bill finally became law in the state of New York in 1848.¹⁴

Even in 1847, Elizabeth had strong feelings about her identity as an individual rather than as the property of her husband. Writing to Rebecca R. Eyster, May 1, 1847, she said, "I have very serious objections, dear Rebecca, to being called Henry. There is a great deal in a name. ... Why are the slaves nameless unless they take that of their master? Simply because they have no independent existence. Our colored friends in this country who have education and family ties take to themselves names. Even so with

¹¹ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 73.

¹² *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 30.

¹³ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 109.

¹⁴ Document I, "Preceding Causes," Matilda Joslyn Gage, 1881, *The Concise History of Woman Suffrage by Stanton, Anthony, Gage and Harper*, edited by Mari Jo and Paul Buhle, University of Illinois Press, 1978, p. 65.

women. The custom of calling women Mrs. John This and Mrs. Tom That, and colored men Sambo and Zip Coon, is founded on the principle that white men are lords of all. I cannot acknowledge this principle as just; therefore, I cannot bear the name of another."¹⁵

Elizabeth met with Lucretia Mott again in 1848, when the latter was visiting her sister, Martha Wright, near Seneca Falls. Speaking of their discontent regarding the laws against women, they decided to hold a meeting of women to discuss the subject.¹⁶ On July 19th and 20th, 1848, the women called for a convention to "discuss the social, civil, and religious condition of women," expecting a small crowd. Martha C. Wright, Mary Ann McClintock and others took a leading role in the convention. Elizabeth's sister, Harriet, signed the petition for woman's rights, but later asked Elizabeth to remove her name under pressure from her husband and father.¹⁷

So timid were the women at this first convention that they dared not even lead the discussions. They chose James Mott, the husband of Lucretia, to be their chairman.

When Elizabeth proposed asking for woman suffrage, even Lucretia Mott opposed her, but so strongly did Elizabeth feel about the issue, she rose and nervously made her first speech in its' behalf. Frederick Douglass, the escaped slave and editor, was one of the few who supported Elizabeth's proposition. When reported in the press, the response of the majority was laughter at such a preposterous proposition. Even Elizabeth's father, Judge Cady, took her aside and spoke to her, thinking perhaps she had lost her mind, and tried to dissuade her from this course, but she told him it was his own fault for encouraging her to study the laws which told her of the injustice being done women. Elizabeth described to Clara Bewick Colby that even then the religionists caused the group trouble, writing, "We were severely criticized for having Ernestine Rose, an atheist, and Lucretia Mott, a Hicksite Quaker, on our platform. We paid no attention to such carping, but said, if our movement cannot stand two such grand women as advocates it is not worth saving."¹⁸

While in Seneca Falls, Elizabeth and her family attended the Episcopal church. The reason they chose this particular church was that one day her sons had looked into the building and been fascinated by the minister's "nightgown."¹⁹

Her thoughts on the growing Spiritualist movement were seen in an 1850 letter to Elizabeth Smith Miller. We can see in this letter that she still believes in a god, but has evidently been exposed to

¹⁵ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, Vol. II, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 16.

¹⁶ Lucretia Mott made a point of explaining that it was Elizabeth who had suggested the meeting. "...the first convention originated with thee ... I have never liked the undeserved praise in the Report of that meeting's proceedings, of being 'the moving spirit of that occasion,' when to thyself belongs the honor..." *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, Volume II, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 18.

¹⁷ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 10.

¹⁸ "Mrs. Stanton's Letters, Character glimpses from personal letters to the editor of the Woman's Tribune," *The Woman's Tribune*, 11/8/1902, p. 118.

¹⁹ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 49.

Freethought: "The spirits seem to be making some new manifestations!" she wrote, referring to the recent publicity concerning the Fox sisters and the "Rochester rappings." She goes on to comment, "I am convinced that it is all humbug. How strange, is it not, that these very minds which reject Christ and his miracles and all the mysteries of the Bible, because these things are opposed to reason and the truth as we see it in other revelations of God's laws, should be deluded by this miserable piece of chicanery! I believe this is all done by some human means. There is nothing more wonderful about it than the performances of a necromancer."²⁰

In 1851, Susan B. Anthony came into Elizabeth's life. The two women complemented each other in that Elizabeth was a fine writer, but poor manager, whereas Susan could not write, but was excellent at organization. Years later, Elizabeth described their relationship by writing, "I have so many other things to write just now at Susan's dictation. Her orders are imperative; whatever else I leave undone I must obey her. I have worn that yoke so long that I cannot pull without it."²¹ She wrote to Susan in 1869, "No power in heaven, hell or earth can separate us, for our hearts are eternally wedded together. Ever yours, and here I mean ever, [etc.]"²² Susan meanwhile described Elizabeth as a "word artist."²³

Elizabeth's activities, especially in the early years, were curtailed by her constant pregnancies and the care of her infants. She raised five sons and two daughters; in order of birth: Daniel (Neil), Henry, Jr., Gerrit (Gat), Theodore, Margaret (Maggie), Harriot, and Robert. Although Susan bewailed the time this took away from the movement,²⁴ Elizabeth's family activities actually helped the movement, for "It was extremely felicitous for the woman's rights movement, at a time when by press and pulpit it [the suffrage movement] was denounced as all that was unholy and especially intended as a subversion of all woman's duties as wife and mother, that its head was so marked an example of the domestic virtues."²⁵ Her appearance added to her appeal. At five feet three inches, with blue, twinkling eyes and very small hands and feet, Elizabeth's hair had begun to whiten while she was still quite young. By middle age, she had snow white hair, which she kept in curls. She was a large woman, which added to her matronly appearance, and weighed 240 when older.

Elizabeth always took a great interest in child-rearing, writing articles about the benefits of raising children in fresh air, and ensuring that they had plenty of exercise. On her sixty-fifth birthday, she wrote in

²⁰ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 24.

²¹ "Mrs. Stanton's Letters, Character glimpses from personal letters to the editor of the Woman's Tribune," *The Woman's Tribune*, 11/8/1902, p. 188.

²² *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 125.

²³ "From Susan B. Anthony," *The Woman's Tribune*, 11/8/1902, p. 120.

²⁴ "Those of you who have the talent to do honor to poor - oh! how poor - womanhood, have all given yourself over to baby-making; and left poor brainless me to do battle alone. It is a shame." Letter from Susan B. Anthony to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, June 5, 1856, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 65.

²⁵ "Side Lights on Life of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, by Clara Bewick Colby in 'Arena,' February, 1903," *The Woman's Tribune*, Vol. XX, No. 27, 10/17/1903, p. 1, 108.

her diary that "Once in a while, in thinking of what I might have done for my children, I feel suddenly depressed. But as I did not see, when I myself was young, all that I now see with age and experience, I dismiss the thoughts from my mind with the reflection that I then knew no better than to have seven children in quick succession. I have no sympathy with the old idea that children owe such immense gratitude to their parents that they can never fulfill their obligations to them. I think the obligation is all on the other side. Parents can never do too much for their children to repay them for the injustice of having brought them into the world, unless they have insured them high moral and intellectual gifts, fine physical health, and enough money and education to render life something more than one ceaseless struggle for necessities."²⁶

Always the rebel for woman's rights, Elizabeth was one of the women who tried to wear the bloomer fashion. This fashion was much like what women at the time were wearing, with the exception of the skirt being several inches shorter (but still far below the knee) and very full "Turkish trousers," or straight "masculine trousers" worn under the skirt, so that every inch of skin was covered. One benefit of the outfit, Elizabeth said, was that the woman wearing it was free to use both hands. The simple act of carrying a baby up a flight of stairs in a standard dress meant that one arm was used to hold the baby and one to hold up one's skirts to prevent tripping over them. With the bloomer costume, a woman could carry a baby in one arm and a lamp in the other. Another benefit was that those ladies who wore the dress preferred the "loose waist," not wearing a corset. They found the standard dress not only cumbersome, but unhealthy, for it constricted the internal organs of its' wearer, and dragged through mud and dirt, spreading grime wherever the wearer walked.

The costume was ridiculed by the public and the press, however, and those few brave women who wore it were constantly hounded. Elizabeth's own sons begged her not to wear it when she came to visit them at school.²⁷ In the early 1850's, with her husband running for the New York Senate (which he won), the press used Elizabeth's bloomer costume against her, and "some good Democrats said they would not vote for a man whose wife wore the Bloomers." Still, she wrote, "...had I counted the cost of the short dress, I would never have put it on; on, however, I'll never take it off, for now it involves a principle of freedom."²⁸ Still, in 1853, Elizabeth gave up wearing the costume in public, saying that all the furor raised over it was taking attention away from the real issues. When Lucy Stone wrote requesting Elizabeth's advice on the fashion in 1854, Elizabeth wrote back, "...for your own sake, lay aside the shorts ... We put on the dress for greater freedom, but what is physical freedom compared with mental bondage? By all means have the new dress made long."²⁹

²⁶ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 177.

²⁷ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 35-36.

²⁸ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 29-31.

²⁹ "Letter to Lucy Stone from Anthony and Stanton, February 16, 1854," Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., Blackwell Family Papers, *Failure is Impossible; Susan B. Anthony in Her Own Words*, Lynn Sherr, Random House, New York, 1995, p. 192-193.

A letter to Susan B. Anthony in April, 1852, reveals that Elizabeth recognized the views of the church towards women. "The Church is a terrible engine of oppression, especially as concerns woman."³⁰ It is important to note that there is a definite difference, however, between "the Church" and religion. Many of the reformers of the day spoke against "the Churches" while remaining quite religious. Thomas Paine, although called "a dirty, little Atheist" by President Theodore Roosevelt, was actually a Deist, and wrote that one purpose of his book, *The Age of Reason*, was to prevent people from becoming Atheists by rejecting the "true" god because they were so disgusted with the way organized religion represented the god figure. Thomas Paine, Abby Kelly Foster, Stephen Foster, Parker Pillsbury, and others, especially in the Abolition movement, were Freethinkers, but did not join the ranks of Atheists such as Ernestine Rose and Frances Wright. At this point in her life, Elizabeth was opposed to "the church," but still believed in a god, the historicity of Jesus, etc. Her argument against the church was that it was run by men, with the bible being interpreted by men, to the detriment and subordination of women. This, she felt, was not "God's" way, but men's way, of dealing with women.

In 1852, Elizabeth took part in forming the first temperance organization of women.³¹ In January, 1853, a mass meeting of all the temperance organizations of New York was held at Albany. Elizabeth was elected President of the Woman's State Temperance Society (WSTS), and Susan the Chairman of the State Central Committee. Their association alone boasted a membership of 2,000. Antoinette Brown and Amelia Bloomer were also members, and were appointed to a committee to present to the New York legislature a petition signed by 28,000 women for a law to prohibit the sale of alcoholic beverages.³²

Elizabeth shocked many by telling members she considered drunkenness reasonable grounds for divorce. At the first anniversary of the WSTS, Elizabeth's opponents first succeeded in admitting men to the group, then officially rejected Elizabeth's positions on divorce and woman suffrage. Elizabeth was ousted from the Presidency, and, although Susan was re-elected to office, she also left the group as a show of support to her friend.

In 1854, Elizabeth spoke before the New York legislature on the rights of married women. She was so nervous about her speech that she spent over two months writing it, and asked several men to review it for legal errors. Her labor in this area was rewarded in 1860 with the passage of laws granting married women the right to their own wages and to equal guardianship of their children.³³

Writing to Elizabeth Smith Miller in September, 1855, Elizabeth reports, "As the New York *Observer* and the *Presbyterian* have dubbed me 'infidel,' I thought I would look up my associates. So at the present writing, [books by] Tom Paine and Fanny Wright lie on my table!! I am quite surprised to find them such rational and beautiful writers."³⁴

In 1860, Elizabeth introduced ten resolutions at the 10th National Convention concerning liberalizing divorce laws. She was immediately opposed by Rev. Antoinette Brown Blackwell, who

³⁰ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 40.

³¹ "Elizabeth Cady Stanton," *The Woman's Tribune*, Vol. XII, No. 34, 10/12/1895, p. 1.

³² "Forty Years Ago," Elizabeth Boynton Harbert, *The Woman's Tribune*, March 27, 1888.

³³ *Famous American Women, A Biographical Dictionary from Colonial Times to the Present*, edited by Robert McHenry, 1980, G. & C. Merriam Company, Springfield, Mass., p. 390.

³⁴ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 61.

introduced thirteen resolutions opposing them. Susan B. Anthony, Ernestine Rose and Lucretia Mott were the only leaders who agreed with Elizabeth in this latter.³⁵ Elizabeth later wrote to Susan, "We are right [to address the divorce issue]. My reason, my experience, my soul proclaim it... The men know we have struck a blow at their greatest stronghold. Come what will, my whole soul rejoices at the truth I have uttered. One word of thanks from a suffering woman outweighs with me the howls of Christendom."³⁶

Also in 1860, Elizabeth addressed the American Anti-Slavery Society's annual meeting, speaking on the connection between abolitionism and woman's rights. In early 1861, she toured New York with Susan, Ernestine L. Rose, Lucretia Mott, Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, and her cousin, Gerrit Smith, speaking against slavery. In addition, Elizabeth spoke on divorce reform. The speakers were harassed and physically attacked for saying that the newly elected President Lincoln should abolish slavery. Mobs rioted and forced their way into meetings, where they commandeered the platform and turned off the gas to disrupt the meetings. In Albany, their last stop, the Mayor took a seat on the platform with his revolver across his knees and told the abolitionists to proceed. This brave mayor, George H. Thatcher, did not agree with the Abolitionist platform, but was a strong supporter of Free Speech, and his name and act should be remembered by all who cherish freedom.

When Fort Sumter was fired upon in April, woman's rights took a back seat to the war effort. In 1862, the Stanton family moved to New York city, where Henry had been given a position as Deputy Collector of the New York Customs House. Elizabeth's sisters Harriet and Tryphena lived in New York City, with their husbands Daniel Eaton and Edward Bayard.³⁷

During the Civil War, the women suspended their activities to form the Woman's National Loyal League in 1863. Elizabeth served as President, Susan B. Anthony as Secretary and Ernestine L. Rose on the policy-forming Business Committee. They gathered 400,000 petitions urging Congress to amend the Constitution as to prohibit slavery.³⁸ With the establishment of this new group, public opinion about the women changed. Instead of portraying them as quacks, they were now heroines.

In quick succession, the women formed other associations during this decade: the American Equal Rights Association in 1864, the Workingwoman's Association in 1868, the Woman's Suffrage Association of America in 1868, and the National Woman Suffrage Association in 1869.³⁹ Each represented a pruning in organization to further concentrate successfully on their main goals of woman's rights.

This did not mean, however, that Elizabeth gave her full support to Abraham Lincoln. Like many others, she felt he did not go far enough on the question of slavery.⁴⁰ She wrote "I do hope the rebels will

³⁵ Ernestine L. Rose, *Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, New York, 1990, p. 201-2, 206.

³⁶ Ernestine L. Rose, *Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, New York, 1990, p. 206.

³⁷ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 68.

³⁸ *The Woman's Tribune*, Vol. XII, No. 34, 10/12/1895, p. 1.

Robert McHenry records this as being 300,000 signatures in *Famous American Women*.

³⁹ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 91.

⁴⁰ "I respond to John Bright's sentiment that 'God is carrying on the revolution in America very slowly, that He may make emancipation sure.' Certainly, if the Lord wanted *slow* work to be done, He

sack Washington, take Lincoln, Seward, and McClellan and keep them safe in some Southern fort until we man the ship of state with those who know wither they are steering and for what purpose."⁴¹ She reminded Martha Wright in 1864, "Remember the President's Proclamation reaches only the slaves of rebels. The jails of loyal Kentucky are crammed with slaves from secession states and advertised to be sold for their jail fees 'according to law' precisely as before the war. There must be a law abolishing slavery."⁴²

Although we tend to think of the Northern and Southern citizenry as each being homogeneous in support of their respective governmental platforms during the Civil War, there were several times when northern men rioted against the Union position. Elizabeth and her family were caught in one of these riots, with terrifying results. Elizabeth hid her family from the rioters, knowing that as she was associated with the reform movement, she might be targeted. Much to her horror, Neil was caught by the mob. Expecting her son to be "torn limb from limb" at any moment, Elizabeth told the servants to take the other children to the attic, where she opened the skylight and told them that if the house was attacked, they should flee across the rooftops, while she attempted to hold the mob off downstairs. Neil, with great presence of mind, said to the rioters as they dragged him past a saloon, "Let's go in, fellows, and take a drink," and treated them all. They then demanded that he join them in three cheers for Jeff Davis, which he did with apparent enthusiasm. This action caused the rioters to change their minds about him, and let him go. A little surprisingly, Elizabeth's response to his action was that "he undoubtedly saved his life by deception, though it would have been far nobler to have died in defiance of the tyranny of mob law."⁴³ Soon afterward, the police and soldiers arrived, and a bloody fight ensued with the mob, ending the riot.

In 1866, Elizabeth ran as an Independent candidate for representative to Congress, stating, "my creed is free speech, free press, free men, and free trade." Going further, she told the voters that "In view of the fact that the Freedom of the South and the millions of foreigners now crowding our Western shores, most of whom represent neither property, education, nor civilization, are all, in the progress of events, to be enfranchised, the best interests of the nation demand that we outweigh this incoming pauperism, ignorance, and degradation, with the wealth, education, and refinement of the women of the republic. On the high ground of safety to the nation and justice to its citizens, I ask your support in the coming election."⁴⁴ Elizabeth received 24 out of 20,000 votes and became the first woman to run for Congress.⁴⁵

could not have employed a better hand than Old Abe." - Lydia Maria Child, Letter to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, March 24, 1863, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 92, among others [see Lucy Colman, Abby Kelley Foster.]

⁴¹ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 90-91.

⁴² *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 93.

⁴³ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 94-95.

⁴⁴ "Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton," *Eminent Women of the Age*, Theodore Tilton, 1868, p. 332-361.

⁴⁵ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 93.

In 1865, all African American men were declared "free." This did not, however, give them voting rights, which became the next great issue to be addressed. Elizabeth was finding that her old comrades in the abolition movement were dividing into two groups: those who thought that support should be given to male "negro suffrage" first, and later to fight for woman suffrage, and those, like Elizabeth, who wanted to press the government for suffrage rights for all. It was thought by the first group that if support was given to both minorities, neither would receive suffrage, but if the right of suffrage was asked for male African American men only, the reformers would be successful. Opponents told Elizabeth to have patience, saying that if she would support "negro suffrage" now, it would only be five or ten years before women had the vote. Elizabeth was appalled. The opposition seemed overwhelming, and she wrote to Susan, "Come back and help... I seem to stand alone."⁴⁶

Unfortunately, in pressing for woman suffrage, racist elements began to be seen from the pen of this woman who had fought for abolition. Although her goal was to gain suffrage for all - black, white, men and women, simply because it was just - she knew that this argument alone had no impact, and so forsook it. She took the stance that if *any* group were to be given suffrage, it should be the most educated group, who would make more informed choices in their voting. She wrote to Martha C. Wright, "We have fairly boosted the negro over our own heads, and now we had better begin to remember that self-preservation is the first law of nature. Some say, 'Be still, wait, this is the negro's hour.' But I believe this is the hour for everybody to do the best thing for reconstruction. A vote based on intelligence and education for black and white, man and woman - that is what we need. ...keep your lamp trimmed and burning, and press in through that constitutional door the moment it is opened for the admission of Sambo."⁴⁷

To Wendell Phillips, editor of *The National Anti-Slavery Standard*, she wrote, "...the black man is now, from a political point of view, far above the educated women of the country. For the last thirty years the representative women of the nation have done their uttermost to secure freedom for the negro, and so long as he was lowest in the scale of being we were willing to press his claims. ... You say, 'This is the negro's hour.' I will not insist that there are women of that race, but ask, Is there not danger that he, once intrenched in all his inalienable rights, may be an added power to hold us at bay? Why should the African prove more just and generous than his Saxon compeers? Again, if the two millions of southern black women are not to be secured in their rights of person, property, wages, and children, then their emancipation is but another form of slavery. In fact, it is better to be the slave of an educated white man, than that of a degraded, ignorant black one. We who know what absolute power is given to man, in all his civil, political, and social relations, by the statute laws of most of the states, demand that in changing the status of the four millions of Africans, the women as well as the men shall be secured in all the rights, privileges, and immunities of citizens. ...the disfranchised all make the same demand, and the same logic and justice which secures suffrage for one class gives it to all."⁴⁸

She signed the call for the first woman's rights convention to occur after the war, which took place starting May 10, 1866, in New York City. Frederick Douglass, upon receiving an invitation to attend,

⁴⁶ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 105.

⁴⁷ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 108-109.

⁴⁸ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 109-110.

replied in a letter, "I have about made up my mind that if you can forgive me for being a negro, I cannot do less than forgive you for being a woman." William Lloyd Garrison wrote that "I shall assuredly give my warm approval of your movement for impartial suffrage, without regard to sex; and record my protest against the proposed constitutional amendment, limiting the ballot to males."⁴⁹

The result of the convention was the formation of the American Equal Rights Association (AERA). The object of the organization was to demand universal suffrage for both African American men and all women.

The 1867 meeting of the Equal Rights Association included a fiery discussion on suffrage for African American males. Elizabeth, along with Lucretia Mott, believed that if African American men were given the vote, they would add their influence to white males in voting against women's rights.

When George T. Downing, an African American, asked Elizabeth and Lucretia for clarification, Elizabeth replied, "We do not take the right step for this hour in demanding suffrage for any class; as a matter of principle I claim it for all. But in a narrow view of the question as a matter of feeling between classes, when Mr. Downing puts the question to me, are you willing to have the colored man enfranchised before the woman, I say, no; I would not trust him with all my rights; degraded, oppressed himself, he would be more despotic with the governing power than even our Saxon rulers are. I desire that we go into the kingdom together, for individual and national safety demand that not another man be enfranchised without the woman by his side."

Charles Remond said that he thought it was unfair that the African Americans should be free but not have the right of suffrage, to which Elizabeth replied, "That is equaled only by the condition of the women by their side. There is a depth of degradation known to the slave women that man can never feel. To give the ballot to the black man is no security to the woman. Saxon men have the ballot, yet look at their women, crowded into a few half-paid employments. Look at the starving, degraded class in our 10,000 dens of infamy and vice if you would know how wisely and generously man legislates for woman."

Mr. Downing, again seeking to clarify this position, stated that he "understood Mrs. Stanton to refuse to rejoice at a *part* of the good results to be accomplished, if she could not achieve the whole, and he wished to ask if she was unwilling the colored man should have the vote until the women could have it also?" He said she had no right to refuse an act of justice upon the assumption that it would be followed by an act of injustice.

Elizabeth replied that she did indeed demand the ballot for all. She asked for reconstruction on the basis of self-government; "but if we are to have further class legislation, she thought the wisest order of enfranchisement was to take the educated classes first. If women are still to be represented by men, then I say let only the highest type of manhood stand at the helm of State. But if all men are to vote, black and white, lettered and unlettered, washed and unwashed, the safety of the nation as well as the interests of woman demand that we outweigh this incoming tide of ignorance, poverty, and vice, with the virtue, wealth, and education of the women of the country."

Later, Parker Pillsbury tried his hand at explaining Elizabeth's viewpoint: "The white voters are mostly opposed to woman's suffrage," he said. "So will the colored men be, probably; at least so she believes, as Mrs. Mott also suggested very strongly, and a million or more of them added to the present opposition and indifference, are not a slight consideration. Mrs. Stanton does not believe in loving her neighbor *better* than herself. Justice to one class does not mean injustice to another. Woman has as good a right to the ballot as the black man - no better. Were I a colored man, and had reason to believe that should woman obtain her rights she would use them to the prejudice of mine, how could I labor very zealously in her behalf? It should be enough for Mr. Downing and all who stand with him that Mrs. Stanton does not

⁴⁹ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 106.

demand one thing for herself as to rights, or time of obtaining them, which she does not cheerfully, earnestly demand for all others, regardless of color or sex."⁵⁰

When Charles Remond then stated that "All I ask for myself I claim for my wife and sister. ... No class of citizens in this country can be deprived of the ballot without injuring every other class," he was repeating his pro-woman sentiments as he had done at the 1840 London Convention, and once more won the hearts of the women, who reprinted his words in suffrage publications.⁵¹

Elizabeth felt especially betrayed by her friend, Frederick Douglass, who supported making male African American suffrage precede woman suffrage, writing that "common-sense women ... felt towards the Fifteenth Amendment, which places all women under the heels of all men, precisely as Mr. Douglass would have felt had it proposed to enfranchise the men of all races but his own."⁵²

Elizabeth was opposed by many in the woman's rights movement for her position. Lydia Maria Child wrote, "I regard it as a shame to womanhood that any one should think of bartering away their [African American male] rights for the sake of more promptly securing her own."⁵³ She was joined in her opinion by Julia Ward Howe, author of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," Mary Ashton Livermore, woman's rights leader in Illinois, Frances Dana Gage, Ohio abolitionist, and Lucy Stone. Lucy acted in opposition to her husband, Henry B. Blackwell, who strongly opposed ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment.⁵⁴

In 1867, a Constitutional Convention was held in New York state. Elizabeth asked for a hearing at the Convention on the question of amending the Constitution so as to secure full suffrage to women. The chairman of the Standing Committee on the Right of Suffrage for the Convention was Horace Greeley, publisher of *The New York Tribune*. Greeley had always been a supporter of woman's rights, but when Elizabeth appeared before his committee, he asked why women should have the vote if they were not willing to fight for their country. Elizabeth countered by pointing out that many men, who had the right to vote, had hired substitutes during the Civil War to take their place on the battlefield. When Elizabeth then presented a petition in favor of woman suffrage, which had been signed by Greeley's wife, he was furious. Later, Elizabeth said Greeley had personally made sure the measure for woman suffrage failed.

Meeting Elizabeth later at a reception, he said, "I have given strict orders at the *Tribune* office that you and your cause are to be tabooed in the future." Elizabeth's response was that "Of course this will not deter me from speaking my mind in the future as in the past, though I am sorry for our cause that the

⁵⁰ Document 27 (II: 213-20): Resolutions and Debate, First Annual Meeting of the American Equal Rights Association, New York City, May 10, 1867, *The Concise History of Woman Suffrage by Stanton, Anthony, Gage and Harper*, edited by Mari Jo and Paul Buhle, University of Illinois Press, 1978, p. 238-244.

⁵¹ "Resolutions and Debate, First Annual Meeting of the American Equal Rights Association," New York City, May 10, 1867," *The Concise History of Woman Suffrage*, edited by Mari Jo and Paul Buhle, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Chicago, London, 1978, p. 237-244.

⁵² *The Revolution*, May 27, 1869; *Frederick Douglass on Women's Rights*, edited by Philip S. Foner, Da Capo Press, NY, 1992, p. 34-37.

⁵³ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, September 25, 1869.

⁵⁴ *Frederick Douglass on Women's Rights*, edited by Philip S. Foner, Da Capo Press, NY, 1992, p. 34-35.

Tribune will henceforth be lukewarm. This may do something to retard our final triumph; but it will take more than Horace Greeley and the New York *Tribune* to prevent the success of the movement."⁵⁵

The citizens of Kansas were considering legislation giving women voting rights in 1867, and the women wanted their rights secured. Lucy Stone, Olympia Brown and others, toured the state urging the voters to include woman suffrage in the new Constitution. Elizabeth and Susan joined them late in the campaign. They were shocked and angry when Wendell Phillips refused to send funds to help their efforts, although the funds he had on hand had originated with a legacy a Boston merchant had left to be used for both the abolition and woman's rights cause.⁵⁶

It was here that Elizabeth and Susan met George Francis Train, a flamboyant character. Although Elizabeth and Susan both admired Mr. Train, he was seen as a joke by many, and their companionship with him was viewed with regret by many in the woman's rights movement. One point against him was that he was a racist, which Elizabeth denied. The views that were called racist consisted of his promotion of an "educational qualification" for voting privileges that included those of every race and sex, an idea Elizabeth also promoted.⁵⁷

In light of the refusal of their eastern "friends" to support them, they welcomed Train's financial support. He even offered to pay the costs of producing a magazine under their management. Upon their return to New York, the women started a weekly journal to be published under the title of *The Revolution*, with Elizabeth and Parker Pillsbury as editors and Susan as publisher. Parker Pillsbury had resigned his position as an antislavery editor in protest against the viewpoint of abolition leaders against woman's rights. In defense of George Train, Elizabeth wrote to Martha C. Wright, "Mr. Train is a pure, high-toned man, without a vice. He has some extravagances and idiosyncrasies, but he is willing to devote energy and money to our cause when no other man is. It seems to me it would be right and wise to accept aid even from the devil himself, provided he did not tempt us to lower our standard."⁵⁸

The publication of the *Revolution* became reality in January, 1868. The motto of the paper was "Men - Their Rights and Nothing More; Women - Their Rights and Nothing Less." When deciding the name of the paper, Elizabeth wrote to Susan, "There could not be a better name than *Revolution*. The establishing of woman on her rightful throne is the greatest revolution the world has ever known or ever will know."⁵⁹ The paper continued until 1870.

It is not surprising that Elizabeth used the paper to forward her own views and ridicule those of others. She made Wendell Phillips so angry by deriding his position that black men should have the vote

⁵⁵ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 117-118.

⁵⁶ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 99.

⁵⁷ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 100.

⁵⁸ "To Martha C. Wright, January 8, 1868," *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 119.

⁵⁹ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 124.

before women, that at a reception, Phillips not only refused to shake hands with her, but said, "Mrs. Stanton is no friend of mine." Elizabeth wrote, "Poor fellow! After serving up every living man himself [for not supporting his abolitionist views, in his own publication], he cannot stand my satire in the *Revolution*. Well, seeing that he feels it, I will give him some more!"⁶⁰

She promoted the idea of a coalition of women, workers, African Americans and radicals to further their cause. She felt that education was the key to the promotion of the rights of any class, and argued that "The great battle for the laborer must be fought for him by the educated classes, just as for the slave."⁶¹ In 1868, she and Susan founded the Workingwoman's Association, with the plan of establishing unions in every industry employing women, and enlisting the aid of wealthy women to use their influence to help their less affluent sisters. Most of the working women, they found, were more interested in fighting for shorter hours and higher wages than in the long term solutions of woman suffrage, and most left the Association to join labor unions catering to their short term needs.

Despite the popular myth, the relationship between Elizabeth and Susan was not always congenial, although for the most part they kept their disagreements to themselves. As Susan began leaning more towards a single issue - suffrage, Elizabeth provided a contrast with her broad platform of social utopianism. In 1865, Elizabeth had written Susan to tell her she was not going to be bullied by her, and in 1871 emphasized that their friendship was perfect, as long as they were "equals ... neither assuming control of the other."⁶²

When George Train removed his financial support from the *Revolution*, assuring its' demise, Susan assumed the \$10,000 debt the paper had incurred, but not without some resentment toward Elizabeth. Elizabeth said the Anthony family should help pay the debt, to which Susan replied that her family "got none of the good from *The Revolution* and Mrs. Stanton got a great deal." Susan paid the debt fully herself through speaking fees.

In 1876, Elizabeth wrote to Sarah Langdon Williams, "you see how completely Susan is overshadowing the whole of us. Even the editor of the *Woman's Journal* (Lucy Stone/Henry Blackwell), with whom Miss Anthony has long had 'an unpleasantness,' is now so impressed with the great national work she has been doing for eight years, before Congress, in the courts, at the polls, everywhere, that she always reports the doings of the National Woman Suffrage Association under the head, 'Miss Anthony's Meeting.' Now, while we are all devout worshippers of the beloved sister Susan, we do not wish future generations to suppose that she carried the suffrage movement in her pocket, and that such women as Lucretia Mott, Ernestine L. Rose, Matilda Joslyn Gage, Belva Lockwood, Dr. Clemence Lozier, Lillie Devereux Blake, Phoebe Couzins and Sara Andrews Spencer, supplied no enthusiasm, muscle or money for the work."⁶³

⁶⁰ "To E.P. Whipple, September 9, 1869," *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 123.

⁶¹ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 74.

⁶² *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 116.

⁶³ *The Ballot Box*, August, 1876.

In addition, the younger members of the movement shared Susan's viewpoint in emphasizing suffrage, rather than Elizabeth's promotion of social reform, which created stress in their relationship.⁶⁴ In 1888, Elizabeth wrote "The National has been growing political and conservative for some time. Lucy and Susan alike see suffrage only. They do not see woman's religious and social bondage, neither do the young women in either organization."⁶⁵

Still, Elizabeth responded to Susan's constant demands upon her with humor, telling her, "I consider that our relations are to last for life; so make the best of it,"⁶⁶ while privately commenting in her diary, "I get more radical as I grow older, while she seems to get more conservative."⁶⁷

As early as 1868, Theodore Tilton reported that Elizabeth inclined toward "an unchecked free-thinking" against "old-fashioned religious opinions." Although still religious, Elizabeth was turning against *organized* religions. Writing to Robert Dale Owen, Frances Wright's coeditor, on maintaining good health, Elizabeth said, "While others read the litany on Sunday morning and come home tired out and humiliated in confessing themselves 'miserable sinners,' I sleep and rise in such harmonious conditions with myself, all nature, and the soul of good, that, believing we are as perfect as we can be under the circumstances, in view of ancestors and environment, I am refreshed, invigorated with that feeling of dignity which those who are created in the image of God should feel."⁶⁸

She wrote of the relationship of women to christianity in the *Revolution* in 1868, revealing her liberal interpretation of scripture. First listing recent statistics on prostitution and infanticide, Elizabeth used her column to promote healthy living for women, writing, "So long as the Bible, through the ignorance of its expounders, makes maternity a curse, and women, through ignorance of the science of life and health find it so, we need not wonder at the multiplication of these fearful statistics."⁶⁹ She called the idea that women were inferior based on biblical text "twaddle," and says, "The account of the origin of the race in Eden is of course allegorical," writing that "No condition of things, laws, or customs recorded in that ancient system previous to the advent of the Messiah, have any authority to-day; they are all superseded in the Christian civilization. We must seek the truth on this question in the general spirit of Christianity rather than in isolated texts of Scripture, or the customs of the Oriental nations."⁷⁰

⁶⁴ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 116.

⁶⁵ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 154.

⁶⁶ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 127.

⁶⁷ January 9, 1889, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 254.

⁶⁸ "To Robert Dale Owen, April 10, 1866," *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 114.

⁶⁹ *The Revolution*, Vol. I, No. 5, 2/5/1868.

⁷⁰ *The Revolution*, 4/30/1868.

In 1868, Elizabeth and her family moved to Tenafly, New Jersey. This was the only home throughout her marriage which she selected, and is the only home in which she lived that is still standing.⁷¹ From 1869 to 1880, Elizabeth scheduled yearly speaking tours, becoming one of the most popular lecturers who traveled in New England and the Midwest.

The 1869 American Equal Rights Association (AERA) meeting was filled with passion. Already the movement was splitting between the Massachusetts group, led by Lucy Stone, and the original group, led by Elizabeth and Susan. Elizabeth presided over the meeting as First Vice President due to the absence of Lucretia Mott, the President. Ernestine Rose, Susan B. Anthony, Mary Livermore, Phoebe Couzins, Madam Anneke, Madam de Hericourt, Matilda Joslyn Gage, Frederick Douglass, Lucy Stone, Olive Logan, Josephine Griffing, Paulina Wright Davis, and other leaders, joined Elizabeth on the platform.

After the preliminary reports and voting were finished, Stephen Foster rose to address the audience. He stated that he objected to the election of Elizabeth, among others, to a post in the organization as she had repudiated the principles for which it stood. When Elizabeth asked him in what way she had done this, he replied that one of the principles of the organization was support for universal suffrage. Since Elizabeth had been promoting "educated" suffrage, at the expense of newly freed male slaves, she was not following the dictates of the group.

In addition, he accused Susan, who was in charge of monitoring the finances, of stealing. When Susan vehemently denied the charge, Foster asked that the two women step down and allow for the election of officers "who can receive the respect of both parties."

Next, Frederick Douglass stood and denounced the *Revolution* for using terms such as "Sambo" in reference to African American males. He argued that the freed male slaves had a more urgent need for suffrage than had white women. "With us," he said, "the matter is a question of life and death. It is a matter of existence, at least, in fifteen states of the Union. When women, because they are women, are hunted down through the cities of New York and New Orleans; when they are dragged from their houses and hung upon lamp-posts; when their children are torn from their arms, and their brains dashed out upon the pavement; when they are objects of insult and outrage at every turn; when they are in danger of having their homes burnt down over their heads; when their children are not allowed to enter schools; then they will have an urgency to obtain the ballot equal to our own."

A voice from the audience asked, "Is that not all true about black women?"

Mr. Douglass answered, "Yes, yes, yes, it is true of the black woman, but not because she is a woman but because she is black."

Susan replied, "The old anti-slavery school and others have said that the women must stand back and wait until the other class shall be recognized. But we say that if you will not give the whole loaf of justice and suffrage to an entire people, give it to the most intelligent first. If intelligence, justice, and morality are to be placed in the government, then let the question of woman be brought up first and that of the negro last... Mr. Douglass talks about the wrongs of the negro; how he is hunted down, and the children's brains dashed out by mobs; but with all the wrongs and outrages that he to-day suffers, he would not exchange his sex and take the place of Elizabeth Cady Stanton."

"I want to know if granting you the right of Suffrage will change the nature of our sexes," Douglass asked.

"It will change the pecuniary position of women, it will place her in a position where she can earn her own bread."

Lucy Stone then rose and attempted to act as peacemaker. "Mrs. Stanton will, of course, advocate the precedence for her sex, and Mr. Douglass will strive for the first position for his, and both are perhaps

⁷¹ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 109.

right. If it be true that the government derives its authority from the consent of the governed, we are safe in trusting that principle to the uttermost. If one has a right to say that you cannot read and cannot vote, then it may be said that you are a woman and cannot vote. We are lost if we turn away from the middle principle and argue for one class."⁷²

After their experience with the American Equal Rights Association, Elizabeth and Susan were convinced that no group in which men were members, or which took too broad a field of reform, would gain suffrage for women. They were very disillusioned when the men by whose side they had fought for African American freedom now told them to consider their own political freedom as secondary to that of black males. If they had presented a united front, it was thought, insisting that women be given the vote *with* black males, they would have carried the day. Those in disagreement argued that if they had asked for that much, they would not have obtained suffrage for either group.

Elizabeth and Susan left the AERA and formed the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) in 1869 (first called the Woman's Suffrage Association of America). Those opposed to Elizabeth and Susan formed the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) in November, 1869.⁷³ The AERA continued under the presidency of Lucretia Mott.⁷⁴

Reporting on the first NWSA Convention held in Washington, D.C., in January, 1869, Elizabeth reported that Lucretia Mott was elected president. She wrote that

In point of numbers, enthusiasm and ability this Convention has been one of the best we ever attended. The discussion between colored men on the one side and women on the other, as to whether it was the duty of the women of the nation to hold their claims in abeyance, until all colored men are enfranchised, was spicy, able and affecting. When that noble man, Robert Purvis of Philadelphia, rose, and, with the loftiest sense of justice, with a true Roman grandeur, ignored his race and sex, rebuked his own son for his narrow position, and demanded for his daughter all he asked for his son or himself, he thrilled the noblest feelings in his audience, and every true woman must have felt that she would gladly postpone justice for herself to make *such a man* secure in all his God-given rights.

It has been a great grief to the leading women in our cause that there should be this antagonism with men whom we respect, whose wrongs we pity, and whose hopes we would fain help them to realize. When we contrast the condition of the most fortunate women at the North with the living death colored men endure everywhere, there seems to be a selfishness in our present position. But remember we speak not for ourselves alone, but for all womankind, in poverty, ignorance and hopeless dependence, for the women of this oppressed race too, who, in slavery, have known a depth of misery and degradation that no man can ever appreciate.

Elizabeth did not leave religion out of her report on the activities at the Convention, writing

⁷² *The Revolution*, Vol. III, No. 20, Whole No. 72, 5/20/1869.

⁷³ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 125.

⁷⁴ "What is the Difference?", Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Revolution*, 7/9/1868.

... One peculiarity of the Convention was a review and criticism of the opening prayer, by the Rev. Mr. Gray, Chaplain of the Senate. He dwelt somewhat at length on the creation of woman, and seemed to fall in with the common idea that Eve was an afterthought.

Sitting beside our venerable President, trying to maintain a devotional frame of mind, through all clerical heresies, we perceived that in the "Eve passage" she suddenly raised her head, and, in a gentle whisper, said, "I cannot bow to that nonsense." At the close of the prayer Mr. Edward M. Davis, Mrs. Mott's son-in-law, arose, and, with a large Bible in hand, called the attention of the Rev. gentleman to Genesis I. chap. 27th verse: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them." This, Mr. Davis thought, clearly proved that Eve was already walking up and down the garden of Paradise, in all her native dignity, before that deep sleep fell upon Adam.

Elizabeth also took this opportunity to rebuke the women at the Convention, who, she said, were rude whenever a man stood to address them, reminding them "We must not forget that men have sensibilities as well as women, and that our strongest hold to-day on the public mind is the fact that men of eloquence and power on both continents are pleading for our rights."⁷⁵

Her report also included her thoughts on the "educated vote" as well as on a liberalized interpretation of religion. Urging the federal government to allow women to vote on the proposed amendment, Elizabeth said, "In changing the fundamental law of the land, all the people have a right to be heard. The women of this nation have clearly the right to vote on the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Amendments. If our rulers were not blinded by prejudice and custom, they would see that in common justice woman's consent should be asked when millions of ignorant foreigners are to be introduced into the body politic to legislate for her. It might be a question with an educated American woman whether she would trust her interests in the hands of ignorant Chinamen, with their low ideas of womankind, who might make laws that henceforth we should neither read, write, walk, nor go outside our garden gate. We might not like the legislation of the ignorant German, accustomed to drive his wife and cow side by side before the plough. We might not like the legislation of the ignorant African just from his own land or the southern plantation, in whose eyes woman is simply the being of man's lust. We cannot rest in the assurance that the higher orders of men will protect us, for they are helpless to-day to protect themselves here in the metropolis of the country."⁷⁶

Following a religion interpreted by man, she stated that women were expected to "believe his theology, though it pave the highways of hell with the skulls of new-born infants, and make God a monster of vengeance and hypocrisy." She stated her own interpretation of the christian religion by saying, "I look not to the old barbarism of the past, to creeds, or codes, or customs, to learn the rights, the dignity, the destiny of woman, but to the teachings of my own soul, to the inner, and the great outer world that lies beyond human legislation."⁷⁷

⁷⁵ *The Revolution*, Vol. III, No. 4, Whole No. 56, 1/28/1869, p. 1.

⁷⁶ "Anniversary of the American Equal Rights Association; Address of Elizabeth Cady Stanton," *The Revolution*, Vol. III, No. 19, Whole No. 71, 5/13/1869.

⁷⁷ "Anniversary of the American Equal Rights Association; Address of Elizabeth Cady Stanton," *The Revolution*, Vol. III, No. 19, Whole No. 71, 5/13/1869.

1869⁷⁸ marked a very important date in the fight for women's rights. It was this year that Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote the Amendment to the Constitution giving women suffrage rights. This resolution was presented to Congress each year until, unchanged, it was adopted in 1919 as the XIXth Amendment to the Constitution. Erroneously called the Susan B. Anthony Amendment, it was actually completely written by Elizabeth.⁷⁹ George W. Julian first submitted it to Congress on March 16, 1869. It read as follows:

"Article XVI. The Right of Suffrage in the United States shall be based on citizenship, and shall be regulated by Congress; and all citizens of the United States, whether native or naturalized, shall enjoy this right equally without any distinction or discrimination whatever founded on sex."⁸⁰

Elizabeth was not happy with the NWSA in 1870, which she felt was taking a step backward in progress. The AWSA had elected a man as president, and the women felt that the NWSA should also have a male president. Elizabeth stepped aside for a year, while Theodore Tilton took the reins of office, but she privately remarked to Susan, "...it seems to me most humiliating that both of our associations have men as presidents. There was some excuse for this in 1848, when women were just starting public work. But today!"⁸¹ Tilton held the office until January, 1871.

When it was rumored that Elizabeth would run for Congress in the Third District of New York in 1870, the newspapers once again took advantage of the occasion to poke fun at the women's rights movement. The *Courier-Journal* of Louisville, Kentucky, told its' readers that her platform included "The abrogation of Christian marriage... The enlargement of woman's sphere, so as to enable her to do as she (- -) pleases, without the restraint of morality or religion or the conventionalities of society...[and] Pantaloon for woman - petticoats for man."⁸² To the disappointment of the press, she declined the honor of running.

Elizabeth never ceased her search for religious truth. She was particularly influenced by Herbert Spencer, Auguste Comte, and Johann J. Bachofen. Spencer's arguments for the rights of the individual, and the importance of individual voluntary action to effect change caused her to write in 1870, "Spencer is one of my favorite authors."⁸³ Comte described a three-stage system of development for society and human thought, beginning with religion, which was later replaced by secularism. The third stage, not yet attained, was to be a "religion of humanity," a term Elizabeth would often use, in which the philosophical emphasis

⁷⁸ Robert McHenry records this date as being 1878 in *Famous American Women*.

⁷⁹ *Champion of Women, The Life of Lillie Devereux Blake*, Katherine Devereux Blake and Margaret Louise Wallace, Fleming H. Revell Company, London and Edinburgh, 1943, p. 127-128.

⁸⁰ "Anniversary of the American Equal Rights Association; Address of Elizabeth Cady Stanton," *The Revolution*, Vol. III, No. 19, Whole No. 71, 5/13/1869.

⁸¹ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 129.

⁸² "The Hon. Elizabeth Cady Damit Stanton," *Courier-Journal*, Louisville, Kentucky, 10/27/1870.

⁸³ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 85.

was to be placed on the human condition and its' improvement.⁸⁴ She was strongly attracted by the communitarianism of Robert Owen, and was quite radical in advocating a society in which roles and responsibilities in society were assigned by ability and interest and not by sex, with power being shared equally by men and women.⁸⁵

In 1871, Susan and Elizabeth toured the Far Western United States, speaking on woman suffrage. This also caused stress in their relationship, for the press in California praised Elizabeth's oratorical skills, calling Susan "hesitating and halty in her style."⁸⁶

When arranging a joint meeting of the NWSA and the International Workingmen's Association to form a new political party, Elizabeth wrote her advice on how to word the call for the session: "...The labor movement ought to be specially mentioned in the call. The spiritualists are a religious not a political body and cannot be specifically mentioned. The marriage question should be referred to in the declaration only (I guess) incidentally with prostitution. In the Declaration there is one more thing, a protest against union of church and state, grants to sectarian schools, the bible in common schools and patronage of God by putting him in the American constitution."⁸⁷

During the 1870's, Elizabeth became a vice president of the American Labor Reform League (ALRL), which promoted radical social change.⁸⁸ Unlike the majority of suffrage workers, Elizabeth supported the idea of "Free Love." This term was used as an epithet against all woman's rights advocates by the opposition, but in truth, few supported it. The term itself was quite broad, and could include relationships in which partners were changed at will outside of marriage, as well as representing accepted marriage arrangements, but allowing the couple to enjoy an equal partnership within the marriage. Elizabeth wrote, "Freedom, and on this subject! Why, that is nothing short of unlimited freedom of divorce, freedom to institute at the option of the parties new amatory relationships, love put above marriage, and in a word the obnoxious doctrine of Free Love. Well, yes, that is what I mean... If I mistake not, the true free lovers are among the most virtuous of men and women."⁸⁹

To Elizabeth Smith Miller, she wrote that although she was opposed to sexual promiscuity, if by the term it was meant a "woman's right to give her body to the man she loves and no other, to become a mother

⁸⁴ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 86.

⁸⁵ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 88.

⁸⁶ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 118.

⁸⁷ "Proposal to Form a New Party," Elizabeth Cady Stanton, May, 1872, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches*, edited by Ellen DuBois, Schocken Books, New York, 1981, p. 169.

⁸⁸ *Free Love and Anarchism: The Biography of Ezra Heywood*, Martin Henry Blatt, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1989, p. 101-102.

⁸⁹ "On Labor and Free Love: Two Unpublished Speeches of Elizabeth Cady Stanton," Ellen DuBois, *Signs* 1, Autumn 1975, p. 258; *Free Love & Anarchism: The Biography of Ezra Heywood*, Martin Henry Blatt, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1989, p. 103.

or not as her desire, judgment, and conscience may dictate... to be absolute sovereign of herself," then she agreed with the ideas of the Free Love movement.⁹⁰

Still, Elizabeth spoke on the subject of Free Love only before audiences of Free Love advocates; for the majority of her speeches, she was much more restrained. When Ezra Heywood was imprisoned for his Free Love activities, Elizabeth, along with Matilda Joslyn Gage, Frederick Douglass, Parker Pillsbury, and others, signed petitions for his release, but a pardon was refused by President Harrison.⁹¹

Writing to Reverend Antoinette Brown Blackwell in 1873, she responded to Isabella Beecher Hooker's disappointment that Elizabeth did not spend more time thinking of "the afterlife" with her usual good humor. "I am sorry I have disappointed Isabella Beecher Hooker by not devoting more time and thought to the next life," she wrote. "But the fact is I have always been so busy with mundane affairs that I have not had a moment to commune with the angels. If you have any heavenly experiences, do communicate them to I.B.H. and make your letter compensate in a measure for my indifference. To suppose this short life to be all of this world's experiences never did seem wholly satisfactory, but at the same time I see no proof of all these vague ideas floating in Mrs. Hooker's head."⁹²

At the May, 1876 meeting of the NWSA, Elizabeth was elected President, replacing Matilda Joslyn Gage in that post. At this meeting, Matilda Joslyn Gage suggested writing a statement of Women's Rights for the nation's upcoming Centennial. Lillie Devereux Blake then suggested that this statement be presented to the President of the United States during the Centennial celebration. The task of writing the document was accomplished by Matilda Joslyn Gage and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. A plan was developed whereby the women would apply to General Hawley, the Chairman of the Centennial Commission, to have their presentation become part of the ceremonies. "We do not ask to read ours," Elizabeth wrote, "only to present it to the President of the United States, that it may become a historical part of the proceedings."⁹³

General Hawley did not even bother to reply to the women's letter. Sara Andrews Spencer then made an appointment with General Hawley to discuss the matter, and the General, with annoyance, refused permission for the presentation. Elizabeth and Lucretia Mott both refused to have anything more to do with the matter.

On July 4, 1876, the NWSA opened a Centennial Headquarters in Philadelphia to provide a presence during the Centennial ceremonies being held there. They also held a Convention at the First Unitarian Church.

President Grant was unable to attend the Centennial events, so Vice President Thomas C. Ferry presided. Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, Sara Andrews Spencer and Lillie Devereux Blake attended the celebratory events, and, without permission, presented their Declaration of Rights to the Vice

⁹⁰ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 114.

⁹¹ *Free Love & Anarchism: The Biography of Ezra Heywood*, Martin Henry Blatt, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1989, p. 169.

⁹² *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 142.

⁹³ "Woman's Declaration of Rights," Matilda Joslyn Gage, *The Ballot Box*, Vol. 1, No. 5, Toledo, Ohio, August, 1876.

President of the United States. Returning to the meeting, Elizabeth Cady Stanton read aloud the Declaration of Rights to the audience, after which the ladies who had participated in the presentation recounted their adventure.⁹⁴

In addition to the meeting of the NWSA, the American Secular Union was being organized on July 4, 1876, in Philadelphia. Elizabeth was one of the founding members, along with Robert Ingersoll, Josiah P. Mendum, Horace Seaver, Robert Dale Owen, D.M. Bennett, H.L. Green, Amy Post and others. One of the principal reasons for the formation of the group was the success of Christian groups in infiltrating government, including the National Reform Association, the American Sabbath Association, the Young Men's Christian Association, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the Prohibition Party and the Christian Endeavor Societies. These groups had succeeded in closing the World's Fair on Sunday's, influencing the Supreme Court into stating that "This is a Christian Nation," and had also succeeded in having the President under their control. The American Secular Union thought that part of the reason for the success of religious groups in influencing government was their wealth, which was gained through tax exemption at the increased expense of the working citizen.⁹⁵ That Elizabeth was a Freethinker was well known, D.M. Bennett writing of her in *World's Sages, Thinkers and Reformers*,⁹⁶ "Years ago she cast off the superstitions of her youth; and like all the true and noble women whose hearts have glowed with a sacred love of liberty and justice and humanity, she is a true Liberal in every sense of the term."

In 1877, Elizabeth became a Vice President of the NWSA, with Clemence S. Lozier, M.D., taking over the role of President. In writing to *The Ballot Box* that year, Elizabeth enclosed articles clipped from the newspapers, reporting on thousands of dollars of gifts given by women to churches. Her frustration in soliciting funds from women for woman's rights activities, while they gave money to churches caused her to comment, "In my newspaper reading in one week I find \$200,000 given by women to churches and colleges, while the same papers herald the grossest insults to those of our sex asking for an equal recognition of their rights in these institutions. How can we cultivate the virtue of self-respect in woman? ... All over the country you find women straining every nerve to build up churches, and the clergy in turn straining every nerve to keep women in subjection. Now, to my mind, the building up of a true womanhood is a more important work in every community than church, priest, or parsonage."⁹⁷

In 1878 she wrote that "In the churches ... there is a wide spread discontent among the women, - while they are acceptable preachers, most sects refuse to ordain them as Pastors, Elders, Deacons, Trustees. They may get up mite societies and donation parties, beg for carpets, lamps, surplices and gowns, but they must not be recognized as equals," and if women "had any [self-respect] they would leave all churches and denominations in which their equality is not fully recognized, and all conventions where sex was made a question of privilege, and refuse all marriage ceremonies in which husbands and wives do not hold an even platform." Continuing, she said that the "idea so sedulously taught in all religions, that woman and the devil are forever in collusion secretly plotting the ruin of man, - has done more to fill the minds of the sons of Adam with an undefined dread of liberty for woman than any other one lesson of the past, and it has done more to degrade woman in her own estimation. How much more rational the faith that there was no fall, no

⁹⁴ *Champion of Women, The Life of Lillie Devereux Blake*, Katherine Devereux Blake and Margaret Louise Wallace, Fleming H. Revell Company, London and Edinburgh, 1943, p. 126.

⁹⁵ "The American Secular Union," Mrs. M.A. Freeman, Corresponding Secretary, A.S.U., *The Ironclad Age*, Vol. 37, No. 50, 2/18/1893, p. 2.

⁹⁶ 1878, Liberal and Scientific Publishing House, p. 883-884.

⁹⁷ *The Ballot Box*, October, 1877.

devil, no Paradise lost; that the race never held a higher position than to-day, that from the time this planet was capable of sustaining life, there has been a gradual growth and development towards that perfection the race is yet to attain. That man and woman were a simultaneous creation, the masculine and feminine element, essential everywhere in the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms, and the whole world of thought equal in force, power and attraction."⁹⁸

Matilda Joslyn Gage reported that Elizabeth spoke 130 times during the 1878 lecture season.⁹⁹ In addition, Elizabeth was elected unanimously to the Presidency of the NWSA in 1878.¹⁰⁰ The annual national convention was held in Rochester, New York and celebrated the 30th Anniversary of the movement for woman's rights. Elizabeth's first words were "that women should stop giving their fortunes to educational institutions and churches until they were more fully and equally recognized, both by these institutions and before the laws of the land."¹⁰¹

At this meeting, Elizabeth reminded the audience of the contribution of Frederick Douglass to woman's rights, saying, "To you, noble representative (Douglass) of a long oppressed race, who honor our platform to-day, words are inadequate to express our thanks for your steadfast, unwavering devotion to our cause. In advocating the same freedom for us as for yourselves, you have proved that to your mind liberty is the watchword, not for color and class alone, but for all humanity. Your voice, Frederick Douglass, was heard in our first convention, and but for you, I fear the resolution demanding the elective franchise for woman, would not have been adopted, as many of our friends thought the demand premature. May your voice be the first to congratulate us when our success shall be assured."¹⁰²

Later in the meeting, Elizabeth and Frederick Douglass had reason to disagree, when a resolution was offered which stated that "the lessons of self-sacrifice and obedience taught women by the Christian church have been fatal not only to her own highest interests, but through her have also dwarfed and degraded the race." Frederick expressed his opinion that self-sacrifice was the "soul of Christianity, and the soul of everything good," and would like to see that clause of the amendment removed. Elizabeth responded by stating that "it was all very well for a man to arise and laud self-sacrifice, but when the sterner sex had tried only a portion of the self-sacrifice through which women had passed in centuries gone by, they too would be ready to advocate self-development in the place of self-sacrifice, of which they had had enough." She referred to the parable of the ten Virgins, showing that only those were received as brides who cared for themselves. What she advocated was that "when any minister of the Gospel got up to preach the doctrine of woman's subjection and subjugation to man, - at such a time every woman within the church should arise and leave it."¹⁰³ The resolution passed unchanged. Every year from this time, Elizabeth attempted to persuade the NWSA to condemn the antifeminism of the Bible and the anti-woman stance of organized religion.

⁹⁸ *The National Citizen and Ballot Box*, June, 1878, p. 3.

⁹⁹ *The National Citizen and Ballot Box*, May, 1878, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ *The National Citizen and Ballot Box*, Vol. 3, No. 5, August, 1878, p. 1.

¹⁰¹ *The National Citizen and Ballot Box*, August, 1878.

¹⁰² *The National Citizen and Ballot Box*, August, 1878.

¹⁰³ *The National Citizen and Ballot Box*, August, 1878.

In September, 1878, Elizabeth proudly announced the graduation of her daughter, Harriot Elizabeth Stanton, from Vassar. Harriot had been President of her class and had graduated with honors.¹⁰⁴ *The National Citizen and Ballot Box* also reported that Elizabeth's services as a speaker for the coming season could be scheduled through Slayton's Lyceum Bureau in Chicago.

Elizabeth was elected President of the NWSA in 1879. At their annual meeting, held in St. Louis in May, she was greeted with an enthusiastic outburst as she made her way up the aisle to the dais. Describing her entrance, it was reported that "The grand old pioneer of woman suffrage was warmly received. Mrs. Stanton's face may be taken as a model of that of a noble matron. True womanly dignity, virtue and benevolence seemed to shine out of every hair of her ample rows of snowy locks. Her speech was a marvel. All through it there was the most rapt attention. Soft and musical flowed out the words in a most wonderful purity of diction. Mrs. Stanton's presence would command respect anywhere from men. Her appeals to the strongest and best parts of the emotional nature seemed to carry an irresistible converting influence with them.

"Mrs. Stanton spoke for just three-quarters of an hour and during that time the attention was absolutely painful, so eager were her auditors to catch every word. Her address was of the pathetic order, and was the crowning event of this week of extraordinary good things. Both men and women shed tears at some of the powerful pictures which she drew of the wrongs which needed righting, and her matchless bursts of eloquence, with her quite impressive delivery, compelled the multitude to the most extravagant bursts of applause in spite of their desire to keep the chain unbroken. None in that vast hall escaped the captivating effect of her words, and it was the general comment, when all was over, that St. Louis had not in years, if ever, witnessed such a triumph of eloquence as this."¹⁰⁵

After the convention had ended, Elizabeth spoke to a crowded house at the Rev. Ross C. Houghton's Church in St. Louis.¹⁰⁶

When the American Woman Suffrage Association held their own 30th Anniversary meeting in 1880, celebrating the first Woman's Suffrage Convention in New England, it was voted not to invite Elizabeth, although she was the first signer of the call for the Worcester convention of 1850, which they were celebrating. This was certainly not unexpected, as Elizabeth's viewpoints were the main reason for the establishment of a separate, more religious organization in the first place, but Matilda Joslyn Gage took full advantage of their dismissal of Elizabeth to blast them in her newspaper, saying, "Here are the Christian graces in a nutshell ... who is mean, narrow, one-sided and malignant? The 'American' is on record now and forever more. Amen."¹⁰⁷

In 1881, the first volume of the six-volume *History of Woman Suffrage* was published. Compiled by Elizabeth, Susan and Matilda Joslyn Gage, the volumes chronicled the movement. It was interesting to note that the women were not totally impartial in their history, however. Women who had opposed them, such as Lucy Stone, were noticeably downplayed in the articles on the movement, although they had done much for woman's rights.

¹⁰⁴ *The National Citizen and Ballot Box*, September, 1878, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ "Eleventh Annual Convention, National Woman Suffrage Association, St. Louis, Mo., May 7-9, 1879," *The National Citizen and Ballot Box*, June, 1879, p. 7.

¹⁰⁶ "Eleventh Annual Convention, National Woman Suffrage Association, St. Louis, Mo., May 7-9, 1879," *The National Citizen and Ballot Box*, June, 1879, p. 7.

¹⁰⁷ *The National Citizen and Ballot Box*, November, 1880, p. 3-4.

Susan and Elizabeth differed ideologically in that for Susan, the vote was the all-encompassing goal, whereas Elizabeth wished for woman's freedom and improvement in all areas. Thus, Elizabeth was constantly doing things Susan found "politically incorrect" to her own goal of gaining suffrage. When, in 1884, Frederick Douglass came under attack by the press for marrying a white woman, Elizabeth planned to send a letter to various newspapers openly congratulating him on his marriage. Susan stopped her, saying, "Your sympathy has run away with your judgement."¹⁰⁸

In 1882, Elizabeth took her first trip to Europe since her honeymoon there in 1840. She visited her son, Theodore, in France, staying in a convent. These surroundings caused her to consider the power of religion on society. In her diary on September 25, 1882, she wrote, "My dream of the future is co-operation. But is there any other foundation outside of religion on which it can be based? Can a belief grounded on science, common sense, and love of humanity sway the human soul as fears of the torments of hell and promises of the joys of heaven have done?"¹⁰⁹

After visiting Theodore, she traveled to England to stay with her daughter, Harriot. She was joined by Susan in 1883. Together, they encouraged the idea for the formation of an international organization for woman's rights.

At the 17th National Convention, Elizabeth presided for the first time since 1882. A resolution was introduced which immediately met with opposition:

WHEREAS, The dogmas incorporated in the religious creeds derived from Judaism, teaching that woman was an afterthought in creation, her sex a misfortune, marriage a condition of subordination, and maternity a curse, are contrary to the law of God as revealed in nature and the precepts of Christ; and,

WHEREAS, These dogmas are an insidious poison sapping the vitality of our civilization, blighting woman and laying their palsying hand upon humanity; therefore,

Resolved, That we denounce these dogmas wherever they are enunciated; and we will withdraw our personal support from any organization or person so holding and teaching. And,

Resolved, That we call upon the Christian ministry, as leaders of thought, to teach and enforce the fundamental idea of creation that man was made in the image of God, male and female, and given equal dominion over the earth, but none over each other. And further, we invite their co-operation in securing the recognition of the cardinal point of our creed, that in true religion there is neither male nor female, neither bond nor free, but all are one.

Naturally, this resolution resulted in much discussion. Elizabeth was accused of being its' author, which she refuted, although she did, she said, agree with it. Replying to the critics of the resolution, she said,

"You may go over the world, and you will find that every form of religion that has breathed upon this earth, has degraded woman. There is not one that has not always made us subject to man. Men may rejoice in them because they make man the head of the woman. I have

¹⁰⁸ *Failure is Impossible; Susan B. Anthony in Her Own Words*, Lynn Sherr, Random House, New York, 1995, p. 31.

¹⁰⁹ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 195.

been travelling over the old world the last few years and have found new food for thought. What power is it that makes the Hindoo woman burn herself on the funeral pyre of her husband? Her religion. What holds the Turkish women in the harem? Their religion. Man, of himself, could not do this; but when he says: "Thus saith the Lord," of course he can do it. By what power do the Mormons perpetrate their abominable system of polygamy? They do it through their religion. So long as ministers stand up and tell us that as Christ is the head of the Church, so is man the head of the woman, how are we to break the chains that have held women down through the ages? You Christian women can look at the Turkish, the Mormon, and the Hindoo women, and wonder how they can be held in such bondage. Look today at the work women are doing for the churches! *The church rests on the shoulders of women.* Have we ever yet heard a man preach a sermon from Genesis i:27-28, which declares the full equality of the feminine and masculine element in the Godhead? I never heard such a thing in my life. They are invariably shy over that first chapter. They always get up in their pulpits and read that second chapter. Now I ask you if our religion teaches us the dignity of woman? It teaches us that abominable idea of the sixth century - Augustine's idea - that motherhood is a curse; that woman is the author of sin, and is most corrupt. Can we ever cultivate any proper sense of self-respect as long as women take such sentiments from the mouths of the priesthood? Now what we demand is an expurgated edition of the Bible. Men have written it - translated it - revised it, and put in and taken out whatever suits their own ideas. Now what we want is to call a council of women for an expurgated edition of the Bible that shall place us in our true position as equals on this Christian earth. I am not willing that our sons and daughters shall read the Bible as it stands to-day and become poisoned with these ideas of woman's inferiority. I went into many a Catholic church in Europe, where no woman is allowed to sing in the choir. I asked the reason why. I knew; but I wanted to see what they would say. They said it was only because women were not allowed to enter the altar. Women were the authors of sin; we have been the sex that has been denounced from the fifth to the eighteenth century. History shows one continual persecution of woman. It was this that brought about the dark ages. In England I went into the church of good Dr. Dean Stanley. One of the two daughters who showed me around, said: 'Do you notice that cover on the altar? Sister and I worked that.' I said: 'Were you allowed to enter the altar to put it on?' She said: 'O, no.' I asked her why, and she didn't know. 'Shall I tell you?' I said. 'It is because the Christian religion has taught that woman was the author of sin, and is therefore a dangerous element, always dragging man down from his high heavenly position - from his spiritual life.'

"I have been gathering together three or four volumes of the canon laws. They are infamous - so infamous that a council of the Christian church was swamped by them. In republican America, and in the light of the Nineteenth century, we must demand that our religion must teach a higher idea in regard to woman. People seem to think we have reached the very end of theology; but let me say that the future is to be as much [illegible] than the past, than our immediate past has been better than the Dark Ages. We want to help roll off the soul of woman the terrible superstitions that have so long repressed her. We want to teach woman self-respect. Self-respect has been educated out of them, or else we could not find them sitting under the preaching of such men as Morgan Dix and Knox-Little. Some one in the Pan-Presbyterian Council in Philadelphia had the audacity to introduce a resolution favoring a little more liberty for women; but that body of Pan-Presbyterians laughed the idea to scorn. When I read that, I was thrilled to the soul with indignation. I cannot tell you the indignation I feel to see teachers and preachers, who

pretend to preach divine truth, so degrade woman by preaching the nonsense they do.

"Now I hope this resolution will pass. I tell you it is the religious bondage of woman that is to-day the great blockade to her progress. It must be removed."¹¹⁰

In 1885, the New York City Woman Suffrage Society honored Elizabeth's 70th birthday with a party at the home of the group's president, Dr. Clemence S. Lozier. Lillie Devereux Blake and other ladies spoke, as did Elizabeth, who took as her theme "The Pleasures of Old Age." Susan was there, of course, and read letters and telegrams from those unable to attend, congratulating Elizabeth on this milestone birthday.¹¹¹

In her address to the NWSA in 1886, Elizabeth began by saying, "My convictions from year to year have been growing stronger that before we can secure woman's emancipation from the slavery and superstitions of the past we have an important work to do in the church. Hence, I would suggest in 'our plan of work' for the coming year, that, we now begin the same vigorous agitation in the church that we have kept up in the state for the last forty years, as the canon law, with all the subtle influences that grow out of it, is more responsible for woman's slavery to-day than the civil code. ...It matters little that here and there some clergyman advocates our cause, on our platform, so long as no sectarian organization has yet recognized our demand as a principle of justice, and the debate is rarely opened in their councils, being generally treated as a speculative, sentimental question unworthy serious consideration. Neither would it suffice if they gave their adhesion, to the demand for political equality so long as by scriptural teachings they perpetuate our social and religious subordination. ...In view of the intelligence, morality, and liberal education of this period all those texts of Scripture and parables referring to her as 'the author of sin,' as 'an inferior,' 'a subject,' a 'weaker vessel,' should no longer be read in our churches, as they humiliate and destroy the respect that is her due from the rising generation. All these old ideas should be relegated to the ancient mythologies as mere allegories, having no application whatever to the womanhood of this generation."¹¹²

In 1887, after Henry's death, Elizabeth sold the Tenaflly home, and always regretted the sale, for it caused her to depend on shelter from her friends and family.¹¹³ She was in England, staying with Harriot, when she learned of the death of her husband. In her diary entry of January 12, she writes, "I have lived with my husband for forty-six years, and now he leads the way to another sphere. What the next life is, whether this one is all, or we pursue an individual existence in a higher form of development, are the questions not yet answered. My daughter and I have sat together and talked all day long of the mysteries of life and death, speculating on what lies beyond."¹¹⁴

Elizabeth's fight against the use of the Christian religion to keep women in a subordinate position caused an uproar. The Rev. Mr. Dewhurst, speaking before the Connecticut legislature, apparently thought he was helping "the cause" by advocating woman suffrage, but when he said that the Bible did not relegate

¹¹⁰ *The Woman's Tribune*, Volume 2, No. 5, March, 1885.

¹¹¹ "Mrs. Stanton Honored at Home," L.D. Blake, *The Woman's Tribune*, December, 1885.

¹¹² *The Woman's Tribune*, March, 1886.

¹¹³ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 171.

¹¹⁴ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 236.

woman to a second class citizenship *until* she sent the curse of sin into the world, Elizabeth angrily responded by writing that the absurd and wicked idea of woman being the author of sin and cursed in her maternity was the cause of the cruelty and contempt with which women had been treated. Elizabeth and Matilda Joslyn Gage then wrote articles using a long array of facts from history and canon law to support this idea. This brought letters to newspapers against and for their argument that the Bible placed woman in a subordinate role, although both sides agreed that whether or not this was the case, woman should not be subordinate to man.¹¹⁵

Elizabeth was revealing her Freethought beliefs to fellow Freethinkers by this time. In 1887, she wrote to Helen Gardener from England, where she was visiting her daughter, Harriot: "Think of it, she (referring to a fine suffrage leader) says she wishes to break down the material slavery of woman. If she wanted to get the Turkish women out of the harem, would she begin with arguments on Republican government? No, indeed, she would know that they are held in sexual slavery by the power of their religion - *and so are we*. If women were emancipated from their religious superstitions they would understand their interests in the things of this life more readily. But believing that all things here are regulated by the finger of God, the Bible written by Him, expressing His will, how can you rouse them to a desire for or belief in their social and political freedom until you first show them that all these things are the outgrowth of man's thought and selfishness, largely based upon his own superstitions and ignorance of Nature's laws, and resulting in woman's degradation and subjection? Do write whenever you have time. We enjoy your good, wholesome common-sense. You, at least, never aim at one thing and try thereby to hit another."¹¹⁶

In 1888, Elizabeth's and Susan's idea for an International Council of Women was realized. Although not particularly effective, the group did provide a neutral debating ground for the discussion of woman's rights issues.

Elizabeth recorded in her diary on February 8, 1888, that she had written Susan suggesting that the topics to be brought up at the next convention should include keeping the public schools strictly sectarian and keeping libraries, picture galleries and places of amusement open on Sunday for the working public. She notes that the temperance women attempting to pass legislation in opposition to these positions "do not seem to see that all this special legislation about faith, Sabbaths, drinking, etc., etc., is the entering wedge to general governmental interference which would eventually subject us to an espionage that would soon become tyrannical in the extreme."¹¹⁷

Always questioning religious "truth," and advocating justice, Elizabeth wrote in her diary in 1889, "I like the reincarnation idea. That each soul should in turn pass through every form of human existence, and thus learn the temptations and miseries as well as the privileges and joys of all, seems so just and equal that I am quite willing to run the gauntlet, so that the Czar of Russia may trudge in chains in Siberia, toil through long years in the mines and taste the bitterness of his dreary prisons; so that every man with a dozen children may return in woman's form and suffer the pangs of maternity an equal number of times. This would indeed be justice for all."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ *The Woman's Tribune*, June, 1886.

¹¹⁶ "Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Address of Helen H. Gardener at the D.C. Memorial Meeting," *The Woman's Tribune*, 11/22/1902, p. 1, 122-23.

¹¹⁷ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 247.

¹¹⁸ January 14, 1889, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and

By 1890, the Woman Suffrage movement had its own committee room in the national legislature. Before leaving for Europe in 1890, Elizabeth appeared before the Committee in Congress, chaired by Senator Vance. She addressed the Senators, then was questioned by them. Did women expect, asked Senator Vance, that in becoming equal with men they would fight in war? Elizabeth replied that during the Civil War, many women had enlisted and fought, and the only difference in their service was that when discovered, they were dismissed in disgrace and never paid for their services. When asked if in jobs traditionally held by men, women workers lose their "refining influence," Elizabeth answered by saying that in pioneer families, no such distinctions in duties were made, and the wife helped the husband at harvest time, while the husband helped the wife in winter with domestic duties, yet neither seemed to suffer from taking roles society assigned to each sex. The Chairman next asked whether women's moral character would suffer if they engaged in "man's work." Elizabeth pointed out that Queen Victoria was just as dignified and refined in opening Parliament, although she was engaged in politics - a "man's sphere."¹¹⁹

Elizabeth visited her daughter Harriot in England, speaking at parlor meetings around London.¹²⁰ She was familiar with the church/state separation issues taking place in England, which included state recognition of "blasphemy" as a crime, and the refusal to seat duly elected non-Christians in Parliament. She knew George Holyoake, Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant, all of whom were leading British secularists.

Elizabeth discussed Theosophy with Annie Besant (rhymes with "Pleasant"). Annie had been the wife of a minister and the mother of two children. As she slowly became a Freethinker, her husband became increasingly intolerant of her views. When she finally left him, and went to court to gain custody of her children, the court decided, *based solely on her Atheism*, that her husband should retain custody of the children. Annie worked with Charles Bradlaugh in fighting for the rights of Atheists, until, unfortunately, she was converted to Theosophy, a mystic, Indian-based belief promoted by Madame Blavatsky in England. Elizabeth commented on their meeting with Annie that "Mrs. Besant was full, too full, of theosophy ... I liked her better when she was associated with Bradlaugh in the Free Thought and democratic movements. 'The Fabian Society can do more for the amelioration of humanity than the Theosophical Society,' I ventured to remark. But I saw this pained her, so I let her go on in her enthusiasm for Mme. Blavatsky..."¹²¹

In 1889,¹²² the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association formed one group, the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). This did not mean all the members immediately became friends, and those who had opposed Elizabeth's anticlerical position now worked even harder to get rid of her. In fact, probably the only reason she was elected to the post at all was through the influence of Susan B. Anthony, who was popular with both groups. Rev. Anna Shaw wrote a friend in 1890, "If [Aunt Susan] will crowd Mrs. Stanton down our throats, well, we won't have her if we can help it...I have said from the first I will not work under and will work to defeat Mrs.

London, 1922, p. 254.

¹¹⁹ "Woman Suffrage Hearing," *The Woman's Tribune*, February 15, 1890.

¹²⁰ *The Woman's Tribune*, 6/21/1890.

¹²¹ August 30, 1890, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 264.

¹²² 1890, according to Robert McHenry, *Famous American Women*.

S.¹²³ Elizabeth even tried having resolutions she wrote introduced by others, so that the members would not know she had authored them, and would thereby automatically reject them.

In 1891 and 1892, when resolutions were introduced at the NAWSA convention advocating Sunday opening of the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition, opposition arose and the resolutions were dropped from consideration. When Elizabeth again presented the resolution in 1893, Laura Clay, the representative from Kentucky, began fighting it. Failing to have it tabled, she took the position that the decision to be for or against Sunday opening of the fair should rest with each individual woman, and was not for the Association to dictate. Laura won the day and the resolution was defeated. Elizabeth later commented that Laura was her chief opponent on this proposal and claimed that the defeat of the resolution was largely responsible for her decision to resign from the presidency of the NAWSA.¹²⁴

Writing to Matilda Joslyn Gage, Elizabeth explained, "The suffrage movement languishes today because the new-comers and many of the old ones are afraid to take an advanced step. We are just in the position of the churches, dead ... I am sick of all organizations and will not pledge myself to do one thing, except to join [the newly formed Freethought organization, Woman's National Liberal Union] and speak ... Once out of my present post in the suffrage movement I am a free lance to do and say what I choose and shock people as much as I please."¹²⁵

This group, the Woman's National Liberal Union, was begun by Matilda Joslyn Gage in response to the growing conservatism of the NAWSA. Its position included the statement "That the Christian church of whatever name, is based on the theory that woman was created secondary and inferior to man and brought sin into the world, thus necessitating the sacrifice of the Saviour. That Christianity is false and its foundation a myth which every discovery in science shows to be as baseless as its former belief that the earth was flat."¹²⁶

In 1891, Lucy Colman reported that Elizabeth advertised her services to speak to Freethought groups.¹²⁷ Elizabeth also visited Susan in Rochester, New York this year and began a campaign to sexually integrate the all-male University of Rochester. They also sat for the sculpture by Adeline Johnson, which included a likeness of Lucretia Mott which is now on display in the United States Capitol building.

The *Woman's Bible* was a project with which Elizabeth had been interested for years. She wrote to Clara Bewick Colby about her aims in publishing the book: "The beauty of a title is to be as short as possible. The book will be about women, by women, with commentaries from our standpoint.

"If we could get every woman to speak from her standpoint, what a grand tribute it would be to the intelligence, the thoughtfulness, the independence of our sex. Our book would then be comments from the surface, the plain English, the spiritual, the symbolical, the evangelical, the liberal, the Protestant, the

¹²³ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches*, edited by Ellen DuBois, Schocken Books, New York, 1981, p. 182-193.

¹²⁴ *Laura Clay and the Woman's Rights Movement*, Paul E. Fuller, The University Press of Kentucky, 1975/1992, p. 75-78.

¹²⁵ "Letter from Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Matilda J. Gage," reprinted in *The Liberal Thinker*, Syracuse, N.Y., 1890; *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness*, Gerda Lerner, Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford, 1993, p. 163-165.

¹²⁶ "Program of Women's National Liberal Union Convention," Feb. 24-25, 1890, Washington, D.C.; *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness*, Gerda Lerner, Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford, 1993, p. 163-165.

¹²⁷ *Reminiscences*, Lucy Colman, H.L. Green, Publisher, Buffalo, N.Y., 1891, p. 18.

Catholic, the Jew, the Gentile; all from the various standpoints. It would be a lesson to all men of toleration and wisdom such as has never before been possible. I fear that the evangelical element will back out."¹²⁸

Although the title of the book may seem to indicate a rewriting of the Bible, Elizabeth's goal was to assemble an array of viewpoints by women on Biblical text, both defending and attacking it for the role in which it placed women. Unfortunately, none of the conservative religious women would participate in the project. Instead, the list of women included the following:

Revising Committee:

Elizabeth Cady Stanton	Lillie Devereux Blake
Rev. Phebe A. Hanaford	Matilda Joslyn Gage
Clara Bewick Colby	Rev. Olympia Brown
Rev. Augusta Chapin	Frances Ellen Burr
Ursula N. Gestefeld	Clara B. Neyman
Mary Seymour Howell	Helen H. Gardener
Josephine K. Henry	Charlotte Beebe Wilbour
Mrs. Robert G. Ingersoll	Lucinda B. Chandler
Sarah A. Underwood	Catharine F. Stebbins
Ellen Battelle Dietrick	Louisa Southworth

Foreign Members:

Baroness Alexandra Gripenberg	Finland
Ursula M. Bright	England
Irma von Troll-Borostyani	Austria
Priscilla Bright McLaren	Scotland
Isabelle Bogelot	France ¹²⁹

These women ranged from liberal religionists to outright Atheists. They searched the Bible for any references to women, then wrote small essays commenting on the passage. Clara Bewick Colby published the book by chapter in her *Woman's Tribune*, which enjoyed vast circulation in the woman's rights community. Elizabeth's own views were shown in the private notation she added to the copy of the book she presented to Etta Semple: "Read the Bible with the same common sense you read all other books."¹³⁰

After publication of *The Woman's Bible* in 1895, Elizabeth's opponents once more came to the forefront. An example of the public outcry was that of a clergyman in Chicago who told his congregation that the book was the work of the devil.¹³¹ As George Macdonald explained in *Fifty Years of Freethought*, there were two divisions in the woman's rights movement: those led by Elizabeth, who demanded suffrage in

¹²⁸ "Mrs. Stanton's Letters, Character glimpses from personal letters to the editor of the Woman's Tribune," *The Woman's Tribune*, 11/8/1902, p. 118.

¹²⁹ *The Woman's Bible, Part I*, New York: European Publishing Company, 68 Broad Street, 1898.

¹³⁰ *Freethought Ideal*, No. 22, 4/15/1899.

¹³¹ "Side Lights on Life of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, by Clara Bewick Colby in 'Arena,' February, 1903," *The Woman's Tribune*, Vol. XX, No. 27, 10/17/1903, p. 1, 108.

the name of right and justice, and those led by Anthony Comstock, Mary Livermore and Emma Willard, among others, who "demanded suffrage in the name of Christ so that God might be voted into the Constitution, the Bible into the schools, and Christian doctrine generally into civil law."¹³²

Laura Clay was joined by Carrie Chapman Catt, Anna Howard Shaw, Harriet Taylor Upton and Rachel Foster Avery in attempted to convince the Association to denounce the book. First, they submitted a resolution censuring the book at the NAWSA Convention of 1896. As Elizabeth was absent, Susan B. Anthony presented an eloquent plea against their prejudice, saying, "If she had written *your* views, you would not have considered a resolution necessary," and stressing that their organization had always been open to those of all faiths, or of no faith. "What you should say to outsiders is that a Christian has neither more nor less rights in our association than an atheist. When our platform becomes too narrow for people of all creeds and of no creeds, I myself can not stand upon it. Many things have been said and done by our *orthodox* friends which I have felt to be extremely harmful to our cause; but I should no more consent to a resolution denouncing them than I shall consent to this. Who is to draw the line? Who can tell now whether these commentaries may not prove a great help to woman's emancipation from old superstitions which have barred its way? ... Ten women educated into the practice of liberal principles would be a stronger force than 10,000 organized on a platform of intolerance and bigotry. I pray you vote for religious liberty, without censorship or inquisition. This resolution adopted will be a vote of censure upon a woman who is without a peer in intellectual and statesmanlike ability; one who has stood for half a century the acknowledged leader of progressive thought and demand in regard to all matters pertaining to the absolute freedom of women."

During the debate on Sunday opening for the Columbian Exposition, Laura Clay had argued that the issue was one to be decided by individual women, not the organization, but with *The Woman's Bible*, her argument changed completely, saying that it was not individual women who should decide worth of the book, but the organization. The resolution passed 53-41.¹³³

After Elizabeth's death, Josephine K. Henry remembered this event, writing, "The noblest and grandest workers in any cause always receive ingratitude from those they labor for, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton was no exception. The National Suffrage Convention held in Washington in 1896 went out of its way, and beyond its province to pass a resolution condemning the 'Woman's Bible,' which had been issued by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and her invited co-workers, when the work of the very **woman** they condemned made it possible for Woman Suffragists to meet in Convention.

"Why should Elizabeth Cady Stanton's right to publish a book be condemned by a Suffrage Convention? Such a policy has proven itself very harmful to the movement, and was the deepest ingratitude to the splendid woman whose brains and wisdom were so superior that there are none of the new generation worthy to wear her mantle.

"There has never yet appeared a doctor of divinity, or an orthodox Woman Suffragist, great enough, ingenious enough, or brave enough to attempt to answer Elizabeth Cady Stanton's arguments, and, today the most learned ecclesiastics in Christendom will not dare to take 'The Woman's Bible' into his pulpit, and before his congregation, compare it with the 'Holy Bible,' and prove the 'Woman's Bible' false."¹³⁴

¹³² *Fifty Years of Freethought*, Vol. II, George E. Macdonald, The Truth Seeker Company, New York, 1931, p. 107.

¹³³ Document 49 (IV:263-64): "The Bible Resolution and Susan B. Anthony's comment, NAWSA Convention, Washington, D.C., January 23-28, 1896," *The Concise History of Woman Suffrage by Stanton, Anthony, Gage and Harper*, edited by Mari Jo and Paul Buhle, University of Illinois Press, 1978, p. 339-40.

¹³⁴ "Tribute to Elizabeth Cady Stanton," Josephine K. Henry, *The Blue Grass Blade*, 11/9/1902.

Elizabeth was furious. She encouraged Susan to resign as her form of protest against the ungrateful organization. Susan not only refused, but resented the time Elizabeth had taken away from woman suffrage work to produce the volumes.¹³⁵ She did not see, as Elizabeth did, that if women were not freed from religious teachings, the vote would mean nothing, for they would vote according to the dictates of an anti-woman religion rather than independently thinking for themselves and their best interests. Elizabeth's viewpoint has been entirely justified as seen in the political actions of women such as Phyllis Schlafly. For Susan, the vote, and only the vote, was everything, but Elizabeth wanted women to be free in all spheres of life - education, work, home and religion, for only then would the vote mean anything to them.

From that point on, Elizabeth resented the treatment that had been given her by the newer members of the NAWSA. Writing to Lillie Devereux Blake in 1899 when that co-worker was similarly repulsed by the "newcomers," Elizabeth advised her: "You have not been treated by our young coadjutors with less consideration than I have been. They refused to read my letters and resolutions to the conventions. They have denounced the *Woman's Bible* unsparingly; not one of them has ever reviewed or expressed the least appreciation of *Eighty Years and More* (her autobiography). Not one of my suffrage friends has ever thought it worth a complimentary notice in any of the metropolitan journals...Because of this hostile feeling I renounced the presidency and quietly accept the situation, and publish what I have to say in the liberal papers. I do not cultivate any feelings of revenge or hostility, but quietly do my work in other ways that open to me. I have outgrown the Suffrage Association as the ultimatum of human endeavor, and no longer belong in that of old, with its limitations. Now you must do the same; do not cultivate any hostile feelings, nor try to revenge what you deem your wrongs, but use what talents you have in ways that are open to you...use your powers as a free lance; you can do better work with your pen than as an officer in an association with restricted limits, - and so can I. I saw how deeply you were wounded, and felt after you had gone that I did not say the right word at the time. You have certainly done a good work in this city, as well as the state, for a quarter of a century, which many of your friends appreciate. If now someone has arisen, feeling that she can do a better work, and wishes to seize your crown and scepter, lay them at her feet, knowing there are broader fields for you to cultivate."¹³⁶

Shortly after publication of *The Woman's Bible*, Elizabeth was visited by a delegation of Jewish women, who came to argue that the Jewish religion revered women. "I asked them why," Elizabeth reported, "if this were all so, one heard in the synagogue service every week the 'I thank thee, O Lord, that I was not born a woman.'" When the women attempted to explain that this was an "interpolation in our service," Elizabeth responded by saying, "Suppose the service read, 'I thank thee, O Lord, that I was not born a jackass.' Could that be twisted in any way into a compliment to the jackass?" The interview ended with Elizabeth telling the ladies, "Oh no, ladies, the Jews accord us women no more honor than do the Gentiles."¹³⁷

¹³⁵ *Laura Clay and the Woman's Rights Movement*, Paul E. Fuller, The University Press of Kentucky, 1975/1992, p. 75-78.

¹³⁶ *Champion of Women, The Life of Lillie Devereux Blake*, Katherine Devereux Blake and Margaret Louise Wallace, Fleming H. Revell Company, London and Edinburgh, 1943, p. 200-1.

¹³⁷ April 19, 1895, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 313.

Elizabeth and Susan developed the idea of gathering together all the woman's groups into one huge association. This was achieved with the formation of the Woman's National Council.¹³⁸ Although she did not attend the Woman's National Council held in 1895, Elizabeth's ideas were discussed there. A meeting of over twenty woman's rights groups composed the Council, with an aggregate membership of seven hundred thousand women, including the National Free Baptist Missionary Society, Sorosis, the Equal Rights Society, the Professional Women's League, the National Christian Temperance Union and others.

Despite the presence of many conservative women, the speakers overwhelmingly supported many of Elizabeth's ideas that it was man's influence in religion that had held women in a subordinate role. At the close of the session discussing religion, Clara Bewick Colby approached Susan B. Anthony and said, "They are all coming round to Mrs. Stanton's position that woman's inequality in the church is the chief point to be attacked." Susan said she wished Elizabeth had been there to hear the women discussing her views. Clara wrote that Elizabeth's "ideas are now almost universally held by church women even though they may be couched in more religious phrase."¹³⁹

In 1895, Elizabeth was living with her son, Robert Stanton, an attorney, and her daughter, widowed Mrs. Margaret Stanton-Lawrence, the director of physical culture in the New York College for the Training of Teachers, at Columbia Teacher's College in New York City.¹⁴⁰

Despite her unpopularity with the religious set, 8,000 people attended her 80th birthday celebration at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York city in 1895 and sponsored by the National Council of Women of the United States. Elizabeth made a short statement, then had her speech read by another. She included comments on the churches, writing,

As learned bishops and editors of religious newspapers are warning us against further demands for new liberties, and clergymen are still preaching sermons on the "rib origin," and refuse to receive women as delegates to their synods, it is evident that our demands for equal recognition should now be made of the Church for the same rights we have asked of the State for the last fifty years, for the same rights, privileges and immunities that men enjoy. We must demand that the canon laws, the Mosaic code, the Scriptures, prayer books and liturgies be purged of all invidious distinctions of sex, of all false teaching as to woman's origin, character and destiny. To make her the author of sin, cursed in her maternity, subordinate in marriage, an afterthought in the creation, and all by the command of God, was so to overweight her in the scale of being that centuries of civilization have not as yet been able to lift the burden. Charles Kingsley said long ago, "This will never be a good world for women until the last remnant of the canon law is swept from the face of the earth," and Lord Brougham echoed back the same sentiment as to the civil law for women. "It is," said he, "a disgrace to the Christianity and civilization of the nineteenth century." Here is the opinion of two distinguished men as to women's degraded position under the canon and civil law in Church and State. Can it be that what such men see and denounce women themselves do not feel and repudiate?

3. We must demand an equal place in the offices of the Church, as pastors, elders, deacons; an equal voice in the creeds, discipline, and all business matters, in synods, conferences and general assemblies.

¹³⁸ *The Woman's Tribune*, 12/28/1895.

¹³⁹ "Religion in the Council," *The Woman's Tribune*, Vol. XII, No. 8, 2/23/1895, p. 1.

¹⁴⁰ *The Woman's Tribune*, Vol. XII, No. 34, 10/12/1895, p. 1.

Women of wealth are all the time giving large sums of money to build and maintain churches; they fill the pews each returning Sunday; they swell the numbers of the devotee; they supply the enthusiasm for revival seasons, and worship the priesthood. They are ever loyal to the sons of Aaron, the house of Levi, the very powers that through the centuries have done more to block their way to freedom than all other influences put together. It is the perversion of the religious element in woman that has held her for ages the patient victim under the care of Juggernaut, on the funeral pyre, in iron shoes, in the Turkish harem, in the Catholic nunnery, and in the Protestant world beggars ever for fairs, donation parties, church decorations, embroideries of altar cloths, surplices and slippers. In return for this devotion they are entertained with sermons from the texts: "I suffer not a woman to speak in the churches;" "As Christ is the head of the Church, so is man the head of the woman."

4. Women must demand that all unworthy reflections on the dignity and sacred office of the mother of the race be expunged from religious literature, such as the allegory as to the creation of woman and St. Paul's assumption as to her social status. These ideas conflict with the Golden Rule and the fifth commandment: "Honor thy mother," and should no longer be rehearsed in the pulpit. Such sentiments cannot inspire the rising generation with respect for their mothers.

4.[sic] We must demand that the pulpit be no longer desecrated by men who read passages of Scripture or preach from texts that teach subordination of one-half the human race to the other.

What sight could be more inexpressibly sad and comic than a young man fresh from Princeton, preaching his first sermon to a congregation of educated middle-aged women from the text: "Wives, obey your husbands;" "If you would know anything, ask your husbands at home." In view of the character and higher education of the women of the present day, the time has fully come for the Church to take an advance step on this question. Jewish women should demand an expurgated edition of their liturgy. It must be very humiliating to them to have every man stand up in the Synagogue each returning Sabbath day, and say: "I thank thee, O Lord, that I was not born a woman." Nothing that has ever emanated from the brain of man is too sacred to be revised and corrected. Our National Constitution has been amended fifteen times, our English system of jurisprudence has been essentially modified in the interest of women, to keep pace with advancing civilization. And now the time has come to amend and modify the canon laws, prayerbooks, liturgies and Bibles. Gladstone said the American Constitution, considering the circumstances under which it was written, is the most wonderful document that ever emanated from the brain of man. Yet from time to time, with the growth of the people, amendments were demanded. So with our statute laws. Why should we hold the Mosaic code and church decretals more sacred than the Saxon civil code and the legal opinions of Blackstone, Story and Kent? The trouble in both cases is that the laws and customs in Church and State alike are behind the public sentiment of our day and generation.

Woman's imperative duty at this hour is to demand a thorough revision of creeds and codes, Scriptures and constitutions. Petitions for a sixteenth amendment to the National Constitution for the enfranchisement of women have been annually presented to Congress for the last quarter of a century. Similar petitions for equal recognition in the Church should now every year press into the synods, conferences and general assemblies.

Twenty-five years ago a church in Illinois was rent in twain because some women persisted in praying in the weekly meetings. Ten years ago the Presbyterian General Assembly discussed this question for three days, and finally passed a resolution leaving the

matter to the discretion of the pastor. Now women not only pray in church meetings, but on many public occasions, in missionary and charitable conventions. Fifteen years ago the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, by a large majority, voted down a resolution to ordain women as missionaries, and four years ago they voted down a resolution to ordain women as lay delegates; while thus far this autumn every State conference held has given a majority vote in favor of women as lay delegates. Last May (1895), the Episcopal Church of California passed a resolution that women might vote in vestry meetings, and also be eligible as church officers. When the Church obeys the command, "Honor thy mother," and the State heeds the declaration, "Equal rights to all"; when the two powers join hands to exalt the mother of the race, who has gone to the very gates of death to give every man life and immortality, then we shall see the dawn of a new day in woman's emancipation. When she awakes to the beauty of science, philosophy, true religion and pure government, then will the first note of harmony be touched; then will the great organ of humanity be played on all its keys, with every stop rightly adjusted, and with louder, loftier strains, the march of civilization will be immeasurably quickened.¹⁴¹

The following day, November 13, a large reception was held for Elizabeth at the Savoy Hotel.

In 1898, Elizabeth published her autobiography, *Eighty Years and More*. "Most delightful of all in her book," critiqued Helen Gardener, "is her absolute freedom from all cant and superstition."¹⁴²

In 1899, Elizabeth wrote an article for *Freethought Magazine* on Robert Ingersoll.¹⁴³ She wished to issue a volume of her speeches and writings, but could not obtain funding, even from Carnegie and Rockefeller. Bitterly, she wrote to Elizabeth Boynton Harbert, "'If my suffrage coadjutors had ever treated me with the boundless generosity that have my friend Susan, I could have scattered my writings abundantly. They have given Susan thousands of dollars, jewels, laces, silks and satins, and me criticisms for my radical ideas."¹⁴⁴

In 1900, when Susan resigned as President of the NAWSA, she identified Carrie Chapman Catt as her successor. Elizabeth supported another woman. Ideologically, Elizabeth and Susan were going their separate ways, with Susan's emphasis only on gaining the vote, and Elizabeth's on gaining freedom not only to vote, but in all aspects of life. Elizabeth, a life-long supporter of suffrage, wrote, "Much as I desire the suffrage I would rather never vote than to see the policy of our government at the mercy of the religious bigotry of such women. My heart's desire is to lift women out of all these dangerous and degrading superstitions, and to this end will I labor my remaining days on earth."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ "Elizabeth Cady Stanton's Birthday Celebration by the National Council of Women of the United States," *The Woman's Tribune*, 12/28/1895.

¹⁴² "Eighty Years and More," Helen H. Gardener, *The Woman's Tribune*, 2/10/1900, p. 12.

¹⁴³ *Torch of Reason*, Vol. III, No. 35, 9/7/1899.

¹⁴⁴ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches*, edited by Gerda Lerner, Schocken Books, New York, 1981, p. 182-193.

¹⁴⁵ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches*, edited by Gerda Lerner, Schocken Books, New York, 1981, p. 182-193.

On October 12, 1902, Elizabeth died in her apartment in the Stuart building at 94th and Broadway in New York City, only a few hours after writing a letter to President Theodore Roosevelt urging him to support woman's suffrage.¹⁴⁶

According to the family, Elizabeth arranged for her own death. By the time of her death, she was totally blind, and it was reported that she decided that she would choose to die when she felt her usefulness was ending. She persuaded her physician, the story goes, to prescribe an overdose of drugs. The story is not substantiated, although this decision would well fit her personality.¹⁴⁷

Her daughter, Harriot, described her last hours in a letter to Helen Gardener, writing "None of us knew Mother was so near her end 'til Sunday really, (the day she died). She had been suffering from shortness of breath lately, from time to time, and from that cause felt under the mark. On Saturday she said to the doctor, very emphatically, 'Now, if you can't cure this difficulty of breathing, and if I am not to feel brighter and more like work again, I want you to give me something to send me pack-horse speed to heaven.' ... Two hours before her death (on Sunday) she said she wished to stand up. She was sitting in her arm chair in the drawing room, not dressed, but in her dressing-gown and with her hair all arranged as usual... She had told her maid earlier in the day to dress her hair, and when it was finished she said: 'Now, I'll be dressed.' But I dissuaded her, seeing she was weary. The trained nurse (who had only been summoned an hour earlier) and the doctor, when she asked to stand, helped her to rise and stood on either side of her. I placed a table for her to rest her hands on. She drew herself up very erect (the doctor said the muscular strength was extraordinary) and there she stood for seven or eight minutes, steadily looking out, proudly before her. I think she was mentally making an address. When we urged her to sit down she fell asleep. Two hours later, the doctor thinking her position constrained in her chair, we lifted her to her bed, and she slipped away peacefully in a few minutes."¹⁴⁸

Susan told the press that Elizabeth would be cremated, as was her wish. She also stated about her friend that "She talked about the other side, but had no faith that there was any other world. She always said this was a beautiful world and she wanted to stay here as long as possible. She believed in the immutable law in everything, and didn't believe in any special Providence for herself or any one else."¹⁴⁹

Moncure D. Conway, Rev. Antoinette Brown Blackwell (the first woman ordained to the ministry, being accepted by the Congregational Church as a minister), and Rev. Phoebe Hanaford, all spoke at her services.

Still, controversy over religion followed her.

The Reverend Antoinette Brown Blackwell claimed that Elizabeth's last thoughts had been on immortality, but it is more likely wishful thinking on the reverend's part. Elizabeth had written in her diary on April 12, 1900, that "Rev. Antoinette Brown Blackwell and her daughter lunched with us a short time ago. She believes firmly in immortality, and speaks with cheering confidence on that very fascinating but foggy subject. 'You may be sure we shall meet in heaven,' she said in parting. 'I don't object,' I answered." This is typical of Elizabeth, who did not like to argue with her friends, but rather let them talk on while giving them bland responses. Although Reverend Antoinette Brown Blackwell claimed Elizabeth

¹⁴⁶ "Remarkable American Women: 1776-1976," *Life*, 1976, p. 96.

¹⁴⁷ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, A Radical for Woman's Rights*, Lois W. Banner, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto, 1980, p. 172-173.

¹⁴⁸ "Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Address of Helen H. Gardener at the D.C. Memorial Meeting," *The Woman's Tribune*, 11/22/1902, p. 1, 122-23.

¹⁴⁹ *New York American*, October 27, 1902, p. 1.

believed in this particular myth of after life, Reverend Olympia Brown depicted her as a type of Deist, and Elizabeth's supporters in the Freethought community portrayed her quite differently from either of these women ministers.

After praising her as a woman, statesman, mother and wife, J.B. Wilson, M.D., wrote that

But there remains one element of greatness in her which rises above all these: She was a Freethinker. Since her death, this fact has been but little exploited in the press, in fact a studied care has been exercised to keep it still. Only one mention has been made of it, and that by her old associate, Susan B. Anthony, who has publicly stated that Mrs. Stanton was an Atheist, "that at times, for a certain purpose, she would talk of 'Over There,' but she did not mean it, but instead believed that death ended all."

This distinctive element of greatness in her will be but little recognized by the public. The clergy will contrive that it be made as little known as possible. They will do all they can to defeat Infidelity by robbing it of the credit of heading and instituting reform.

Just as they claim the influence of Franklin, Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln upon American affairs, likewise they will attempt to appropriate Mrs. Stanton to themselves. But the time will come when it will be generally known and recognized that it would have been impossible for Franklin, Jefferson, Washington, Lincoln, and Mrs. Stanton to have been what they were if they had not been Freethinkers, Deists and Atheists.

Rationalism will not forever be robbed of its laurels.

The first person to advocate Woman's Rights in this country was Thomas Paine, an Infidel - a Deist.

The first person to organize a Woman's Right's Association in this country was Elizabeth Cady Stanton - Infidel and Atheist. The struggle to gain press recognition and public respect was arduous and long. It required indomitable will and vast intellectual resources, besides a great individuality.

Mrs. Stanton was a politician. She observed that woman-kind was controlled by the church. She realized that she must enlist the favor and utilize the strength of women in the church. She soon brought to her side such eminent church women as Susan B. Anthony, Mary A. Livermore and others.

She saw that as soon as woman was set to work in her own interests and for her own liberty, she would gradually free herself.

Therefore she was temporizing, as she had to be, on matters of religion. Not until late years, after the work she had started had obtained firm root in solid ground, did she openly attack the church.

...

Were every church in this country piled straight on top of each other, they would not begin to reach the heights of good which Elizabeth Cady Stanton accomplished for mankind.

She started a reformation which the church has ever opposed and which it still opposes, and which I believe will prove its death blow.

With the freedom of the mind of woman, the power of the priesthood and clergy become a divided power; and when woman ceases taking her belief at the hands of man; when she takes her rightful place in creed-making and in church jurisdiction; when she begins to preach, as she now works for half the salary the preacher gets; then farewell to the occupations of the holy men of God. Farewell to the ancient gods and saints and relics and superstitions which still bind humanity to dead and depraved ages.

Then the face of man will be turned forward. His gods will be the great reformers of the present. His Bible will be humanity. He will take his revelations from the developments of the Future instead of from the dreams of the past.

Free women will make free men, and free men will not support a mighty power at enmity always with free speech and with free government.

The work of Mrs. Stanton cannot be estimated. Her fame is secure. It will grow brighter, just as woman advances. It will grow more steady, just as superstition declines.

...

When asked, "What has Infidelity done for the world?" you may proudly point to the life, labor and achievements of Elizabeth Cady Stanton.¹⁵⁰

Josephine K. Henry wrote, "This great woman grasped demonstrated facts, and rose superior to the political systems which have destroyed nations, and to the inherited religious superstitions and prejudices bequeathed from an ignorant and cruel past, which have kept the human race in mental slavery... Elizabeth Cady Stanton performed the herculean task of breaking the deadly spell of the Mosaic and Pauline codes, dooming woman to silence and subjection... she further proclaimed that religious superstitions made mental and moral cowards of the human race, and that the absolute divorce of Church and State is the sheet anchor of liberty... This woman discovered with her keen mental power and her analytical and philosophic mind, that Bible commands which teach the inferior positions of woman, and her silence and subjection are her greatest enemies, and the truth of this has been demonstrated by the fact that every advance step woman has taken, has been in defiance of these commands. She inaugurated the Woman Suffrage movement, and has always contended that the Church as organized has withheld both Liberty and Justice from woman, and if Elizabeth Cady Stanton's wise councils had been heeded in the past two decades, the cause would be 25 years nearer final victory than it is today - **and it never will triumph until they are put into practice...**"¹⁵¹

Perhaps the person who knew Elizabeth's thoughts best near the end of her life was fellow Freethinker, Helen Gardener. Helen and Elizabeth made an agreement to speak at the funeral of the one who died first between them, and made plain their thoughts to each other, for they knew that there would be much speculation, if not downright lying, about their beliefs. Helen wrote of her upcoming memorial speech for Elizabeth, to be held November 13, 1902, "I shall do it with a full and grateful heart, and I hope we may be able to fitly voice something of that which Mrs. Stanton wished said for her when she should have gone into the Silence. More than three years ago she asked me to be ready to speak for her - over her dead form - when she could no longer speak for herself. There were certain things which she laid great stress upon and asked me then and there to make notes of. I did so. I have those now and will use them together with such thoughts of my own as I may be able to express in honor of the greatest woman of our time."¹⁵²

Helen began her speech by saying, "Three years ago Mrs. Stanton asked me, in case she should go into the silence before me, if I would speak for her - at her grave. I have come here to-night, in part, to keep my promise to the dead. She agreed to do the same for me should I go first." Continuing, she reported, "First of all she wished it known that she died as she had lived, a fearless, serene agnostic. Her philosophy kept her sane and sweet. No fear for her soul, no dread of any future life, prevented her from using all of her splendid energies to better conditions in this world. She worked for the welfare of the race,

¹⁵⁰ "Elizabeth Cady Stanton," J.B. Wilson, M.D., *The Blue Grass Blade*, 11/9/1902.

¹⁵¹ "Tribute to Elizabeth Cady Stanton," Josephine K. Henry, *The Blue Grass Blade*, 11/9/1902.

¹⁵² *The Woman's Tribune*, 11/8/1902, p. 118.

here and now, and believed that any possible future could and would take care of itself... She hugged to her breast no superstitions that prevented her from thinking first and always of the highest good to the living - to those who come after. Many of her constituents in the suffrage work deeply deplored her activity in free religious lines; but she calmly replied that woman would never be fit for freedom, nor understand its benefits and bearing until she ceased to hold to her bosom the primary cause of her degradation - her religious superstitions, which bind her to the degraded status assigned her as 'the will of God' in all accepted 'revelations.' So long as she really believes (or pretends to do so for policy's sake), that Jehovah created her to serve man as his subordinate, she can be only half-hearted in her demand for either legal or social equality, and she can use only half of the legitimate arguments in her own defense. She spikes her own guns and throws away most of her powder. She weakens her case from the start and utterly begs her question. She leaves her antagonist in full possession of the field and allows him to plant her batteries to suit himself. She must have the courage to go to the root of the difficulty if she expects to gain her point.

"So, for the past few years, much of Mrs. Stanton's time and literary energy have been spent in an effort to bring women up to this vantage ground, - in a contest against religious superstitions, rather than against purely political ones, which she perceived had their basis and origin in the religious ones..."¹⁵³

Her long-time friend and co-worker, Susan B. Anthony, wrote soon after the Elizabeth's death, "Well, it is an awful hush - it seems impossible - that the voice is hushed - that I have loved to hear for fifty years - longed to get her opinion of things - before I knew exactly where I stood - It is all at sea - but the Laws of Nature are still going on - with no shadow or turning - What a world it is - it goes right on & on - no matter who lives or who dies!!...I can think of nothing - ." ¹⁵⁴

Six months later, we find that Susan was still distraught over the loss as she wrote, "Dear me! how lonesome I do feel, not to have any Mrs. Stanton to write to, to think of going to see, and talking to! It was a great going out of my life when she went, but she is gone not to return and we can only follow, where? and Echo answers, where?"¹⁵⁵

Quotes

At the World Anti-Slavery Convention on her honeymoon, 1840:

These were the first women I had ever met who believed in the equality of the sexes and who did not believe in the popular orthodox religion. The acquaintance of Lucretia Mott, who was a broad, liberal thinker on politics, religion, and all questions of reform, opened to me a new world of thought. As we walked about to see the sights of London, I embraced every opportunity to talk with her. It was intensely gratifying to hear all that, through years of doubt, I had dimly thought, so freely discussed by other women, some of them no older than myself - women, too, of rare intelligence, cultivation, and refinement. After six

¹⁵³ "Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Address of Helen H. Gardener at the D.C. Memorial Meeting," *The Woman's Tribune*, 11/22/1902, p. 1, 122-23.

¹⁵⁴ *Letter, 1902*, SBA to Ida Husted Harper, October 28, 1902, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, IHH collection, HM 10692.

- *Failure is Impossible; Susan B. Anthony in Her Own Words*, Lynn Sherr, Random House, New York, 1995, p. 176.

¹⁵⁵ *Letter, 1903*, SBA to Theodore Stanton, May 18, 1903, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., ECS Papers.

- *Failure is Impossible; Susan B. Anthony in Her Own Words*, Lynn Sherr, Random House, New York, 1995, p. 176.

weeks' sojourn under the same roof with Lucretia Mott, whose conversation was uniformly on a high plane, I felt that I knew her too well to sympathize with the orthodox Friends, who denounced her as a dangerous woman because she doubted certain dogmas they fully believed.

- *Eighty Years and More, Reminiscences 1815 - 1897*, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Northeastern University Press, Boston, 1993 (1st published 1898), p. 83.

One word of thanks from a suffering woman outweighs with me the howls of Christendom.

- ECS in a letter to SBA, regarding her introduction of the issue of divorce to the 10th National Woman's Rights Convention, creating an uproar, *Ernestine L. Rose, Women's Rights Pioneer*, Yuri Suhl, Biblio Press, New York, 1990, p. 206-7.

In the darkness and gloom of a false theology, I was slowly sawing off the chains of my spiritual bondage, when, for the first time, I met [William Lloyd] Garrison in London. A few bold strokes from the hammer of his truth, I was free! Only those who have lived all their lives under the dark clouds of vague, undefined fears can appreciate the joy of a doubting soul suddenly born into the kingdom of reason and free thought. Is the bondage of the priest-ridden less galling than that of the slave, because we do not see the chains, the indelible scars, the festering wounds, the deep degradation of all the powers of the God-like mind?..

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Speech to the Anniversary of the American Anti-Slavery Society," 1861, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches*, edited by Ellen DuBois, Schocken Books, New York, 1981, p. 80.

..Think you, oh Christian priests, meekly I will take your insults, taunts and sneers? To you my gratitude is due for all the *peculiar blessings* of slavery, for you have had the morals of this nation in your keeping. Behold the depths into which you have plunged me - the bottomless pit of human misery! But perchance your head grows dizzy to look down so far, and your heart faint to see what torture I can bear! It is enough.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Speech to the Anniversary of the American Anti-Slavery Society," 1861, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches*, edited by Ellen DuBois, Schocken Books, New York, 1981, p. 85.

When we remember that in all ages men have supposed that women were created for no higher purpose than to minister to their passions, we need not wonder that those women who have stepped outside the conventionalisms of their day and generation, and claimed a place in the world of morals and intellect have been uniformly and bitterly assailed, by the pulpit and the press, as irreligious, infidel and immoral.

- "Distinguished Women," *The Revolution*, Vol. II, No. 15, Whole No. 41, 10/15/1868, p. 1.

What has not been said of those in our own republic, who have demanded, for the last thirty years, freedom for the slave; and political rights for women? and yet this country cannot boast more virtuous, religious, refined, cultivated wives and mothers than Lucretia Mott, Frances D. Gage, Antoinette Brown Blackwell, Caroline H. Dall, Abby Kelley Foster, Caroline M. Severance, and Lucy Stone, who have been the target for the wit, ridicule and scorn of narrow priests, scurvy editors, and dishonest politicians.

- "Distinguished Women," *The Revolution*, Vol. II, No. 15, Whole No. 41, 10/15/1868, p. 1.

Statutes that make woman man's chattel slave; theologies that make her his subject, owing obedience; customs that make her his toy and drudge, his inferior and dependent, will ever be expressed by the lower orders of men...

- *The Revolution*, 1/21/1869.

If we would make our sons loyal to womanhood, we must cease to degrade it in their eyes. We must get out expurgated editions of our creeds and codes and constitutions, that our Bibles and Blackstones may alike teach lessons of respect for the mother of the race.

We must exalt woman; make her man's equal in every position of life, and thus slowly change the public sentiment that now regards her as fair game for any one who can cheat or defraud her.

- *The Revolution*, 1/21/1869.

It is objected that the Bible is opposed to divorce... I do not propose to go into the Bible argument... On this as on every subject, the Bible can be quoted on both sides... All this talk about the "indissoluble tie," and the sacredness of marriage irrespective of the character and habits of the husband, is for its effect on women. She never could have been held the pliant tool she is to day but for the subjugation of her religious nature to the idea that in whatever condition she found herself as man's subject, that condition was ordained by Heaven.

- "Home Life," c. 1875, speech, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches*, edited by Ellen DuBois, Schocken Books, New York, 1981, p. 136.

Instead of leaving every thing in the home to chance as now, we should apply science and philosophy to our daily life. I should feel that I had not lived in vain if faith of mine could roll off the soul of woman that dark cloud, that nightmare, that false belief that all her weaknesses and disabilities are natural, that her sufferings in maternity are a punishment for the sins of Adam and Eve and teach her that higher gospel that by obedience to natural laws she might secure uninterrupted health and happiness for herself and mould future generations to her will. When we consider all a mother's influence over her child, antenatal as well as educational, we see her power is second only to that of God himself...

- "Home Life," c. 1875, speech, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches*, edited by Ellen DuBois, Schocken Books, New York, 1981, p. 137.

Home life to the best of us has its shadows and sorrows, and because of our ignorance this must needs be.. The day is breaking. It is something to know that life's ills are not showered upon us by the Good Father from a kind of Pandora's box, but are the results of causes that we have the power to control. By a knowledge and observance of law the road to health and happiness opens before [us]: a joy and peace that passeth all understanding shall yet be ours and Paradise regained on earth. When marriage results from a true union of intellect and spirit and when Mothers and Fathers give to their holy offices even that preparation of soul and body that the artist gives to the conception of his poem, statue or landscape, then will marriage, maternity and paternity acquire a new sacredness and dignity and a nobler type of manhood and womanhood will glorify the race!!

- "Home Life," c. 1875, speech, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches*, edited by Ellen DuBois, Schocken Books, New York, 1981, p. 138.

All over the country you find women straining every nerve to build up churches, and the clergy in turn straining every nerve to keep women in subjection. Now, to my mind, the building up of a true womanhood is a more important work in every community than church, priest, or parsonage.

- *The Ballot Box*, October, 1877.

This idea [the fall of man caused by Eve] so sedulously taught in all religions, that woman and the devil are forever in collusion secretly plotting the ruin of man, - has done more to fill the minds of the sons of Adam with an undefined dread of liberty for woman than any other one lesson of the past, and it has done more to degrade woman in her own estimation. How much more rational the faith that there was no fall, no devil, no Paradise lost; that the race never held a higher position than to-day, that from the time this planet

was capable of sustaining life, there has been a gradual growth and development towards that perfection the race is yet to attain. That man and woman were a simultaneous creation, the masculine and feminine element, essential everywhere in the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms, and the whole world of thought equal in force, power and attraction.

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON.

- *The National Citizen and Ballot Box*, June, 1878, p. 3.

The object of the NATIONAL CITIZEN says its editor is "to teach women *to think*." What an audacious proposition!! for a little four page monthly!! "To teach women to think," when all the ecclesiastical organizations that have existed in the history of the race, have tried to prevent them from ever making that experiment.

To think is dangerous; it leads to doubt, rebellion, persecution and death.

- "Teach Women to Think," Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The National Citizen and Ballot Box*, September, 1880, p. 3.

For twelve years in succession I have travelled from Maine to Texas, trying by public lectures and private conversations "to teach women to think," but the chief obstacle in the way of success has everywhere been their false theology, their religious superstitions, their low estimate of themselves as factors in human progress.

Whatever common sense proposition I have laid before them for consideration, they have uniformly asked does that harmonize with the teachings of the Bible? As if the morals, the political economy, the philosophy, the jurisprudence in a theocracy under Moses at the dawn of creation, would answer for a republic under Rutherford B. Hayes in the 19th century. In answering their questions, I have discovered that the large majority know very little of the Book, by whose authority they suppose all men are divinely ordained, to rule over all women. They never ask who wrote that Book, how it was compiled, whether its parables and allegories are to be taken literally, or figuratively. Whether our English translation is fair at all points, whether advice suited to women, centuries ago, has any significance in our day; nor on what grounds special inspiration is claimed for this Book above all others.

- "Teach Women to Think," Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The National Citizen and Ballot Box*, September, 1880, p. 3.

As the majority of women will not think, and read for themselves, they believe in a masculine God, a masculine Bible, a masculine religion. Whatever the graduates from Princeton tell them about the knowable and the unknowable they accept.

- "Teach Women to Think," Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The National Citizen and Ballot Box*, September, 1880, p. 3.

... How much happier life would be, if we made more of man and this world and thought less of future states of which we know nothing.

- Diary Entry, November, 25, 1880, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 180.

But when at last woman stands on an even platform with man, his acknowledged equal everywhere, with the same freedom to express herself in the religion and government of the country, then, and not until then,.. will he be able to legislate as wisely and generously for her as for himself.

- ECS, *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. I, 1881; *The New Quotable Woman*, edited by Elaine Partnow, Meridian, Penguin Books Ltd., Middlesex, England, 1993, p. 180-181.

The prolonged slavery of women is the darkest page in human history.

- ECS, *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. I, 1881; *The New Quotable Woman*, edited by Elaine Partnow, Meridian, Penguin Books Ltd., Middlesex, England, 1993, p. 181.

Wherever the skilled hands and cultured brain of women have made the battle of life easier for man, he has readily pardoned her sound judgment and proper self-assertion.

- ECS, *History of Woman Suffrage*, Vol. I, 1881; *The New Quotable Woman*, edited by Elaine Partnow, Meridian, Penguin Books Ltd., Middlesex, England, 1993, p. 181.

I have been into many of the ancient cathedrals - grand, wonderful, mysterious. But I always leave them with a feeling of indignation because of the generations of human beings who have struggled in poverty to build these altars to the unknown god.

- ECS, Diary Entry, 1882, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, Vol. II, Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, eds., 1922; *The New Quotable Woman*, edited by Elaine Partnow, Meridian, Penguin Books Ltd., Middlesex, England, 1993, p. 182.

A consideration of woman's position before Christianity, under Christianity, and at the present time, shows that she is not indebted to any form of religion for one step of progress, or one new liberty; on the contrary, it has been through the perversion of her religious sentiments that she had been so long held in a condition of slavery. All religions thus far have taught the headship and superiority of man, the inferiority and subordination of woman. Whatever new dignity, honor, and self-respect the changing theologies may have brought to man, they have all alike brought to woman but another form of humiliation.

- "Has Christianity Benefited Woman?," *North American Review*, Vol. CXL, No. 342, May, 1885, p. 389-399.

It is not to any form of religion that we are to look for woman's advancement, but to material civilization, to commerce, science, art, invention, to the discovery of the art of printing, and the general dissemination of knowledge.

- "Has Christianity Benefited Woman?," *North American Review*, Vol. CXL, No. 342, May, 1885, p. 389-399.

...when, in the fifteenth century, the sacred Scriptures were collected and first printed, the spirit of these canons and all that logically grew out of them were engrafted on its pages, making woman an afterthought in the creation, the author of sin, in collusion with the devil, sex a crime, marriage a condition of slavery for woman and defilement for man, and maternity a curse to be attended with sorrow and suffering that neither time nor knowledge could ever mitigate, a just punishment for having effected the downfall of man.

- "Has Christianity Benefited Woman?," *North American Review*, Vol. CXL, No. 342, May, 1885, p. 389-399.

I tell you it is the religious bondage of woman that is to-day the great blockade to her progress. It must be removed.

- *The Woman's Tribune*, March, 1885.

I have studied this question. You may go over the world, and you will find that every form of religion that has breathed upon this earth, has degraded woman. There is not one that has not always made us subject to man.

- *The Woman's Tribune*, March, 1885.

What power is it that makes the Hindoo woman burn herself on the funeral pyre of her husband? Her religion. What holds the Turkish women in the harem? Their religion. Man, of himself, could not do this; but when he says: 'Thus saith the Lord,' of course he can do it. By what power do the Mormons perpetrate their abominable system of polygamy? They do it through their religion. So long as ministers stand up and tell us that as Christ is the head of the Church, so is man the head of the woman, how are we to break the chains that have held women down through the ages?
- *The Woman's Tribune*, March, 1885.

... your political and social degradation are but an outgrowth of your status in the Bible.
- *The Woman's Tribune*, November, 1886.

Again there are some who write us that our work is a useless expenditure of force over a book that has lost its hold on the human mind. Most intelligent women, they say, regard it simply as the history of a rude people in a barbarous age, and have no more reverence for the Scriptures than any other work. So long as tens of thousands of Bibles are printed every year, and circulated all over the inhabitable globe, and the masses in all English-speaking nations revere it as the word of God, it is vain to belittle its influence. The sentimental feelings we all have for these things we were educated to believe to be sacred, do not readily yield to pure reason. I distinctly remember the shudder that passed over me on seeing a mother take our family Bible to make a high seat for her child at the table. It seemed such a desecration. I was tempted to protest against its use for such a purpose, and this, too, long after my reason had repudiated its authority.

To women still believing in the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, we have nothing to say. Our only claim to their attention is that we approach the subject in an earnest search after truth, and shall present to our readers incontrovertible facts.
ELIZABETH CADY STANTON.

- "The Woman's Bible," *The Woman's Tribune*, November, 1886.

Think of it, she (referring to a fine suffrage leader) says she wishes to break down the material slavery of woman. If she wanted to get the Turkish women out of the harem, would she begin with arguments on Republican government? No, indeed, she would know that they are held in sexual slavery by the power of their religion - *and so are we*. If women were emancipated from their religious superstitions they would understand their interests in the things of this life more readily. But believing that all things here are regulated by the finger of God, the Bible written by Him, expressing His will, how can you rouse them to a desire for or belief in their social and political freedom until you first show them that all these things are the outgrowth of man's thought and selfishness, largely based upon his own superstitions and ignorance of Nature's laws, and resulting in woman's degradation and subjection?
- Letter to Helen Gardener from England, 1887, quoted by HG at ECS' memorial, printed in *The Woman's Tribune*, Vol. XIX, No. 31, 11/22/1902, p. 1.

We who understand the dangers threatened in the Prohibition movement ... must not be dazzled by the promise of a sudden acquisition of numbers to our platform, with the wide spread influence of the church behind them, if with all this is coming a religious proscription, that will undermine the secular nature of our government.
- *The Woman's Tribune*, 1/21/88.

Some knowledge of the principles of political economy, of the American system of jurisprudence, and of the secular nature of our government are surely important subjects, on which women should inform themselves.

The brave heroes of our revolution, seeing the evils in the old world from a union of church and state, laid the foundations of our Republic so securely against all ecclesiastical power as to show us, that they understood the work they had in hand.

Such fear had they of priestcraft and religious fanaticism in politics that at first the clergy were not allowed to vote or express any opinions on politics in their pulpits.

But at length, having no established church with its emoluments and places of honor in government, it was deemed safe, for them to have some opinions and to express them at the polls as other men did, with no added power or authority because of their profession.

Since then as citizens, they now have their legitimate influence in the state, surely there is no reason why as members of the various sects, their theological dogmas should be recognized in our National Constitution.

As all shades of religious opinions are represented in the American people, Jews and Gentiles, Roman Catholics and Protestants, Deists, Theists, and Atheists, our first duty is to see that each and all stand equal before the law; their rights of conscience and individual judgment fully protected.

Those who ask for religious tests, in our rulers and party platforms would desire to frame such tests to suit their convictions, and thus the dogmas of a fraction of the people would disqualify the rest, for equal rights in the state and equal joys in Heaven.

If the ignorance, superstition and fanaticism of women, are to be used by crafty priests, either Protestant or Roman Catholic, to this end, their enfranchisement will prove no blessing to themselves nor the nation.

- *The Woman's Tribune*, 1/21/88.

...As to the amendments of the Constitution now asked for by some reformers, and a body of the clergy, to recognize the Christian theology in the Constitution and introduce religious tests into political parties and platforms in direct violation of Article VI, clause 3, of the National Constitution, I think the majority in our woman suffrage associations would be opposed to all such amendments, as they would destroy the secular nature of our Government, so carefully guarded by our fathers in laying the foundation of the Republic. This freedom from all ecclesiastical entanglements is one of the chief glories of our Government and one of the chief elements of its success. We can not too carefully guard against all attempts at a retrogressive policy in this direction. If there is one lesson more plainly written than another on the institutions of the Old World it is the danger of a union of church and state, of civil and canon law, of theological speculations in the practical affairs of government.

- "Address of Welcome to the International Council of Women," Elizabeth Cady Stanton, March 25, 1888, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches*, edited by Ellen DuBois, Schocken Books, New York, 1981, p. 214.

Although native-born, virtuous, intelligent, law-abiding citizens, we hold the anomalous position of subjects under a foreign yoke. We are taxed without representation, tried without a jury of our peers, having no voice in the laws and rulers under which we live. Representatives from England, Ireland, Scotland, Germany and France make and administer the law for the daughters of Jefferson, Hancock and Adams, and we have no redress.

- "The Worst Enemy of Woman is Man," *The Woman's Tribune*, 9/29/88.

If we turn from the state to the church, another institution equally dominated by man, we find nothing there to inspire one ray of hope. The status of women baptized into the church is even more degraded than born as a citizen into the state, because the whole Christian system is built on the doctrine of original sin, and woman its chief actor and author.

The canon laws expressing the thought of the "Holy Fathers," from St. Augustine down to Cardinal Gibbons, as well as the Jewish prophets and Christian apostles, as recorded in the Old and New Testaments, are one and all so degrading to my sex that Rev. Charles Kingsley has well said, "This will never be a good world for woman until every remnant of the canon law is swept from the face of the earth." All these voluminous ecclesiastical authorities, unknown to women in general, have emanated from the brain of man; for violations of the sacred code, penances and disciplines have been administered by man. Women have been exiled, imprisoned, scourged, tortured, drowned, burnt alive, by the edicts of man. Through the trying period of celibacy and witchcraft her suffering make the blackest page in human history, and yet the doctrine of her subjection through omnipotent sin, the source and centre of all woman's wrong and miseries, is echoed by "holy men" in their pulpits at this hour, and worse than all, claimed to be Divine authority. Verily in the church as well as in the state woman's worst enemy has been man.

- "The Worst Enemy of Woman is Man," *The Woman's Tribune*, 9/29/88.

My idea is, that heaven is here in each human soul that is attuned to harmony, obedient to eternal law. As our planet is boundless, and the atmosphere forty miles deep all around the globe, surely there is abundant space for the children of earth, when disembodied, to remain where they are, watching the progressive movements, and scenes in which they have been most deeply interested, and ministering consolation to those they love who are still in this struggling life.

- *The Woman's Tribune*, 1/12/89.

The doctrine of reincarnation has much to recommend it to our serious consideration. I have often felt that in the unequal conditions of the human family, the oppressions the many suffer that the few may shine, there was neither justice nor wisdom. But the idea of reincarnation reconciles me to the seeming unequal distribution of the good things in life.

If each soul is destined to taste the bitterness and happiness of all, the prince in turn to be peasant, pauper and prisoner, and each in turn to be prince, patrician, philanthropist, by which men will endure the trials and disappointments of women, and women the hardships of men, and so on through the whole range of mortal experiences, that each may learn the temptations of poverty and wealth, then the broad differences we see in life have a deeper significance.

- *The Woman's Tribune*, 1/12/89.

I am most truly a protestant, for I protest indifferently against all systems and all sects.

- Diary Entry, January 31, 1889, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 255.

Some men tell us we must be patient and persuasive; that we must be womanly. My friends, what is man's idea of womanly? It is to have a manner that pleases him, quiet, deferential, submissive, that approaches him as a subject does a master. He wants no self-assertion on our part, no defiance, no vehement arraignment of him as a robber and a criminal. ...What do we know as yet of what is womanly? The women we have seen thus far have been, with rare exceptions, the mere echoes of men. Man has spoken in the state, the church, and the home, and made the creeds and codes, and customs that govern every relation in life, and we have simply echoed all his thoughts and walked in the paths he prescribed, and that they call womanly.

- "President's Address," XXII Annual Convention, Washington, D.C., 2/18/1890, *The Woman's Tribune*, 2/22/90.

If educated women had exerted any enlightened influence on the religious thought of the world, leading men in the 19th century would not stand debating the damnation of infants at this hour, harrowing up the souls of pale mothers, sorrowing over the loss of their first born. Men not endowed with the paternal instinct may pass unscathed through the ordeal of such a discussion, but alas! for the young mothers all over this land, who read these atrocious sentiments in cold type, as they decorate with flowers the little graves of their loved ones.

Our insane asylums are full of susceptible imaginative young women, whose reason has been dethroned by these religious superstitions.

Surely the yearning mother-love once set free from old creeds and dogmas, must bring to humanity new light and hope, both for this world and the one to come.

- "President's Address," XXII Annual Convention, Washington, D.C., 2/18/1890, *The Woman's Tribune*, 2/22/90.

I hope this convention will declare that the Woman Suffrage Association is opposed to all Union of church and State and pledges itself as far as possible to maintain the secular nature of our government.

- "President's Address," XXII Annual Convention, Washington, D.C., 2/18/1890, *The Woman's Tribune*, 2/22/90.

The people being the primal source of power, speak through their respective Legislatures, and are above all constitutions, which they give new interpretations, as they advance in civilization.

- *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*.

- "Working Women and the Ballot," *The Woman's Tribune*, 12/5/91, Vol. VIII, No. 41, p. 1.

The spirit of the church in its contempt for women, as shown in the Scriptures, in Paul's Epistles to the Pentateuch, the hatred of the fathers manifested in their ecclesiastical canons, and in the doctrines of asceticism, celibacy and witchcraft, destroyed man's respect for women and legalized the burning, drowning and torturing of women by the thousands.

- "The Antagonism of Sexes," *The Woman's Tribune*, Vol. X., No. 25, 6/3/1893, p. 1.

The witch trials of the Middle ages, wherein thousands of women were condemned to the stake, were the very real tracers of the contest between man and women. Christianity putting the religious weapon into man's hand, made his conquest complete.

- "The Antagonism of Sexes," *The Woman's Tribune*, Vol. X., No. 25, 6/3/1893, p. 1.

With the scepter of power in his hands, man enforced one lesson in government and religion, in the civil and canon law, the subordination of woman. While they chanted the glory of motherhood in all their cathedrals round the globe, the contempt they taught for womankind was only equalled by the fear of her as a spirit of evil. Church and State united to make her subjection sure; Catholic and Protestant alike joined in the persecution. Luther and Calvin vied with St. Chrysostom and St. Augustine in their denunciations of the sex, while bishops and judges presided over witch trials far into the eighteenth century.

- "The Antagonism of Sexes," *The Woman's Tribune*, Vol. X., No. 25, 6/3/1893, p. 1.

As I read the signs of the times, I think the next form of religion will be the "religion of humanity," in which men and women will worship what they see of the divine in each other; the virtues, the beautitudes, the possibilities ascribed to deity, reflected in mortal beings.

- "The Worship of God in Man," address by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, for the Parliament of Religions, read by Miss Anthony, *Woman's Tribune*, Vol. X., No. 43, 10/7/1893.

Woman suffrage will help shape what I think will be our next form of religion, the "Religion of Humanity." This faith will teach our practical duties toward men in this life, cause men and women to worship what they see of the divine in each other, and show us that loving human fellowship is the real divine communion.

- "When Women Vote," written for *Demorest's Magazine*, reprinted by *The Woman's Tribune*, Vol. II, No. I, 1/6/1894.

Had girls from the inauguration of our government been prospective heirs to equal citizenship, they would have shared with boys all the advantages and opportunities of life, equal education, equal personal and property rights, and been equally honored and respected everywhere. Woman's thought in government and religion would have modified the harsh features of our customs, creeds and codes, tempering justice with mercy[,] cruel superstitions and blind faith with common sense, and enforced one code of morals for man and woman.

- "An Appeal to Young Women, By Elizabeth Cady Stanton," *Woman's Tribune*, Vol. XI, No. 3, 1/20/94, p. 1.

Reformers who are always compromising, have not yet grasped the idea that truth is the only safe ground to stand upon.

- ECS, *The Woman's Bible*, Part I, 1895; *The New Quotable Woman*, edited by Elaine Partnow, Meridian, Penguin Books Ltd., Middlesex, England, 1993, p. 181.

I asked them why... one read in the synagogue service every week the "I thank thee, O lord, that I was not born a woman," "...It is not meant in an unfriendly spirit, and it is not intended to degrade or humiliate women." "But it does, nevertheless. Suppose the service read, 'I thank thee, O Lord, that I was not born a jackass.' Could that be twisted in any way into a compliment to the jackass?"

- ECS, Diary Entry, 1895, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton*, Vol. II, Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, eds., 1922; *The New Quotable Woman*, edited by Elaine Partnow, Meridian, Penguin Books Ltd., Middlesex, England, 1993, p. 182.

We need more common sense, science and philosophy in training the minds of women, and less religious fanaticism.

- "To the Revising Committee of the Woman's Bible," *The Woman's Tribune*, Vol. XII, No. 24, 6/15/1895, p. 1.

The Bible and Church have been the greatest stumbling blocks in the way of woman's emancipation.

- ECS, quoted in *Free Thought Magazine*, September, 1896; *The New Quotable Woman*, edited by Elaine Partnow, Meridian, Penguin Books Ltd., Middlesex, England, 1993, p. 811.

The whole tone of Church teaching in regard to woman is, to the last degree, contemptuous and degrading.

- E. C. Stanton, *Free Thought Magazine*, September, 1896.

There is no persecution so bitter as that in the name of religion. ... Much as I desire the suffrage, I would rather never vote, than to see the policy of our government at the mercy of the religious bigotry of such women. My heart's desire is to lift women out of all these dangerous and degrading superstitions and to this end will I labor my remaining days on earth.

- Draft of "Criticism of Bigotry of Women," a response to the NAWSA's resolution to disavow *The Woman's Bible*, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches*, edited by Ellen DuBois, Schocken Books, New York, 1981, p. 244-245.

Today Miss Anthony is an agnostic. As to the nature of the Godhead and of the life beyond her horizon she does not profess to know anything. Every energy of her soul is centered upon the needs of this world. To her, work is worship. ...Her belief is not orthodox, but it is religious.

- *Eighty Years and More, Reminiscences 1815 - 1897*, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Northeastern University Press, Boston, 1993 (1st published 1898), p. 160-161.

It was thought, in those days, that firm faith in hell and the devil was the greatest help to virtue. It certainly made me very unhappy whenever my mind dwelt on such teachings, and I have always had my doubts of the virtue that is based on the fear of punishment.

- *Eighty Years and More, Reminiscences 1815 - 1897*, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Northeastern University Press, Boston, 1993 (1st published 1898), p. 8.

The memory of my own suffering has prevented me from ever shadowing one young soul with the superstitions of the Christian religion.

- E.C. Stanton, *Eighty Years and More*.

I found nothing grand in the history of the Jews nor in the morals inculcated in the Pentateuch. I know of no other books that so fully teach the subjection and degradation of women.

- E.C. Stanton, *Eighty Years and More*.

When women understand that governments and religions are human inventions; that Bibles, prayerbooks, catechisms, and encyclical letters are all emanations from the brain of man, they will no longer be oppressed by the injunctions that come to them with the divine authority of "Thus saith the Lord."

- *Eighty Years and More, Reminiscences 1815 - 1897*, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Northeastern University Press, Boston, 1993 (1st published 1898), p. 285.

Men can never understand the fear of everlasting punishment that fills the souls of women and children. The orthodox religion, as drawn from the Bible and expounded by the church, is enough to drive the most imaginative and sensitive natures to despair and death.

- *Torch of Reason*, Vol. III, No. 25, 6/29/1899, p. 6.

Woman's education has been left too much to the church, which has made her a devotee, training her sentiments and emotions at the expense of her reason and common sense. The state must now open to her a wider field of thought and action.

We must turn the tide of her enthusiasm from the church to the state, arouse her patriotism, awaken her interest in great public questions, on which depend the stability of the republic and the elevation of the race, instead of wasting so much time and thought on the salvation of her own soul. In her education hereafter substitute reason for blind faith, science for theological superstitions, then will our most liberal men, our scientists, scholars and statesmen find in the women of their households a reserve force for building a higher, purer civilization.

- "The Effect of Woman Suffrage on Questions of Morals and Religion," *Torch of Reason*, Vol. III, No. 39, 10/5/1899, p. 1.

It is too bad that all our women suffragists cannot see that the chief obstacle in the way of our emancipation is this church and its literature.

- "Mrs. Stanton Writes Mrs. Henry," Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Blue Grass Blade*, 8/10/1902.

MRS. STANTON'S LETTERS.

[Character glimpses from personal letters to the editor of the WOMAN'S TRIBUNE.]

"I am often asked how New York came to move first in the matter of property rights for women. You see there was a combination of happy influence in the Governor, the Judges and the Dutch aristocracy of women; Ernestine Rose, Paulina Wright, (not yet Davis) and I began petitioning in 1840 and kept it up until the bill passed in 1848.

"We were severely criticized for having Ernestine Rose, an atheist, and Lucretia Mott, a Hicksite Quaker, on our platform. We paid no attention to such carping, but said, if our movement cannot stand two such grand women as advocates it is not worth saving."

"Debates on points where there is difference of opinion give life to a convention and teach women to think and reason and hold there [*sic*] prejudices in abeyance. Our object in life is to find out the truth and not to hold a little society together."

About "The Woman's Bible["]: "The beauty of a title is to be as short as possible. The book will be about women, by women, with commentaries from our standpoint.

Referring to an alleged interview in which Mrs. Stanton was represented as waiting because there was none to succeed her, she wrote: "There is not one word of it true. I am an optimist and believe in progress and that each generation is an improvement on those before. With women as teachers in all our public schools; as professors and presidents in colleges; in the pulpits, the courts, the hospitals and in all the trades, doing good work everywhere, who can question their ability and assured equality in the near future in all rights, civil, political, social and religious. Believe nothing the journals say of me inconsistent with the character of a common-sense woman. Many young women are coming on to more than fill my place."

- *The Woman's Bible*, 11/8/1902, p. 118.

Throughout this protracted and disgraceful assault on American womanhood the clergy baptized each new insult and act of injustice in the name of the Christian religion, and uniformly asked God's blessing on proceedings that would have put to shame an assembly of Hottentots.

- Elizabeth Cady Stanton, signed by Mrs. Stanton, Mrs. Gage, Mrs. Susan B. Anthony.

The Clergy and Women.

THESE two classes, it is said, are too pure, too spiritual, too exalted to vote. The laws and custom for the clergy are in harmony with this idea, they are treated as a superior class, as a privileged order. The people furnish them houses, food, clothes; lawyers fight their battles for nothing, physicians prescribe for their families without charge, they get railroad tickets, periodicals and newspapers at half price. The butcher, the baker, the milkman, the blacksmith and the carpenter delight to grant favors to their pastor. He is the special favorite of the law, too. \$1500 of his property is not taxed, in fact, all pay more respect to the black coat than any other. But what one of all these privileges is bestowed upon a woman? None, whatever. With her, the practice is all reversed, she does everything for the rest of the world at half price. She is taxed on all she eats and drinks and wears. The poorest widow pays as much as a millionaire for a trip on the cars, for a book or paper. As she owns nothing, has no credit in the marts of trade, and is a beggar in the world of work, she is without influence, and it is nobody's interest to do her favor. Could a ballot bring her down

any lower? If, like the Priest, she were, in fact, regarded as a superior being, and because of the "holy office of maternity," enjoyed the long list of privileges he does, one might accept the assertion that woman is too good to vote, but unfortunately, creeds, codes, customs, all point in the opposite direction, that with woman, disfranchisement is degradation.

E.C.S.

- *The Revolution*, 5/8/1869.

Letter from Mrs. Stanton.

EDITOR BALLOT BOX: You ask for my speech at our 4th of July celebration in Philadelphia. I spoke extemporaneously, which I seldom do, and can not reproduce it.

As the leaders of the National Woman Suffrage Association had seats reserved for them on the platform at Independence Hall, we had hoped to read our Declaration there. In that case we did not propose to hold a meeting of our own. But as General Hawley refused to receive it even, without reading, Mrs. Mott and myself decided that we had listened to our fathers, sons and husbands long enough in silence, and resigned our seats to younger members of the association. A celebration of our own was decided upon, but too late for much preparation. We agreed among ourselves on short speeches of fifteen minutes on the various points of the Declaration. "Manhood Suffrage" was assigned me.

The degradation of woman in a nation where aristocracy is based on sex, has always been to me the most humiliating feature in our condition. The idea that all classes of men, black and white, foreign and native, washed and unwashed, learned and unlearned, drunk and sober, old and young, are the judges, rulers, law-makers, bishops, priests, Heaven's law-givers for all women, their superiors in so many of the cardinal virtues, in self-discipline, self-sacrifice and spiritual insight, would be laughable if the absurdity of the position were not so terribly demoralizing to both sexes alike.

Think of ignorant emigrants landing on our shores, born and bred under the despotisms of the old world, with their vague ideas of human rights, and woman's in particular, accustomed to see her harnessed with a cow before the plow, bearing heavy burdens, while the man walks leisurely by her side, coming to this Republic to be our sovereigns; to fasten on our necks the yokes they have just thrown off their own. And trying as this is, after all, what these *ignorant* foreigners may say or do, in expressing their contempt for woman, is not half so aggravating as to have *educated* Englishmen and Germans come here and oppose woman's demands for political equality, and assume to teach American women their "sphere." As if our Declaration of Independence in 1776, and that first shot at Lexington that went round the world had not settled the question of individual spheres long before the sound fell on their dull ears. And in no place is woman's subjection more offensively set forth than in those ecclesiastical councils that deny woman the right to enter their theological seminaries, or to be ordained for the ministry, and base their own love of power, selfishness and narrow-mindedness on the will of God and the teachings of the Bible. The moral effect of what men in high positions say and do has its influence for good or evil on all classes of mind. When the laws and religion of the country made the black man a legal bondman, a Heaven-ordained slave, he was a pariah everywhere, but with the ballot in his hand he opened the college doors, the courts, the halls of legislation; the crown and sceptre of sovereignty [*sic*] were his, and he walked with new safety and dignity on the earth.

Even so the sentiments of bishops, judges and statesmen in regard to woman are felt in all circles of social life. Denied political equality, she, too, is a pariah everywhere. The contempt expressed in high places is seen in the overt acts of the lower order, in the haunts of vice, the streets, the highway. You scarce take up a paper without reading the report of some terrible outrage on womanhood; the young girl, picking flowers by the roadside on her way to school, and the matron, sauntering through the meadow, on her way to church, are alike the victims of brute force.

You can not find an order of men so lawless as to break into our cathedrals, desecrate the altars, toss about the elements of the sacrament, because they have all alike been educated into a holy reverence for these temples of the Lord. And is not the mother of the race, as a factor in civilization, more than temples, altars, or sacraments? Yet, where shall we look for lessons of honor and reverence for her.

Common minds cannot appreciate the ethics and philosophy of woman's equality, all that it signifies, its transforming influence on man, woman and society; but they can understand what a ballot means in a republic; they can feel its leveling influence. When Patrick and Hans walk to the polls with their [sic] wives, a new idea of the dignity of these women enters their heads as no arguments could. When graduates from Princeton ascend their pulpits to preach to congregations of women who called them to their position, who will have a word to say about their salaries, and as to the taxes on church property, they will be very careful not to preach to them about subjection. They will find it good policy to liberalize their views on doubtful passages of scripture as to woman's position, just as they have for the negro's, since the first gun at Sumpter blew away the theological cobwebs on slavery, that obscured the vision of so many learned Doctors of Divinity.

The polling booth is the outpost to the stronghold of equality - the point to strike the first blow at this unnatural aristocracy of sex. A voice in the governing power is the a, b, c of woman's rights, that all can understand.

Women owe it to themselves as well as the best interests of society, to insist that the twaddle on this question must cease. Newspapers and periodicals that publish invidious statements in regard to women should be banished from our firesides. Men who sneer at "the sex" should be shunned. Ministers who preach woman's subjection, should be gently rebuked by the simultaneous exit, in the midst of their sermon, of all their feminine parishioners; and lyceum lecturers, who set up their little boundary lines, beyond which our daughters may not go, should be left to their solitary reflections. As the audiences on all occasions are largely composed of women, a "rush" now and then might prove most effectual in changing their views as to woman's true place in the universe of matter and mind. A representative of the superior sex, sitting near me, says, "Men do not carry coals to Newcastle," the fact that large assemblies of women listen patiently to discourses on their sphere, shows that the old ideas are still marketable.

But when we consider how difficult the first step of resistance is against any ancient form of oppression, we cease to wonder at woman's apathy; and when we look at the humble place uniformly assigned her in the work of the world, we are not surprised at the low estimate she places on herself. And yet, it is pitiful to see sensible women all over the country sacrificing so much personal and family comfort and advantage to multiply churches that teach woman's degradation. I visited a little town in Iowa, where the women worked two afternoons every week, cutting and sewing rags to get a carpet made for their church, while the pastor who was to walk thereon, plumed himself on the God-ordained superiority of his sex, and aired his views in the pulpit. Sitting in the midst of this bevy of rag-cutters, in a large, bare room at the top of the house, we discussed woman's position in the church, and I was glad to find that most of them felt the degradation. As there were several bright young girls there, I advised them to devote the time they were giving in sewing, decorating and begging for the church, to their own education. If women all over the country would expend their efforts, time, means on their own improvement, now given to the externals of the church, we should not hear so much of man's superiority. Young men would think it a very poor use of their time to get up donation parties and fairs, and go begging from house to house to get lamps and carpets for churches, and presents for their ministers. And yet this is the chief occupation of our women in most villages and cities. Propose any organization for the improvement of women themselves, a club, a debating society, or anything, and you will find the clergy, as a general thing, opposed to it, because it takes woman's interest and enthusiasm from the churches. And just so outside the churches. Let women work for temperance, prison reform, anti-slavery, state fairs and Centennial exhibitions, their efforts will be lauded to the skies. The press, the pulpit and the politician will all join in the chorus. But let her dare to propose anything for herself, to enter Harvard or Princeton, to hold any place in the world of work for which she is

fitted, to hold office and vote, to be recognized as an equal everywhere, and how quickly the tune changes. The same principle was illustrated in the old days of slavery. As a slave the negro could be waiter, body-servant, nurse, in such capacity travel everywhere, at the North in cars, omnibuses, steamboats, hotel halls, parlors, dining-rooms, without giving the least offense to any one's olfactories. But as an equal, well-dressed, educated, refined, no one could endure "that natural odor," and he was shut out from all decent association.

The point of offense in the woman suffrage movement is just this, we demand complete equality of rights everywhere; in the halls of legislation, in the courts, in the pulpit, at the fireside. We believe in no divinely ordained heads on this green earth, and we have proved that it is possible to have a state without a king, a church without a pope, a currency without a gold basis, a family without a divinely ordained head.

Yours, sincerely,

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON.

- *The Ballot Box*, Vol. I, No. 7, October, 1876.

Letter to Henry Stanton.

Tenafly, August 2, 1880.

Dear Kit [Henry Stanton], - I am now reading Lecky's *History of Rationalism in Europe*. The chapter on Witchcraft is heartrending. How anyone, in view of the protracted sufferings of the race, can invest the laws of the universe with a tender loving fatherly intelligence, watching, guiding and protecting humanity, is to me amazing. I see nothing but immutable, inexorable law, grinding the ignorant to powder. History shows us that by bitter experience man has learned the laws of the universe and their relation to his own organization. With the advent of the Christian religion, came more terrible tortures and persecutions than ever before. And woman has all along been the great sufferer. I note that a large majority of those who were tortured for sorcery were women. And those who will not accept the popular superstitions *to-day* suffer bitter persecutions, more and more refined, of course, as civilization advances. Instead of the tortures of the Inquisition, they endure ostracism. When shall we learn the lesson of individual freedom?

- *Elizabeth Cady Stanton as Revealed in her Letters, Diary and Reminiscences*, edited by Theodore Stanton and Harriot Stanton Blatch, Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1922, p. 171.

Teach Women to Think.

The object of the NATIONAL CITIZEN says its editor is "to teach women *to think*." What an audacious proposition!! for a little four page monthly!! "To teach women to think," when all the ecclesiastical organizations that have existed in the history of the race, have tried to prevent them from ever making that experiment.

To think is dangerous; it leads to doubt, rebellion, persecution and death. Every woman should read Lecky's *History of Rationalism in Europe*, and she will clearly see, that it is far better to live like an oyster in his shell, and do no thinking, nor talking either. When we consider what the martyrs to every truth have suffered, in the march of progress, the most ordinary sagacity would teach us, that it is much safer to lie low until after the battle, than to have one's head in the fight. But as silence does not save the oyster from being caught and eaten, neither does ignorance save the woman from suffering and death.

Not thinking, led the Hindoo mother to throw her new born children into the rivers, for the sacred crocodiles to feed upon, or on the highway to be crushed by the car of Juggernaut, it led the widow to the pyre of her husband; and is the reason why a vast majority of the victims hung, burned, drowned and tortured for witchcraft in the 16th century were women.

Seeing then that thinking and not thinking are equally dangerous for women, the question is, whether it is better to die, as an intelligent agent, in the defence of great truths, or as the victim of degrading superstitions.

For twelve years in succession I have travelled from Maine to Texas, trying by public lectures and private conversations "to teach women to think," but the chief obstacle in the way of success has everywhere been their false theology, their religious superstitions, their low estimate of themselves as factors in human progress.

Whatever common sense proposition I have laid before them for consideration, they have uniformly asked does that harmonize with the teachings of the Bible? As if the morals, the political economy, the philosophy, the jurisprudence in a theocracy under Moses at the dawn of creation, would answer for a republic under Rutherford B. Hayes in the 19th century. In answering their questions, I have discovered that the large majority know very little of the Book, by whose authority they suppose all men are divinely ordained, to rule over all women. They never ask who wrote that Book, how it was compiled, whether its parables and allegories are to be taken literally, or figuratively. Whether our English translation is fair at all points, whether advice suited to women, centuries ago, has any significance in our day; nor on what grounds special inspiration is claimed for this Book above all others. I remember in 1848, when the first property bill for married women was passed in New York, a very devout woman asked me, if that would not be an infringement on the divinely ordained headship of man and opposed to the principles of the Bible. Before signing a petition for the pending bill, she said her mind must be convinced on that point. So I turned to the 27th of Numbers and read her about the five daughters of Zelophehad, who having no brothers, asked that they might inherit their father's estate. These girls plead their own case, before all the congregation at the door of the tabernacle, before Moses and Eleazer the priests and princes. They were greatly impressed with the justice of the demand, and the clear concise way in which the plaintiffs presented their case, and yet the demand was so novel and so opposed to Jewish law, that Moses was sorely puzzled to know what to do, and so he brought the case before the Lord, and "*the Lord said the daughters of Zelophehad speak right.*" Why! said the objector, I never read that before, and forthwith signed the petition.

One day, I was urging another very devout woman of great wealth, to give something to Vassar College. She said she could not conscientiously do anything, that did not seem consistent with the Bible idea, of the position of woman. We do not read of colleges for women "in God's word." Yes we do, I replied, the very first account we have of a woman in a college is found in II. Kings ch. 22nd, vs. 14th, where the five men members of King Josiah's called to consult with Huldah the prophetess on the political situation, on which occasion she expounded to them a very remarkable book, that had been found in the temple, which neither Josiah nor his cabinet understood. Huldah not only dwelt in the college in Jerusalem, but she was thoroughly versed in all questions of ecclesiastical law and expounded to them the book, and as the king was guided by her judgment all was well with him.

Well! well! said this objector after scanning the passage with evident surprise. I never read that before, but I do not suppose that college in Jerusalem was anything like Vassar College. No I replied there were probably not 400 girls in all Palestine capable of passing the required examination to enter Vassar. But my point is that there was a college in Jerusalem, and one woman was in it, and that neither the king the chief priests, nor the God of the Jews made any objection. Well said she, evidently struggling with a new thought, I will talk with *my pastor*. Shortly after our conversation she gave \$30,000 to Princeton!! And the budding theologians [*sic*] trained there teach our countrywomen their *true* origin, proper position on the planet, and future destiny, and what a picture they paint of God's attitude toward woman!!

His first plan they tell us was to have no women on the earth, but compassion for the sadness and solitude of man moved Him to reconsider his plan, and woman was called into being. Instead however of her being a solace, and inspiration to man, she was at once betrayed into an intrigue with the Devil, demoralized Adam, and reversed the laws of nature, making discord of the harmony that had reigned everywhere. Then God in his wrath cursed the woman. He told her to multiply and replenish the earth, and

then pronounced a curse on her for obeying his command, and thus made the relation of wife and mother one of sorrow, and degradation. This is the picture painted in dark, strong colors, or quiet softened hues according to the intelligence and temperament of the pulpit pedant, in all the sects of the Protestant religion.

As the majority of women will not think, and read for themselves, they believe in a masculine God, a masculine Bible, a masculine religion. Whatever the graduates from Princeton tell them about the knowable and the unknowable they accept.

Having presumed to do some reading and thinking for myself I present another picture drawn from the Bible for our women to consider. Man and woman were a simultaneous creation, endowed with equal power and dominion in the world of thought and action. The masculine and feminine elements, like the centripetal and centrifugal forces, must together have existed eternally even in the Godhead. Read Genesis ch. 1,27: And God said let us make man *in our own image*, male and female made he *them*, recognizing the two elements masculine and feminine, Heavenly Father and Mother in the Godhead.

And these elements pervade all nature, the animal, the vegetable and the mineral world; there could be no perpetuation of creation without these two forces equal in power everywhere. And yet in discussing the Godhead, some theologians [*sic*] preach one unit; others preach three in one, three male heads, Father, Son and Holy Ghost though the Bible teaches the union of the masculine and feminine in the Godhead, the Heavenly Father and Mother, the great central facts of the universe.

Again it is said "And God gave *them* dominion over the fish of the sea and the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth;" but no dominion was given to man over woman. Thus we see that man and woman were a simultaneous creation, and that the first title deed to this green earth was given to both alike.

This account of the creation harmonizes with common sense and science. It makes God just, and woman man's equal. But what of the second account of the creation of woman? As the two are in direct conflict if taken literally, both cannot be true, and we better accept the one that seems most rational, and corresponds with our own observation and experience; and rest in the belief that the human family have always been propagated as they now are; that no daughter of Eve was ever the result of a surgical operation performed upon her Adam.

The second chapter of Genesis is a mere allegory, and all sensible men and women so regard it. It is high time for all nations to try the substance of their Bibles, in the same crucible of reason, as they do all other books.

- *The National Citizen and Ballot Box*, September, 1880, p. 3.

Church Action.

We [Matilda Joslyn Gage, editor] often receive letters from women like the following, and we wish to say once for all, that we are trying to educate the women of this nation, into that self respect that shall compel them to abjure all church organizations that do not recognize their complete equality. But to the letter. In answering this, as we shall endeavor to do clearly and faithfully through our corresponding editor, Mrs. Stanton. We intend to answer all of this character.

JANUARY 15th, 1881

DEAR MRS. GAGE: - "I am taking your paper and like it - having ever since old enough to think, believed in woman's being on a level with man in all things - but the last (Jan.) number contained some thoughts I object to. The wholesale censure of people termed "bigoted religionists," and placing the responsibility of all wrongs to women at their door, is unjust. In regard to the sermon of the Rev. Knox-Little (I read extracts from it in the "Alpha" also) I think almost any person with sound sense would think it not only slanderous but barbarous and unfeeling, and *Christians* do not endorse or practice such doctrine.

Many no doubt *profess* what they do not *possess*. Those who possess "the spirit of the Master" an

essential characteristic of a Christian," would no more impose on or defraud women of their rights, than did the blessed Nazarene Himself, and *He* often showed them especial favor as you know. I can see no reason why the religion of Christ can or should conflict with womans' emancipation.

Womans' cause is near my heart, and I am sorry to see those things in your paper for I wanted to introduce it to my friends, and they will hardly accept and read it if they find it condemning [*sic*] a religion they love, and which they know better fits them for life's battles, if it really has possession of their hearts.

"Pardon me, please, if you think me presuming in thus addressing you."

Yours Respectfully,

[Elizabeth Cady Stanton responds:] You need ask no pardon. We should feel unspeakably happy could we meet the thousands of women who read our paper face to face to argue with them this momentous question. "Have any of the religions yet taught on earth, tended to the elevation of woman?" We say most emphatically no, not one!

Advancing civilization with its arts and sciences; in teaching Nature's laws; cause and effect; individual rights; thus redeeming man from fear of the physical phenomena around him, and the grosser forms of superstitious worship has improved the condition of all humanity, and woman has inevitably shared the advantages of this general law of progress.

The American idea of individual rights, the Protestant idea of individual conscience and judgment have been gradually infusing into the minds of all our people, more self respect and personal independence. Hence, the women of this republic hold a higher social and civil position, than do those of the Fejee Islands. But we owe none of this to Church action, or the popular theology, which are utterly opposed to the teachings of Jesus; to His words and example in the treatment of women. The complete equality of humanity, black and white, male and female, was the theme of all His discourses. The difference between the Church of that sublime Nazarene and of the Rev. Knox Little's, is as broad as that between heaven and earth. This is a distinction we want women to keep ever in mind. That the teachings of Jesus, and the popular church of to-day, are by no means the same thing. We have no fault to find with what Jesus did or said in regard to woman. We can extract more texts from Scripture to prove woman's equality with man, than the whole Pan Presbyterian Church together can exhume on the opposite side. It is the church and priesthood of *to-day*, we arraign at the bar of a candid world, for their part in the enslavement and degradation of American womanhood. We declare the Church to be the greatest block in the way of our advancement, that we now have to contend with.

Let facts prove our assertion. While for the last forty years the state has been steadily liberalizing the laws for woman, recognizing in a measure her civil and political equality, what has been the attitude of the church? Excepting the Unitarians, Universalists, and Hicksite Quakers, every sect holds a hostile attitude toward woman's equal status as a church member. The great Methodist organization refuses to ordain a woman to preach the gospel, and at their last national convention they voted by an overwhelming majority to refuse hereafter even to *license* them to preach as missionaries to the people, thus taking a retrogressive step on this question. In the late Pan Presbyterian synod, held in Philadelphia, when some liberal member, on several occasions, moved to consider the status of woman in that church, he was silenced with sneers and laughter. The proposition could not have been treated with more contempt if "apes" had been substituted for "women." Rev. Knox-Little fairly represents in his Philadelphia sermon the general feeling and opinion of our Protestant clergy.

Have any of the religious periodicals criticised or repudiated that sermon? Has the pastor to whose church the writer of the above letter belongs denounced this English divine for his blasphemous interpretation of Scripture, his hypocrisy as a follower of Jesus, and his unmanly insults to the mother of the race?

We wish to ask our correspondent a few questions.

1st. Do you believe "in woman's being on a level with man," in the church, as elder, deacon, ordained to preach, administer the sacraments of baptism, marriages, and burial services?

2nd. Is it unjust to arraign those who deny these rights to women of thorough collegiate education, Christian character, and religious enthusiasm as irrational, irreligious bigots?

3d. Is not the condemnation you pour on the head of Knox-Little equally deserved by all who sustain and agree with him?

The very points in our paper you say you are "sorry to see," are precisely what you need to see and what you should faithfully lay before the women in your neighborhood. We gave you last month a chapter of history on church action, and the canon law. We ask you to read and study these questions, and help the women in your circle of friends to examine and reason for themselves. Look at the degradation of the Turkish, the Hindoo, the Chinese women, and remember they are all held in bondage by their religion. Look at the Mormon women in the heart of our republic. It is the perversion of the religious element in their nature through which they are degraded, and so it is with us. The church teaches woman's subjection, inferiority, degradation; that she was an after-thought in creation; cursed of God; the author of sin in the world; unfit to enter a pulpit and warn sinners to repentance. Thus are our sons educated into contempt for their mothers; all respect destroyed in woman's mind for herself; and the moral character of the whole race imperiled.

"Well," says one, "what can we do about it?" *Leave the churches and let the Rev. Knox-Littles preach to empty benches.* Women owe it to themselves to exalt the idea of a true womanhood above churches, altars, sacraments. We are wont to hear men with impassioned eloquence declare that man is above all institutions, governments, creeds, codes, and constitutions, and so say we of woman. We implore you in this struggle for woman's freedom, have no fellowship with churches that deny her equality.

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON.

- *The National Citizen and Ballot Box*, March, 1881, p. 4.

The Cause of Woman.

One of the most unfounded of the claims made by the champions of the Christian Church in behalf of their cult is that it has been the chief factor in the emancipation and elevation of woman. Aside from the kindred claim that the negro of America owes his freedom to the teachings of the Bible and the labors of the theological organizations, no assumption of modern Christians has so small a basis in fact. The entire history of the Galilean church abounds with testimony which negatively [*sic*] answers the question, Does woman owe her comparatively [*sic*] advanced position to Christianity?

In the space at my disposal here I cannot do better than to give some extracts from an article written by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and which appeared in the *Index* of Oct. 30, '84, and also a quotation from Sir Henry Maine. I will say, however, that Mrs. Stanton's distinction between the teachings of the reputed Jesus of Nazareth and those of the Christian Church is one which is not counterparted by any real difference.

Says Mrs. Stanton:

I speak of the Christian Church, Catholic and Protestant, of the priesthood, the bulls of its popes, the decrees of its councils, the articles and resolutions of its general assemblies, presbyteries, synods, conferences, which, all summed up, compose the canon law, which has held Christendom during what is called the Dark Ages until now under its paralyzing influence, moulding civil law and social customs and plunging woman into absolute slavery.

The worst features of the canon law reveal themselves to-day in woman's condition as clearly as they did fifteen hundred years ago. The clergy in their pulpits teach the same doctrines in regard to her from the same texts, and echo the same old platitudes and false ideas promulgated for centuries by ecclesiastical councils. According to church teaching, woman was an after-thought in the creation, the author of sin, being at once in collusion with Satan. Her sex was made a crime; marriage a condition of slavery, owing

obedience; maternity a curse; and the true position of all womankind one of inferiority and subjection to all men; and the same ideas are echoed in our pulpits to-day.

England and America are the two nations in which the Christian religion is dominant; yet by their ethics taught in the pulpit, the ideal woman is comparatively more degraded than in pagan nations. I say comparatively, for because of the various steps of progress in education, science, invention, and art, woman is now more fully the equal of man in these countries than in any other nation or period of the world. And yet the old ideas taught by the Church in the Dark Ages of inferiority and depravity are still maintained; and just in proportion as women are the equals of the men by their side, the more keenly they feel every invidious distinction based on sex. To those not conversant with the history of the Christian Church and the growth of the canon law, it may seem a startling assertion; but it is, nevertheless, true that the Church has done more to degrade woman than all other adverse influences put together. And it has done this by playing on the religious emotions (the strongest feelings of her nature), to her own complete subjugation. The same religious conscience that carried the widows to the funeral pyre of their husbands now holds some women in the Turkish seraglios, others in polygamy under a Mormon theocracy, and others in the Christian Churches, in which, while rich women help to build and support them, they may not speak or vote or enjoy any of the honors conferred on men, and all alike are taught that their degradation is of divine ordination, and thus their natural feelings of self-respect are held in abeyance to what they are taught to believe is God's will. Out of the doctrine of original sin grew the crimes and miseries of asceticism, celibacy, and witchcraft, woman becoming the helpless victim of all the delusions generated in the brain of man.

Having decided that she was the author of sin and the medium through whom the devil would effect the downfall of the Church, godly men logically inferred that the greater the distance between themselves and all womankind, the nearer they were to go and heaven. With this idea, they fought against all woman's influence, both good and evil. At one period, they crucified all natural affections for mother, sister, wife and daughter, and continued a series of persecutions that blackened the centuries with the most horrible crimes.

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Lecky, in his *History of Rationalism* and his *European Morals*, gives facts sufficient to convince any woman of common sense that the greatest obstacle in the way of the freedom and elevation of her sex has been, and is, the teaching of the Church in regard to her rights and duties. Women have ever been the chief victims in the persecutions of the Church amid all its awful tragedies, and on them have fallen the heaviest penalties of the canon law.

But the canon law did not confine itself to social relations, it laid its hand with withering touch on the civil law, and blighted many personal and property rights accorded woman under the Roman Code.

Speaking of the Roman Code before the introduction of Christianity (Gaius) Maine says: "The jurisconsults had evidently at this time assumed the equality of the sexes as a principle of the code of equity. The situation of the Roman woman, whether married or single, became one of great personal and property independence; but Christianity tended somewhat from the very first to narrow this remarkable liberty. The prevailing state of religious sentiment may explain why modern jurisprudence has adopted these rules concerning the position of woman, which belong, peculiarly to an imperfect civilization. No society which preserves any tincture of Christian institutions is likely to restore to married women the personal liberty conferred on them by middle Roman law. Canon law has deeply injured civilization."

These are but a few, a very few, of the facts, which can be cited in support of the charge made against the system of anti-naturalism known as Christianity that it has been one of the most potent instrumentalities in the enslavement and consequent degradation of woman. And to-day, as in the past, woman finds her bitterest and most powerful foe in the Christian Church of God.

- Edwin Walker, *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, 4/10/1885.

The Central Idea of Woman's Degradation.

To the Editor of THE TRIBUNE.

Seeing an anti-polygamy department in THE WOMAN'S TRIBUNE and an earnest appeal for the women of the nation, "to take the initiative in an active crusade against the Mormon monster," I would make a few suggestions for the consideration of your readers.

What is the basic idea on which Mormonism rests? "The divinely ordained" inferiority and subjection of women, taught in every form of religion in every age, and latitude, in all church canons and holy books, and echoed to-day in all our pulpits. The same idea that under monogamic relation makes prostitution a recognized necessity, and divorce from drunkards and libertines so difficult to obtain in some States of the Union. The same idea on which the old English common law for woman was based; the foundation of the American system of jurisprudence; against which we have battled for half a century. The same idea that has robbed woman under christianity of all participation in the rites and ceremonies of the church, declaring her unfit to enter the sacred altar or to touch the vestments of the high priest, unfit to be elder, deacon, a member of the vestry, to have an equal voice as trustee, in the business matters, and discipline of the churches.

The same idea that deprives intelligent, virtuous women of all voice in government, while the most ignorant orders of men can vote and legislate on their political, civil and social status.

The same idea that has caused us such a prolonged struggle to open the college doors, the trades and professions, to our daughters. It is with infinite sorrow that I see earnest women wasting so much enthusiasm on intemperance, polygamy, prostitution; all outgrowths of woman's degradation: instead of utterly and completely repudiating the idea of her "divinely ordained subjection," wherever they find it, whether in state or church, in codes or canons, in statutes or scriptures. If one generation of women would take the initiative in an active crusade against the monstrous ideas, that woman was an afterthought in the creation, the author of sin made especially for man's pleasure and convenience, her sex a crime, marriage for her a condition of slavery, and maternity a curse, and demand of the state and church an expurgated edition of Blackstone and the Bible, placing the mother of the race on an even platform, at least, with her sons, polygamy, prostitution and intemperance would soon receive their death blow. The same perversion of the religious element, that holds woman an abject slave in the Turkish harem, and under a Mormon theocracy, holds her passive in the churches, though denied all its honors and privileges, and compels her to listen to the demoralizing teachings, in regard to her origin and destiny.

We must demand one revision of the scriptures by women. Men have thus far written, translated, interpreted and revised at their pleasure, and with the unction of "thus saith the Lord" imposed heavy burdens on woman.

I for one am not willing that another generation of children shall be taught the Bible idea of woman's subjection, as interpreted by the lessons of the pulpit, and the action of the church.

Turn your guns! women of the republic! on the basic idea that decides your status in the state and the church, and as equal factors in civilization, demand for yourselves exact equality everywhere.

When a church refuses to ordain an educated, devout woman, who has successfully passed an examination, and graduated from a theological seminary, and has all the requisites for a successful preacher, that church does as much to degrade ideal womanhood, as do the Mormon apostles in their way.

When Congress refuses to pass a 16th amendment, to enfranchise the women of this nation, they degrade those, who are their peers, in knowledge and understanding infinitely more, than do the Mormon apostles, the ignorant type of womanhood, they import from the old world.

The basic idea is the same in both cases, man's right to decide woman's position, in whatever way seemeth good to himself.

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON.

Johnstown, N.Y., Dec. 3d, 1884.

- *The Woman's Tribune*, January, 1885.

Has Christianity Benefited Woman?

The assertion that woman owes all the advantages of her present position to the Christian church, has been repeated so often, that it is accepted as an established truth by those who would be unwilling to admit that all the injustice and degradation she has suffered might be logically traced to the same source. A consideration of woman's position before Christianity, under Christianity, and at the present time, shows that she is not indebted to any form of religion for one step of progress, or one new liberty; on the contrary, it has been through the perversion of her religious sentiments that she had been so long held in a condition of slavery. All religions thus far have taught the headship and superiority of man, the inferiority and subordination of woman. Whatever new dignity, honor, and self-respect the changing theologies may have brought to man, they have all alike brought to woman but another form of humiliation. History shows that the condition of woman has changed with different forms of civilization, and that she has enjoyed in some periods greater honor and dignity and more personal and property rights than have been accorded her in the Christian era. History shows, too, that the moral degradation of woman is due more to theological superstitions than to all other influences together. It is not to any form of religion that we are to look for woman's advancement, but to material civilization, to commerce, science, art, invention, to the discovery of the art of printing, and the general dissemination of knowledge. Buckle, in his "History of Civilization," calls attention to the fact that when woman became valuable in a commercial sense, in proportion as she secured material elevation and wealth, through her property rights, she began to be treated with a deference and respect that the Christian church never accorded. In ancient Egypt, at the most brilliant period of its history, woman sat upon the throne and directed the civilization of the country. In the marriage relation she as supreme in all things - a rule that, according to Wilkinson, was productive of lasting fidelity. As priestess she performed the most holy offices of religion, and to her is traced the foundation of Egyptian literature, the sacred songs of Isis, said by Plato to be ten thousand years old. Colleges for women were founded there twelve hundred years before Christ, and the medical profession was in the hands of women. It is a sad commentary on the Christianity of England and America, to find professors in medical colleges of the nineteenth century less liberal than those in the earliest civilizations. In 1876 four professors in the College of Surgeons in London resigned because three women were licensed for the practice of midwifery, and the whole Royal College of Physicians thanked them for it. In 1869 the professors in the University of Edinburgh refused to teach four highly respectable women that had matriculated, and the students, echoing the contempt of their teachers, mobbed them. Nor did the conduct of American students, when women were admitted to the clinics of the Pennsylvania and New York hospitals, reflect greater credit on American manhood.

All Pagandom recognized a female priesthood, believing that national safety depended on them. Sybils wrote the books of Fate, and oracles where women presided were consulted by many nations. The pages of Roman history are gilded with the honor shown to women, and the civil laws for wives and mothers were more liberal in some respects than those in Christian countries have ever been. The rights of property that were willingly secured to women by ancient Roman law, were wrung out of the English Government by the persistent efforts of women themselves, only three years ago. Among the Germanic nations woman was treated with marked respect. Tacitus gives us many striking pictures of the equal privileges of the men and women, of their mutual love and confidence, and their lofty virtue; the dignity of the German bride and the marriage ceremony, and the significance of the wedding presents. Their marriage bond was strict and

severe, alike for men and women. Almost alone among barbaric nations, they preserved monogamic relations. "In all things," says Tacitus, "they consulted their women," who, with strong muscular bodies, possessed clear, vigorous minds; and though, as in all warlike tribes, they performed the agricultural labor, yet they preserved their health and beauty to a great age, because they were respected and honored by their men, who were chaste and temperate in all things; and they enjoyed the inspiration of liberty and love in their daily toil.

The German scholar Curtius says, "The native selfishness of man has been the great power against which moralists, philosophers, and teachers have had to contend." What sooner dissipates this than a deep affection for a noble woman? No love is so all-absorbing, so enduring, or gives such satisfaction to this mortal life; no power can so exalt and quicken civilization. It was this that elevated the Germanic tribes, and infused the poetic sentiment into their earliest literature. It is only in countries where Germanic ideas have taken root, that we see marks of any elevation of woman superior to that of Pagan antiquity; and as the condition of the German woman in her deepest paganism was so striking as to challenge the attention of Tacitus and his contemporaries, it is highly unreasonable to claim it as an achievement of Christianity. In fact, the Christian doctrine of marriage, as propounded by Paul, does not dignify woman as does that which German soundness of heart established at an early day. F. W. Newman, brother of the cardinal, one of the leading authorities on ecclesiastical subjects, says:

"With Paul, the sole reason for marriage is, that a man may gratify instinct without sin. He teaches that, but for this object, it would be better not to marry. He wishes that all in this respect were as free as himself, and calls it a special gift from God. He does not encourage a man to desire a mutual soul-union intimately to share his griefs and joys, one in whom the confiding heart can repose, whose smile shall reward and soften toil, whose voice shall beguile sorrow. He does not seem aware that the fascinations of woman refine and chasten society; that virtuous attachment has in it an element of respect which abashes and purifies, and which shields the soul even when marriage is deferred; not yet, that the union of two persons who have no previous affection can seldom yield the highest fruit of matrimony, but often leads to the severest temptations. How should he know all this? Courtship before marriage did not exist in the society open to him, hence he treats the propriety of giving away a maiden as one in which her conscience, her likes and dislikes, are not concerned. (1 Cor. vii. 37, 38.) As a result of the Apostolic doctrines, in the second, third, and following centuries, very gross views concerning the relations of the sexes prevailed; and they have been everywhere transmitted where men's morality is exclusively formed from the New Testaments, viz., in the Armenian, Syrian, and Greek churches, and in the Romish church, in exact proportion as Germanic and poetical influences have been repressed; that is, in proportion as the hereditary Christian doctrine has been kept pure from modern innovations. The marriage service of the Church of England, which incorporates the Pauline doctrine, is felt by English brides and bridegrooms to contain what is so offensive and degrading, that many clergymen mercifully make lawful omissions. The old Roman matron was morally as high as in modern Italy; nor is there any ground for supposing that modern women have advantage over the ancient in Spain and Portugal, where Germanic have been counteracted by Moorish influences. The relative position of the sexes in Homeric Greece exhibits nothing materially different from the present day. In Armenia and Syria perhaps Christianity has done the service of extinguishing polygamy; this is creditable, though nowise remarkable, as Judaism, also, in time unlearned polygamy, and made an unbidden improvement on Moses."

Rev. William Ellery Channing, in his essay on Milton's character and writings, says:

"There is no prohibition of polygamy in the New Testament. It is an indisputable fact that, although Christianity was first preached in Asia, which had been from the earliest ages the seat of polygamy, the apostles never denounced it as a crime, and never required their converts to put away all wives but one."

Hence, we cannot credit Christianity with woman's elevation from the degradation of polygamy, especially as it exists under our own government to-day, in the Territory of Utah and elsewhere, and concubinage is recognized by statute law in some of the Southern States. The historian Hallam says in his "History of Literature":

"Love, with the ancient poets, is often tender, sometimes virtuous, but never accompanied by a sense of deference or inferiority. This elevation of the female sex through the voluntary submission of the stronger is a remarkable fact in the

philosophical history of Europe. It originated partially in the Teutonic manners. Some have said 'the reverence and adoration of the female sex which has descended to our own times, is the offspring of the Christian dispensation.' But until it can be shown that Christianity establishes any such principle, we must look a little farther down for its origin. ... Without rejecting the Teutonic influence, we might ascribe more direct efficacy to the favor shown towards women in succession to lands, through inheritance or dower, by the later Roman law."

Gallantry, in the sense of a general homage to the fair, a respectful deference to woman, independent of personal attachment, first became a perceptible element of European manners in the south of France at the end of the tenth century. This spirit is not found in the ancient poetry of the Franks or Anglo-Saxons, but it is fully developed in the sentiments and usages of northern France. Gallantry toward women was practiced by the Goths before they were acquainted with Christianity. Catholicism has greatly diminished the political and priestly powers of women (see Comte, "Philosophie Positive," Vol. V., pp. 221-223). It would seem, then, that the authorities are against the proposition that the moral elevation of womankind is due to Christianity, and tell us that it is due to altogether different causes, among which we find early Germanic influences and the modern literature of Germany, containing pure and noble views of love; ancient customs, giving woman property rights, and favors shown to woman by later Roman law; French influence; gallantry; the springing up of home life in the dark ages. The brave words and deeds of reformers in every generation, proclaiming the principles of justice and equality for all humanity, must be recognized as one of the essential factors in the civilization in which woman has had a share. With regard to intellectual growth and elevation, we have the same causes alike for man and woman. What either acquired was in opposition to the church, which sedulously tried to keep all learning within itself. Man, seeking after knowledge, was opposed by the church; woman, by both church and man. Educated men in our own day, who have outgrown many of the popular theological superstitions, do not share with the women of their households the freedom they themselves enjoy. Hence, it is not unusual to find the wives of clergymen far more bigoted than their husbands. Among the Greeks there was a class of women that possessed absolute freedom, surrounded by the wisest men of their day. They devoted themselves to study and thought, which enabled them to add to their other charms an intense intellectual fascination, and to make themselves the center of a literary society of matchless splendor. Aspasia was as famous for her genius as for her beauty. She is said to have composed many of Pericles's most famous orations, and inspired his loftiest flights of eloquence. Socrates, too, owed his deep obligations to Diotima. In the society of this remarkable type of Grecian womanhood the most brilliant artists, poets, historians, and philosophers found their highest inspiration. True, the position of these women was questionable; but as they were the only class to whom learning and liberty were permitted, they illustrate the civilization of the period.

The question is pertinent, Does the same class in Christian civilization enjoy as high culture and equal governmental protection? Since English and American statesmen, by recent legislation, have proved that they consider this phase of social life a necessity, why do not the Church and the State throw some shield of protection over the class of whom Lecky, in his "History of Morals," speaks so tenderly? What has Christianity done for this type of womanhood? Have eighteen centuries of its influence mitigated the miseries of this phase of life one iota? No, nor ever will, until the mother of the race is recognized as equal in every position in life, honored and dignified at every altar; not until another revision of the Protestant Bible shall strike from its pages all invidious distinctions based on sex. The masculine and feminine elements of humanity, in exact equilibrium, are as necessary to the order and harmony of the world of morals as are the centripetal and centrifugal forces exactly balanced in the world of matter. As long as the religion of a nation teaches the subordination of woman, of the moral and spiritual elements of humanity to physical force, a pure civilization is impossible. Just as slavery in the South, with its lessons of obedience, degraded every black man in the Northern States, so does an accepted system of prostitution, with its lessons of subjection and self-sacrifice, degrade the ideal womanhood everywhere.

In harmony with the pagan worship of an ideal womanhood of sybils, oracles, and priestesses, women held prominent positions in the church for several centuries after Christ. We have proof of this in the restrictions that at a later period were placed upon them by canon laws. The Council of Laodicea, three hundred and sixty-five years after Christ, forbade the ordination of women to the ministry, and prohibited them from entering the altar. The Council of Orleans, five hundred and eleven years after Christ, consisting of twenty-six bishops and priests, promulgated a canon that, on account of their frailty, women must be excluded from the deaconship. Nearly three hundred years later we find the Council of Paris complaining that women serve at the altar, and even give to the people the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Through these canons we have the negative proof that for centuries women preached, baptized, administered the sacrament, and filled various offices of the church; and that ecclesiastics, through prohibitory canons, annulled these rights.

In the fifth century the church fully developed the doctrine of original sin, making woman its weak and guilty author. To St. Augustine, whose early life was licentious and degraded, we are indebted for this idea, which was infused into the canon law, and was the basis of all the persecutions woman endured for centuries, in the drift of Christian opinion from the extremes of polygamy to celibacy, from the virtues of chivalry to the cruelties of witchcraft, when the church taught its devotees to shun woman as a temptation and defilement. It was this persecution, this crushing out of the feminine element in humanity, more than all other influences combined, that plunged the world into the dark ages, shadowing the slowly rolling centuries till now with woman's agonies and death, paralyzing literature, science, commerce, education, changing the features of art, the sentiments of poetry, the ethics of philosophy, from the tender, the loving, the beautiful, the grand, to the stern, the dark, the terrible. Even the paintings representing Jesus were gradually changed from the gentle, watchful shepherd to the stern, unrelenting judge. Harrowing representations of the temptation, the crucifixion, the judgment-day, the Inferno, were intensified and elaborated by Dante and Milton. Painter and poet vied with each other in their gloomy portrayals, while crafty bishops coined these crude terrors into canons, and timid, dishonest judges allowed them to throw their dark shadows over the civil law.

The influence of the church on woman's civil position was equally calamitous. A curious old black-letter volume, published in London in 1632, entitled "The Lawes and Resolutions of Woman's Rights," says, "The reason why women have no controul in Parliament, why they make no laws, consent to none, abrogate none, is their Original Sin." This idea is the chief block in the way of woman's advancement at this hour. It was fully set forth by the canon law, with wearisome repetition, and when, in the fifteenth century, the sacred Scriptures were collected and first printed, the spirit of these canons and all that logically grew out of them were engrafted on its pages, making woman an afterthought in the creation, the author of sin, in collusion with the devil, sex a crime, marriage a condition of slavery for woman and defilement for man, and maternity a curse to be attended with sorrow and suffering that neither time nor knowledge could ever mitigate, a just punishment for having effected the downfall of man. And all these monstrous ideas, emanating from the bewildered brains of men in the dark ages, under an exclusively masculine religion, were declared to be the word of God, penned by writers specially inspired by his Spirit.

Just at the period when the civil code began to recognize the equality and independence of the wife in the marriage relation, the church, to which woman had reason to look for protection, either blindly or perversely gave the whole force of its power against woman's equality in the family, and in fact against her influence altogether. In chapter V. of Maine's "Ancient Law" we have a clear statement of the influence of canon law on the liberty of person and property that Roman women then enjoyed. Speaking of their freedom, he says:

"Christianity tended from the very first to narrow this remarkable liberty." "No society which preserves any tincture of Christian institution is likely to restore to married women the personal liberty conferred on them by middle Roman law." "The expositors of the canon law have deeply injured civilization." "There are many vestiges of a struggle between the secular

and ecclesiastical principles, but the canon law nearly everywhere prevailed. In some of the French provinces married women of a rank below nobility, obtained all the powers of dealing with property which Roman jurisprudence had allowed, and this local law has been largely followed by the code Napoleon. The systems, however, which are least indulgent to married women are invariably those which have followed the canon law exclusively, or those which from the lateness of their contact with European civilization have never had their archaisms weeded out."

By the dishonoring of womanhood on the ground of original sin, by the dishonoring of all relations with her as carnal and unclean, the whole sex touched a depth of moral degradation that it had never known before. Rescued in a measure from the miseries of polygamy, woman plunged into the more degrading and unnatural condition of celibacy. Out of this grew the terrible persecutions of witchcraft (See Lecky's "History of Rationalism."), which raged for centuries, women being its chief victims. They were hunted down by the clergy, condemned, for crimes that never existed but in the minds of religious devotees. The clergy sustained witchcraft as Bible doctrine, far into the eighteenth century, until the spirit of rationalism laughed the whole thing to scorn and gave mankind a more cheerful view of life. The reformation brought no new hope to woman. The great head of the movement, while declaring the right of individual conscience and judgment above church authority, as if to warn woman that she had no share in this liberty, was wont to say, "No gown worse becomes a woman than that she should be wise." Here is the key-note to our Protestant pulpit for three centuries, and it grates harshly on our ears to-day. The Catholic Church, in its holy sisterhoods, so honored and revered, and in its worship of the Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus, has preserved some recognition of the feminine element in its religion; but from Protestantism it is wholly eliminated. Religions like the Jewish and Christian, which make God exclusively male and man supreme, consign woman logically to the subordinate position assigned her in Mohammedism. History has perpetuated this tradition, and her subjection has existed as an invariable element in Christian civilization. It could not be otherwise, with the Godhead represented as a trinity of males. The old masters in the galleries of art have left us their ideals of the Trinity in three bearded male heads. No heavenly Mother is recognized in the Protestant world.

The present position of woman in the spirit of our creeds and codes is far behind the civilization of the age, and unworthy the representative women of this day. And now, as ever, the strongest adverse influence to her elevation comes from the church, judging from its Biblical expositions, the attitude of the clergy, and the insignificant status that woman holds in the various sectarian organizations. For nearly forty years there has been an organized movement in England and America to liberalize the laws in relation to woman, to secure a more profitable place in the world of work, to open the colleges for higher education, and the schools of medicine, law, and theology, and to give woman an equal voice in the government and religion of the country. These demands, one by one, are slowly being conceded by the secular branch of the government, while the sectarian influence has been uniformly in the opposite direction. Appeals before legislative assemblies, constitutional conventions, and the highest courts have been respectfully heard and decided, while propositions for the consideration even of some honors to women in the church have uniformly been received with sneers and denunciations by leading denominations, who quote Scripture freely to maintain their position. Judges and statesmen have made able arguments in their respective places for woman's civil and political rights; but where shall we look for sectarian leaders that, in their general assemblies, synods, or other ecclesiastical conventions, have advocated a higher position for woman in the church? The attitude of the clergy is the same as in bygone centuries, modified somewhat, on this as on all other questions, by advancing civilization. The Methodists have a lay ministry, but they do not ordain women. Liberal clergymen in other sects have been arraigned and tried by their general assemblies for allowing women to preach in their pulpits. In imitation of the high churches in England, we have some in this country in which boys from twelve to fifteen supply the place of women in the choir, that the sacred altars may not be defiled by the inferior sex - an early Christian idea. The discourses of clergymen, when they enlarge on the condition of woman, read more like canons in the fifth century than sermons in the

nineteenth, addressed to those who are their peers in religious thought and scientific attainment. The Rev. Morgan Dix's Lenten lectures last spring, and Bishop Littlejohn's last triennial sermon, are fair specimens. The latter recommends that all the liberal legislation of the past forty years for woman should be reversed, while the former is the chief obstacle in the way of woman's admission to Columbia College. And these fairly represent the sentiments of the vast majority, who never refer to the movement for woman's enfranchisement but with ridicule and contempt - sentiments that they insidiously infuse into all classes of women under their influence. None of the leading theological seminaries will admit women who are preparing for the ministry, and none of the leading denominations will ordain them when prepared. The Universalists, Unitarians, and Quakers are the only sects that ordain women. And yet women are the chief supporters of the church to-day. They make the surplices and gowns, get up the fairs and donation-parties, and are the untiring beggars for its benefit. They supply its enthusiasm, and are continually making large bequests to its treasury; and their reward is still the echo of the old canon law of woman's subjection, from pulpit to pulpit throughout Christendom. Though England and America are the two nations in which the Christian religion is dominant, and can boast the highest type of womanhood, and the greatest number in every department of art, science, and literature, yet even here women have been compelled to clear their own way for every step in progress. Not one wrong has been righted until women themselves made organized resistance against it. In the face of every form of opposition they are throwing off the disabilities of the old common law, which Lord Brougham said long ago "was in relation to woman the opprobrium of the age and Christianity." And not until they make an organized resistance against the withering influence of the canon law, will they rid themselves of the moral disabilities growing out of the theologies of our times. When I was standing near the last resting-place of the Rev. Charles Kingsley not long ago, his warning words for woman, in a letter to John Stuart Mill, seemed like a voice from the clouds, saying with new inspiration and power, "This will never be a good world for woman until the last remnant of the canon law is civilized off the face of the earth."

- ELIZABETH CADY STANTON.

- *North American Review*, Vol. CXL, No. 342, May, 1885, p. 389-399.

Religion Good for Women and Children and the Laboring Classes.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

An out-and-out English agnostic remarked to a friend, who wondered that he still said grace at table and regularly attended divine worship: "We must keep up the church as the most powerful police institution we have; it would be an awful calamity to take their religion from the laboring classes, and especially from women and children. All these are more easily governed through their fears, as their capacity to reason is very limited."

In regard to the first proposition, all history shows that there have been more outrages committed by the church, through its ecclesiastics, in the name of religion, on the sacred rights of humanity and the best interests of society, than by all other organizations together.

It has, indeed, been, in all ages, "a powerful police institution," to rob the poor, to suppress freethought, to make martyrs of noble men and women; but when has it ever risked its own safety to fight the battles of the people against the oppressions of the state? When, by wise counsels a united body, has it ever averted the settlement of one vexed question by war? In the prolonged anti-slavery struggle for forty years, it spoke with no certain sound, until the clashing arms and roaring cannon proclaimed liberty throughout the nation. But when the indignant masses awake from the lethargy of ages the world over, as they have already in France, and see how they have been deceived, defrauded, and priest-ridden, they will repudiate the church and the creeds that have so long held them in bondage. As, with more general education, with the light and knowledge of science, the people cannot be much longer swayed by worn-out superstitions, is it not better for their spiritual teachers to begin now to teach them what is true, as far as they

themselves know, and to stop teaching them mere speculations and superstitions, the wild vagaries of unbalanced minds, the accumulated errors of the ages? They tell us, by way of excuse for their unfaithfulness, that the people are not ready for a more rational theology, that the undeveloped mind is not prepared for the whole truth about anything. But a measure of the truth, as far as it goes, must be better than error; and, if they are always deluded with falsehoods, how will they ever be prepared to accept what is reasonable? We must remember that truth is the natural food for the human soul, the atmosphere in which all its finest qualities most readily develop. Hence, those who hold the vantage-ground of thought should give freely of their richest treasures to those who would be delivered from the errors of the past. We pride ourselves on the munificent charities of this christian civilization, on our unbounded alms-giving to the poor and needy; but behind those outstretched hands, appealing eyes and pleading lips, are hungering souls oppressed with fear of an angry god, an all-powerful devil, a judgment day, and everlasting punishment.

When educated men emancipated from these old errors excuse themselves from preaching the truth as they see it, because the people are not ready to hear it, they should be reminded that, as self-constituted religious teachers, their special business is to prepare the people for steady onward steps. Archdeacon Farrar, in the January number of the North American Review, says truly:

"There must be progress. - Churches have been very slow to learn this lesson. They have fought to the last for exploded doctrines and antiquated traditions. They have often resisted to the last the advancing knowledge of mankind. They have become revolutionary and convulsive in the effort to keep things fixed when the world is moving forward, and they have tried to persevere when it was their duty to improve. They have kept their earthen vessels closed, so that the swelling tide of human progress did but shatter them upon the shore, or, at the best, roll them hither and thither with their stagnant doctrines rotting in a dead theology."

Here is the opinion of a churchman as to this "police institution," claimed to be so necessary to the good order of society.

While the people would be unspeakably happy to be lifted out of all their harassing superstitions and harrowing fears of the eternal future, it is the height of cruelty and injustice for the educated classes, who live on their labor, grinding them to powder by a cunning system of legislation, dooming them in this life to ignorance, poverty, and rags, to fasten on their sorrowing souls the belief that their miseries here are but the foreshadowing of infinitely worst [*sic*] suffering hereafter. If we think it is not safe to tell them the simple truth, that we know nothing of what lies beyond our mortal horizon, we might at least picture for them some beautiful visions of peace and joy in comfortable homes eternal in the heavens. If all fear of future misery could be banished from their minds, the darkest clouds that hang over their earthly pilgrimage would be lifted. It is too bad to defraud them of the comforts and necessities in this life and of all bright hopes in the celestial world hereafter. If some dreams and speculations must be sent forth as a kind of police chart of instructions, pray let them tell of a golden age to come, when the blessings of life shall be shared equally by all the children of earth.

And, as to the women and children, - ah! How little strong men dream of all they suffer in a sincere belief of the gloomy doctrines of our christian theology! Men, with their steady nerves, strong muscles, equable temperaments, trained to reason and self-reliance, in contact with the stern facts of life, cannot comprehend the multiplied and ever-present fears and apprehensions of coming danger that poison the lives of most women and children, growing out of their more nervous organization, more fertile imaginations, and that natural timidity that accompanies a sense of helplessness in danger. Alas for the children! Their lives are beset with fears. They are afraid of their parents at home, of their teachers in school, of the police in the street, and of the omnipresent god and devil, at all times and in all places. It is folly to hope much from the lessons of love, taught in sweet-sounding phrases, so long as they are reminded every hour in the day that they are doing something to make god angry and the devil smile. - While fathers and husbands rejoice in their emancipation from the bondage of the christian theology, and discuss with each other the rationalism of the great German thinkers, of French scientists, and the English historians, laughing among

themselves at all the gods and devils of the old theologies that have made humanity tremble, now crumbled to dust, how can they calmly contemplate, from day to day, the fact that all these withering, crippling superstitions are being fastened on the minds of their own trusting wives and daughters, and their innocent young children, whom they are bound to protect, not only from physical harm, but spiritual slavery!

How carefully they would guard their children from measles, whooping-cough, and scarlet fever, - diseases that will never give them one-half the suffering that will come to them with a faith in the doctrines of original sin, an angry god, a cunning devil ever whispering in their ears, coaxing them to lie and steal and swear, a day of judgment, the last trump, and everlasting punishment in a lake of fire!

And alas, too, for the pale-stricken mothers of the race who believe all this, and still more that, through their folly, through that one fatal interview in the Garden of Eden, all this misery entered the world, and hence the pangs of maternity were to be their punishment, - the curse pronounced in the beginning on all Eve's daughters. And multitudes of women believe this today, instead of referring their sufferings to their artificial habits of life, - to tight waists, heavy skirts, high heels, improper diet, and want of exercise. Passages of scripture perpetuating all these cruelties and absurdities are still read in our pulpits, with a holy unction that makes them seem plausible to unthinking minds. How can educated men of common sense and kind feeling live side by side with women and children year after year, and never share with them the freedom and blessedness of a more rational religion? A system of theology that the agnostics, the scientists, the philosophers, the historians, and the most enlightened and progressive clergymen themselves repudiate cannot be the most nourishing spiritual pabulum for women and children, to say nothing of the laboring masses.

I can truly say, after an experience of seventy years, that all the cares and anxieties, the trials and disappointments of my whole life, are light in the balance with my sufferings in childhood and youth from the horrible dogmas I sincerely believed and the gloomy environments connected with everything associated with the name of religion, - the church, the parsonage, the graveyard, as it was called in those days, and the solemn tolling bell on Sundays and many other days for funerals, which seemed to be of more frequent occurrence there than any other place in which I have ever lived. Everything connected with death was inexpressibly dolorous. The body, covered with a black pall, was borne on the shoulders of men; the friends in crape [*sic*] walked with bowed heads, weeping and sobbing; the neighbors who had tears to shed did so copiously; and the rest summoned up their saddest facial expressions. Round the grave came the solemn warnings to the living and, sometimes, unwelcome prophecies as to the safety of the dead. And all that pageantry of woe, and visions of the unknown land beyond the grave, haunted my midnight dreams and shadowed the sunshine of my days. The parsonage, with its bare walls and floors, its shriveled mistress and blind sister, - more like ghostly shadows than human flesh and blood, - and two black servants racked with rheumatism, odoriferous with the pungent oil they used in the vain hope of making their weary limbs more supple, and the aged graduate from the Scotch university in Glasgow, buried in his library with musty books and papers, one window looking to the south and a flickering fire in the hearth, was the spot where I spent hours in the exhilarating study of the Greek testament and in recitations from the Westminster catechism. These were considered special privileges and pleasures, vouchsafed to no other child, as there were none born to that household. The church, with its bare walls and floors and severely angular architecture, with no furnace to keep us warm, no organ to gladden our hearts, no choir to lead our songs of praise in harmony, was sadly lacking in all attractions for the youthful mind. The preacher, shut up in an octagon box high above our heads, gave us sermons over an hour long, and the chorister, in a similar box below him, intoned line after line of David's psalms; and, like a flock of sheep at the heels of their shepherd, the congregation, without regard to their time or tune, straggled after their leader.

A few years later the introduction of stoves, a violoncello, Wesley's hymns, and a choir, split the church in twain. The old Scotch presbyterians were opposed to all innovations that would give to their people paths of flowery ease on the road to heaven. So when the thermometer was twenty degrees below zero on the Johnstown hills, four hundred feet above the Mohawk Valley, we trudged along through the

snow, foot-stoves in hand, to the cold hospitalities of the "lord's house," to hear sermons on "predestination," "justification by faith," and "eternal damnation." To be restless or to fall asleep under such solemn circumstances was a sure evidence of total depravity and the machinations of the devil to turn your heart from god and his ordinances. As I was guilty of all these shortcomings and many more, I early believed myself a veritable child of the devil, and suffered endless fears lest he should come some night and claim me as his own. To me, he was a personal, ever-present reality, crouching in a dark corner of the nursery. Ah! How many times I have stolen out of bed, and sat shivering on the stairs for hours, where the hall lamp and the sound of voices from the parlor would in a measure mitigate my fears! With a vigorous constitution and overflowing animal spirits, I endured the strain of all these depressing influences for years, until my reasoning powers and common sense triumphed at last over my imagination. The memory of my own suffering has saved me from the cruelty of ever shadowing one young soul with any of the superstitions of our christian religion.

But there have been many changes, even in my native town, since those dark days. Our old church is turned into a mitten factory, where the pleasant hum of machinery and the glad faces of men and women have chased the evil spirits to their hiding-places. We now have there beautiful churches, ornamental cemeteries, cheerful parsonages, and some educated men and women, emancipated from the old theologies. But, with many, the dogmas and superstitions of a worn-out faith are still considered good for women, children, and the laboring masses.

Tenafly, N.J., Feb 22.

- *Monroe's Iron-Clad Age*, 4/8/1886.

Mrs. Stanton Writes Mrs. Henry.

New York, May 30, 1902.

Josephine Henry:

Dear friend: - I have been in the habit of binding up in a volume many fugitive articles from papers and magazines that I consider specially [sic] valuable.

Among these are several articles from your pen. I have just been reading yours on woman suffrage in the United States; and am much struck with this sentence: "If through my last half century women had as assiduously demanded this abolition of the diabolical laws of the church in regard to their sex, as they have those of the states there would not be an ecclesiastical or political slave on American soil today.["]

I wish you would send me whatever you write.

We so perfectly reflect, seemingly on each others thoughts that it would be a great comfort to me as we never met, if I could see all you write.

You ought to have articles every week in the Boston Woman's Journal and the Washington Woman's Tribune, but our woman suffrage papers are afraid to attack our deadly enemy the church, and its sacred literature, its priests and bishops.

I have just written an article sacrificing some bishops for their insulting comments on women and sent it to the Woman's Journal but it was promptly returned.

The Freethought papers, the Boston Investigator, Torch of Reason and Freethought Magazine are the only papers where my liberal sentiments are sure to be published [sic].

Through what papers do you find utterance? It is too bad that all our women suffragists cannot see that the chief obstacle in the way of our emancipation is this church and its literature.

Do you ever visit New York? If you do, this next time you come, pray honor me with a call. I should like to see at least one woman as radical as myself: if you have any sketch of yourself, your origin and career, do send me a copy.

I hope we may meet face to face at no distant day with kind regards and best wishes for your health and happiness.

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON.
- *The Blue Grass Blade*, 8/10/1902.

[The following is in ECS' handwriting inside Harriet Closs' *Woman and her Relation to the Church or Canon Law for Women*, Lexington, KY, James E. Hughes, Publisher, 1902]

[Page 1]

Lester L. Ward

With the compliments of Elizabeth Cady Stanton

The St..t

250 West ..th St.

New York.

Oct 12, 1902

[Page 2]

The greatest block in the way of woman's complete emancipation is the Canon Law, with the discipline of the church, the teachings of prelates in their pulpits, and the innumerable texts in the Bible so degrading to the mother of the race, making her subordination absolute because taught by the church as the will of God: thus perverting her religious sentiments, the strongest element in her nature.

[Page 3]

Woman has always been one of the chief pillars of the church, contributing her wealth generously for its support and by her steadfast faith in its creeds and authorities has maintained its stability: hence it is her right and duty to use her voice in purifying its laws and discipline, securing equal rights, justice and freedom for all womankind.

Mrs. Stanton's Article on Divorce.

Below is the very last article written by Mrs. Stanton, and is now published for the first time. Mrs. Stanton had written it in reply to Bishop Seymour's article on her views regarding the divorce evil. Mrs. Stanton started the symposium on the vital subject, and her profound article has attracted widespread attention throughout the country among profound thinkers. Mrs. Stanton sent another and longer article with the one printed immediately below, and this will be published in the near future.

AN ANSWER TO BISHOP STEVENS BY ELIZABETH CADY STANTON.

In his tritle [sic] the Bishop of North Carolina deals with scientific matter, but instead of giving biological proof of his first assertion that husband and wife are one flesh, or sociological statistics in support of his second assertion that the "disruption of one flesh" is bad, he quotes the Bible. But I decline to accept Hebrew Mythology as a guide in twentieth century science.

In the beginning of the article, the Bishop declares that the wife should be allowed divorce on no ground whatsoever. But after endeavoring to bring agreement out of the contradictions of the Bible, he thinks it a "troublesome case," and decides it might be expedient to allow divorce for desertion. But simply this is the Bishop's position: If a drunken man comes home every night and beats his wife, she must not divorce her husband; but if the same drunken man does not lift his hand against his wife, but on the contrary runs away and leaves her alone, then she may divorce him.

The common-sense, plain people of the nation know life, and will not follow the advice of men who turn for guidance to writings of a people of 2,000 years ago. More and more intelligent people embrace truth as it is revealed to-day by human reason.

I agree with exactly one sentence of the Bishop - "Most women will object to this article."

I commend instead of the myths of the second chapter of Genesis, the following verses which theologians always overlook: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them.

"And God blessed them. God said unto them * * * have dominion over every living thing." - Gen., i., 27 and 28.

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- *New York American*, October 27, 1902, p. 2.



MRS. CATHARINE A.F. STEBBINS

MRS. CATHARINE A.F. STEBBINS

August 17, 1823 - ?

Catharine Fish was born in Farmington, New York of a Quaker couple, Benjamin Fish and Sarah D. Bills. Benjamin and Sarah moved their family to Rochester, New York when Catharine was about five years old and began some of the earliest anti-slavery societies there. In addition to fighting slavery, the Fish family promoted abstinence and moral reforms, and at the early age of twelve, Catharine was securing signatures on anti-slavery petitions.¹ At fifteen, Catharine's mother banished all wines from her house, and Catharine and her sister kept an anti-tobacco pledge on their parlor table, which they convinced visiting young men to sign.

As with other lucky Quaker girls, Catharine was given a better education than her neighbors of other christian sects. After completing her education, Catharine received her teaching certificate, and opened the first public school in the ninth ward of Rochester.

Catharine did not lose her interest in reform when she became a teacher however. She served as secretary to a woman's anti-slavery society before and after her marriage to Giles B. Stebbins in August, 1846.²

In 1848, Catharine attended the first Woman's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York, speaking and contributing a resolution which was passed. The next week, when a similar convention was held in Rochester, she served as one of the secretaries.

Visiting Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1849 and 1850, Catharine published her first letter protesting the subordinate position of women and causing much discussion.

During the Civil War, Catharine wrote short letters to be published in the Rochester papers, addressing the conduct of war meetings, the war itself, criticizing the men and their methods, and urging more emphasis on "Freedom," and less on "Union."

During this time, she organized both anti-slavery and woman suffrage societies in New York and Michigan, worked in aid societies in both states, and worked zealously in 1862 and 1863 in the cause of clothing refugees on the Mississippi and its western environs.

In 1869, Catharine moved to Detroit, Michigan, spending her winters in Washington, D.C. She authored many articles urging suffrage and was always an active member of the National Woman Suffrage Association. In 1871, she served as a representative from Michigan on the National Committee for the

¹ *Women and the Work of Benevolence*, Lori D. Ginzberg, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1990, p. 103.

² *A Woman of the Century, 1470 Biographical Sketches Accompanied by Portraits of Leading American Women in All Walks of Life*, edited by Frances E. Willard and Mary A. Livermore, Charles Wells Moulton Publisher, 1893, republished by Gale Research Company, Book Tower, Detroit, 1967.

NWSA;³ in 1876, she was a Vice President of the Association;⁴ and in 1877 and 1878, she served on the Executive Committee.⁵ At the Eleventh Annual Convention of the NWSA, held in St. Louis in May, 1879, Catharine was elected an Honorary Vice President of the Association.⁶

In addition to taking part in hearings before judiciary committees of the House of Representatives and other bodies, as well as writing letters to national nominating conventions seeking equal representation for women of the different states, Catharine was recognized for securing signatures for the Woman Suffrage Amendment.⁷

At the Thirtieth Anniversary celebrating the birth of the woman's rights movement, held in Rochester, New York, Catharine served on the committee to nominate officers, as well as on the auditing committee, and represented Michigan as a delegate from that state.⁸

In addition, Catharine signed the call for the first meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Women.

In 1894, Catharine issued a leaflet of quotes by famous people dedicated to equal suffrage, including Mrs. Isabella B. Hooker, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Lydia Maria Child.⁹

Catharine was one of the brave women who wrote for *The Woman's Bible* in 1898.¹⁰

Catharine was not an Atheist, but like many Quakers, was quite liberal in her beliefs. She said "God" was "our name for the Universal Father," and associated her view of this "Universal Father" with love. She was completely opposed to the union of church and state, and where sects disagreed with her social goals, she opposed them. When urging "moral and religious culture," she was careful to indicate that "I do not by any means allude to a sectarian religion or any shade of it."¹¹ Mostly, she seems to have been a gentle negotiator between the more radical Atheists and Freethinkers and the religionists of the movement, emphasizing their similar goals rather than their differences to encourage unity.

Quotes

Church and State have combined to prevent the elevation of woman, but thanks to the great law of Providence, both are now yielding to the logic of progress.

- *The Ballot Box*, 2/1877.

³ *The Revolution*, 7/13/1871.

⁴ *The Ballot Box*, Vol. I, No. 6, 9/1876, p. 1.

⁵ *The Ballot Box*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 6/1877, p. 1, Vol. 2, No. 8, 11/1877, p. 1, and *The National Citizen and Ballot Box*, Vol. 3, No. 5, 8/1878, p. 1.

⁶ *National Citizen and Ballot Box*, 6/1879, p. 5.

⁷ *The Ballot Box*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 4/1878, p. 1.

⁸ *The National Citizen and Ballot Box*, 8/1878.

⁹ *The Woman's Tribune*, 8/18/1894.

¹⁰ *The Woman's Bible*, Part I, New York, European Publishing Company, 1898.

¹¹ *The Woman's Tribune*, 4/12/1890.

I hope the same ground will be taken in all our discussions on the church resolutions or questions at any time, as was taken by the abolitionists, that the church is *false to the principles of justice and freedom*, and therefore, we attack its action without any reference to criticism of Orthodoxy or Free-Religious people, and that it shall be understood that we will not hesitate longer to show up any and all of their denials and contradictions of the principles which underlie our reform, and which they profess to revere as citizens of this republic.

- *The National Citizen and Ballot Box*, September, 1878, p. 2, quoted by Matilda Joslyn Gage (her italics).

We want to show *all* that we must not put a people's government in jeopardy by any union of church and state; by any possible interpretation by a spirit of hatred that would disallow freedom of belief to one church and allow it to another. We can never run the risk of placing a word in our sacred constitution that conveys a narrower conception than that held by Roger Williams. Prof. Colt Tyler in his "History of American Literature," says that Roger Williams "stepped two or three centuries ahead of his age, and affirmed there should be no national church." The arguments were put in a little book entitled "Queries of Highest Consideration." But he was himself bitterly persecuted in New England for the protests he constantly made against the church "for assuming authority over the conscience." No man of our own time has had clearer vision of the rights of individuals, and of the true limitations of the state on the one hand, and the church on the other.

- *The Woman's Tribune*, 10/20/88.

In my first reference to religious proscription I meant to repeat the fact that "God" (our name for the Universal Father) has been at different periods and in differing "religions," represented as having conflicting attributes; and where love should be, hate, wrath and jealousy have been ascribed, and in too many books and creeds this is still embodied and taught.

- *The Woman's Tribune*, 10/20/88.

The Bible, viewed by men as the infallible "Word of God," and translated and explained for ages *by men only*, tends to the subjection and degradation of woman. Historical facts to prove this are abundant. In the dark days of "witchcraft" - through centuries - alleged witches were arrested, tried in ecclesiastical courts, tortured and hung or burned at the stake by men under priestly direction, and the great majority of the victims were women. Eve's alleged transgression, and the Bible edict in the days of the reputed Witch of Endor, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," being the warrant and Divine authority for this awful slaughter of women.

- Catharine A. F. Stebbins, - *The Woman's Bible, Part II*, New York: European Publishing Company, 68 Broad Street, 1898, p. 211.

Letter from Mrs. Stebbins.

Dear Mrs. [Matilda Joslyn] Gage and *Woman's Tribune*:-

Oh no! an individual cannot place our Association (National W.S.A.) in a ["]false light." To me, Miss Anthony is not "wild" on the subject of Republicans, but *sound*. It is the party of progress now in the present - if any is; in other words, the men composing it have larger and more liberal policies than others, and they are striving to do the best for the largest number of laboring men in our country, and to a certain extent to protect the wages of women.

Even with Mrs. Gage's characterization of the parties, we can see as much that is "politic" in the rest, Prohibition and all. As much as I have revered Clinton B. Fisk for his efforts for the Freedmen and other good work, associated as he is now with the next man on the ticket, and considering the party's hatred

of Republicans, I fear he will not stand at the end of the race as he has heretofore done. But I will hope he will be strong to the end. We, as women, are entitled to our preferences and our political judgments, even before we gain the ballot, and the best we can see - the best to us - we must approve and aid.

Mrs. Gage says also, in your issue of August 18th, that several of the Prohibition State Conventions refused to put in a suffrage plank. True, and also true that some who did, do not bring suffrage actively into the canvass, but have been comparatively dumb. I will join Mrs. Gage in this: "I am glad, oh, so glad, that Susan does not favor the Prohibition party." A good many who believe in the principles of prohibition, and are *opposed to the licensing of any evil*, are driven from the party because, as here in Michigan, there seems to be more hatred of Republicans than love to total abstinence and prohibitory laws. The immense temperance gain - prohibition - in the south, by "local option," had no help from the Prohibition party.

Prohibition in Kansas and Iowa was carried by that party. Indeed the "Prohibition party" has not accomplished prohibition in a single state.

These facts which cannot be denied, may well lead us to distrust the practical wisdom of this third party movement. There are doubtless many good people in it, yet while its managers try to mislead, by endeavoring to show there is no essential difference between the Republican and Democratic parties, even on the tariff in this campaign - they sink to the level of demagogues.

But I think Mrs. Gage could make what she says of "God," and "religious tests," and "proscription for religions [sic] opinions," clearer to some who have not had a kindred education; and to younger minds who have not given to history a hundredth part of her study. Some of our sisters could stand with us if she would devote a thoughtful letter to this theme. We want to show *all* that we must not put a people's government in jeopardy by any union of church and state; by any possible interpretation by a spirit of hatred that would disallow freedom of belief to one church and allow it to another. We can never run the risk of placing a word in our sacred constitution that conveys a narrower conception than that held by Roger Williams. Prof. Colt Tyler in his "History of American Literature," says that Roger Williams "stepped two or three centuries ahead of his age, and affirmed there should be no national church." The arguments were put in a little book entitled "Queries of Highest Consideration." But he was himself bitterly persecuted in New England for the protests he constantly made against the church "for assuming authority over the conscience." No man of our own time has had clearer vision of the rights of individuals, and of the true limitations of the state on the one hand, and the church on the other. Late in his life he wrote: "From my childhood, now about three score years, the Father of lights touched my soul with a love to Himself, to His only begotten, the true Lord Jesus, and to His Holy Scriptures." Thus two or three of your correspondents can see that a great man agreeing in worshipful faith with them, using the same holy names, was yet so clear-sighted, and utterly true, to the nature God had bestowed, that, as in the defense of his principles, he "had maintained the rocky strength of them, to my own and other conscience's satisfaction; so thro' the Lord's assistance, I shall be ready for the same grounds, not only to be bound and banished, but to die, also, in New England, as for most holy truths of God in Christ Jesus." He called the place where he at last established a pure democracy, *Providence*, (having a sense of the Father's "merciful providence" to him,) and "desired it to be a shelter for persons distressed for conscience." It was "a town fellowship" in *civil* government. He refused to persecute Quakers, and he respected the rights of Indians.

In my first reference to religious proscription I meant to repeat the fact that "God" (our name for the Universal Father) has been at different periods and in differing "religions," represented as having conflicting attributes; and where love should be, hate, wrath and jealousy have been ascribed, and in too many books and creeds this is still embodied and taught.

- C.A.F. Stebbins, *Detroit, Mich.*

- *The Woman's Tribune*, 10/20/88.

A Glance at the Tribune of March 22.

Dear Tribune: Your editorial, "Women in Arms," reminds me that once when arranging mottoes for a suffrage meeting, I had selected this from Curtis, "There are no guns or clubs behind the reform we advocate." A gentleman objected to its use, as he did not wish to promise that we should not be defended and enabled *by all means*, and as our "Fathers" were, if need be.

Madam Naomi Anderson makes some excellent points and suggestions; she characterizes well the royally courageous Elizabeth Lyle Saxon, saying, "She would not fear to stand on the walls and blow the trumpet of justice for her colored sisters." No one could be a better leader for the proposed "appeal to Congress," were she in strong health and not far retired for the present, from busy scenes. But an education in the *principles and action*, of the Equal Suffrage Associations, and Temperance Unions, and Social Purity Societies, such as she proposes, would be, doubtless, the very best instruction that could be given the colored women of the south.

The instruction would naturally combine moral and religious culture, (I do not by any means allude to a sectarian religion or any shade of it) social life and stimulus to intellectual training; exercise of the musical faculties and eloquence; the evoking of business talents; and all would conspire to enlighten and to refresh mind and heart in ways not before experienced. I cannot think of better instrumentalities. Through the thorough organization Mrs. Anderson desires, and the weekly meetings in which these women would be actors, or have active interest, there would come a new life for them. It seems to me a grand proposal. Let it be entered upon if there are excellent leaders and laborers not immediately pledged to other interests. If it is to become a power, there will be found the right servants to serve such a mighty and needed work.

But another matter, Mrs. Anderson may reason as she will, (and as *she* must) but the slave-mothers will enshrine in their "hearts" only one name, and it will be that of Abraham Lincoln. That devoted name stands for many others, but they were all bent on a benign purpose, to work with the absolute good. Let us be sure and preserve moral distinctions. Abraham Lincoln saw, long before, the right of *all* to Freedom, and exerted his influence to extend it.

A brief reception for Amelia B. Edwards in our art-museum permitted me the time to say, I am glad you are with us in suffrage, there are a good many ladies here this evening who favor it; she instantly asked, "Why, are they not *all* in favor?["] soon adding, "You should have had it accorded long ago, in America." She was very attractive to most of us, aside from her lectures.

- *Cathe. F. Stebbins.*

- *The Woman's Tribune*, 4/12/90.



Josephine Tilton



Angela Heywood

Lucy M. Tilton



THE TILTONS

THE TILTONS
LUCY M. TILTON
JOSEPHINE S. TILTON (-1922)
FLORA TILTON (-1918)
ANGELA HEYWOOD

"A singular woman among a remarkable group,"¹ Angela Tilton Heywood was the co-editor of *The Word*, which spoke for women's liberation from traditional sexual roles. Angela thought of sex as a completely natural function to be enjoyed, rather than as the dirty, bestial act described by theologians as "weakness of the flesh."

A self-proclaimed Free Lover, Angela was not a "loose" woman, as enemies of the term would wish the public to believe. Married to Ezra Heywood in 1865, she was the mother of four, and shared a long and monogamous relationship with her husband. The Heywoods would raise Vesta (1869), Hermes (1874), Psyche Ceres (1881), and Angelo (1883) with "vigorous home training."

Angela had been a radical before meeting Ezra. A resident of Massachusetts, she worked for the abolition of slavery. Her mother, Lucy M. Tilton, was an abolitionist, labor reformer and free-love advocate, and a great friend of Lucy Colman.

Lucy Tilton lived as the widow of Daniel Tilton most of her life, maintaining her home by her own hard work, and always associated herself with the working class as against what she considered the "learned class" of snobs and tyrants.² She served for many years as an officer of the New England Labor Reform League (NELRL). Angela was a strong force in this organization, arguing that one of the groups strongest goals should be equality in pay between the sexes to ensure women's independence.

In addition to working for the New England Labor Reform League, Angela was instrumental in founding the New England Free Love League (NEFLL), inspired by a speaking tour featuring Victoria Woodhull. The League's long-range goals were "the abolition of legal and compulsory marriage and all other institutions, laws and customs, whereby the sexes are bound and fettered in their relations in any form or degree, and the substitution therefore of such a social system as shall guarantee to all individuals the power to exercise their right of freedom at their own cost in matters of love." Benjamin Tucker was corresponding secretary, Angela served as a vice president, and Ezra was on the Executive Committee.³ The NEFLL held its first public convention in Boston in March, 1876, to crowds so large some had to be turned away.

Angela and Ezra had both been quite religious when young, but Angela switched her priorities from teaching Sunday School classes and attending prayer meetings to fighting for abolition after hearing William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Theodore Parker, and others. She worked as a shop clerk and a house servant before meeting Ezra at an abolitionist meeting. Writing later of religion, Angela stated that "Religion will repent of the subjection it has imposed on women; learning will confess its ignorance of us; books (simply because they are *he* books) will move forward from the alcove shelves and come down ashamed longer to be books; and male science will dissolve itself to escape from the infamy of its rude and savage treatment of us."

¹ *The Sex Radicals*, Hal D. Sears, The Regents Press of Kansas, 1977, p. 172.

² *The Word*, Oct., 1883, p. 1.

³ *Free Love & Anarchism: The Biography of Ezra Heywood*, Martin Henry Blatt, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1989, p. 82.

Ezra and Angela attacked marriage as a legal institution in *The Word*, saying it thwarted individual liberty in discriminating against women, yet Angela praised marriage if used as a nonlegally-binding relationship uniting the feminine and masculine sides of a "plural unity."

In addition to working for labor and male/female relationship reform, Angela and Ezra were active in promoting dress reform, the abolition of taxes, anarchism, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and many other reforms.

In 1871, Angela and Ezra moved to Princeton, Massachusetts, where they built the Mountain Home Resort, hoping to make it a profitable hotel. Luckily, summer trade ensured the family an income, to which was added the money made from publishing books and pamphlets.

Among the townspeople, it was believed that Angela was the more radical of the couple. She was not "ladylike," for she was, wrote Stephen Pearl Andrews, "hard as flint when her rights, or the rights of those whom she represents, are invaded."

Ezra and Angela were not alone in their attempts to redefine sex to the American public. Josephine Tilton, Angela's sister, supported them in all their efforts. In addition, Josephine worked diligently for labor reform, and was in contact with Albert Parsons before his murder by the government for the Haymarket Square incident. Josephine never married, but rather devoted her life to reform activities.

Flora Tilton also worked for reform, and with Josephine worked as a sales agent in the field for the Co-Operative Publishing Company, Ezra's and Angela's publishing arm. Although Flora eventually married Archibald H. Simpson, she remained independent.

Angela, Ezra, Josephine Tilton and Benjamin Tucker were among those calling for a National Free-Love Convention in 1873, in Ravenna, Ohio. The convention resolutions stated that women were entitled to choose their vocation, to dress as they liked, to control their sexuality and to choose to use birth control.

Angela and Ezra sided with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony when the woman's rights movement split into two groups. The Heywoods agreed that to ensure equality, women must have suffrage. Early in her career, Elizabeth had criticized the role of women in marriage, and had attempted to raise a discussion of women's sexual roles, but was outvoted by those who thought such discussions would undermine efforts to gain suffrage. Despite these attempts by the conservatives, a great many citizens associated women's rights advocates with the Free Love movement, with the Free Love movement being totally misinterpreted by the public to mean unrestrained sex with multiple partners. Thus, leaders of the women's rights movement in the 19th century, such as Susan B. Anthony, grew so tired and disgusted by being accused of "Free Love" sentiments that they considered it an insult to even be asked their opinion about it.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton spoke in support of the true meaning of the Free Love movement in 1870, saying that the government should not regulate private affection. She called the Free Lovers she knew "the most virtuous of men and women,"⁴ which, as we see in Angela and Ezra, as well as many other Free Love advocates, was quite true.

Ernestine Rose, one of the greatest woman suffragists of the 19th century, carefully defined what she considered to be "Free Love:" "The question of a Divorce law seems to me one of the greatest importance to all parties, but I presume that the very advocacy of divorce will be called 'Free Love.' For my part (and I

⁴ "On Labor and Free Love: Two Unpublished Speeches of Elizabeth Cady Stanton," Ellen DuBois, *Signs* 1, Autumn 1975, p. 258.

wish distinctly to define my position), I do not know what others understand by the term; to me, in its truest significance, love must be free, or it ceases to be love. In its low and degrading sense, it is not love at all, and I have as little to do with its name as its reality."⁵

Elizabeth served as a vice president of the American Labor Reform League (ALRL), the parent of the NELRL, and when her radicalism regarding marriage and religion isolated her from the mainstream of the suffrage movement in the 1890's, she still maintained a close relationship with the Heywoods.

Unlike most of even the most radical women's rights advocates, Angela wrote that women had a right to use birth control and even abortion to control their own bodies. Although both Ezra and Angela called abortion a "fearful, tragic deed," they wrote that "even that does not call for man's arbitrary jurisdiction over woman's womb."

Angela coined the word "heism," that would later become "sexism," and wrote against the lawful power men had over women's bodies. But rather than simply write *against* existing sexual policies, she wrote joyous praises of the sexual relationship at its best and finest. She wrote that people needed to "see that human bodies are naturally wholesome, and that the obscenity scare lies mainly in *diseased* mentality," a mentality assuredly shared by woman-hater Anthony Comstock. In opposition to popular beliefs, Angela maintained that women were just as able to enjoy sex as were men.

Several groups were organized against the actions of Anthony Comstock and his kind, including the National Liberal League, in 1876, and the National Defense Association, whose executive committee in 1879 included Ezra, Flora Tilton, and Benjamin Tucker. The latter group was to help Ezra and D.M. Bennett, among others, in their legal battles against Comstock.

The Heywoods published *Cupid's Yokes*, a compilation of their arguments against marriage, in 1876, then went on a speaking tour promoting their ideas. In New England, while Angela was at the podium before her audience, a "rude gentleman" grabbed Ezra backstage, hustled him into a coach without explanation, and drove him to jail. Ezra later found out he had been arrested by none other than the woman-hating Anthony Comstock.

Comstock's version of events included a description of Angela, who "delivered the foulest address I ever heard. She seemed lost to all shame. The audience cheered and applauded. It was too vile; I had to go out."⁶

In 1877, Josephine was arrested for selling *Cupid's Yokes*, but was released without going to trial. In 1878, Josephine, W.S. Bell, and D.M. Bennett (editor of *The Truth Seeker*) were arrested in New York for selling the book. They were attending a meeting of the New York State Freethinkers Association, and Josephine sold over 600 copies before the arrest took place. Although originally, Josephine refused bail, she later accepted it when delivered by her mother's dear friend, Lucy Colman. The three Freethinkers went to court, but the case was never brought to trial.⁷

Ezra was brought to trial in 1878 for mailing copies of *Sexual Physiology* and *Cupid's Yokes* to Anthony Comstock, who had used a false name, as was his usual custom. He was sentenced to two years in jail and fined \$100.

⁵ *Free Love & Anarchism: The Biography of Ezra Heywood*, Martin Henry Blatt, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1989, p. 102-103.

⁶ *Free Love & Anarchism: The Biography of Ezra Heywood*, Martin Henry Blatt, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1989, p. 113.

⁷ *Fifty Years of Freethought*, Volume I, George E. MacDonald, New York, The Truth Seeker Company, 1929, p. 228-229.

The National Defense Association began actions to attempt to free Ezra. Gathering petitions, they sent Laura Kendrick to Washington to present them. Angela was angry that she had been left out of the efforts, and of Laura's portrayal of her as the "poor little imbecile woman unfit to live without a man." Due to the efforts of the NDA, Ezra was freed by unconditional presidential pardon in 1878, after serving about six months of his sentence.

While Ezra had been in prison, he had not been inactive. He proposed eliminating the religious notation of years, A.D., replacing them with Y.L., of Year of Love, starting from the date the New England Free Love League was founded in Boston, February 25, 1873. From this time on, all issues of *The Word* used the new dating system. Ezra wrote that the A.D. dating system "recognizes a mythical God in the calendar, puts Christian collars marked 'J.C.' on naturally free necks, and registers us subjects of the lascivio-religious despotism which the male-sexual origin and history of the cross impose." The system also "breeds idiotic servility to usurped power and poisons youth with pernicious deference to false authority."⁸

After Josephine had written him, in reference to his book *Yours or Mine*, "I see you still refer to a male God. Why not stop using pronouns, relative to Deity, until one is invented that includes both masculine and feminine genders?" Ezra thought it over and decided that the abolition of religious ideas was "a greatly needed reform to which Atheists have devoted much beneficent service ... the *idea* of an invisible, irresponsible MASTER of whom we are helpless slaves, ineffably demoralized thereby; and the *fact* that Deity, judged by his most learned human exponents, sanctions oppression, cruelty, fraud, war, murder, wherever popularly deemed 'necessary,' make it an imperative duty to depose God and allow him henceforth to serve as an extinct transgressor in historical museums with other relics of mythological savagery. We substituted for the word LIFE..." Heywood believed that neither God nor any external master should impose authority. He declared: "Loyal to Truth as I understand it, called no man or God master, I shall henceforth stand clear of this coeive superstition [Christianity], a free citizen in the banner state of life, Love." Love, Heywood believed, was the "primary and ultimate force in human affairs which existed before State, Church, Christs, Gods, and will survive them."⁹

Angela envisioned a world in which the "glad spectacle of men and women working together, impelled by love, not compulsion," would be a reality.¹⁰

While Ezra was in prison, payments could not be made on the Mountain Home, and Angela, Vesta and Hermes were thrown out of the hotel, which was sold at auction for debt. Josephine and Flora, along with Ezra's sisters, cared for the three. After his release from prison, Ezra repurchased the Mountain Home with the help of contributions, such as that from Isaac and Elmina Drake Slenker, and the generosity of his creditors, but business was off because of Ezra's repeated arrests for obscenity. Still, Ezra and Angela did not have the financial stability they had once enjoyed, and publication of *The Word* became sporadic after 1885, due to family illnesses and their financial situation.

In 1878, Ezra and Angela founded the New England Anti-Death League, a spiritualist organization. Angela believed in spiritualism, while Ezra was doubtful, but thought it did explain the many "spirit communications," "rappings," etc., of the time. Many Freethinkers of the era were duped by spiritualism, perhaps as a last remnant of a discarded religiosity. It is interesting to note that although people seem to be

⁸ *Free Love & Anarchism: The Biography of Ezra Heywood*, Martin Henry Blatt, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1989, p. 121.

⁹ *Free Love & Anarchism: The Biography of Ezra Heywood*, Martin Henry Blatt, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1989, p. 121-22.

¹⁰ *Free Love & Anarchism: The Biography of Ezra Heywood*, Martin Henry Blatt, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1989, p. 71.

capable of accepting that there is no father-god in the sky, the thought of their own mortality, though obvious, is unacceptable, and so they will go to any lengths to "explain" in terms they would never accept of other aspects of religion, how the "spirit" of a person can live on after the brain cells are dead.

At the time, many pseudo-sciences were rivaling real scientific discoveries for public acceptance, and, not surprisingly, those "findings" which most pleased people were more readily accepted. For instance, racists and sexists used brain studies and phrenology to explain the superiority of the male Caucasian, while evolution was hounded by most. This is understandable, for phrenology, etc., verified existing racist and sexist models, while evolutionary science discarded the popular view of global development, while exorcising the "godly" hand from human development.

In 1883, Ezra was arrested again, this time for selling Angela's writings in pamphlet form. Although Anthony Comstock had arrested women before, and driven them to suicide (of which he boasted), he did not arrest Angela this time. The case did not come to trial until 1884, and then charges against Ezra were dismissed.

When the Haymarket martyrs were awaiting their murder sentence by the courts, Ezra visited them, as well as visiting their wives, including Lucy Parsons. After the murders, Ezra wrote in *The Word* that the martyrs were "Far beyond ordinary gentlemen, [they] had intelligent hands, serviceable brain and heroic heart. [They were] agnostics in religion, Equitists in faithful work, sinking self in Moral Order, mounting the scaffold with serene, ecstatic fortitude ... Enriched by their Thought, luminous in their martyr Service, labor literature has in their mental work [a] precious heritage!"¹¹

In 1890, when the greatest enemy of freedom and thought of the 19th century, Anthony Comstock, arrested Moses Harman for "obscenity" for printing an article written by Angela in his publication, *Lucifer*, Ezra republished it in *The Word*. Not surprisingly, Comstock had him arrested in 1890. The article in question was the same one for which Ezra had been arrested in 1883, and contained Angela's condemnation of Comstock for attempting to be the "policeman of the American woman's genitals."

Ezra was found guilty, and upon sentencing, Josephine Tilton leaped up and shouted, "Men of Massachusetts, in the name of the rights of man, I protest against these proceedings. I ask if you countenance a Court that does not weight equity?" Judge Carpenter ordered that she be removed. While the judge continued to call for her ejection, she shouted out that the court did not countenance liberty. After Josephine had been removed, the judge refused to allow Angela or Ezra to speak after they requested permission.¹² Ezra, then sixty-two, was sentenced to two years of hard labor, without appeal.

Once again, the Mountain Home was in trouble while Ezra was in prison. Angela begged readers of *Lucifer* for help in securing food and fuel. Ezra appealed for help from knowledgeable editors to continue publication of *The Word*, but the paper once again ceased publication.

Ezra's supporters again attempted to secure his early release through petitions. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Matilda Joslyn Gage, Frederick Douglass, Benjamin Tucker, Parker Pillsbury and E.B. Foote, Jr. were among those signing petitions, but in vain.

After Ezra's release in May, 1893, friends noted his physical deterioration, due in part, it is thought, from tuberculosis he had contracted in prison. A banquet and reception was organized for him by Josephine.

¹¹ "Ezra Heywood and the Chicago Martyrs," Martin Blatt, *Haymarket Scrapbook*, edited by Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont, Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, Chicago, 1986, p. 150.

¹² *Free Love & Anarchism: The Biography of Ezra Heywood*, Martin Henry Blatt, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1989, p. 166.

He attended the twenty-second annual convention of the American Labor League, but became so ill with a cold, complicated by the tuberculosis, that Josephine and Flora took him into their home for care. Angela and Psyche Ceres also cared for him, but on May 22, 1893, Ezra died.

Funeral services were held in Josephine's and Flora's home, attended by Lucy Tilton. Angela could no longer publish *The Word*, while attempting to maintain a home for her younger children. Although Ezra's brother, Samuel, was wealthy, he provided no support at all to his brothers family, whom he considered too radical. Angela began doing day work in office buildings to support the family. Of the children, none seems to have followed in their parents footsteps. Angela died at ninety-five.

Josephine and Flora continued their activities. At Flora's funeral in 1918, Archibald H. Simpson described her as a "pioneer in her radical notions of woman's rights ... She was indeed a free woman ... ever master of herself." A "Rationalist and Freethinker," he said, Flora "abhorred the mockery of a Christian ritual over the remains of a Freethinker," and so her funeral, like her life, was not conventional. Flora was then cremated. Josephine died in 1922.

Experiences of a Canvasser

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TRUTH SEEKER, *Sir*: It may be of interest to you and your patrons should I give a little of my experience as a canvasser of radical literature, now that a "tendency" is to become a test of obscenity.

I have sold thousands of Heywood's essays, and, later, I have carried out his "What is Freedom," by Henry Appleton; Henry Edger's essay on "Prostitution, and the International Woman's League," "So the Railway Kings Itch for an Empire, Do They?" by a Red-Hot Striker of Scranton. "Cupid's Yokes" I have sold since it was first published in the early part of 1876. (The year is suggestive, is it not?) My observations and experiences in the sale of this pamphlet, could they be known, would alone be sufficient evidence to justify a new inquiry into the nature and relations of sex.

But the point I wish to call attention to is, that no matter what the word or subject may be, to the unchaste mind everything is open to a vulgar construction. No essay have I sold which proves it more conclusively that the "Red-Hot Striker." The title page alone has subjected me to two "offenses against decency" oft repeated; falling from the lips of one to be taken up and passed round by many others. But this is not the worst. "Cupid's Yokes," with all its pertinent suggestions, opens the way to men, for lack of moral preception [*sic*] and responsibility, to prosecute as "obscene, lewd, and lascivious." "Prostitution" calls forth too often a jeer, and some man, with mocking look, asks, "Why can a decent woman want to hawk about such works?" But a pamphlet that has not the slightest reference to sex, the "Red-Hot Striker," on its last page has called forth the most vulgar allusion in relation to sex that I have heard in my whole ten years' experience in canvassing.

If it be a crime to circulate obscene matter through the mails, what will the editor of *The Index* and defenders of the state authority do when seriously, in the spirit of humanity, they face those "whose name is legion" with their gross utterances polluting the air and poisoning the spirit they rest upon? Yea, sir; put them all in prison and there would not be enough left outside to populate the earth even with all the resources of omnipotent will.

- Josephine S. Tilton, *The Truth Seeker*, May 3, 1879.



MRS. M.M. TURNER

MRS. M.M. TURNER

~ 1829 - 19??

We meet Mrs. M.M. Turner when she is in her seventies, and know very little about her life. Her book, *The Bible God, the Bible and Selections from the Writings of Scientists* was published in 1900, and cost 25¢ a copy.

A favorite of the staff of the *Oregon Torch of Reason*, Mrs. Turner was never at a loss for words to her favorite Freethought newspaper. She wrote that "science is only now emerging, victorious, from her long, bitter, bloody warfare with theology," while lamenting that "Scientists who will accept no scientific theory without full and sufficient evidence, who believe in the sublime and sacred uniformity of the universe, send their children to the Sunday schools, making them enemies of science."¹

Undoubtedly quite familiar with the bible, she quoted freely from it to make her arguments, saying, for instance, of the members of a religious conference, "The ropes of 'faith' and 'reverence' bind these gentlemen to strange, unscientific beliefs, such as the trap in the garden story and the fall of man; an universal deluge which Terah, the father of Abraham, escaped in some unexplained way, Gen. xi. 27, Josh. xxix. 2, and such passages as are found in Ex. xxxii. 11, 23; Num. x. 11-31, xxxi. 17-18, Deut. xiv. 21, xxiii 13, 19, Gen. xx. 18, 1 Kings xxii. 23-26, Ezek. xiv. 9, Jer. vii. 22, viii, 1-2, etc. etc."²

In 1899, *Torch* staffer Pearl Geer visited Mrs. Turner at her summer vacation spot in Atlantic City, New Jersey. He found her "more active in body than most women of fifty, and more active mentally than most women ever get to be. She is deeply interested in the Liberal University, and has contributed more money than any other woman, and more than most men. She not only contributes freely herself but advises others to do the same, and aids the cause with her pen." Mrs. Turner's traveling companion was her sister, a Miss Randolph, who was a religious woman, although, wrote Pearl, "People do not necessarily have to be Secularists in order to be good and intelligent. Many are good and intelligent in spite of their religion. Miss Randolph is one of these."³

As reported by Pearl Geer, Mrs. Turner supported the efforts of the Oregonians to start a Freethought school, and sent them a bust of Thomas Paine for instructional purposes. In 1900, she wrote to report that she had added a codicil to her will giving the Freethought school \$2,000, being "convinced that the welfare [*sic*] of the human family depends upon putting education upon a scientific basis, free from all theological creeds, doctrines and superstitions."⁴

The War God's Method.

BY MRS. M.M. TURNER.

"There came out a fire from the Lord and consumed 250 men." "Now they that died in the plague were 14,700." "The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died." "The Lord thy God will send the hornet among them, until they that are left...be destroyed." "And all the men shall stone him with stones that he die." "I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them,

¹ "Count Tolstoi, Religion and Science," *Torch of Reason*, Vol. II, No. 32, 8/18/1898.

² "The Lambeth Conference," *Torch of Reason*, Vol. II, No. 34, 9/1/1898.

³ "Abroad," P.W. Geer, *Torch of Reason*, Vol. III, No. 29, 7/27/1899, p. 2.

⁴ "A Bequest," *Torch of Reason*, Vol. IV, No. 3, 1/25/1900.

with poison of serpents of the dust." "The Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them." "The sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies." "The Lord make thee a curse and an oath among thy people, when the Lord doth make thy thigh to rot, etc."

The Jews had to get possession of the land promised to them by their God (as a possession to be held forever), by conquest, by wars almost of extermination. "Smite every male with the edge of the sword." "Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth." "Thou shalt utterly destroy them." "And Joshua did unto them as the Lord bade him, he houghed their horses and burnt their chariots with fire." "Kill every male among the little ones, and all the women; ... but all the virgins keep alive for yourselves." "The Lord delivered the Canaanites and the Perrizzites into their hands and they slew 10,000." "Cursed by he that keepeth back his sword from blood."

Having been theologically trained in his youth, and believing that the above quotations from the Bible are the works and commands of God, it is not to be wondered at that the Rev. R.L. Wright, in a sermon preached in Baltimore, Md., in June, 1899, should say, "God has in every age of the world used war as one of his sterner methods for the advancement of his cause."

"God do move in a misterious way

His wonders to perform."

as the old darkey quoted.

Theologians claim that this God is omniscient and omnipotent. That he called into being, by word of mouth and out of nothing, the numberless suns "that strew the field of night," vast nebulous masses, comets and swarming meteors. That he peopled the earth with its various nations. Being responsible to nothing, his will is the sole and arbitrary law of the mighty forces of the universe. Residing in the blissful home he made for himself, with the angels "he created to adore and enjoy him," he has, through all the ages, century after century, used bloody, cruel horrid war, replete with human sufferings of body and mind, at his own whim and caprice, "to advance his cause." The ways of peace and happiness were open to him.

And the end is not yet. The Rev. Mr. Wright, who might have been a thorough worker in the dungeons of the inquisition (one of God's methods), says further, "I believe there is yet a mission for the gun....The Christian world has yet to reckon with Turkey...There is ground to believe that before we have universal peace, we shall have almost universal war, and that God will so move the armies on the great checker-board of the world's history, that when the struggle is over the Anglo-Saxon race shall dominate the world, and Christ's religion shall be supreme and save it."

God's method of war has put its blood and agony-stained stamp upon every period of human life. For nearly 2,000 years the Christian religion has afflicted the world. Yet it is not saved! Theologians still proclaim the "curse and wrath of God," and the trooping of unsaved souls to hell.

Children are now even taught to sing in the Sunday Schools:

"Far, far away, in heathen darkness dwelling,

Millions of souls may be forever lost."

The Rev. Mr. Wright seems to be unconscious of the work of science, of the proved and verified knowledge of the uniform laws of the universe, which is, in itself, virtue, destined to do away with theological factions and superstition; to purify, organize, and unite the families of the earth; and by the terribly destructive weapons the knowledge of the laws of nature enable her to make, to put a stop to war - the cruel murder of man by his brother man.

The "God explosion," with his servant the cannon, will prove to be the strongest allies of peace.

In times of peace, reason and knowledge flourish and build up moral and physical strength, so that man can face the universe and redeem himself; while faith, in the unproved, sneaks away and hides itself in the ignorance from whence it came.

The doctrine of development has come to be the scientific view of life. The more that view is brought home to the mass[es], the stronger will be the foundations of the state, and the more rapidly and happily will the stages which separate us from a condition of perfect social health be accomplished.
- *Torch of Reason*, Vol. III, No. 29, 7/27/1899.

Eve Again.

BY MRS. M.M. TURNER.

If the Bible is to be taken as authority, Eve can scarcely have the credit of having brought death into the world. Gen. 3: "And the Lord God said, behold the man has become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take of the tree of life and eat and live forever, therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden. So he drove out the man, and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

If there is any truth in the Bible it was no part of the Lord God's plan that Adam and Eve and their posterity should live forever. Their only chance of doing so was to eat of the tree of life which grew "in the midst of the garden", to prevent which a police force of cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, kept "the way of the tree of life".

If Adam, having eaten of the fruit which made him like the gods ("The man has become as one of us, to know good and evil"), had gone at once to the tree of life and eaten of the fruit, we might now have a god on earth with more love and sympathy for the human family than that far-off god who, from his happy home, sees life's agonized struggles, but lends no helping hand.

It does not seem, in justice, that Eve should have a monument to her memory because she brought death into the world. Adam's failure to eat of the fruit of the tree of life before a guard was placed over it brought death and its blessings of peace and rest.

Gen. 3: "And the Lord God called unto Adam and said, hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commandad [sic] thee, saying, thou shalt not eat of it...So he drove out the man." Eve WENT with her husband.

There could not have been any reservation in the mind of this innocent first woman when she said, in reply to the serpent, the fallen angel, or Satan, possibly decked in the livery of heaven, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden".

It does not seem that Eve can have a monument to her memory as Mr. Tenney suggests, because she brought death into the world, but because she has been falsely accused of bringing sin into the world and unjustly condemned for the same (she and all women with her), she should have a monument exonerating her and repudiating St. Paul's teaching:

1 Tim. 2: "Let the women learn in silence in all subjection. I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."

"God made a covenant with Adam not only for himself, but" for his wife and "his" unborn "posterity". So Eve came under condemnation for Adam's sin.

There is no point in human life of more vital importance than the birth and education of children. Woman's work! but for which theological theories have rendered her utterly unfit by keeping her degraded and her mind bound in the fetters of faith and superstition, until science came to the fore. The garden story is now by the more intelligent believed to be a Persian myth. A Persian myth and the myth of a shadow begotten child (St. Luke 1: "The power of the highest shall overshadow thee") - the only witness a dream, - are the pillars upon which rest the 150 recognized denominations, propped up by hypocrisy, sophistry, fear, ignorance, superstition, self-interest, love of power, need of employment and emolument - all betraying the "sole and supreme allegiance of conscience to the community, which is the first principle of natural ethics".
- *Torch of Reason*, Vol. III, No. 44, 11/9/1899.

Theological Nonsense.

T. De Witt Talmage: "We must be careful how we judge Robt. G. Ingersoll. Who knows but at that last moment he saw the truth of the gospel as he had not been able to see it before? And it only takes a prayer half-a-second to go to heaven and half-a-second to return."

Bishop W. Paret: "The sacrifice of Christ himself as an atonement was the thought of God before creation began."

Cardinal Gibbons: "In the economy of divine Providence there will always be classes, that the virtue of benevolence may be exercised."

Rev. R.H. McKim: "We will have to take into consideration what the devil and his angels will do."

Rev. Lyman Abbott: "The resurrection is the best attested fact in history."

Rev. E. Winchester: "As long as the priest habitually succeeds in persuading sinners that God has forgiven them his office is impregnable."

M.M.T.

- *Torch of Reason*, Vol. III, No. 44, 11/9/1899.



SARA A. UNDERWOOD

SARA A. UNDERWOOD

A contributor to *The Woman's Bible*, friend of Elizabeth Cady Stanton,¹ and author of *Heroines of Freethought*, published in 1876, Sara Underwood has been variously described as the sister or wife of B.F. Underwood.²

Besides a few writings, I have found very little information about her. Perhaps the pages of the Freethought publication, *The Open Court*, which B.F. Underwood edited at its' inception, would reveal more facts about her life, but I have been unable to obtain that magazine through the library system. All I can offer to the reader are a few samples of her writing.

Quotes

The advancement of woman throughout Christendom has been going on only where these doctrines have been outgrown or modified through the influence of science, of skepticism, and of liberal thought generally. That the Bible does teach that woman's position should be one of subordination and submission to man, and that through her first came sin into the world, in indisputable; and I do not see how such teachings, believed to be direct from God, can be accepted without retarding woman's progress.

...The idea of woman's equality with man in all natural rights and opportunities finds no support in the Bible. The doctrine that there is neither male nor female, neither bond nor free, in Christ Jesus, had no practical application to social conditions. It left the slave in chains, and the woman in fetters. Where the old theological dogmas respecting woman are the least impaired, woman's condition is the least hopeful. Where the authority of reason is in the ascendant, or where it is superseding the authority of book revelations, or creeds and of churches, woman's position is the most advanced, her rights are the most completely recognized, her opportunities for progress the most fully allowed, and her character the most fully developed.

- Sara A. Underwood, *The Woman's Bible, Part II*, New York: European Publishing Company, 68 Broad Street, 1898, p. 191-192.

Is the Bible the Friend of Woman? Is the Church? Who but Infidels are in Favor of the Elevation of Woman?

Mrs. Sara A. Underwood in Index, May 31.

It has ever been a part of the policy of the christian church, when it has opposed, disliked, or ignored any discovery in science or innovation in moral methods, which, recommended by its truth and justice, has finally become accepted by the majority of people, gradually to adopt as its own offspring the demonstrated scientific fact or successful reform, and to modify its own teachings so as to make them harmonize with it.

The movement in favor of the advancement and enfranchisement of woman has been no exception to this rule. To-day, we have "ministers of the gospel" who undertake the apparently impossible task of reconciling "the bible and woman's suffrage." And some of the journals most prominent in the woman's cause are yet so unawake to the liberal origin and trend of the movement as to fancy they make that cause stronger and its justice more incontrovertible by taking the position that the church has been the patron and instigator of it. If the facts of history did not so thoroughly disprove this, we would have no objection whatever to giving christianity credit for any efforts made toward the elevation of woman; but, since we

¹ *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches*, edited by Gerda Lerner, Schocken Books, New York, 1981, p. 198.

² *A Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers of All Ages and Nations*, Joseph M. Wheeler, Progressive Publishing Company, London, England, 1889, p. 321.

believe in giving "honor to whom honor is due," it is only just that The Index, whose motto is "Light, Liberty, and Right," should in this anniversary week, when the suffrage anniversary will, we hope, awaken new interest in the woman's cause, explain to whom is due the honor of the most earnest and successful pioneer work in this so nearly triumphant reform, whether to the high dignitaries of the orthodox faith or to the efforts of unorthodox and free-thinking reformers.

The first "vindication of the rights of women" of which we possess any definite information is that of Mary Wollstonecraft, an avowed deist, who, in 1792, wrote that still readable and passionate demand for the political recognition of her sex, which bears that title.

From 1820 until her death in 1852, Frances Wright, an outspoken free thinker, did valiant service for the enfranchisement of her sex here in America, her adopted country; and it is in recognition of that service that to-day her portrait occupies a prominent position in the office of a journal devoted to woman's suffrage, though the journal referred to discountenances anything savoring of free-thought principles, and mistakenly thinks to strengthen a cause born of those principles by pandering to the dying orthodoxy of to-day. In *The Eminent Women of the Age*, Mrs. Stanton writes thus of Frances Wright: "We may date the woman's rights' cause proper from the division in the anti-slavery organization in 1840; though, before that time, Frances Wright, an Englishwoman, of rare gifts both as a writer and speaker, had visited this country and addressed large audiences, demanding, at that early day, all the champions of woman's rights now claim." Mrs. Stanton continues: "She was followed by Ernestine L. Rose, a native of Poland, a woman of great beauty, refinement, and cultivation, of generous impulses, liberal views, and oratorical power. She came to this country in 1836, addressed large audiences in Charleston, S.C., and in Detroit, Mich., on 'The science of government.' She was among the first who agitated the property rights of married women in the state of New York. As early as 1838, she circulated petitions on that subject, which were presented by Judge Herttell in the legislature. She has been one of the leaders in the woman's rights movement since that time, and spoken at all the annual conventions." The Judge Herttell who presented in 1838 the petitions of Mrs. Rose for the rights of married women was as open and avowed a freethinker as Mrs. Rose herself, and he was also one of the earliest advocates of total abstinence in this country.

Harriet Martineau, an agnostic, so early as 1835 gave publicity to her convictions on the question of woman's rights. "I declare," she says, in *Society in America*, written in 1836, "that whatever obedience I yield to the laws of the society in which I live is a matter between not the community and myself, but my judgment and my will. Any punishment inflicted on me for a breach of those laws I should regard as much gratuitous injury, for to those laws I have never actually or virtually assented."

As early as 1840, Margaret Fuller, whose orthodoxy is certainly questionable, had begun to write and work for the enfranchisement of her sex from all the disabilities and limitations imposed upon it by reason of masculine and religious prejudice. In 1847, Hon. E.P. Hurlbut, formerly a judge of the supreme court of the state of New York (who is still living, and who has within a few years done good and effective work for liberalism), in his excellent volume on *Human Rights*, openly advocated the legal and political "rights of women" in a chapter so entitled; and so radical and pronounced were those views that his friend, George Combe, in some notes appended to Judge Hurlbut's work, felt obliged to take exceptions to them.

Of the more recent advocates of woman's suffrage, Mrs. Stanton, Theodore Parker, R.W. Emerson, Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott, Lydia Maria Child, Mrs. Caroline H. Dall, William Lloyd Garrison, Fred Douglass, Colonel Higginson, Louisa Alcott and her venerable father, Anna Dickinson, Julia Ward Howe, and many others in this country, together with George Eliot, Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, Prof. Huxley, Frances Power Cobbe, John Bright, George Jacob Holyoake, and Charles Bradlaugh in England, are all either liberal christians or avowed freethinkers; none are entirely orthodox in faith.

And what can orthodox christianity show in confirmation of its claim that to its teachings and labors woman's elevation and coming enfranchisement are due? What is its record of work done in behalf of one-half of the human race and religion's most zealous supporters? Certainly, in spite of the specious pleas only

recently thought necessary by some preachers, that the bible is not opposed to woman's suffrage, it can be very clearly shown from that book that woman was considered by all its writers the inferior of man, made so originally. So, though the question of suffrage had never occurred to them, yet it is utterly incompatible with the spirit of biblical teachings. Rev. Horace Bushnell's passionate denunciation of woman's suffrage as a "Reform against nature" was indorsed by all good churchmen as the exposition of their views on that question: and it is only a few weeks since the publication of Rev. Morgan Dix's Lenten sermons on woman, relegating them to the inferior and subordinate position occupied by the sex two centuries ago, - a position which biblical authority plainly indicates as the proper and divinely ordained place for the sex through whose transgression sin entered the world, though many of his clerical brethren, more strongly imbued than himself with the progressive spirit of the age, openly deride the Rev. Dix's antediluvian notions in regard to their mothers', wives', and daughters' places in society. Yet the unmistakable earnestness and the unassailable orthodoxy of his views gives this man a select audience and a thoughtful hearing.

Of the many denominational christian papers published in this country and in England, how many take a decided stand in favor of the advancement of women? Only one, the Independent, (which lives up to the spirit indicated by its name), so far as the writer knows, openly takes the position that women have as much right to suffrage as men; while many, like the Congregationalists, do not hesitate to disavow any sympathy with the movement. There are no liberal papers which take ground against it. The Methodist church, one of the most liberal of the orthodox denominations, has within a few weeks allowed one of its most efficient and enthusiastic workers, Miss Anna Oliver, to give up her charge of the congregation she has done so much for and the church she has so ably redeemed from debt through her financial ability, simply because its orthodoxy does not venture to gainsay Paul's dictum, "I suffer not a woman to teach." So Mrs. Van Cott's ministrations are still unsanctioned; and in other churches the women workers, the real "pillars of the church," are degraded by the simple fact of their sex on which religion has cast a ban and obloquy.

Until, then, women learn to cast aside the authority of the church, the enfranchisement of the sex must be delayed. And those who have that cause at heart must work first for the enfranchisement of the female mind from priestly domination.

- *Monroe's Iron-Clad Age*, Vol. 28, No. 12, 6/16/1883, p. 8.



ESTHER VAN RIPER

ESTHER ANN VAN RIPER

12/25/1844 - 4/29/1910

The first woman to join the [Thomas] Paine Memorial Association, a valued member of the American Secular Union, the Ingersoll Memorial Association and the Social Order of United Liberals,¹ Dr. Esther Ann Van Riper supported the cause of freethought through organizational participation, publication of freethought articles, and financial support to an amazing extent considering her extremely busy life.

A widow and mother of three, Dr. Van Riper succeeded in obtaining diplomas from the Board of Medical Registration and Examination of the States of Ohio and Illinois, the Electro-Medical Institute of Columbus, Ohio, the Druidic University of America² and the Jacksonian Optical College of Jackson, Michigan, as well as maintaining memberships and involvement in the American College of Science, the Red Cross Hospital of Chicago, Illinois, the American Medical Union, the Northern Indiana Medical Association, and the Southern Michigan Medical Association of Physicians and Surgeons, among others.

Esther Rogers was born on Christmas Day, 1844, in Lodi, Michigan. Her parents, both New York State natives, were the descendants of English and Irish members of the upper class. Esther's father, Edmon G. Rogers,³ graduated from West Point, and served in the War of 1812. Purchasing land in Michigan, he married Lucinda Isbell and raised five daughters and one son. Esther's father died in 1861, with his wife surviving him by more than fifty years.

At three years of age, Esther was sent to school, showing such progress that at 14, in 1859, she was sent to high school for five years, an unusual privilege for a female at the time. At the end of those five years, on August 4, 1864, she married Dr. Myron Hawley Van Riper.

Myron, of Dutch and Welsh descent, was a native of New York State, where his father had been a prominent attorney in Albany. Myron studied medicine for two years at the prestigious Bellevue College, then traveled to Michigan to enter the medical department of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

Before accomplished this, however, the events of the Civil War temporarily set his life in another direction. Enlisting as a surgeon in a Michigan regiment, Myron was wounded and captured at Malvern Hill, and, after spending time in several southern hospitals, was returned to Michigan near death from his wounds. Recovering his strength after weeks of recuperation, Myron continued his pre-war plan of attending the University of Michigan, and graduated with a degree of M.D. in 1865.⁴

After graduation, the Van Ripers moved to Illinois, where Myron Van Riper practiced medicine. Esther began her medical training under his husbands' tutelage, studying with him for eight years. Although this might seem an odd way of learning medicine, it must be remembered that women physicians were rare, and it would have been impossible for Esther to both attend a medical university and care for her home and family in the manner in which society demanded. Studying with her husband, she was able to actively participate in the diagnoses and treatment of various conditions, and observe and assist in operations. After studying with Myron for several years, she began writing medical papers of her own

¹ *Blue Grass Blade*, 3/28/1909, p. 2.

² *History of Pickaway County, Ohio and Representative Citizens*, edited and compiled by Hon. Aaron R. Van Cleaf, Circleville, Ohio, published by Biographical Publishing Company, George Richmond, Pres., Chicago, Illinois, 1906.

³ Esther's father's name appears variously in articles as "Edmon," "Edmund," and "Edwin." I used the oldest source, as being the only one written during her lifetime, hence, hopefully, having been supplied by her for the article.

⁴ *Portrait and Biographical Record of Fayette, Pickaway and Madison Counties, Ohio, containing Biographical Sketches of Prominent and Representative Citizens*, Chapman Bros., 1892.

based on her knowledge and experience in the field. Finally, she was thought proficient enough to pass the medical examinations, which she accomplished handily, and was registered and admitted to the practice of medicine in Illinois.

During this time, of course, Esther maintained a household and bore and was raising three boys, which, in this preindustrialized era might have been thought enough to occupy every free hour of the day. It is interesting to note that at this time, men were thought successful in their field when they worked diligently at perfecting their skills during working hours, and returned to a home well managed by their wife at the end of the day. For a woman to be thought successful, she must not only become as professionally proficient as a man, but had to uphold society's vision of her role as a woman, excelling at housekeeping and mothering skills, or face public censure. Unlike their philosophy in judging professional men, society was very quick to denigrate the accomplishments of women who slighted the home for their career, a viewpoint from which we still suffer today.

After the death of her husband in Kankakee, Esther took her three boys to Circleville, Ohio in 1881, where she established a successful practice, continuing in her field until her final illness demanded its' discontinuance.

Of her three boys, Myron, the eldest, became a printer, working in Chicago, Illinois, for a time, then returning to Circleville. Garrett, her middle son, worked in New York City as a pressman, later moving to Cleveland. Her youngest, flamboyantly named Marquis de Lafayette Van Riper, predeceased the Doctor. Visiting Esther's grave in Circleville, she is found next to this son. Her stone is very plain, listing only her name, and the year of her birth and death, and not even mentioning her profession. Marquis' stone, however, was inscribed by his grieving mother:

A lonely grave, but Oh!
have care,
For world-wide hopes
are lying there;
How much of light, how
much of joy,
Are buried with my
darling boy.

Marquis de Lafayette Van Riper died at only 33 years of age.

In politics, Esther staunchly supported the Republican party, as had her father and husband. Whenever possible, she attended Freethought conventions, participating in the activities of her local Buckeye Secular Union⁵ as well as it's parent organization, the American Secular Union, and traveling out of state to attend such events as Thomas Paine Memorial meetings in New York.⁶ She attended these meetings as late as 1908, continuing her participation as long as her health allowed. She was one of the first to join Josephine K. Henry's Woman's Club, composed of Freethought women from around the nation.⁷ In addition, she published articles in several freethought publications, although I have been unable to locate them. She was reputedly outspoken about her Freethought views, and was not one to banter words when confronted by believers.

⁵ *Blue Grass Blade*, 9/13/1908.

⁶ *Blue Grass Blade*, 3/28/1909, p. 2.

⁷ *Blue Grass Blade*, Vol. XII, No. 3, 3/8/1903.

In 1909, at the age of 65, Esther developed Bright's disease,⁸ and became confined to her home in August. Although her health showed improvement over the winter, she suddenly contracted a severe cold in May, 1910, and died of pneumonia two weeks later. Her mother, still living in Michigan, and two of her sisters, outlived her.⁹

In its' obituary, the Circleville paper described Esther as "a woman of more than ordinary ability, her intellectual attainments being of a high order....She was a large hearted woman, and beside an ardent devotion to her two [surviving] sons, was possessed of a spirit of charity which found constant vent in assisting the poor and needy."¹⁰ No mention was made of her Freethought activities.

Myron, her eldest son, lived until 1944, naming his daughter Esther in honor of his mother. Little Esther was only one year old when her grandmother died, and she followed her grandmother in death at the age of 12 from a heart condition. She was buried between her parents in Forest Cemetery, Circleville, Ohio, not far from her grandmother. Her mother, Myron's wife, died in 1945. Nothing more is known of Garrett Van Riper by this author. In addition, nothing is said of Esther's son's religious philosophies, so we do not know if they followed their mother in Freethought or yielded to the pressures of society to accept a religious belief.

Dr. Esther Van Riper was a remarkable woman, showing that great strength of character shared by those few women whose intellect demanded more than the "woman's sphere" to which society had assigned them. A student who never stopped learning, a mother who never stopped loving and nurturing, a physician whose medical practice included free treatment for the poor and devotion to volunteer organizations such as the Red Cross, and a woman not bound by societal conventions either professional or religious, Dr. Van Riper met financial, social, and educational obstacles, as well as personal tragedies, and overcame them with a strength of purpose and will seldom found then or now.

⁸ First described by the English physician Richard Bright, nephritis, as it is now known, is a general term for inflammatory and degenerative diseases of the kidney, often associated with hypertension and arteriosclerosis and contributes to death through heart failure.

⁹ *Circleville [Ohio] Democrat, Blue Grass Blade*, 5/29/1910.

¹⁰ *Circleville [Ohio] Democrat, Blue Grass Blade*, 5/29/1910.



LOIS WAISBROOKER

LOIS WAISBROOKER

1826 - 10/3/1909

Born in 1826, Lois Nichols Waisbrooker was called "the strongest personality among American feminists" by the editor of the English birth-control journal *New Generation* in 1927.¹ Born poor, Lois worked as a domestic servant until she secured a teaching position in a school for African-Americans prior to the Civil War. This vocation was considered disreputable, but Lois never cared about public opinion.

After the Civil War, she began lecturing on women's rights, free love and spiritualism. Ezra Heywood, meeting Lois at a Spiritualist convention in Boston in 1875, said she was like a "she Abraham Lincoln." This appraisal was repeated by Edward W. Chamberlain in a review of one of her books in 1893.

In 1869, Lois' first publications, *Suffrage for Women: The Reasons Why*, and *Alice Vale: A Story for the Times*, were published, followed by *Helen Harlow's Vow, or Self Justice* in 1870 and *Mayweed Blossoms* in 1871.² *Helen Harlow* was about a young woman who was betrayed and deserted, but who braved the vindictiveness of society to raise her son alone. Other books written in later years include *Perfect Motherhood*, *A Sex Revolution*, *The Fountain of Life*, *The Sex Question and the Money Power*, *Woman's Source of Power*, and others.

Lois, along with Moses Harman and Ezra Heywood, protested the 1873 Comstock Act, which placed penalties upon publishing loosely defined "obscenities." They insisted on publishing articles, pamphlets and books on birth control and sexuality, and consequently were all three arrested repeatedly.³

In the 1880's, Lois began publication of *Foundation Principles*, in which "The Curse of Godism" appeared. Although Lois lived in several states in her life, *Foundation Principles* remained a constant as Lois moved from state to state. She set type for the paper and printed it herself.

Moses Harman asked Lois to serve as editor of *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer* in 1891, as he was being subjected to a series of trials and jail sentences for publishing obscene literature. During her stint as editor, she published excerpts from a government document on horse diseases, comparing the frank discussion of sexuality in the government pamphlet to the illegal discussion of sex for which Moses was suffering.

The post office confiscated the entire issue, returning it only after numerous protests. From that time until her substitute editorship ended, Lois published *Lucifer* under the banner, "Published under Government Censorship."⁴ The event came to be called the "Horse Penis Affair."

From July 1893 to November 1894, Lois was in Topeka, Kansas, serving as editor and publisher of *Foundation Principles*, and also managing the Independent Publishing Company.

A lifelong women's rights advocate, she had trouble determining her stand on birth control. On the one hand, she saw motherhood as woman's most powerful argument for superiority over men, but on the other hand, she supported birth control as an individual right. She felt it was unfair that when

¹ *The Sex Radicals*, Hal D. Sears, The Regents Press of Kansas, 1977, p. 229.

² *A Concern About Humanity: Notes on Reform, 1872-1912 at the National and Kansas Levels of Thought*, James C. Malin, 1964, p. 116.

³ *Encyclopedia of the American Left*, edited by Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, and Dan Georgakas, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1992, p. 241.

⁴ *Freethought on the American Frontier*, edited by Fred Whitehead and Verle Muhrer, Prometheus Books, 1992, p. 117.

contraceptives were used, it was always the woman's responsibility to use them. "Throw the responsibility on your own sex," she wrote to men, "not on ours. If there must be care upon either side let the men assume it."⁵

Lois received many letters asking for advice. One such letter, from a lawyer, told of his unhappy married life, and how he was having an affair. Lois advised him to divorce his wife and marry the "other" woman. She published the letter and her reply in *Foundation Principles* in 1894.

Sympathizer Elmina Drake Slenker had received a similar letter, but chose to answer it privately. This Lois rebuked, saying that through print, the message would reach a wide audience, whereas Elmina's answer was directed only to one individual.

Lois was promptly charged by Anthony Comstock's forces with mailing obscene matter. She noted that the deputy marshal sent to arrest her was African American, writing, "it seems a little curious that one of the race for whom I endured reproach forty years ago should be selected to arrest me now."

Lois suspected that part of the reason for her arrest may have been her support of the Populist party in Kansas, causing pro-Republican forces to attempt to shut her up.⁶ The case was later thrown out.

She looked forward to the Freethinkers convention in Topeka September 6-9, 1894, to present her story, delivering a speech on "Motherhood." One listener wrote that he liked the speech, except for its adverse criticism of christianity. Lois replied by writing "The Curse of Godism" in the September 15 issue of *Foundation Principles*. She used the old Lucretian argument, echoed many times and still unanswerable by "believers," that if there was "an infinite personality," it would be morally repsonsible for the welfare of the beings he created. "The present condition of the human family" is proof, wrote Lois, "that no such all-mighty, all-wise, all-good personality exists." This being, of course, could be almighty, but then could not be all good, for an almighty being who was also good would prevent disease and disaster from affecting his creation. The being could be all good, but if so, it could not be almighty or it would stop the suffering endured by all creatures on the planet.

Lois announced in November, 1894 that she had just been indicted, and told her readers that although she was considering discontinuing the paper, if that was her decision, it would be made because the paper was too much work for her to continue alone, rather than because of legal intimidation. The case was finally decided after June, 1896, when it was found that the "facts stated did not constitute a public offense."

As stated, Lois' favorite topic was women's reproductive rights. In 1894, she printed a commentary by the famous Freethought physician, Dr. E.B. Foote, in which he urged educated reproduction, so that only wanted children would be born. He reported that sometimes his fellow physicians "prescribed" pregnancy to consumptive women to "end their suffering" - medically prescribed suicide.

Lois mourned that to promote educated reproduction, one must discuss sex, but to discuss sex was illegal. Still, Lois' attitude was "Which is of the most importance, the welfare of future generations, or the U.S. mail sacks?" She later wrote, "I shall say what I think, or nothing."⁷ She was still demanding free speech in 1897, when she wrote "I claim the right to think and act for myself independently of the arbitrary control of any personality or set of personalities in the universe."⁸

⁵ *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, Third Series, Vol. I, No. 19, 5/12/1897, p. 150.

⁶ *The Sex Radicals*, Hal D. Sears, The Regents Press of Kansas, 1977, p. 219-220.

⁷ *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, January 11, 1895.

⁸ *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, April 21, 1897, Vol. I, No. 16, p. 125-126.

Lois moved to California in 1895, living first in Antioch, then San Francisco, then Ogilby. In 1896, she discontinued *Foundation Principles* due to ill health. She was seventy years old.

Always poor, in 1899, appeals were being made for financial aid to Lois through the Freethought press.⁹ She was living in Santa Ana, California at the time.

In 1900, Lois began publishing *Clothed in the Sun*, first from San Francisco, then from the "free love and anarchist" settlement called Home, in Washington state.

In 1902, a bench warrant was issued against Lois as one of the "Home colony Anarchists" for mailing "obscene matter;" in Lois' case, copies of her paper, *Clothed with the Sun*.¹⁰ The colony was being attacked on all sides since the assassination of President McKinley by "an anarchist."

Anarchists around the country were physically attacked and arrested, although having nothing to do with the assassination. It was the government's opportunity to eliminate an enemy of the government. Her article, "The Awful Fate of Fallen Women," was found to be obscene, and she was fined \$100.

In 1905, Lois republished the book, *Woman's Source of Power*.¹¹ In it, she lamented that although her goal throughout life had been to take love and sex out of the gutter and purify it, her writings had so often been perceived as lewd and degrading by the public.¹²

In 1906, Lois spent the winter in Gibbs, California, in the Santa Cruz mountains.¹³

Lois was lecturing in Chicago in 1907, urging mothers to concern themselves with their own development, including the protection of their sexual rights, and to love their children.

On October 3, 1909, Lois, at age 83, died at her son's home in Antioch, California.¹⁴ Her last published article, appearing in Moses Harman's new publication, *American Journal of Eugenics*, was called "The Curse of Christian Morality." At the time of her death, her papers showed she was working on several more articles on women's rights.

⁹ *Freethought Ideal*, Vol. VI, No. 1, 6/1/1899.

¹⁰ "The American Press-Writer's Association," A.C. Armstrong, *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, Third Series, Vol. VI, No. 11, Whole No. 910, 3/27/1902, p. 82 and *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, Third Series, Vol. VI, No. 16, 5/1/1902.

¹¹ *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, Whole No. 1055, 12/21/1905, p. 431.

¹² *The Sex Radicals*, Hal D. Sears, The Regents Press of Kansas, 1977, p. 245.

¹³ *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, Whole No. 1058, 2/1/1906, p. 457.

¹⁴ *Fifty Years of Freethought*, Vol. II, George E. Macdonald, The Truth Seeker Company, New York, 1931, p. 341.

The Curse of Godism

There are many things I would like to say in this issue [which] will be left unsaid for want of time and strength. One remark by a good woman who heard me in the City Park, on Sunday, Sep. 9th, I want to comment upon a little. She liked all I said *only* she could not sanction my attack on Christian religion. I say a *good* woman and I mean it. Oh, there are so many good, honest souls in the churches, but it is time the good people began to learn that something beside goodness is needed. The following taken from a pamphlet published some years since, and which will be republished sometime, will in part say for me what I wish. It is entitled "The Folly of Worship, or The Curse of Godism."

Oh, the power of an impression made upon the brains of the people by the constant reiteration of an idea, true or false. Like the perfume of flowers or the malaria of the swamp - like the cold breath of winter or the heat of summer, the mental atmosphere like the physical, becomes so permeated that each and all affected; and often so affected that change is resisted, even if for the better.

The man who has become nearly insensible from cold begs you to let him alone, but to do so is death to him.

There must be a change, but people resist it for they are drunk on the poppy leaves of vicarious atonement, stupified with the idea that God does it all and they must wait his will, and they resist having the sweet delusion that they may rest upon some outside power, taken from them. Until the people let go of the God idea and take hold of themselves, of the innate powers of their own being, there is no hope for them.

We are speaking of a God to whom the people pray - the God to whom churches are built - the God with a priesthood set apart for his service, and upon whose altars they sacrifice humanity. We do not say there is not a something beyond our comprehension; a life, a law, a power, self-acting and eternal. But know this: it has no kinship with the God of the Christians, nor with that of any other people whose worshipful ignorance causes them to build temples and pay tithes to win his favor.

Only think of it, men and women of the nineteenth century; think of a God who can be bought by your service, your churches, your prayers, your tears, your flattery, your bowed heads and bended knees - a God who can be induced to favor you - to pour out of his spirit upon you because of all this! No wonder then men in high places are for sale! God has his price, they have theirs. He will punish you unless you pay the price he demands; the men who control the wealth of the world will starve you if you do not serve them. Like God, like people. Think of the folly! Finite beings building churches to what they call the Infinite God!@

If their ideal - the monster creation of their ignorance really existed, the difference between such a being and man would be a thousand times greater than between man and the smallest insect. Let us imagine man receiving homage of ants, giving laws to ants, getting angry at wicked, disobedient ants "every day," and further - let us imagine ants in different parts of the earth building temples to man, ordaining a priesthood to stand between the ants and man, explaining man's will to the common ants, dealing out promises of future reward to obedient ones, and threats of future punishment to disobedient ones - imagine them sending missionaries to other ants to teach them how to win man's favors - imagine all this and see in the picture the folly of worship, the curse of Godism.

Think for a moment how you would despise a man who, were it possible to do so, would accept such homage and make such demands upon ants; and yet you are silly enough to believe that an Infinite God wants your worship, is pleased with the temples you build and consecrate to him. Use your reason, dear friends, and you will see that any being who would demand such homage would be beneath contempt. The power that does and must govern, and to which all must submit, is eternal, immutable, uncreated law. To imagine a creator of law is to admit that it can be destroyed; and did such a possibility exist, the universe could be annihilated. Yes, law; immutable, omnipresent and when understood by man - so understood that its requirements are all met - then it becomes man's servant; or, in other words, the relation between mind, intelligence and inherent law is co-operation, inter-dependent - that of mutual servant and sovereign.

But worship, priests, temples, prayers, songs, will these lead you to the sphere of eternal law - will these teach you to handle Nature's forces, to solve mathematical problems, to compound according to chemical formulas - in fact, will they make you independent, like unto gods in and of yourselves? Not at all.

Nature repudiates the farce. Science is the hand-maiden of her choice, the one commissioned to destroy Godism. Science ministers in the temple of this all-controlling, all-serving power, eternal Law, and that temple is not made with hands, to say nothing of toiling hands that find not compensation.

C.C. Post in September 1st *Freedom*, has a very comprehensive article of this same subject, shows the evils of this personal God idea, and the evil of worshipping such a personality follows as a logical conclusion. It is because this idea of a personal God and a personal Christ is so enslaving, so belittling, that I oppose it: Mr. Post says:

But what, some may ask, if the difference, or why does it matter whether God or First Cause is a person or a force? God is God in either case. In either case is the power above all other powers - the creator and fashioner of the universe - what odds, then, whether we conceive this power to be possessed of a body or not?

But it does make a difference. It makes the greatest conceivable difference. It makes the difference which exists between owning ourselves and being owned by another; the difference between master and servant.

A First Cause having personality and an individual will - a personal God who created the universe and man for his own personal glory - while to such a God man must forever bow down in worshipful obedience, towards Law, as the first cause, [eternal self-existent] man stands in a totally different relation, and may by understanding it, make it his servant.

For while man is nothing, and can do nothing *outside* of the law, yet may he through an understanding of the law make its power *his own*; may compel the law - even the law of which he is the creature - to obey him.

Electricity is a law or a force in Nature. In Nature, force and law are one: the law itself being the force and the force the law.

Before men understood the law of electrical force they supposed it to be a god. Thunder, they said, was the voice of the God in anger, and the lightnings the breath of his nostrils with which he consumed his enemies; and they were the slaves and worshipers of this suppositious god. Man has always worshipped what he was afraid of, and never by an mistake has he worshipped anything else. From this fact you may readily deduce the true character of worship, which is only an attempt to hoodwink and placate a power supposed to be dangerous. And so too it will readily be seen that all the churches are monuments of an ignorant and a servile fear, that the coming light of the new intelligence will convert into schools and workshops, and places of recreation and amusement.

When man learned that thunder and lightning are caused by electricity, and that electricity is a force or law in Nature, then fear gave place to understanding, and knowing the law of electricity, or so far as he has learned it, he commands it, and is its master instead of its slave. Instead of prostrating himself in fear and trembling before it as an angry God, he now stands calmly upright in the presence of a force in Nature which he can control. Instead of humbly craving to know the wishes of another he confidently expresses his own desires. Instead of asking the good will of a God he gives commands to the law, and law obeys him. The lightnings are chained. Through knowing the law man has made himself master even of the law itself, and bids it fetch and carry as he will.

The one is a slave, prostrate in the dust at the feet of his God; the other stands majestically forth and gives his commands to the Law, himself a god by virtue of his acquired knowledge and power.

Yet the power and glory of the lightning is not less because man has learned that it is a force and not a person. On the contrary, to the perception of every reasoning being is its power and goodness and glory magnified a thousand times by knowledge of it - by the knowledge that though its power is sufficient to rend the earth in twain, to thrust the ocean from their beds, the stars from their orbits, yet so gentle is it that a little child with chubby hands upon its mane may guide it where he will.

Neither is man rendered less just or moral by his change in his relationship from slave to master of the lightnings, but the opposite.

Every faculty of his being, every attribute of his nature, is enlarged and elevated and refined and improved by the change. He is not only a wiser but a better man, more noble, more just, more appreciative of good in nature and in his fellow man as master of the forces of nature than he ever was or could be of a being whose anger the lightnings represented.

And what is true of man and one law or force in nature is equally true of man and all laws and forces, not one can be excepted.

I do not exactly coincide with Mr. Post where he says if a personal being called God created us that we owe him all and he us nothing. I claim that on moral grounds, were in infinite personality possible, and he had created us he would be responsible to us and for us. We should have a claim upon him for all that is good in life. The present condition of the human family is proof that no such all-mighty, all-wise, all-good personality exists. It is because I see such a waste of human energy, such a belittling of human dignity in those senseless cries called prayers to some imagined being they call God, that I so determinedly oppose all the manifestations of Godism.

In an article on another page headed: "The Next Great Strike," the "Rev." Mr. Dixon says; "There is but one power that can prevent this great strike, and that is the church of God."

There is no "church of God," and what is called such is largely responsible for the state of things we now have. It is simply a body of people how, so far as the God idea is concerned, are in their babyhood.

"Children crying in the night;
Children crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry.

Children lying in the dust at the feet of Jesus instead of standing on their feet and looking the problems of the universe in the face.

The greatest of strikes, and one which will eventually come, will be a rebellion against all this. Then the "stained glass windows," the magnificent edifices in which "humble worship" is the object of assembling, these will give place to schools of science where masterful souls command the forces of the universe; where the great mother heart will find a way to bless all her children.

The woman movement of the last half century means more than the ballot. It means more than equality with man in the pursuits and emoluments of life as they now exist. It means a state of society in which the motive powers are brought to bear upon the moral instead of the selfish elements of character, upon self-respect instead of self-abasement.

It means a state of society in which human beings shall be considered of more value than property, and the knowledge of how to improve the human race, of more value than how to improve animals, and not as now where government expends both time and money upon the latter, and imprisons men and women who devote themselves to the propagation of such knowledge as tend to improve the human.

It means a state of society in which all that tends to the welfare of gestating mothers shall be considered of more value than cathedrals, palaces, bank accounts or any other form of wealth calculated to build up individual or corporate power, or to perpetuate a sect or sects. In a word, this general unrest of women means a state of society which shall give us Perfect Motherhood, a motherhood from which submission to masculinity, be it to man or a so-called God, will be eliminated, and when that is done a more than the millennium will be the result.

- Lois Waisbrooker, *Foundation Principles*, 9/15/1894.

The Great Conspiracy.

In a circular sent out to the public to show up some of the outrages perpetrated against the freedom of the press the writer says:

"There is more in this obscenity law than appears on the surface. It is the work of the church, professedly in the interest of good morals, but really to get control of the postal department of the government and establish a censorship which will aid it in perpetuating its own power."

That there has been a deliberate conspiracy is evidently true, but the church is not alone in it. It is the combined effort of the enemies of liberty in both church and state, and the people at large have been kept in ignorance of the same. True, the obscenity law is the legitimate child of New England puritanism, but Protestants themselves have, for the most part, grown entirely away from the narrowness of their puritanic ancestors. Only a few of the relicts, like Anthony Comstock, remain, and they have succeeded because the church at large has no idea of the purpose involved.

Even the Catholic leaders dare not trust the masses of their membership with their real purpose, and, being aware of the liberalizing tendency of a free atmosphere, they all make false accusations and by the aid of the law keep the great public from knowing what it is they have called obscene. With money at their command to buy judges and jurors, they practically say: We have pronounced the matter obscene, and you dare not undeceive the public by republishing and sending it broadcast.

Therefore, obscenity trials are in that sense secret tribunals, and lying ones at that, as the condemned matter is not what has been considered obscene, but by declaring it so the great public believes it to be the same.

But present events demand a review of the past, of the steps taken to secure our present censorship. I had thought the obscenity law the first step, but when I learned that congress had given the right of private judgment to postal officials as to what might and might not pass through the mails I knew that that, if not the first step, was a very important one. It is a direct bid to the opponents of a free press to seek official places in the postal department.

But whatever the first step may have been, there is one which none but the plotters themselves could even have dreamed that it led in the direction of suppression, and yet without it there would have been no excuse for such censorship as we now have, and that is the cent a pound postage law. This was said to be in the line of the public good, and all went well for a time. Publishers deposited their papers in the mail without question or criticism.

But it was soon found that business men were establishing advertising sheets; that in this and other ways the cheap postage law was being taken advantage of, and this furnished the excuse for a series of questions which must be satisfactorily answered and sworn to before a cheap postage permit could be had. This result was just what the plotters expected and planned for; they understood the greed of the business world. The scheme worked to a charm; it furnished, as has been said, a satisfactory excuse for the series of questions which were the beginning of our present censorship.

This, as far as I know, was the first attempt of the government to regulate the business of newspaper publishers, but with their pottage of cheap postage the general press was blind to its far-reaching significance, and even liberal thinkers failed to realize that it was a trap. They failed to see that in giving the number of subscribers and sending copy of paper to Washington, as they must before being allowed second-class rate of postage, they thus furnished the enemies of freedom the name, character and strength of every radical paper in the nation.

Time is showing the meaning of all this, for now, if a publisher is known to be opposed to the prevailing religious, political or social regime, the subscription list must not only be sworn to but must be verified. The list is demanded, names taken therefrom, the parties written to asking if they are subscribers, and the applicant is required to show the letters written by subscribers ordering the paper and sending remittances for the same, as is shown by Benj. F. Tucker in giving an account in "Liberty" of his struggle to get second-class postage for it.

Upon presenting his request he was asked: "What proof have you that this is a bona fide list of paying subscribers? Can you show the letters containing remittances in which your subscribers ordered the paper?" When furnished with such letters, many of which were from personal friends and contained much personal matter, this tool of the plotters read them from beginning to end in Mr. Tucker's presence. One from an old friend began with: "I send you \$3 for a year's subscription."

"How is this?" he was asked. "Three dollars is not the subscription price."

"The gentleman sent an excess, desiring to contribute to the paper's growth," replied Mr. Tucker. Prompt came the next question, "And what did you do with the money?"

"Placed it with the paper's receipts."

"You did not appropriate it to sending the paper to other individuals?"

"Not in special; all receipts are used in paying the general expenses," and thus this petty examination continued to the end.

Mr. Tucker says: "This occurred early in January. I heard nothing more until near the middle of February. Then I began to receive from my subscribers in different parts of the country elaborate, regularly printed circulars which had been sent to them from Washington by the department asking them a set series of questions concerning their subscription to 'Liberty,' how much they paid, how they paid it, if any extra inducements were held out to secure their subscriptions, etc., etc."

Quite a difference between now and when the cent a pound rate was first established. Then, as before said, it only needed to take your papers to the office, have them weighed and pay the postage. Now second-class postage means the right to demand of a publisher his private letters for official inspection; it means the right to demand what a publisher does with extra money sent by friends; it means the right to demand for official inspection the subscription list; it means the right to insult a publisher by refusing to accept his sworn statement and of appealing to his subscribers as to the truth of what he says.

Had all this been claimed at first the people would have been so indignant that the whole matter would have been overhauled at the very next session of congress, but little by little the cords have been tightened until now, unless all questions are satisfactorily answered, sworn to and confirmed by outside testimony, it means the highest postage paid or the suppression of all radical papers. Yes, the highest postage paid, for litter postage is only 32 cents per pound, and to pay a cent a copy for some of our small radical papers would be from 36 to 40 cents a pound. And if, after the publisher has been sufficiently humiliated, he succeeds in obtaining second-class rates, he must still be subjected to the same degrading espionage.

It is a direct discrimination, not in law but in fact, against publishers of radical thought; an indirect but none the less real attempt to suppress all such papers as far as is possible. The law, it is true, applies to all, but the general press would not stand such espionage for a moment, and as congress has given postal officials the right of private judgment they of course leave all papers alone but such as they wish to annoy.

It is because they can so handle the sex question as to arouse the prejudices of the people that they have made use of that as the first step toward press censorship, and not because they are seeking sex purity. When shown an extract from Alice B. Stockham's "Tokology," "Of course it's obscene," said the attorney for the postal department; "all discussion of sex is obscene; there is no need to talk of such matters except between physicians and their patients." Mrs. Stockham is a physician, and what she has written is between her and that great, suffering patient, Humanity.

Attorney-General Goodwin, in saying what he did, practically tells every postal clerk in the nation that all works on sex may be thrown out. He is as rabid as the slaveholder was against anti-slavery publications, and in the end his efforts will be equally fruitless. The pioneers of progress are searching for the laws of nature, which, if obeyed, will give us heaven on earth, and neither the prison nor the gallows will deter them from trying to find what it is that poisons the life-fountain.

But our postal censors were not satisfied in getting the number and strength of all "heretic" papers - they wanted also the names of the subscribers. It was several years before this was called for, but now they are getting them through the law which gives the post-master the right to demand the subscription list for inspection.

Do you think all this has been a happen-so? do you think there is no plan, no plotting, behind it? There certainly is and has been from the first, and there are other steps contemplated. What they are I do not clearly see, but I should as soon think of a serpent stopping on its way to its intended victim as of these

conspirators leaving things as they are. There is a time coming, unless there is a stop put to the onward march of this imperialistic power, when no letter, book or package can be sent through the mail unless it has upon it the name of the sender.

This would be all right if the postal department was simply a public carrier, but as a moral censor it is quite another thing. There are many in San Francisco, Cal., who remember the case of young Price, who was sent to San Quintin [*sic*] for a year for mailing an obscene pamphlet, and he positively asserts that he never saw the pamphlet until he saw it in court; did not know till then that there was such a pamphlet in existence.

Now, what is to be done about this state of things? It seems to me sometimes as if our revolutionary fathers must rise from their graves to confront their degenerate sons - such servility, such a rendering up of the people's individual rights for a few cents postage! Where is the self-respect of our newspaper fraternity, that they submit to such a degradation of their manhood - degradation so long as such a law stands upon the statute book, whether enforced or not!

As I see things there should be a concerted effort to place the postal department where it belongs as a public carrier, a public servant. Its moral sponsorship should be taken from it and left with the states. Then there could be no censorship to destroy the freedom of the press. Friends of freedom, wake up and act if you wish even a shadow of our liberties to be preserved.

LOIS WAISBROOKER.

- *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, Whole No. 1071, 8/2/1906, p. 1 (587)-588.



Lizzie Swank Holmes

**LILLIE D. WHITE
LIZZIE SWANK HOLMES
HANNAH J. HUNT**

Lillie D. White
Lizzie Swank Holmes 1850-1926
Hannah J. Hunt

Hannah J. Hunt was a strong Freethinker who raised equally active Freethinking children: Lizzie Swank Holmes, Lillie D. White, and a son, C.F. Hunt, all of whom, mother included, wrote for *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*.

Lizzie moved to Chicago in 1877, after the death of her first husband. Working as a music teacher and a seamstress, she learned about the Labor Movement and became a leader, along with her sister Lillie, in organizing seamstresses in the Working Women's Union. While first a member of the Socialist Labor Party, Lizzie became an anarchist in 1883.

In 1885, Lizzie married English-born William Holmes, also an anarchist. Working with Albert and Lucy Parsons within the International Working People's Association (IWPA), Lizzie was assistant editor of *The Alarm*, edited by Albert. The first issue of *The Alarm* was published October 4, 1884, and was the only English language publication in Chicago representing the IWPA. By 1886, an average edition of the paper was running to 3,000 copies. At first, Lizzie used the pseudonym of May Huntley in writing for *The Alarm*, later using her first husband's last name, Swank.¹

As friend to both Albert and Lucy Parsons, Lizzie was a prominent actor in the events surrounding the Haymarket Affair. The day before the Haymarket meeting, she led a march of 300-400 working women on the Chicago Board of Trade, demanding the eight-hour workday. On the evening of May 4, 1886, Lucy and Lizzie were planning strategy to involve more seamstresses in their organizing efforts. Suddenly, someone came in and asked Albert to come to Haymarket Square to speak. Lizzie, Albert and Lucy, and the Parsons' two children, left to go to the meeting.

Albert spoke before the crowd, urging calm. As the children were tired, the group left, and went to Zepf's Hall when they heard the sound of a bomb exploding outside. It was never determined which side threw the bomb, but even the mayor, who had been present, said that the meeting was a quiet one, and with the record of police violence against workers, it would not be surprising to find out the police threw it into the crowd, resulting in a state of bedlam that killed police and bystanders alike. Regardless of who instigated the attack, the workers would, of course, be the ones to suffer, and especially any who had spoken that day.

Immediately upon hearing the explosion, Lizzie urged Albert to leave the city, and accompanied him to the train station where he left for William's and Lizzie's home in Geneva, Illinois, while Lucy took the children home. After seeing him off, Lizzie returned to Lucy's to spend the night with her.²

The next day, Lucy and Lizzie were arrested, along with many others. The police made it a point against them that they did not believe in a god. It was reported that "The police are principally Irish Catholics, and were glad to have a pretext to make the attack."³ While Lucy was released the same day

¹ *The History of the Haymarket Affair, A Study in the American Social-Revolutionary and Labor Movements*, Henry David, Ph.D., Russell and Russell, N.Y., 1936, p. 113-114.

² "Women in the Haymarket Events," Carolyn Ashbaugh, *Haymarket Scrapbook*, edited by Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont, Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, Chicago, IL 60690, 1986, p. 97.

³ *The History of the Haymarket Affair, A Study in the American Social-Revolutionary and Labor Movements*, Henry David, Ph.D., Russell and Russell, N.Y., 1936, p. 225-226.

(although arrested and released two more times), Lizzie was held until May 6, when her brother paid her \$500 bail. Kate Kane, an attorney from Milwaukee, represented Lizzie, and the charges were eventually dropped.⁴

Meanwhile, William and Albert hid out at the Holmes' home in Geneva, until William convinced Albert to move to Wisconsin for safety. William served as the communicator between Albert and Lucy after the move. Persuaded by his attorney to surrender to police, Albert returned on the day the trial began for the captured speakers of that fateful day in Haymarket Square.

After the trial began, Lizzie accompanied Lucy every day to the courtroom. She took the stand to defend her article "Notice to Tramps" which had appeared in *The Alarm* April 26, 1886, and was threatened with arrest, which luckily never took place.

Of course, on orders from the judge to the jury, all the speakers from that day were sentenced to death, even Albert, who had not even been at the event when the bomb was thrown. Their hanging was to take place November 11, 1886.

On November 10, the Governor of the state confirmed Albert's sentence, despite the pleas of many people to reduce it. Lucy and Lizzie went to visit him that day, but were turned away and told to come back the next day.

November 11, the day of Albert's murder by the court, Lizzie, along with Lucy and the Parsons children, returned to the jail. The police neither let them in, nor denied them entry; instead, they played with them, sending them first to one entrance, then to another, only to be turned away and sent on. It was very cold, and the children began crying and shivering.

When Lucy finally became frustrated and tried to cross the police line, all four were arrested. They were taken to jail, where they were stripped, children and adults, and put in separate cells. Once the executions took place, a matron came in to tell them it was all over. Lizzie could not see Lucy, but said she heard her moaning in the next cell. William, meanwhile, was trying to get to his wife, and was threatened with arrest if he didn't leave the jail.

Finally, about 3:00 p.m., the women and children were released. Albert's body was brought home, and Lizzie stayed with Lucy throughout the day.

The first carriage following Albert's coffin through the streets of Chicago on the way to Waldheim Cemetery contained Lucy, Lizzie Holmes, Sarah Ames, and Mrs. Fielden. Around 125,000 people lined the streets in respect.

Lizzie and William then helped Lucy publish *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Basis*, by Albert Parsons, in December, 1887. Only 300 copies were delivered before police confiscated the rest.

Lizzie said later that the hardest task after Haymarket was "learning how to live without them; of taking up the burden of life again ... Many a true comrade came through the ordeal changed and broken, never to be again what he had been."⁵

Lizzie's spirit was not broken, like some others, however. She was active in the Knights of Labor and was essential in forming the Ladies' Federal Labor Union in 1888 under the AFL.

In the mid-1890's, William, Lizzie and her mother, Hannah, moved to Colorado, later moving to New Mexico. She contributed articles to *Free Society*, *The Industrial Advocate* (edited by William Holmes), *American Federationist*, *Lucifer*, *the Light-Bearer*, and other radical publications, until 1908.

⁴ "Women in the Haymarket Events," Carolyn Ashbaugh, *Haymarket Scrapbook*, edited by Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont, Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, Chicago, IL 60690, 1986, p. 98.

⁵ "Radical Women: The Haymarket Tradition," Carolyn Ashbaugh, *Haymarket Scrapbook*, edited by Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont, Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, Chicago, IL 60690, 1986, p. 177.

Meanwhile, Lizzie's sister, Lillie D. White, was just as active. Lillie had belonged to a Free Love community in Berlin Heights, Ohio for awhile and never lost her interest in feminism in all its forms, including sexual freedom.

In 1891, Lillie appeared with Lois Waisbrooker, Etta Semple, and Voltairine de Cleyre as a speaker at the Kansas Liberal League Annual Meeting.⁶ She also served as secretary of the Kansas Freethinkers Association.

When Moses Harman was in prison, Lillie took over editorship of *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*. One of the first articles she wrote as editor was one in which she declared that the church was woman's enemy, "which we all know is responsible for her greatest suffering and degradation."⁷

When Moses returned from prison in the spring of 1893, Lillie worked for the extreme antifusion wing of the Populist Party, continuing her writing in feminist and Populist journals.⁸

In 1893, Lillie was a featured speaker at the International Congress of Freethinkers, held in Chicago, Illinois. The Wednesday meeting was dubbed Woman's Day, and was chaired by Dr. Juliette Severance. Accompanying Lillie on the platform that day were such women as Susan H. Wixon, Mattie A. Freeman, Voltairine de Cleyre. Other luminaries speaking on different days of the Congress included Samuel Putnam, Judge Waite, Dr. E.B. Foote, Sr., Moses Harman, John Remsburg, and L.K. Washburn.⁹

In 1899, Lillie wrote that men as well as women needed emancipation. She stated that some women claimed superiority through motherhood, tyrannizing men. She promoted the idea of men and women dismissing the stereotypical lifestyles in which they thought they should live, with the women becoming more than simply housewives and mothers, and the husbands being encouraged to become more nurturing fathers to their children.¹⁰

Lillie's husband was C.S. White¹¹ with whom she had at least one son. In 1900, the White's moved to Louisiana because of Mr. White's failing health, but it seems to have been ineffective, for she reported that he was an invalid until his death December 8, 1905.¹² Lillie wrote somewhat oddly that "I do not consider it a reflection on his character (or on mine) as a free thinker that a Methodist minister conducted his funeral services. Knowing our belief he was broad-minded enough to give a very appropriate and touching address."¹³

⁶ *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, 8/21 & 28, 9/18/1891.

⁷ *The Sex Radicals*, Hal D. Sears, The Regents Press of Kansas, 1977, p. 245-8.

⁸ *The Sex Radicals*, Hal D. Sears, The Regents Press of Kansas, 1977, p. 148.

⁹ *The Truth Seeker Annual and Freethinkers' Almanac*, 1895.

¹⁰ *The Sex Radicals*, Hal D. Sears, The Regents Press of Kansas, 1977, p. 245-8.

¹¹ *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, Third Series, Vol. VII, No. 37, Whole No. 988, 9/24/1903.

¹² *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, Third Series, Vol. VII, No. 40, Whole No. 991, 10/17/1903, p. 318.

¹³ *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, Whole No. 1055, 12/21/1905.

Although I do not know when Hannah or Lillie died, Lizzie died in New Mexico in 1926.¹⁴

Population and Economics

BY LILLIE D. WHITE.

Mr. Harman "avoids personalities as much as possible," but evidently the possibility did not exist in the editorial under discussion in 640. "When woman's sense of responsibility to the unborn is fully awakened she will not bring children into the world until conditions are provided that will give to each a place at nature's table" might have been intended for women in general, but the lines following, "such conditions as will not require the discontinuance of the favorite family paper in order that all may have bread" must have had reference to the parent who had requested Lucifer stopped because the choice of bread or Lucifer had to be made.

This looked to me like a reckless hit, because it was made on the head of an unoffending person for if the parents of a fine family of loving happy children, intelligent enough to read Lucifer, whose love was proved by their sacrifice, well enough off, I infer, to have brought their children pretty well along toward years of maturity - are not fit progenitors of the race where under the sun shall we find proper parentage?

That class of parents deserve great credit for having all the children they possibly can have. It is from that class that we may expect the energy and strength, the *life* that sometime will break the bonds that fetter us, burst through the shell of oppression and injustice that surrounds us.

Nothing but life, a great flow of abundant over-flowing life will do this. To destroy, to annihilate to *check* life destroys the means of our salvation.

I do not object to individual mothers limiting their families to suit the income - on the same principle that I would not advise them to spend their little money on beautiful pictures or books or pleasures that they long for, that they have a right to and ought to know - but that such restriction is a remedy for economic evils is just as absurd and impossible as that the denial of books and pictures could be a remedy.

I have always advocated woman's freedom in motherhood with reference to *herself* only, not as to its effect on society or the race. In fact if the perpetuation of the race is a good thing we owe untold gratitude to unwilling mothers for so far the world has mostly been populated by them. I call Mrs. Russell's attention to this. I fear she has given a wrong meaning to my words formerly.

If Mr. Harman's suggestion that "woman should not bring children into the world until conditions" etc., were acted upon it would simply wipe out of existence the wage earners of the world, for no parent depending on wages - upon a place to toil granted by a master - has any assurance whatever that he or she can provide for the helpless years of the childhood of a family. And if his strike could be inaugurated and not another child be born for twenty-five years, I see no reason to believe that the world would be in any better condition to receive them than it is now so far as the effects of their absence is concerned.

In my opinion the labor problem is helped toward solution by every accession to the ranks of toilers. Every year of "hard times" augments the army from the middle class who are squeezed out by the millionaire's mill. Improved machinery adds its thousands every year. All these are welcomed by the philosophical labor reformer. New life must come to replace the old.

If there were an actual scarcity of honey Mr. Harman's argument drawn from the bees might be a good one; but there is not, every working bee comes into the world with ability to produce all the honey he needs himself and more. The queen bee never restricts or starves her progeny for the sake of storing up

¹⁴ Blaine McKinley, *Haymarket Scrapbook*, edited by Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont, Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, Chicago, IL 60690, 1986, p. 179.

honey for the drones. The restriction begins in quite another quarter and is carried out in a decisive and effective manner, and the greater the number of bees the neater and quicker the job is done.

To me the fear of over population is so groundless that I regret while I am amused to see the concern displayed by Mr. Harman and Mr. Coolridge. Mr. Harman refers to that remarkable freak of fecundity in a way that seems to say: "See what we are coming to if mothers go on unchecked in their head-long career toward multitudinous maternity."

Mr. Coolridge thinks if "every woman has as many children as she may wish to have" it is equivalent to "increasing the number of sufferers."

Willing mothers do not increase sufferers. The suffering is caused by the exploitation of the honey made by the working bees - these children - into the millionaire's hive.

As a matter of fact Mr. Harman and Mr. Coolridge have every reason to be thankful that the theory they advocate is working out so well.

Women are not, by any means, tumbling over each other in eagerness to imitate the example of prolificness in Lucifer 650.

Large families are comparatively rare nowadays. On every hand we find young men who refrain from marriage because they know that industry and skill do not give assurance of ability to provide "places at nature's table." Young women refuse to marry for various reasons. The wives of working men are moving heaven and earth, so to speak, in their frantic endeavors to limit the family to the possibilities of scanty and constantly lowering income. They grasp eagerly at any knowledge of contraceptics, preventives, methods of abortion, anything, everything to lower the cost of living. Thus adapting themselves to the millionaire's regime that stores the honey of the working bees in the hives of the drones. All this has a tendency to eliminate from human nature the parental instinct and desire that lovers of the race think so important. I too "avoid personalities as much as possible," and hope I have not transgressed this rule.

REMARKS [by Moses Harman]

I may not be a "philosophical labor reformer," but I still insist that it is the quality of population rather than the quantity that will bring "salvation" from plutocratic rule. The more "life" we have of the lower types the more easy it will be for the slave-holding class to perpetuate its power by pitting the slaves against each other. It is only the strong, the intelligent, the self-reliant, the self-respecting men who can be relied on to bring salvation for themselves and their fellow toilers, and such men as these are not born of submissive, improvident mothers.

The mother bee does not store honey at all, nor does she portion it out to her offspring, but being herself free and strong, self-reliant and provident, she produces a race of workers who will not become slaves to drones. The human mother is not free nor strong, self-reliant nor self-respecting, and her offspring are - like unto herself! An important difference. When will the human mother go to the bee, "consider her ways and be wise."

Most of the points brought forward by Mrs. White are sufficiently answered by Mrs. Wilcox and Mr. Coolridge in this week's Lucifer, and the rest seem to me to be self-refuting. At all events we have no further space for answer in this week's issue. - M.H.

- *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, April 14, 1897, Vol. I, No. 15.

Shall We Be Happy by Being Deceived?

BY LILLIE D. WHITE.

In a discussion I have had with a very dear friend (who gives me permission to submit a few pages to Lucifer) she says, "The women here are narrow-minded, old-fashioned 'slave wives and mothers' but they seem far happier, kinder and sweeter than any of the do-as-I-please or free love women I have known."

It is true that the dutiful, conventional, God-and-Grundy-taught, please-your-husband woman acquires a reputation for sweetness and kindness that the self-assertive rebel against authority and marriage seldom enjoys. But in my opinion she deserves no credit for it. I do not admire self-sacrifice or submission to the will of others, but women have so long been taught that these are the highest of feminine virtues they seem to enjoy the situation and thrive in it.

For my part I know no better rule of conduct than for every one to do as he or she pleases, with of course a due consideration of *consequences* to oneself as well as to the rights and feelings of others. The only one I would prevent from doing as he pleases is the one who is invading the personal rights of another. And in the case we have been discussing this was what the husband did for a good many years. Is not he the one to be condemned for doing as he pleases when it means a constant outrage of his wife's tastes, inclinations and desires instead of her who asks nothing of him "but to keep his hands off."

They had not one taste in common but she never objected to any way he chose to enjoy life away from her while he objected to everything she did that had not direct reference to his pleasure and comfort. This was the price of her peace - what she paid for a "respectable position" and a reputation for being "happy and kind and sweet." How much better it is to keep up appearances and be quiet than to tell the truth when it makes a disagreeable racket.

How this old world does like to be deceived! Barnum said people liked to be humbugged, but they are determined to be deceived. The stability and sanctity of our marriage institution is largely due to deception and hypocrisy. No one knows how much of our boasted happiness and peace depends upon the success with which we cover up our mistakes. The short life of David Copperfield's little Dora was blissfully happy because she was successfully deceived.

Maybe Mrs. McKinley's supremely happy married life had no better basis. A great many women and men also are made happy by that kind of deception and no one should object to anything that makes people happy. Our marriage institution depends upon it but each one must decide for him or herself just how much of that kind of happiness he or she can afford to give.

The only marriage that is worth suffering or sacrificing oneself for is the one that requires neither. The union of congenial "twin souls" where both are made happy by each doing as he pleases, may be possible even in this wicked world and the despised "do as I please" woman may be doing more to establish such a marriage than the "sweet and kind" ignoramus ("narrow-minded and old foggy") who contentedly makes the best of the present wretched hodge-podge and gets the credit of being the bulwark of our "grand" civilization.

No one knows better than I the likelihood of the "do-as-I-please woman" being crushed in the ruins of the altars and hearthstones she demolishes - how cold and bare and merciless is the alternative the world offers. She, indeed, is "following the path where her feet bleed," but no philosopher will censure her. With all her mistakes, blunders, suffering and failures she is an important factor in the coming of the new time.

I have no word of blame for her nor for the poor soul-starved, over-worked, over-burdened, please-your-husband women that I see all around me, and no advice to give either. I see no soft, easy place in the world of social freedom for the rebellious slave who would loosen her bonds if she could. Millions

of bodies must yet be thrown into the stream before the bridge is built over which the whole human race will pass to the Land of Freedom.

- *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, Third Series, Vol. VI, No. 14, 4/17/1902, p. 1-2.

Control of Children.

I am glad Mr. Harman has invited discussion on child training. It is an important subject and one on which most of us have opinions. The selection from Herbert Spencer in No. 959 was the best thing that could be said on the subject. People who feel desperate and make a great fuss because children are sometimes bad, whatever the training, should be comforted by the article as the writer explains it (the badness) as belonging naturally to the evolutionary growth of children and they get over it as they grow larger and their noses get the right shape.

C.L. James gets a good deal of criticism but he is all right on this question, for he agrees with me. Children do not need so much forcing as most people think.

Sadie Magoon is a long way ahead of the average child trainer in kindness and good sense but she too makes mistakes, that is, from my standpoint.

She should have allowed her little girl to wade in that icy water all she wanted to. Children were never made sick by rain or snow or cold or wet or ice if they play in them as long as they enjoy it, and have a chance to get warm and dry when they are ready and want the dry clothes and warmth. Mrs. Magoon did not say her child was sick from going in the water three times. Why should she be made sick from the fourth or fifth, or if she had been in as much as the three times all at once? That plan would have saved two pairs of shoes and stockings. Why should the child be robbed of that much pleasure? Think what a rare chance she had to be insured against future wettings, accidental or otherwise. Now she *is* in danger of being made sick when she gets wet, which is very likely to happen occasionally. Few of us get through the world dry shod, and it is of no great advantage to us if we do.

It is an awful superstition mothers get, that wet and cold make children sick. The *do* get sick from them sometimes, it is true, but it is the superstition, not the wet and cold, makes them so. Girls are taught that it is particularly dangerous at certain times to be exposed to cold or wet or bad weather, and so, if they are obedient, they will be very careful, and when by accident they are so exposed they will be very sick, because that is the programme - and conventional lines must not be ignored.

I never did a think in my life with the direct purpose of saving or improving my health. I never refrained from doing anything I wanted to do on account of a possible effect on my health. I am not too old to remember how I loved to wade in water and paddle around in a hard rain; in fact, I enjoy it yet, and I would not rob my children of the same pleasure. I remember rolling in snow with the other children when I was a child, and how we enjoyed it. We didn't spoil any clothes, either, nor have to change. We were never prevented from doing anything of that kind we wanted to do, and there was never a bunch of healthier "kids" raised than we were. We never had to be called in; we knew just when we had enough without any coercion or instruction.

I always felt the utmost assurance that my children knew enough to come in when it rained - that is, if they wanted to. If they didn't want to come in they were not forced to, and they enjoyed the same pleasures and benefits that plants and animals derive from rain. My children have better health than the average, and I have had none die. If we live and learn we will discover ghosts in our hygienic creed as well as in the religious. It will be better to banish them all.

Mrs. Magoon says: "I never told them to do or not to do anything and then allowed them to persuade me to decide differently."

I wonder why! We allow ourselves to be persuaded to decide differently on many ideas in religion, politics, love, business, etc. Why should we be creed-bound only to our children? A neighbor of mine who believed in this creed told me of an experience of her own. Her little girl in a pettish way threw a

handful of beans on the floor. The mother told her to pick them up, and on the command being refused she proceeded to not be persuaded to decide differently. She had begun a washing, which she put away for the sake of inculcating a lesson of neatness and obedience - a worthy object, surely. She was kept busy until noon coaxing, scolding and spanking to get the beans picked up, but she "conquered." Glorious victory!

If it had been me who told my two-year-old baby to pick up some beans and she objected, the beans would have remained on the floor until this time, if they hadn't got swept out incidentally, before I would have spanked a single spank for the sake of beans or obedience.

I should consider it one of the greatest misfortunes of life to have a thoroughly obedient child. A clubfoot or cross-eyes or rickets would be a picnic in comparison. A little incident in real life to illustrate. Some little neighbor children came to visit mine one day, a long time ago. Their grandma proposed to take the whole gang to see a new building, a short block away. The oldest visitor said: "Oh, no; we can't go, for we didn't ask mamma."

I told my children then I hoped they would never be so dependent on my permission, or so devoid of judgment of their own that they would be afraid to step out of their tracks without my consent. I wanted them never to lose a little pleasure that came in their way through fear of what I would say or do.

Nothing is so destructive of the growth of judgment, of character, of individuality as a dependence on the will or judgment or authority of another. A willing dependence is more damaging than if forced. Unwilling obedience foretells a future rebellion. Willing, slavish obedience is hopeless.

We sometimes hear stories in which the moral is that prompt obedience saves a child from danger or death. But while teaching moral lessons of that kind, just think of the boy who stood on the burning deck. We all know what happened to him.

LILLIE D. WHITE.

Lake Charles, La.

- *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, Third Series, Vol. VII, No. 12, Whole No. 9-6, 4/2/1903, p. 90.

Breeding Prize Animals.

To give R.B. Kerr a continued hearing in *Lucifer* strikes me as being a very severe test of one's advocacy of free speech. I should have to say of his article in 977, "This is the end of the limit." I consider it an insult to free women and a worse insult to free men.

Some people, however, seem to like that kind of stuff, and he certainly writes just the sort of stuff such people like. It would be too bad to deprive any one of such pleasures. But there must be some readers who do not believe that freedom and intelligence will lead women into competing with each other as breeders of prize animals. I hope Kerr will hear from them.

For many years old men-grannies have worried exceedingly about women becoming unfit for mothers through the higher education, and that freedom and intelligence might lead them to refuse to be mothers. They may be consoled, for Mr. Kerr has discovered something that is going to make women rush into competition with each other in breeding babies by the tall, handsome, muscular, generous men. Of course, the men have nothing to say. They are not free to choose the mothers of their children! Whoever heard of such a thing?

The social and sex reformers do talk and write a great variety of rot. "The freedom or right of a woman to choose the father of her child," is one of their most precious axioms, and, to my mind, one of the rottenest. Women do not make any such choice; they don't want to, however free they may be.

Women usually choose or are chosen by men as companions or lovers for their own grown-up mutual happiness. There is no reason to think free women will do differently. Children may result - more or less welcome - but instances are rare in which fathers are chosen in any other way. There may have been in the history of the social revolution a woman here and there who deliberately and intelligently decided on the baby, then considered who should be its father (with regard to fitness only - not affection), and

following stirpiculture rules the best she knew how. But ten to one she never did it a second time, and the chances are she had no more reason to be proud of the baby than if it had been born in the ordinary, unscientific way.

Mr. Kerr is very emphatic about the mental and physical qualifications for fatherhood, but says nothing about fitness for motherhood, thereby implying that all women are fit to be parents, but only a very few men. I believe, if men and women were lined up and properly selected, as many culls would be found among women as men - as many women unfit to be mothers as men unfit to be fathers. But the unfit mothers may choose a fit father, and the poor man has nothing to say about it. "Thy desire shall be unto Woman and she shall rule over thee!" says the new text.

If I were a man I should resent vigorously the theory that "man is ready at all times to supply," etc. In the first place, it is not true, and it would be a disgrace to both men and women if it were true. I could despise no man more thoroughly than one who would consent to father a child for no other reason than that of being solicited by a woman on account of his height or weight or good looks. Such a man might be forgiven for once on account of youth or inexperience or for a desire to experiment - if he repented sincerely and would never do it again, but a man who practices and advocates such propagation is not fit to be a father and is beneath the contempt of self-respecting people.

The idea that "every woman should try to have the best possible children," is not a new one or original with Mr. Kerr. There have always been numberless rules for the guidance of breeding women - more or less superstitious, perhaps - and followed with more or less fidelity. But, according to their knowledge and opportunity, women always have had the best children possible, and they will never do any better than that.

For my part, I don't see anything to worry about. Children are not failures by any means and never have been. And, now that so many have reached here successfully by the old route, why these doleful apprehensions for the future? Are the inferior and the unfit increasing? If so, some other cause is at the bottom of it than big families, overburdened and slave mothers, tyrannical husbands or sex slavery, for these are decreasing and changes are in the direction of conditions that stirpiculturists most desire.

In the diagnosis of every ill, bodily or social, every specialist finds his own particular ailment deeply seated and nothing else the matter. A dose of his remedy is all the patient needs.

It is surprising how many deaf people an ear doctor finds.

A worm doctor can get a tapeworm from any man, woman or child that submits to his treatment.

The Socialist doctor finds society suffering from capitalistic greed, and he's the only man who can cure the patient.

The Infidel finds him rotten with religious superstition and wants to burn the bibles, churches and preachers.

The emancipation-of-women-from-sex-slavery doctor sees in every woman a poor sex slave and in every conjugal embrace a sexual outrage. He would cure the patient immediately by abolishing marriage.

The stirpiculturist sees no babies born but the crippled, deformed, depraved and idiotic. This deplorable condition of the patient can be cured "in no time" by the choice of himself and a few other tall, handsome, superior men to do the fathering of the babies, and in no other way.

And so it goes. "If only I could apply my remedy, how quickly all would be healed."

I tried to hurry with this article, for I thought others would want to say the same things and I wanted to be the first, but two Lucifers have come since I begun it, and no one has stolen my thunder, and neither man nor woman has taken up their respective battles with Mr. Kerr.

I wonder if the twentieth century man has not sufficiently outgrown the virus of old-time chivalry to deny the charge, or does he fear by its denial the reflection on his manliness cast by commonplace mind?
LILLIE D. WHITE.

- *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, Third Series, Vol. VII, No. 30, Whole No. 981, 8/6/1903, p. 234.

Revolutionists

[Lizzie M. Holmes]

Our martyred [Haymarket] comrades were revolutionists. They never denied it and they worked, hoped and died for it. It was part of their lives, a religion, in a sense, and they carried it to that last moment when [Adolph] Fischer cried, "This is the happiest moment of my life!"

But a revolutionist is not to be comprehended by the common mind which thinks as it is told to think; and he is more than *we* are wont to believe. He is pictured as a caricature of rage and rebellion. He is more likely to tower above our heads, calm, thoughtful, courageous, realizing better than we, the danger, yet patiently, bravely awaiting it. He is more than a reformer, more than a well-wisher of humanity. He does not hope - he *wills*.

He sees a vision of society as it should be, thrown up against the sky of the future, and all his mighty energies are bent upon making it a reality. The terrors facing him do not count; the immediate perils are small compared to centuries of anguish stretching behind him, and the marvelous possibilities glowing in the future. Compromises, palliatives, peace measures, are but obstacles in the way of a true adjustment of human relations. He is standing upon a mountaintop, and he knows before we do what is coming.

He does not love violence and bloodshed; his great heart is breaking over the sufferings of the poor; he cannot endure that this shall go on forever, and in his prophetic brain, he knows - *it will not!*

But the world does not need such men, it is said. "A revolutionist is about nine parts crank and one part criminal," comes from a lenient critic; and he adds, "Evolution is the silent force at work, and our impatience, our violence, our unhappiness over sad conditions do not hasten or retard the general progress. Why not make the best of things and so add to the stock of happiness by being happy ourselves?"

But evolution is made up of growth and sudden changes, and painful births, and deaths of the old. It is not all gentle unfoldment in the warm, sleep sunshine. Pain and struggle and irresistible energy are elements in evolution. The destroyer is part of the process of up-building, and we need not fear it.

*"Whate'er of good the old time had
Is living still."*

That fiercely, desperately, earnest soul who is ready to die that the truth may be uncovered from the weight of thousands of years, is a necessary factor in development. We dread his disturbing influence; so do we dread the furious storm which clears and purifies the air, but it must come.

It is not in us all to be revolutionists. Many of us are not made of that stuff which can rise about the present, troublous danger and live and die for a coming glory. We have not that terrible courage which demands justice though the heavens fall. It is not necessary, perhaps. Planners and builders are wanted; cheery souls who can conserve the possibilities of happiness until all can enjoy them, sweet natures who will live beautifully, as we all wish to do sometimes, and who preserve the ideal. The art of living must not be forgotten while we are struggling for the opportunities to learn it; the poetry of life must be cherished by someone, while others are fighting for a place for it.

It is not easy to make happiness, to keep bright and cheery and brave under conditions which tend to kill the spirit; and they, too, are heroic who can always do this. But let them never belittle the grand, great natures who can do what is also essential, and which they cannot do.

The world worships its successful fighters, and questions little why they fought. The slain and the vanquished are reviled rebels, though their cause was the noblest; one lauded victor must have climbed over the bodies of many martyrs - and they are forgotten. Our comrades are as yet among the vanquished; it depends on us to rescue their names from obloquy, and to keep bright the cause for which they died. The love of life was strong in their young, ardent natures, yet they shrank not from the sacrifice. Their devotion was an inevitable part of evolution; quiet work, endurance, patience, hopefulness, the simple *living* of those principles we love, are also necessary. But - ah, let us never forget the men who could rise

to heights we perhaps never could, or blame them for being the lofty souls they were. The martyrs of the race have been its saviors.

- Lizzie M. Holmes, *Free Society*, November 1, 1899; *Haymarket Scrapbook*, edited by Dave Roediger and Franklin Rosemont, Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, Chicago, IL 60690, 1986, p. 179-180.

[In Honor of Mary Wollstonecraft]

By Lizzie M. Holmes.

The rebellious cry of a slave is never an agreeable sound, and is never popular at the time it is heard. Be it ever so expressive, ever so strong, ever so eloquent, the majority of the people will not listen to it, and many would like to see the crier killed that his protests might be silenced.

Sometimes, if in after years the slave and his fellows should gain a modicum of freedom, the worth of the first rebel is recognized and he receives a belated measure of appreciation and praise. Only "success succeeds" and then the reviled rebel becomes a hero.

Mary Wollstonecraft was the first woman in these later centuries to raise a cry for the "Rights of Women," and really inaugurated the modern Woman's Rights movement. The rights that have been claimed for women during the century since Mary Wollstonecraft lived have been ridiculed, abused, misrepresented, tossed aside as worthless; yet, almost unconsciously to society, the conditions that warrant for women all that she demanded have slowly swept into existence, and even while we are laughing at the "coming woman," lo! she is here as the "new woman" and we accept her whether or no, and find ourselves made as happy by her and as dearly loved as ever. And we find her so great. There is so much of her; she is brave as well as gentle, wise as well as loving, self-poised and self-respecting as well as self-sacrificing and faithful. There are not enough of her as yet, but she is still coming. There is a new vitality in society, new thoughts stirring revived minds, new and better loves springing up and higher ideas of happiness coming into existence. And we are still improving. This new and better condition of affairs has had as one of its most powerful promoters the work of the brave band of women who were in the first place aroused to action by the noble and energetic Mary Wollstonecraft.

The demands made by the Woman's Rights societies may not always have been wisely made; not always timely, and not always what women really needed. But their influence in bringing about better conditions for women can scarcely be estimated. While they demanded in strenuous tones "the ballot for women," "representation with taxation" and, except in a few instances, have failed utterly, they have brought about what is far better, viz., the recognition of woman's rights to herself, to live her own life, to development, to a choice in the use of her powers in the world of industry, art and learning.

Mary Wollstonecraft's claim for rights for women included all that has come to her and more; she believed that equal franchise would bring about a recognition of her equal rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, sooner than anything else. It was too soon then for even the most advanced of thinkers to appreciate the fact that the ballot, like the scepter, is an instrument of despotism and no person living has a "God-given right" to use it. This thought is heresy even now, but thoughtful people know it is true. All the reasons that have ever been urged against the use of the ballot by women were well grounded; but they weigh against its use by men as well. It used to be said that woman ought not to expect the right of franchise because she could not carry a gun. But the truth is, that intelligent human beings out to use neither. One is a form of violent coercion, so is the other. It is not a thing to be proud of - that of being trained to kill one's fellow beings; it is no more honorable to force one's fellows to obey laws and to live under conditions which they despise; so it has been no great loss to women that they could neither carry a gun and fight like a soldier, nor cast a ballot like a politician.

Women have made these demands as a groundwork for greater liberty in all fields; for equal opportunities, for the right to choose their vocations, their beliefs, their friends and their lovers; and that they have not got what they asked for, but *have* gained in some degree these higher rights, is a grand accomplishment.

In the days when virtuous women were to be seen only in the home, when women were secluded, guarded, protected and commanded, and from whom only domesticity, faithfulness, tenderness to her own, and obedience were expected, it was a mighty work to write such a book as "The Rights of woman"; and brave must have been the woman who "dared." But hers was a large soul, and the brain that could conceive unaided the thoughts contained in it, worthy to be remembered through all the long ages to come after her. Mary Wollstonecraft was one of the great women of that century; besides her wonderful ability she was loving, true, sympathetic, and she understood her own nature and lived up to it. But like Thomas Paine, her good works are forgotten because she advocated an unpopular cause. She has not been remembered as she should have been in this country; she helped to lay the foundation of such freedom, independence, brave thinking as we possess, and should be remembered as a heroine. But if only in the hearts of a few liberty-loving thinkers her memory is held sacred, let it be with more intense reverence and love, for that fact; may her memory be kept green forever in the minds of all those who love liberty, equality and fraternity.

- *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, Third Series, Vol. VII, No. 16, Whole No. 967, 4/30/1903, p. 123.

A Free Woman's Duties.

Although I know that Celia B. Whitehead is perfectly capable of taking care of herself and her side of the question, and of answering R.B. Kerr properly, I cannot resist taking a slight part in the controversy myself.

For this reason: I have been so many times exasperated since I took an interest in social questions - which is about forty years ago - at the assurance with which so many radical men have presumed to tell free women what they ought to do. It seems that it is so ingrained in the fiber of a man's makeup to advise, control and guide women, that in the very act of fighting for woman's freedom he must drag in alot of paradoxical stuff about a free woman's duties.

I do not believe in any man's right to compel women to do anything "for the sake of having her children well born" - not even in his advising her in regard to it. For several reasons:

The first is that in our present stage of progression nobody knows anything about he laws of heredity or prenatal influence. Some pretend they know, but the final outcome is seldom what the parents or any one else expected or prepared for. A woman, a human mother, cannot be compared to a horse, a cow or a sheep. Dyer D. Lum used to say, "You cannot train human beings on barnyard morals." There may be such a thing as "scientific breeding" among domestic animals, but as yet there is no such thing among human beings. The surroundings, conditions, psychic influences, the relation to others of the human mother, are so complex, so intermingled, are so varied and so changeable, that it is impossible to formulate a law that you can always count on. Thus one mother will refrain from touching intoxicating drink for fear of imparting a taste for it to her unborn child; another will drink it when she fancies she has a craving for it, for the same reason. And one child is as likely to be a drunkard as the other, or the reverse. And I believe it is generally conceded that hereditary influences do not count much against surroundings after the child is born. So, as the case is as doubtful as is religion, who has any right to advise or suggest any particular plan or course of conduct as regards the welfare of unborn children?

Another is: You have no right to ask a mother to make sacrifices for unborn children - that is, personal sacrifices of her feelings, rights, tastes and inclinations. I protest against any woman's being

expected to "become a mother to a man to whom her 'whole being did not go out,' for the sake of a future child." I would not ask her to give up one single "whim or inclination of her own" just for the supposed good of her coming child.

Another reason is: that an argument for variety for the sake of the welfare of future children is like "speaking two words for yourself and one for the child." It seems that men like variety, but whether it is a natural trait that would remain under the best and freest conditions is yet to be seen. I believe that it comes from long centuries of pandering to the passions of men, of conceding that men's passions are of so much importance, until now he is an abnormal creature, mostly run to animal instincts and a fierce greediness for new sensations. Perhaps the companion and lover of the future free woman will be an altogether different sort of being. Women are more inclined to constancy and, as Mrs. Whitehead says, a true woman who develops in an all-around, well-poised manner does not want to - cannot, even - "change her whole affectional and mental attitude every two or three years," even for the sake of the welfare of her children. She should not be required to do so. Anything that interferes with the individual's first duty to herself is wrong.

But I believe that all this talk about a mother's sacrificing her own wishes and desires, giving up all her own "whims and inclinations" for the sake of well-born children, is useless. Since we cannot any of us define a line of conduct, of thought and action that will positively insure perfectly born children, it seems to me the next best thing is for every woman to do the very best she can for herself. If free and unprejudiced, she will naturally do this: She will look out for her own health and happiness, her own best development, her own highest thoughts and emotions. She will not be advised or cajoled into becoming a mother by a man she does not love merely because the man is a healthy animal. Such parenthood would be robbed of all that is sweet and tender and spiritual - all that makes it beautiful, and would probably have as deleterious an effect on the child as anything could.

As to women's choosing sick or weak men as fathers because they love them - that is a difficult question and cannot be settled offhand. I certainly would not coerce the woman into my way of thinking about it, whatever that way might be. I know a sweet-souled little widow with as pretty, healthy and good a child as I ever saw anywhere. After she was married a few months her husband began to show symptoms of consumption, and finally the doctors declared that he was doomed to die sooner or later. The wife's friends warned her to be careful and avoid pregnancy as the child might inherit the father's weakness. She said:

"If I must lose my beloved husband, the next greatest happiness I can have in this world is to bear a child that is his. I will not let it inherit anything that can injure it; it will be a child of such love that it cannot go wrong. If I may, I shall bear a child by him."

And she did; the sweet little girl is her greatest comfort and happiness today. Who would have had a right to forbid her indulging her great wish? Surely not any lover of liberty.

I am willing to leave the whole subject to free and enlightened women, unadvised by "free" men who delight in telling free women what they must do.

LIZZIE HOLMES.

- *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, Third Series, Vol. VII, No. 18, Whole No. 969, 5/14/1903.

There is No Death.

There is no death;
'Tis but a change
From this old house into a newer,
But a passing from a sham life
Into a truer.

There is no death;
'Tis but a step
That leads up to the higher;
Each setting of the sun doth bring
Us one day nigher.

There is no death;
'Tis but a change
Wrought in nature's laboratory,
But passing on from mundane spheres
To higher glory.

There is no death;
'Tis setting free
From clay's incumbering fetters,
Where spirit grows in wisdom's ways
Far better.

There is no death;
'Tis but a law,
A mandate, that no man can sever;
Progression's forward course will be
On, on forever.

- C.S. White, in "Twentieth Century," Sept. 8, 1892.
- *Lucifer, the Light-Bearer*, Whole No. 1055, 12/21/1905.



SUSAN WIXON

SUSAN WIXON

Susan Wixon's family arrived in Eastham, Massachusetts in 1621. Of Welsh descent, Susan Helen Wixon was born into an upper middle class family. While she was still young, her father and mother, Captain James Wixon and Bethia Smith Wixon,¹ moved the family from Dennisport,² Cape Cod to Fall River, Massachusetts after four of her brothers died at sea, all in the same tragic incident.³ Her father, who had traveled extensively at sea and had dealings with people around the world, had come to the conclusion that religion was based more on location and training than truth, and adopted the philosophy of the brotherhood of the human race as his creed.

Although liberals, her parents exposed her to orthodox religion at an early age, sending her to Sunday school. Susan's reaction to the lessons foretold her future philosophy. Although very young, and not very articulate, she told her teacher and classmates that "Anybody who would make a lake of fire and brimstone in which to burn up his children ought to be the first one to be burned in it."⁴

Raised to be independent, Susan taught school for several years, despite her family wealth. Indeed, she was such a good student in the public schools that she applied to be a teacher at twelve, and made such a good impression on the committee elected by the town to hire teachers, that she began teaching at thirteen.⁵

Going back to school for further education, Susan went on to teach for several more years in both Massachusetts and Rhode Island while still quite young. The removal from her parents' home necessitated by her career showed her more of the world, and although she had attended the Universalist church with her parents in Fall River, she now dabbled in Spiritualism for a short while before deciding that all the supernatural theories to which she had been exposed were false.

Susan was very interested in industrial reform, especially when it concerned women's role in industry. When mill workers went on strike in Fall River, Susan joined their cause, even though her father was a major stockholder in the various mill corporations in the town.⁶ Later, her activism in this cause led to her election to the committee on woman's industrial advancement for the World's Columbian Exposition. Through her efforts in promoting her ideas to Governor Russell of Massachusetts, she gained the appointment for two women as factory inspectors in 1891.

¹ *A Woman of the Century, 1470 Biographical Sketches Accompanied by Portraits of Leading American Women in All Walks of Life*, edited by Frances E. Willard and Mary A. Livermore, Charles Wells Moulton Publisher, 1893, republished by Gale Research Company, Book Tower, Detroit, 1967, p. 793-4.

² Also listed as Dennis Port, and Dennis in other biographies.

³ *A Woman of the Century, 1470 Biographical Sketches Accompanied by Portraits of Leading American Women in All Walks of Life*, edited by Frances E. Willard and Mary A. Livermore, Charles Wells Moulton Publisher, 1893, republished by Gale Research Company, Book Tower, Detroit, 1967, p. 793-4.

⁴ *Four Hundred Years of Freethought*, Samuel Putnam, 1894, The Truth Seeker Company, p. 824-28.

⁵ *A Woman of the Century, 1470 Biographical Sketches Accompanied by Portraits of Leading American Women in All Walks of Life*, edited by Frances E. Willard and Mary A. Livermore, Charles Wells Moulton Publisher, 1893, republished by Gale Research Company, Book Tower, Detroit, 1967, p. 793-4.

Four Hundred Years of Freethought, Samuel Putnam, 1894, The Truth Seeker Company, p. 824-8.

⁶ *World's Sages, Thinkers and Reformers*, D.M. Bennett, Liberal and Scientific Publishing House, New York, 1878, p. 1032-33.

One of Susan's first public efforts was her opposition to the use of funds for sectarian purposes by a corporation in which she owned stock. Attending the annual stockholders meeting, she spoke so forcefully against this practice that the vote taken after her speech ended it. A local paper, reporting on the event, wrote, "We honor the heroism of the young lady, a stockholder, who had the devotion to principle and the moral courage to attend a meeting of stockholders where she was the only woman present, and, with thrilling eloquence, to advocate the rights of those who were thus attempted to be despoiled of their own, by the combined action of corporate sectarian influence, and whose strong logic, forcible appeal, cutting and convincing arguments, roused a majority to side with right and justice. When Roger Williams, the apostle of religious liberty, fled from Massachusetts to Rhode Island, he declared for 'soul liberty.' Let credit be given to Susan H. Wixon for the same noble sentiment."⁷

Susan was the first woman to speak in Paine Hall, a favorite gathering place for liberals.

Always interested in education, Susan was elected to the School Committee in Fall River first in 1873, serving for three years, and was re-elected in 1890 and continued to be re-elected for at least 21 years,⁸ even though her Atheism made her unpopular with many. In at least one election, her name appeared on both the Republican and Democratic ticket.⁹

In love with a fellow reformer and lecturer, he unfortunately died before their wedding could take place.¹⁰ She never married.

Susan wrote the "Children's Corner," published in the *Truth Seeker* for many years, as well as contributing to the *Boston Investigator*.¹¹ For many years she was a reporter for the *Boston Sunday Record*.¹²

Susan wrote several books, including *Apples of Gold* (1876), *Sunday Observance* (1883), *All in a Lifetime* (1884), *The Story Hour* (1885), *Summer Days at Onset* (1887), and *Right Living* (1894). *The Story Hour* was said to be "the only illustrated Freethinker's children's story-book in the world."¹³

⁷ *Four Hundred Years of Freethought*, Samuel Putnam, 1894, The Truth Seeker Company, p. 824-28.

⁸ *Fifty Years of Freethought*, Vol. II, George E. Macdonald, The Truth Seeker Company, New York, 1931, p. 401.

⁹ *Torch of Reason*, Vol. III, No. 25, 6/29/1899, p. 2.

¹⁰ *World's Sages, Thinkers and Reformers*, D.M. Bennett, Liberal and Scientific Publishing House, New York, 1878, p. 1032-33.

¹¹ *A Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers of All Ages and Nations*, J.M. Wheeler, Progressive Publishing Company, 1889, p. 335.

¹² *A Woman of the Century, 1470 Biographical Sketches Accompanied by Portraits of Leading American Women in All Walks of Life*, edited by Frances E. Willard and Mary A. Livermore, Charles Wells Moulton Publisher, 1893, republished by Gale Research Company, Book Tower, Detroit, 1967, p. 793-4.

¹³ *Four Hundred Years of Freethought*, Samuel Putnam, 1894, The Truth Seeker Company, p. 824-28.

A Biographical Dictionary of Modern Rationalists, Joseph McCabe, London, Watts & Co., 1920, p. 901-2.

Her interests led her to become the president of the Humboldt Scientific Society, founder and president of the Fall River Woman's Education and Industrial Society and a member of various organizations, including the Woman's Relief Corp, Associated Charities, and the Moral Educational Society of Boston, among others.

She used her position on these societies not only to promote their individual agendas, but to promote her favorite themes. In a meeting of the Humboldt Scientific Society, she spoke on woman suffrage, for instance.¹⁴

Susan served on the executive committee of the National Woman's Liberal Union, established as a more radical woman's rights organization than either of the better known National Woman's Suffrage Association or American Woman's Suffrage Association. Working primarily for separation of church and state, as well as for woman's rights, the Union was established in 1890. The Union president was Matilda Joslyn Gage, and other members included Voltairine de Cleyre and Olympia Brown. Among its' stated objectives were the recognition by government of woman's equality, a demand to preserve the secular nature of the government and last, "To show that the real foundation of the Church is the doctrine which we denounce as false in science and its foundation a theological myth."¹⁵ Resolutions included in the organizational meeting of the N.W.L.U. included a reaffirmation of the importance of separation of church and state, and included the following:

Resolved, That the Christian church, of whatever name, is based on the theory that woman was created secondary and inferior to man, and brought sin into the world and necessitated the sacrifice of a Savior. That Christianity is false and its foundation a myth, which every discovery of science shows to be as baseless as its former belief that the earth is flat.

Resolved, That every church is the enemy of liberty and progress and the chief means of enslaving woman's conscience and reason, and, therefore, as the first and most necessary step toward her emancipation, we should free her from the bondage of the church.

Resolved, That, as the first duty of every individual is self-development, the lessons of self-sacrifice and obedience taught woman by the Christian church have been fatal not only to her own vital interests, but, through her, to the vital interest of the race.

Resolved, That the great principle of the Protestant reformation, namely, the right of individual conscience and judgment, heretofore claimed and exercised by man alone, must also be claimed and exercised by woman, who, in her interpretation of the Scriptures, should be guided by her own reason, and not by the authority of any church or creed.

Resolved, That as our nation is composed of people holding various and conflicting religious views, Roman Catholics disagreeing with Protestant forms, both disagreeing with Jewish rites, and the agnostic holding to no defined system; therefore it is wrong and unjust to impose upon the pupils of our common schools religious instruction of any sort, and in simple justice to all people we denounce and oppose every kind of religious instruction in our schools.

Resolved, That morality is not theology, but has a basis independent of "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not;" that right is right and wrong is wrong, not because any being in the universe so declares, but in the nature of things, the origin of right being in truth and not in authority.

Resolved, That we seek the truth come whence it may and lead where it will; with the Greek Plato we deem nothing so beautiful as truth; with Hindu Maharajah, we believe no religion can excel the truth, and, with the American Lucretia Mott, we accept "truth for authority and not authority for truth."

¹⁴ *The Woman's Tribune*, Vol. XIV, No. 7, 4/3/1897, p. 1.

¹⁵ *The Woman's Tribune*, 2/22/1890, p. 80.

In addition to being on the executive council, Susan spoke at the inaugural session, and read an original poem, "When Womanhood Awakes."¹⁶

In 1892, Susan toured Europe, visiting England, Scotland, France and Belgium, principally studying the tariff/free trade question, and collecting statistics on woman's work and wages, and writing and speaking of her findings when she returned.

In 1893, Susan wrote encouraging women's participation and attendance at the Freethought Congress to be held in Chicago in October, which was setting aside one day as "Woman's Day." As part of her plea, Susan wrote, "The tyrannical metes and measures of ecclesiastical authority have trampled upon womanhood as nothing else in this world has done or could have done. Ecclesiasticism made her a slave, an underling, and fastened the finger of silence upon her lips....Every woman who knows the value of an independent mind should be present at the freethought congress in October. Every woman who has felt the thralldom put upon her sex by theological dogma should make it a point to be at the congress, that the world may see how many women there are who are superior to superstition and priestly influence. The congress has honored woman by the appointment of a day essentially her own. Let women honor congress by her presence."¹⁷

In 1897, she was elected secretary of the American Secular Union and Freethought Federation,¹⁸ and in 1899, she was elected a vice-president and served in that capacity for several years.¹⁹ At the 1902 26th Annual Congress of the American Secular Union, Susan shared the platform with Edwin C. Walker, Charles Watts, Moncure D. Conway, Hugh O. Pentecost and others.²⁰

During her adult life, Susan lived with her sister, remaining in Fall River.²¹

Susan died in her home on August 28, 1912. She never told her age, but was thought to be about 65 at the time of her death.²²

¹⁶ *The Woman's Tribune*, 2/22/1890, p. 80.

¹⁷ *The Ironclad Age*, Vol. 38, No. 24, 8/19/1893, p. 1.

¹⁸ *Fifty Years of Freethought*, Vol. II, George E. Macdonald, The Truth Seeker Company, New York, 1931, p. 147.

¹⁹ *Torch of Reason*, Vol. III, No. 47, 11/30/1899.

²⁰ *Fifty Years of Freethought*, Vol. II, George E. Macdonald, The Truth Seeker Company, New York, 1931, p. 227-28.

²¹ *A Woman of the Century, 1470 Biographical Sketches Accompanied by Portraits of Leading American Women in All Walks of Life*, edited by Frances E. Willard and Mary A. Livermore, Charles Wells Moulton Publisher, 1893, republished by Gale Research Company, Book Tower, Detroit, 1967, p. 793-4.

²² *Fifty Years of Freethought*, Vol. II, George E. Macdonald, The Truth Seeker Company, New York, 1931, p. 401.

Quotes

Superstition is called by the fashionable name of religion to-day, and though its fangs have lost none of their poison and venom, yet it cannot do the harm it would, thanks to the pioneers of Freethought who have gone before.

- *The Truth Seeker*, June 21, 1879.

The cause of the subjugation of woman reaches far back, and is wound around with the rusted chain of ancient theology and a false faith.

- *Woman: Four Centuries of Progress*, Susan H. Wixon, The Truth Seeker Company, 1893, p. 9.

The more Christianity prevailed the worse it was for woman. When Christianity wore its highest crown of power, then was the worst period of woman's enslavement.

- *Woman: Four Centuries of Progress*, Susan H. Wixon, The Truth Seeker Company, 1893, p. 13.

The old superstitions have gone, many of them, and where, let me ask, is the Bible to-day? - tottering in weakness, a moldy mass of ignorance and superstition.

- *Woman: Four Centuries of Progress*, Susan H. Wixon, The Truth Seeker Company, 1893, p. 15.

There is one force, and but one, that has brought about this condition of things and assisted woman to the place in which she finds herself to-day. Freethought - call it Liberalism, education, or whatever you will - is the one power which has broken the chains of woman and started her on the road to Freedom.

- *Woman: Four Centuries of Progress*, Susan H. Wixon, The Truth Seeker Company, 1893, p. 29.

Freethought has always been the best friend woman had - the noblest, truest ally and champion. It has ever sought to place her in her own true light before the world - the guide, counselor, and friend of man; queen not only of home and household, but of every domain where her worth and work is required, and equal sharer in life's pursuits, duties, and emoluments - the undwarfed, unfettered, real complement of man.

To a free and liberal press, to the free schools, to free thought and free speech, to an enlightened public opinion, is due the emancipation of woman from the bondage of superstition. To these forces, and these alone, must she look for her future welfare.

- *Woman: Four Centuries of Progress*, Susan H. Wixon, The Truth Seeker Company, 1893, p. 31.

Freethought, many times slandered, bruised, beaten, bleeding, martyred, yet now arisen, glorified, deified, arrayed in robes of consummate grace and glory - the pure white angel, and only saviour of this, or any other world.

- *Woman: Four Centuries of Progress*, Susan H. Wixon, The Truth Seeker Company, 1893, p. 3.

Our public schools are for the children of the people. They should be entirely secular, free from any religious bias or leaning. Composed as they are of the children of Catholics and Protestants, Jew and Gentile, creedist and Atheist, Unitarian and nothingarian, not anything therefore savoring of religion should have a place in the schoolroom. The Bible does not belong there. The common school should be a secular school in every respect. Bible-reading in school does not tend to make a child more moral, nobler, or better in any sense, and, as is usual, hastily read, makes little impression, and every teacher knows that there are parts of the Bible quite unfit for reading. To many pupils it is an idle waste of time. If parents

must insist on this exercise, let it be done in the home or the church of each particular individual. The moral influence of the parent is greater than creed or book. It is the habitual behavior of the parent that influences the child, without which the precept is as naught.

- "Education of Children," *The Truth Seeker Annual and Freethinkers' Almanac*, 1895, Truth Seeker Office, p. 95-103.

Woman: Four Centuries of Progress.

Susan H. Wixon.

A Lecture Delivered at the Freethinkers'

International Congress, Chicago, Ill.

October, 1893.

We are living to-day in the midst of glowing splendors. Our breath mingles with the bloom and beauty, the flowers and fragrance of the grandest hour since time began to be.

On either hand a multitude of honors and achievements meet and greet us.

The blossom of genius, the wealth of art, the glories of science, speak with a million eloquent tongues.

Reality, strong, supple, graceful, with queenly magnificence, dowers the world with strength and honor. As, with magician's wand, she has touched the hidden forces of Nature, lo, from centuries of growth and development, has unfolded the fairest fruitage of all the blooming earth.

It is eminently fitting and proper that the blossom of philosophy and reform should crown this unequalled exhibit of the world's great work and worth. Hence, science holds the jeweled coronal above the fair brow of Freethought to-day. Freethought, many time slandered, bruised, beaten, bleeding, martyred, yet now arisen, glorified, deified, arrayed in robes of consummate grace and glory - the pure white angel, and only savior of this, or any other world.

In the midst of the golden glory of the magical scenes unfolded before the enraptured vision stands woman, an active, honored coadjutor and friend. For the first time in modern history she is in her own place. For the first time her right to be a part of the forces that produce the beauty and delight of the world is acknowledged. For the first time she stands beside her brother in art, literature, industry, and science.

All honor to America for this recognition, a recognition, however, absolutely compelled by the hard work and persistency of woman, and the time in which we live; and it is right that in this new world the triumph of woman over old-time prejudices, over ancient and rigorous customs, should be complete and undisputed.

Just here it is pertinent to inquire why this present condition of things has not always obtained, why woman has not heretofore, as in the present, stood shoulder to shoulder, and hand in hand with man? What terrible force, what iniquitous powers have operated to keep her in ignorance, and what has made her a weakling, distrustful of herself? What had she done? what dreadful crime committed for which she was relegated to a back seat or no seat at all, in the world's great auditorium? What sins lay at her door that she should be compelled to do penance as long as she lived?

And what has changed the order of events? What has raised her to the position she occupies to-day? What power has brought to her the opportunities she now enjoys? What has broken the barriers that, not so long since, shut her from all that she now takes as her just right and due? Why is the consideration tendered her to-day, never vouchsafed her before? What in the past held her a slave, and what has changed her condition?

The above are a few of the inquiries we shall seek to answer, briefly and concisely as possible in the space assigned us upon this occasion.

When Isabella of Castile fitted out, at her own expense, the little squadron, that, launched on its voyage of discovery, was destined to touch into action the springs of a new world, little did she think what

she a woman, was doing for the liberation of her sex. And, when Columbus sent a cargo of Indians to Spain as slaves and this true queen indignantly ordered them returned to their native land, it was then a ringing blow was struck at human slavery, a blow that has resounded down to the present, and still is ringing in the ears of dependent womanhood. It was then that Isabella unlatched the door to the woman's kingdom.

That she gave a reluctant consent to the establishment of the Inquisition only makes more apparent the angry sea of Ecclesiasticism in which she as well as all other women of her time was engulfed. Man was there too, but his head was now and then above water. He could occasionally feel the breezes of liberty and understand which way they were blowing. But woman could neither see the real light nor experience the touch of the sweet winds of freedom.

She was enslaved without knowing it. She accepted her situation meekly. She thought she must. She was born and reared in subjection. Her pre-natal condition bore the stamp and seal of slavery. Her mother wore the badge and emblem of servitude before her.

Her "very chains and she grew friends,
So much a long communion tends
To make us what we are."

She was held as a species of property, along with chattels, animals, or real estate, created, as the Hebrews had it "solely for the pleasure of man," but "man was said to be made for the glory of God."

Petruchio in the "Taming of the Shrew," expresses the former, and to a great extent, the still prevalent notion of the ownership of woman, when he says,

"I will be master of what is mine own.
She is my goods, my chattels; she is my house,
My household stuff, my field, my barn,"

my animal and so on.

This conception of the status of woman is recognized in the Episcopal marriage service. Some male relative must be present to respond "I do," to the question "Who *gives* this woman away?" thus implying that she is owned by somebody, and when she marries she simply changes masters.

No one gives the man away. He usually does that himself! and pretty effectually too, sometimes.

In Spain, four hundred years ago, woman had learned the use of the needle and could sew and embroider, but it was not till the time of Elizabeth that the needle was known to any great extent in England. Four hundred years ago the general use of the table fork was unknown. The clergy from the pulpit denounced the article as devilish, an implement of Satan, and as flying in the face of divine wrath to use it at table when God had purposely made fingers with which to eat.

Society, at that time, was loose and sensual. Woman was the beast of burden, the puppet, the plaything for man's amusement, or the serving mistress to come and go at his command, his vassal, and legitimate prey. She was unacquainted with her own nature, and practically unknown to herself.

Perhaps she had a dim consciousness of something different than she had known, but, in the main, she knew no better than to acquiesce in a dreadful edict that had been put forth against her. Her sphere was compassed by one word - toil. It was bounded by one other word - submission. The mummy of an Egyptian woman represents her with a distaff in her hand and a finger upon her lips, signifying silence and labor.

Worn with fatigue and suffering, many times a mother, with all the consequent perils, trials, cares, and vicissitudes of motherhood, she was in no condition to realize any higher state than the one she occupied. Go look among the valleys and mountains of Italy, Switzerland, Russia, where women have

toiled for eight hundred years in silence and servitude - go to Germany and Belgium and see women harnessed with dogs and sweating under the most abject toil, behold the condition of woman in priest-ridden country, if you would understand a little of the slavery that still holds a woman bound hand and foot. Go to France and those countries where prostitution is legalized, where, under the sanction of law, the bodies of women are made marketable merchandise, if you would realize somewhat of that ancient sacerdotal barbarism that has not even yet taken its fingers from the throat of woman.

Nor need we go three thousand miles from home to find women bending beneath the yoke of a bondage dreadful to contemplate. Nay, nay, friends.

Go out upon the streets of this beautiful city, and behold women selling themselves for bread this very night. And mark ye the eager purchasers at every point. Mark ye, too, the men of standing, of influence, yea, those who are sent up to the nation's capital to frame the laws of the land, hesitating at nothing to accomplish the ruin of innocent women. Take off the veneer from aristocratic circles, and witness the surging of the filthy waves in the miasmatic lakes of pollution, where woman sinks to rise no more.

Go read the "age of consent" laws, disgracing the statute books of every state in the Union. Read the reports of indignities heaped upon young and innocent children, murdered oftentimes by the wolf of passion in man.

And, through it all, from beginning to end, may be traced the subserviency of women herself - the victim and slave of falsehood and fear.

CAUSE OF WOMAN'S SUBJUGATION.

The cause of the subjugation of woman reaches far back, and is wound around with the rusted chain of ancient theology and a false faith. Under pagan rule woman was treated with honor and regard, and she had many rights and privileges which were lost to her under Christian rule.

If ever there was an ingeniously woven plot, it is that the "Fall of Man," with Paul of Tarsus for its mouthpiece.

His words on the subject of women are deadly poison. "She was the first in the transgression," said priestly Paul, "therefore keep her in subjection." "She shall not teach. She must not usurp authority over the man." "She must obey her husband," whatever he may command, and she "*must* keep silence." Why? Well, this is the reason given. "*She* was first deceived and not Adam!"

Realizing that she might desire to ask a question or two, might wish for some education, her schooling is provided for in this way by the sainted Paul: She can go home and ask her husband! Can anyone wonder that women, married women especially, were such absolute illiterates when they had such ignorant instructors as the husbands of the past? No provision having been made for old maids and widows, they have had the field to themselves.

It is needless to say that they have made good use of time, and show some progress! Paul also gave instruction as to how women should dress - that they should not wear gold, jewels, or pearls (see Paul's Epistle to Timothy), thus paving the way for masculine dressmakers. It was long after the death of Paul before women dared to wear rings and breastpins.

This reformer also left written orders how women should wear their back hair, long, of course, and braided. He is, for the most part, dutifully obeyed to this day, with some additions, as the French twist, bangs, and frizzles. He also commanded that woman should keep her head covered when she went to church, and that is presumably the reason, gentlemen, that you find yourselves presented with such marvelous milliners' bills as to sometimes cause each particular hair of your heads to stand on end, like quills upon the fretful porcupine.

Strangely enough, few names are dearer to the ordinary Christian woman's heart than that of Paul, yet no man has done more to bring disgrace, shame, and servitude upon women than this same Paul. No man has stood in the way of woman's progress as he has. No other man, primarily speaking, has caused her so much sorrow; none made her more dependent; none besmirched her name and fame as he has.

No man more deserves the contempt and scorn of the sex he has so slandered and vilified.

An apple has been flung at the head of woman, and she was accused of the blackest crime in the calendar - that of introducing into the world all the shame, pain, woe, crime, and wretchedness in it, and we need contemplate only a portion of it to know how stupendous and monstrous the charge. She was not adjudged probably guilty, and bound over to a higher court for trial, but, without judge or jury, without being allowed one little word in self-defense, without a witness to attest her innocence or to prove an *alibi*, she was pronounced *guilty*, GUILTY, GUILTY!

She was drummed out of her garden home, according to the record, and her sentence pronounced, with no recommendation to mercy.

THE CANON LAW.

The canon law comprises that system of laws established by the Christian church in the ninth century, and based upon the Bible. These laws are the root and cause of the subjugation and degradation of women in Christian countries.

In 1632 a book was published in England in which it is declared that "the reason why women have no control in Parliament, why they make no laws, consent to none, abrogate none, is because of their original sin!"

This is the whole story in a nutshell. All the abuses, humiliations, cruelties, and indignities heaped upon woman in Christian countries may be traced directly and squarely to this source, and nowhere else - the fable of original sin.

Listen to this from St. Chrysostom, Greek father of the church, commonly known as the golden-mouthed saint. This may be one of his golden utterances. Judge ye: "Woman is a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic peril, a deadly fascination, and a painted ill."

Hark ye to what the great authority, Tertullian, a Latin father of the church, said: "Woman, thou shouldst ever be clothed in rags and in mourning, appearing only as a penitent, drowned in tears, and expiating thus the sin of having caused the fall of the human race. Woman, thou art the gate of the devil. It is thou who hast corrupted those whom Satan dare not attack face to face."

You will note that Tertullian regarded woman as worse than the devil.

St. Jerome wrote that "woman is the gate of the devil, the road to iniquity, the sting of the scorpion, in a word, a dangerous species." Jerome was the dirty fellow who lived in one garment till he died, letting his body go unwashed and half-starved, despising and mortifying the same, in order to preserve his soul. At the death of this notable saint, his ragged garment, full of lively tenants, was held up as proof of his right to be known as a saint and blessed martyr. This gave him the undoubted right to thus discourse regarding women.

St. Gregory said that "woman had no comprehension of goodness," and the poet Milton has pictured her in "Paradise Lost" as "the embodiment of sin, half woman and half serpent, chief doorkeeper of the infernal regions." He also wrote of the angels in heaven as being all men. How many of you, gentlemen, would care to purchase tickets to such a heaven as that?

The canon law held that the deposition of a woman was unworthy of credence, although women are not more given to lying than men.

St. Augustine authorized every husband to slap his wife in the face. Upon some such authority as this, undoubtedly, was based the old English law that says a man may beat his wife with a stick, not larger round than his thumb. If larger than that, the beating might incapacitate her for work. The canon law also decreed that woman was so vile, that while the Lord's supper might be allowed her, yet she should not receive it in her naked hands; and the council of Macon in the year 581 solemnly debated with itself whether woman had a soul or not - whether she was a beast or a human being.

St. John Damascene, once Christian governor of Damascus, wrote: "Woman is a daughter of falsehood, a sentinel of hell, the enemy of peace." Another Christian saint said: "Of all wild beasts woman is the most dangerous."

She was regarded as simply a chattel, an unfortunate creature that man felt obliged to provide for, if married to one, while all unmarried women were bound over to slavish toil, by law, from eleven to forty years of age.

It was not till the tenth century that a Christian wife of a Christian husband was allowed to eat at the same table with her husband. The more Christianity prevailed the worse it was for woman. When Christianity wore its highest crown of power, then was the worst period of woman's enslavement.

Lecky, in his history of European morals, writing of this time, says: "Woman was represented as the door of hell - the mother of all ills. She was taught that she should be ashamed of the very thought that she is woman. She should live in continual penance on account of the curses she has brought into the world. She should be ashamed of her dress, for it is the memorial of her fall. She should be especially ashamed of her beauty, for it is the most potent instrument of the demon."

These are some of the degrading sentiments crushing woman to the dust. And they bore the sanction of the then greatest power in the civilized world! How many men could stand up under such an avalanche? I pause for a reply.

These and similar declarations were not treated lightly as in the present, but were held to be gospel truths.

When the witchcraft frenzy broke out in Europe, who but women and female children were the principal victims? It was women who were accounted as having dealings with Satan, and the Bible declares, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live. [sic]" Pope Innocent VIII²³ considered it sufficient authority upon which to issue his famous bull against witchcraft. In Geneva five hundred women were for this cause executed within three months. In Germany it is estimated that one hundred thousand victims to the delusion lost their lives, while the clergy, in mad excitement, preached notable "witch sermons," as they were called, condemnatory of women as witches and vile emissaries of Satan. England sent thirty thousand poor, defenseless creatures to death on the charge of riding through the air on a broomstick! Not only in the old countries did this foolish delusion of witchcraft prevail, but it showed itself in the New World as well, and the first two centuries of the settlement of America bear testimony in the colonial records of frequent arrests, trials, persecutions, and executions of women for practicing witchery. In the United States one hundred and fifty were imprisoned on the charge of witchcraft, nineteen were executed, some upwards of eighty years of age.

These women were believed to be in league with the devil, and were consequently regarded with the utmost horror and suspicion. The persecutions came from the church, and George Combe says, in speaking of this shocking state of affairs, that "religion was employed to fan the flame of cruelty and superstition." John Wesley has said that to destroy the belief in witchcraft was to destroy the Bible - and Wesley was certainly right. The old superstitions have gone, many of them, and where, let me ask, is the Bible to-day? - tottering in weakness, a moldy mass of ignorance and superstition.

But little progress was made, or could be expected under a general belief that woman had the power to change herself at will into a black cat, and in this guise perform all kinds of villainy, cruelty, and depredation, to cause pain and sickness, to blight crops and torture the innocent, to maliciously injure, to destroy and kill.

²³ I think she meant Innocent III.

Satan was thought to be trying to go the Almighty one better, if I may be pardoned the phrase, in getting possession of the saints, and any maimed, unattractive, aged woman was liable to be accused of being a witch. In the present, times are so changed and opinions, that the young and attractive among women are the most bewitching witches.

It seems almost incredible that such men as Sir Matthew Hale in old England, and Cotton Mather in New England should lend themselves to gravely preside over a delusion like witchcraft. Yet such is superstition, and when blinded by religion, no one can calculate its harmful and deleterious effects upon the human mind.

Woman was now regarded with more suspicion than ever, and was continually urged by the fathers of the church to repent of her sins. Her business was to work and pray, and her only recreation a walk in the graveyard to view the place where she might shortly lie.

In such a situation she found herself hedged about and circumscribed, unable, from ignorance, to define her position, and too bewildered to lift herself above it if she knew it.

In England, as is stated by Herbert Spencer, "wives were bought from the fifth to the eleventh century. Women were whipped on slight provocation, and Christian gentlemen arranged pleasure parties to go to Bridewell to see the women whipped." And this public whipping of women was not abolished in England until 1817. In that country the wife calls her husband "master" to this day. In this country wives were bought by the early settlers in Virginia, and the price paid was one hundred and fifty pounds of tobacco. (See Eggleston's Hist.) The first persons publicly whipped in this country were women. They were tied to the tails of carts and whipped on their naked backs through the streets of Boston. Our police courts everywhere are still disgraced by wife-beaters, the frequency of whose appearance before the bar of so-called justice is a disgrace to present civilization.

As a result of the shameful burdens and bondage of woman, the ownership and slavery of the same, the Christian world has been, and is still, a hot-bed of sensuality and vice. When the mother is regarded solely as a house-cleaner, a scrub, drudge, and breeder of children - and I regret to say that too many regard her in this light only even to-day - what can be the outcome but laxity of morals and crime? When Lust is concealed under the title of Love, what can you expect but sin and sensuality? As the offspring of the inferiority and degradation of woman, planted and maintained by theology, behold in every town and city throughout the Christian world wells of immorality, sinks of iniquity, disgraceful to humanity and shocking to the moral sense of communities.

Two standards of morality have been adopted as a result of the teaching of the early theologians, one for woman, and another, quite different, for men.

And there can never be any great moral progress until there is but *one* code of morality, and that for all the universe alike.

The first Synod of the Reformation passed laws sanctioning polygamy. Martin Luther himself favored it, and the Bible gave it sanction.

Out of it has come the prostitution that goes hand in hand with our boasted civilization, planting itself before every church-door in Christendom, and which the church candidly admits it is powerless to wipe out.

Thus woman was stranded, as it were, on the rocks of superstition, a helpless and almost hopeless wreck, made so by ecclesiastical rulings and decisions, based entirely upon false and ruinous charges.

Gradually the tide arose, and woman found herself afloat, afloat on a cruel, treacherous sea, but still afloat. People were beginning to think, and to think aloud.

As the rigidity of the early Christian teaching softened under the influence of the truths of science, the star of woman dimly appeared in the firmament.

A little learning was not to woman a dangerous thing, but the opening of a door letting in a little of the light of common sense. She had been kept in ignorance. She could not read. She could not write. Samuel Johnson claimed that "as the faculty of writing has been chiefly a masculine endowment, the

reproach of making the world miserable was thus thrown upon women; and the grave and the merry have equally thought themselves at liberty to conclude, either with declamatory complaints, or satirical censures, of female folly or fickleness."

The effort made to allow her some advantages of education met with great disfavor and terrible opposition.

The first plot of ground for a schoolhouse in this country was given by a woman, Bridget Graffort in 1700, but her sex was not allowed to attend that school. The entrance of girls to the first high school was most bitterly opposed, and it was only after great pleading, and the paying of taxes under protest, that they were admitted.

In France in the sixteenth century when Mme. de Saintonges attempted the opening of a school for girls, her father called in four eminent physicians to pronounce as to her sanity. To attempt to educate a girl was considered proof enough of mental derangement.

The whole duty of woman had been assigned her by the early Christian rulers - to make bread, and keep the cradle rocking - to bear children in sorrow and silence, and to bear the burdens not only of the household, but of out-door labors as well. Her path was indeed a weary one, marked by insult, wrong, blood, and tears, from which there seemed to be no appeal.

THEOLOGY NEVER HELPFUL TO WOMAN.

In the face of a history replete with abuse, cruelty, scorn and dogmatic insolence toward woman, the Christian church still has the audacity and impudence to declare that it has been her friend - that it has done everything for her elevation and advancement. It says that what she is to-day she owes to the church. a blacker falsehood was never uttered.

After the crusades the respect and deference first proffered to woman came from the Moors and Saracens of Spain. In America, it was Thomas Paine who first spoke for equal rights for woman. And her first step in progressive lines began with her defiance of, and indifference to, churchly rules.

Within the last hundred years her march has been steadily onward. But it has not come through the channels of the church, or by theological dogma.

Why, theology forbade a mother to kiss her babe on a Sunday morning. It told her when her unbaptized little ones died that an extraordinary use of their skulls was made in repairing old sidewalks in the regions down below, where asphalt pavements and other modern improvements are unknown. This was consolation with a vengeance.

Within the present century, when a young lady, having taken cold at a ball, became ill with pneumonia and died, the clergyman who officiated at her funeral, administered consolation to the bereaved parents in this wise: "I have no doubt," said he, "that she is now dancing amid the pains and tortures of hell-fire!" And then proceeded to declaim against the sin (?) of dancing.

Theology the friend of woman! What did this boasted friend do when woman insisted on her right to free speech? I will tell you, friends. It hanged her in the person of Mary Dyer, to a tree on Boston Common till she was dead. It banished Anne Hutchinson to the wilderness for saying that the clergy of Boston preached a covenant of faith instead of works.

What was the consequence when the beautiful Madame Roland declared her sentiments for truth and justice? She was rendered speechless by severing her head from her body.

What was the answer when woman asked for a little more education? Christianity bade her go home, sew on shirt buttons, mend the stockings, and mind her husband.

When did Christianity, that boasts of being so friendly to woman, ever advocate her right to representation? her right to self-ownership? Never. Has it ever been known to speak for equal suffrage regardless of sex, or previous condition of sex servitude? No, it never has. Has it ever favored eligibility to office of persons of suitable age and intelligence, without regard to sex? Never in the world. Has it labored at all for the elevation of woman, either inside or outside the church? Certainly not.

Has this boasted friendly power ever sought the educational development of woman and the spread of useful scientific knowledge among women?

Never to my knowledge or the knowledge of anybody else. Has it ever striven that woman should receive the same pay as man for the same work? Never, not even for missionary labors. Has it been tolerant of woman's liberal and progressive ideas? No, but, on the contrary, most intolerant and abusive. Upon all these points, this self-asserting "friend" has been as dumb as a tongueless bell, when not preaching against her progress and advancement.

When, a hundred years ago, Mary Wollstonecraft spoke brave words for the amelioration of the condition of her sex, how was she received? With derision, scorn, and contumely. Frances Wright was driven from a hotel in New York out upon the street, a stranger in a strange land, to find lodging where she might, because of her advanced views. Ernestine L. Rose and others who followed her have felt, in their own persons, the cruel shaft of ridicule and insult, for endeavoring to lift woman from the quagmires of superstition in which she was placed by an ignorant past.

INVENTION WOMAN'S FRIEND.

The age of invention marks the era of woman's hour.

With the printing press came broad streams of light that crept through the bars of the prison-house of woman. It shed its streams of glory around her head like an aureole, and illumined her onward path.

When Charlotte Guillard in 1490, four hundred and three years ago, started her printing presses, printing books in Latin and Greek, and keeping those presses busy for fifty years, she broke the way for future generations.

The first daily newspaper in England was printed by a woman, Elizabeth Mullet. And during the invasion of the British in this country in the war of the Revolution, when newspapers in Boston were suspended, the only two, and those the most radical, were owned and edited by a woman, Margaret Draper.

These early pioneers in printing and editing made it possible for Margaret Fuller first, and many other women since, in the present century, to adopt journalism as a means of support.

The printing press has been one of the greatest factors of modern progress. While it has been at times the enemy and detractor of woman, it has been also her greatest friend and the promoter of her best interests.

The press gave to civilization a new impetus. When people began to read, they began to think. When they began to think, they were led by easy steps to reason and reflect.

By hard and incessant labor woman has overcome many of the obstacles in her path. In astronomical science, Mary Somerville, Caroline Herschel, Hannah M. Bouvier, Maria Mitchell, rank equally with men.

In other fields of science, where feet of women have trod, they have made constant progress. In art, Rosa Bonheur, in her particular department, stands without a peer, while Elizabeth Sirani has the honor of painting one of the finest paintings in the known world (The Baptism of Jesus). To Louise Bourgeois the world is indebted, in medicine, for a treatment that robs some of the ailments of woman of half their terrors.

In literature, many publications attest the value and excellence of woman's work, while George Eliot, peerless and immortal, stands among the greatest, with the laurel on her brow.

In political economy, Harriet Martineau, who wrote forty volumes on the subject, and of whom the late Wendell Phillips was pleased to say she had more brains than twenty thousand ordinary men, stands side by side with the foremost political economist of this or any period.

As showing the prejudice against woman in literary matters, a gentleman declared he had never been brought to the pass of reading "Jane Eyre," or "John Halifax, Gentleman," because these books were written by women, and he did not believe a woman could write anything fit for a man to read! It was such prejudice as this that forced women to adopt masculine cognomens in order to receive the reward of true merit which would be awarded to the matter, the signature indicating a man instead of a woman.

In business conduct the women of France take the lead, carrying on large enterprises with ability and shrewdness. In our own country they are not behind, coming into all activities. The inventions of women are particularly noticeable, being of a practical, beneficial order. Woman owes very much of her advancement to the inventive genius of the world.

It was the evolution of the spinning jenny that broke one of the shackles that bound her. She had been the spinner, weaver, and maker of all the garments worn by man, and thus had she been kept in one ceaseless round of toil.

The power loom struck the handcuffs from her hands. When the spinning wheel and the ponderous old hand loom went into the attic, woman got her passport to the World's Fair to be held in 1893.

The first sewing machine sent the thimble flying from her finger, and gave her time to read, time to think. The washing machine was a god-send. The carpet sweeper was worth more to her than a thousand years of prayer.

As new fields opened, her vision unfolded. She saw clearer. The scales fell from her eyes.

In the beginning of the century there were but seven occupations open to woman. Now there are nearly four hundred, in any of which she can earn her own living. She is beginning to realize the value of independence. Within the present century the advancement of woman in industry, art, literature, science, has been as wonderful as it is marked.

She has entered nearly every department of work and education, and wherever her hand has gone she has achieved success.

Woman is practicing law in sixteen states and three territories in this country. Nearly two hundred pulpits are occupied by women. There are six medical colleges exclusively for women, and thirty-six in which they share instruction with their brothers. This has placed three thousand women in active medical practice. Two hundred and four out of three hundred and forty-five colleges are co-educational, and ninety-six per cent of our teachers are women. There are women bankers, brokers, dentists, directors of corporations, heads of business establishments, artists, authors, writers, printers, and no large newspaper office is complete without one or more women upon its editorial staff. "But, after all, she hasn't produced a Shakspeare, Bacon, or a Robbie Burns," pipes a little man. Hasn't she? Well then, who did, if she didn't?

Politically, the march of woman has been directly onward. She votes on school matters in twenty-five States, holds the office of school committee, school superintendent, trustee of universities, dean of colleges, and many other offices. In Kansas she has equal municipal rights with man, and in Wyoming she enjoys all the state rights and privileges equally with men. Before another decade shall pass it is not unreasonable to believe that woman will be an equal factor in the whole political world with man - that she will occupy a seat in the Congress of the nation at Washington, and people will wonder why she was not always there.

Macaulay said: "The best way to prepare a people for liberty is to give them liberty," and the people are just beginning to realize that the best way to make a nation great and prosperous is not by holding one-half of the population in a superior or an inferior condition, but it is accomplished by making all of intelligence equal before the law and the government under which they live.

In the time to come, and toward which everything is pointing, the popular vote of this country will not arise from the slums and saloons. It will not be the vote of the ignorant and unthinking. But it will be the *woman's* vote.

An incident. A few years since a woman, born in a foreign land, applied for naturalization papers. When her case came before the court, the judge looked at the woman in astonishment. He had never before heard of a woman applying for citizenship. For what did she want to be a citizen of this county? Wasn't she a woman? And was not that enough? He did not know about it. A man might take out papers; but a woman - well, he would inquire and see.

At the time of the application the court room was filled with its usual quota of loafers and odors, not exactly of the highest order of intelligence, or as fragrant as the rose. The loafers heard the woman's

request in pained and indignant amazement. As she retired from the room, pending the judge's inquiries as to her legal right to make such an application, the loafers expectorated freely, looked at each other quizzically, with half-opened eyes, and said one to another, "*Her wants to be like we.*"

Heaven forbid that woman should ever become like the audiences of the district court, and you may be assured she never will, but she would be glad to at least take the management of her own affairs into her own hands, instead of leaving it to the tender mercies of the "we" of the court-room rabble.

With the opening of new avenues of employment has come to woman the right and privilege of competition, which she never enjoyed before in the whole course of her existence. And this is a marked era in her advancement. Heretofore she has been crowded out of many employments that would seem rightfully to belong to her, man assuming that he had the right to provide for her as he pleased. He felt that he alone had the right to be the wage-earner, or, if woman worked for wages, he should have the expenditure of the same. Said Alexander Hamilton, "Give a man a right over my subsistence, and he has a right over my whole moral being." By woman coming into the great arena of labor and competing with man, she has achieved a great victory. Another triumph in this direction will be accomplished when her work shall secure the same pay as is now accorded to man for similar labor. The trend of womanhood in this line is toward a better and nobler future than ever has been known before.

It is a significant fact, marking the steady progress of woman, that her applications for business positions are no longer treated with contempt, but are respectfully, and, for the most part, generously considered.

Since her advent into the labor market, her rise has been steadily upward and onward. More than three million women are earning independent wages in the United States alone. Eighty thousand women are earning wages in New York city outside of domestic service. Six thousand are acting as postmistresses. Fourteen hundred are in various government departments in Washington.

Simultaneously with the uplift of woman in this country has come her advancement in British Columbia, Quebec, and Montreal, in England, Scotland and Wales, in France, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Poland, British Burmah, Madras, and Bombay, at the Cape of Good Hope, New Zealand, New South Wales, Queensland, and South Australia. In all these countries women have some political freedom, and that country is behind the times where women have no political powers whatever. In spite of old customs and religious restrictions, women almost everywhere are inquiring and asserting their human rights as intelligent beings.

And what has occasioned this uprising among women?

FREETHOUGHT, THE BENEFACITOR OF WOMAN.

There is one force, and but one, that has brought about this condition of things and assisted woman to the place in which she finds herself to-day. Freethought - call it Liberalism, education, or whatever you will - is the one power which has broken the chains of woman and started her on the road to Freedom. When the colleges refused her admittance, Freethought said, "We will build new ones for her." It did so, and put an annex on the old ones for her benefit. It said, "Down with the despotism that would keep woman forever in the bonds of ignorance." And in this way more has been accomplished for her in a few years than in an age of scheming, and preaching narrowed down to the musty dogmas of ancient theology. It early sent her forth as a teacher and encouraged her to press on to newer heights, held her trembling hands, and guided her unaccustomed feet.

It bade her go preach the gospel of truth and righteousness to every living creature, the gospel of a new and better era. It opened the doors and sent her out into the sunlight of freedom, and her march has been steadily and nobly onward.

Freethought has broken every barrier to woman's enfranchisement that so far has been broken and will yet beat down the remaining stumbling blocks in her pathway.

For centuries the married women of England and their property had no separate existence. Freethought succeeded in securing "The Married Women's Property Act," whereby women could hold

property separately from the husband. This was in 1862. Before that, in our own country, Judge Herttell, a noted Freethinker of New York, had argued for the bill to restore to married women the right to hold property, as guaranteed by the constitution of New York state. Fifty years ago everything belonging to a woman when she married became her husband's property; also, all that she might subsequently inherit. She could not sue or be sued at law. Her wages belonged to her husband. She could not even own her children. Freethought has changed all this. In nearly all of the forty-four states of the Union a married woman holds and controls her own property, if not her person. She is entitled by law to the money she may earn by working for anybody *except* her husband. In six states she has gained equal rights with her husband as to the guardianship of her children. Freethought will yet assist her to equality in this respect in the other thirty-eight states, for it has ever regarded her as an individual, independent being, capable of government and the exercise of liberty.

Freethought early discovered that there is no sex to right, no sex to wrong, no sex to purity and truth; that these qualities belong equally to man and to woman. When this is still better understood and the old customs of society are outgrown woman will demand the same purity of life and conduct from man that is now exacted from her. She will then frown upon the same irregularities in man that she now despises in her own sex.

Freethought has always been the best friend woman had - the noblest, truest ally and champion. It has ever sought to place her in her own true light before the world - the guide, counselor, and friend of man; queen not only of home and household, but of every domain where her worth and work is required, and equal sharer in life's pursuits, duties, and emoluments - the undwarfed, unfettered, real complement of man.

To a free and liberal press, to the free schools, to free thought and free speech, to an enlightened public opinion, is due the emancipation of woman from the bondage of superstition. To these forces, and these alone, must she look for her future welfare.

To destroy mental slavery is the work of the great future, for that is the vulture still preying upon the vitals of our common humanity. This cannot be accomplished without first making woman herself free. Her condition decides that of the race. Elevate her, and you lift the whole human family. Degrade her, and disgrace and shame become the lot of man.

Education is the great lever, raising all to higher ground. It is woman's benefactor. Pen and voice have been employed against woman's right to free and full education. But wherever she has secured equal facilities she has held her own, distanced man when he has been her competitor, won the prized in mental work, and maintained her physical balance.

Her progress, through many difficulties, through many false notions and foolish prejudices, has been straight onward and successful. Yet there still remains much to be overcome, many narrow views to be overthrown. To do this there must be absolute equality of the sexes. There must be no more cringing dependence, no more creeping and fawning for favors, no more sex slavery, no more enforced motherhood, but entire freedom and independence of action.

Time and the agitation of free and noble principles alone can accomplish this. Goethe says: "Time is my inheritance, Time my field." And Time will bring all things to those who work and wait.

In the future we shall hear no more of what can be done for the elevation of woman, but the question will be how shall we lift man from the moral degradation of sensuality, of strong drink, tobacco, lewdness, profanity, and obscenity.

The future will be ruled not by brute force or by vast wealth, but by moral and intellectual strength, and these belong to woman as to man, and will be exercised for the good of the whole by both man and woman.

Schopenhauer saw only ill in the whole world, but Liebnitz beheld the good running like a silver thread all through life's changes. So, after the ills that have beset the way of woman, shall come the good. Her path is onward, and her motto, Excelsior. Whither she goes, as a necessary consequence, man must

follow. The twain will stand side by side, shoulder to shoulder. They will be friends, equals, companions, helpmates. Woman, as she progresses, will never lose her womanliness, as some have feared and predicted.

Woman will be always woman, whether she performs her part of life's work as lawyer, editor, doctor, banker, broker, president of corporations, ship-captain, mine-operator, stock raiser, teacher, merchant, or manufacturer; whether she pursues the calling of any great business operator, or remains simply the housekeeper and regulator of the family, venturing not beyond the boundaries of home, she will remain distinctively and essentially woman. She will be always tender, solicitous, sympathetic, loving, and lovable.

She will always be the principal factor of the household, the home-maker, the heart-sweetness, the true lover and comforter of man, appreciated by him as never before in the history of the world.

And then, when man and woman

"Upon the skirts of time
Sit side by side, fully summ'd in all their powers,
Dispensing harvest, sowing the To Be
Self-reverent each, and reverencing each,
Distinct in individualities,
Then comes the statelier Eden back to man-"

and to woman, also.

Then will the whole world be their country, and the practice of goodness the only religion.



FRANCES WRIGHT

FRANCES WRIGHT¹

9/6/1795 - 12/13/1852

James Wright was a rebellious youth. When he married Camilla Campbell in 1792, he was under police surveillance for contributing to the costs of printing and distributing that revolutionary book, *The Rights of Man*, by Thomas Paine, and he was known to attend meetings of the Friends of the People, a group so radical that several of its members had already been tried, convicted and deported for the changes they wanted to make in the government. So close was James to arrest that one night he took all the compromising papers in his possession, rowed out to the middle of the river in his home city of Dundee, and dumped them, to protect himself and his friends from prosecution.

James was from a family of wealthy linen merchants and his bride, who had a more aristocratic background, seemed very much in love with him, judging from her letters to him. As was common at the time, children came in quick succession to the young couple, with three children, a boy and two girls, being born within the first five years of their marriage. Frances, the middle child, was born September 6, 1795. Their happiness was short-lived, however, with Camilla growing ill and dying in February, 1798. James followed two months later.

The children were then split among their mother's relatives, with young Richard, the eldest by a year, being sent to the Milnes of Scotland, while Frances was sent to her Grandfather General Campbell and Aunt Frances Campbell in Dawlish, England. Some accounts of this separation place Camilla, the youngest sister, and Frances together at their grandfather's from the time of their parents death, while others tell that the girls were not reunited until Frances was nine years old. Whatever the truth, once reunited, the girls formed a lifelong bond of mutual support.

The Campbell's were very rich and Frances and Camilla were instructed in all the graces needed by aristocratic young women. Although Frances probably could not remember her parents, who died when she was only two, she was just as rebellious as her father had been. Very early in life she questioned the inequalities she witnessed between the classes of people. One day, when a beggar came to the door, she saw her grandfather rudely turn him away. An interesting and revealing conversation between Frances and her grandfather followed the incident:

"Why are those people so poor?" she asked.

"Because they are too lazy to work," answered General Campbell.

"But you don't work, Grandfather."

"Certainly not," replied the General. "I could not associate with the rich if I worked. It is a shame for a rich man to work. Some are born rich and some are born poor. The Scriptures say, 'The poor you shall have always with you.' God intended that there should be poor and that there should be rich."²

Frances thought that if she had any money, she would have given it to the poor man. She observed the poor being evicted from the homes in which for generations their families had lived, simply because the rich landowner wished to make the area over into hunting grounds. She watched as the poor, aged and sick

¹ According to Joel Brown, a carpenter who worked for Frances Wright in Cincinnati, Ohio near the end of her life, she preferred being called "Frances Wright," rather than the more popularly used "Fanny Wright." Out of deference to this great lady, "Frances" will be used in writing of her life in this volume, unless a passage is quoted in which the name "Fanny" is part of the original quotation.

² *Frances Wright, Free Enquirer*, A.J.G. Perkins and Theresa Wolfson, Harper and Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1939, p. 8.

labored, and asked, "Has man, then, no home upon the earth; and are age and infirmity of no care or consideration?" and in her youthful empathy for them, vowed to do all she could to personally redress human wrongs.³

In 1809, after a separation of eight years, Richard visited his sisters at Dawlish. He was on his way to become a cadet in the service of the Great East India Company. They were very excited to see each other. Richard was killed in an engagement with the French on his first voyage. Before word could reach the family of Richard's death, however, Grandfather Campbell died, leaving the girls to be raised by Aunt Frances.

When Frances was sixteen, she read about the United States for the first time. No one had ever spoken of this place and she wondered if it was real. The maps in the house didn't show the U.S. because they were too old. After searching diligently for more information, Frances learned it was a real country and became determined to visit it.⁴

Frances and Camilla did not like their aunt, and when Frances was eighteen, although she was legally under her aunt's supervision until she turned 21, she persuaded her to send the two sisters to their uncle, Professor James Milne of Glasgow, Scotland to live. Professor Milne was not as wealthy as the Campbells, and it was quite different for the girls to have to live in the new surroundings, sharing a room where they had always had their own before. But it was exciting too, for many interesting and controversial subjects were discussed by the visitors from the nearby college.

It was here that Frances discovered the writings of Epicurus and adopted his philosophy, discarding religion. She found herself drawn to Epicurus' teachings that man should heed only the evidence of his five senses. Knowledge, he said, came from seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling. Epicurus distrusted knowledge that came from speculation or logic. He especially distrusted knowledge that was handed down by superior authority.

Epicurus' ideas fitted Frances's developing philosophy. She had lost faith in religious leaders who claimed to know God's wishes and wanted their followers to take their word for it.⁵

One could be sure of nothing one could not prove scientifically; that is, by observation. Since one could not observe God, one could not say that God existed. On the other hand, one could not say that God did *not* exist. Frances would have said: there is no evidence either way, and so one cannot claim that either statement is false or that either statement is true.

She also discovered the writings of Jeremy Bentham and learned that she was not only a sceptic but a utilitarian.⁶ At the age of eighteen she wrote *A Few Days in Athens*, in which she expounded the Epicurean philosophy.⁷

³ *World's Sages, Thinkers and Reformers*, D.M. Bennett, Liberal and Scientific Publishing House, New York, 1878, p. 727.

⁴ *Frances Wright, Free Enquirer*, A.J.G. Perkins and Theresa Wolfson, Harper and Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1939, p. 12-13.

⁵ *Commune on the Frontier, the Story of Frances Wright*, Richard Stiller, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1972, p. 31.

⁶ *Frances Wright and the 'Great Experiment'*, Margaret Lane, Manchester University Press, Rowman and Littlefield, 1972, p. 5.

⁷ *A Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers of All Ages and Nations*, by J.M. Wheeler, Progressive Publishing Company, 1889, p. 336.

Frances and Camilla Wright made their first trip to America in the American-owned packet ship *Amity*, with a Yankee crew and captain. They set sail from Liverpool on August 2nd, 1818 and arrived the beginning of September after a voyage of thirty days. In spite of fair weather and favoring winds, Camilla was very seasick most of the time. Frances, however, was not disabled either by sickness or nervous fears.⁸

The two Wright sisters set out in the hot summer of 1819 to tour the northern and eastern states. They traveled from New York up to the Canadian border and as far west as Niagara Falls and Lake Erie, and then went south to Washington, D.C.⁹ Just before their return to England, Frances and Camilla visited President James Monroe in the White House.

Frances and Camilla sailed from New York to Liverpool on the 10th of May, 1820, after a tour lasting two years.¹⁰

Throughout the trip, Frances had written many letters to friends in England, describing all she experienced in the United States. In the summer of 1820 she put those letters in order, selected the best ones, and edited them. The manuscript, entitled *Views of Society and Manners in America in a series of letters from that country during the years, 1818, 1819, and 1820, by an Englishwoman* was sent to the publisher in the spring of 1821. It was an instant best seller, making Frances famous, and was translated into several European languages.

The leader of the Utilitarian philosophy, Jeremy Bentham, read her book and wrote immediately asking her to visit him next time she came to London. This was a favor not usually granted to women.¹¹ She accepted his invitation promptly. Bentham's opinion of Frances appears in an old letter which she preserved to the end of her life. In the letter, he said she had "the strongest sweetest mind that ever [was] cased in a human body."¹²

The one consequence of writing her book that was to have the greatest influence on her life was that it was read by another great admirer of the young country, the Marquis de Lafayette. He wrote to her and extended an invitation to visit him at his home, La Grange, in France. Frances and Camilla accepted his invitation, and a great friendship resulted.

So great was their friendship that when Lafayette was invited to tour the United States, arrangements were made whereby Frances and Camilla would travel separately, but meet with him at the various cities to which he had been invited. In August, 1824, Frances and Camilla set out to return to their beloved United States, arriving on September 11.

November 4, 1824 found Lafayette, Frances and Camilla at Monticello, visiting ex-President Jefferson, ill and worried about debts. From Jefferson, Frances learned more about the four million slaves in the United States. Slavery was the most obvious blemish to Frances' vision of the free and egalitarian United States.

⁸ *Frances Wright, Free Enquirer*, A.J.G. Perkins and Theresa Wolfson, Harper and Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1939, p. 26.

⁹ *Commune on the Frontier, the Story of Frances Wright*, Richard Stiller, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1972, p. 52-53.

¹⁰ *Frances Wright, Free Enquirer*, A.J.G. Perkins and Theresa Wolfson, Harper and Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1939, p. 53.

¹¹ *Frances Wright, Free Enquirer*, A.J.G. Perkins and Theresa Wolfson, Harper and Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1939, p. 58.

¹² *Frances Wright, Free Enquirer*, A.J.G. Perkins and Theresa Wolfson, Harper and Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1939, p. 60.

At this time in the United States, there were already stirrings against slavery. Jefferson had demanded unsuccessfully that the Virginia assembly allow him to free his slaves in 1769, and as early as 1773 he had publicly agitated for an end to slavery. In 1784, as a member of Congress, he proposed a law that failed by one vote to prohibit slavery in any state created after 1800.

Jefferson's current thinking was towards colonization of the whole slave population to Africa or some other country where their color would be no longer a handicap to their development into free people in a free country. Jefferson was on the board of the National Society working towards this goal. It was felt that because of the extreme prejudice against blacks in the United States, giving them their freedom would not ensure their equality in this country, and so for their own future happiness, it was thought best to relocate them.¹³

The black press of the time disagreed, saying that those who advocated colonization were no friends of the ex-slave. Some free blacks, however, had seen the results of prejudice in white communities and took the chance on moving when it was offered.

The short trip to Virginia with Lafayette had given her a brief firsthand look at slavery. Instead of reading about slavery, she now witnessed men, women, and children shackled like animals and whipped as they were driven up the gangplank of a ship to be taken to Savannah. The slaves were "things." The whites on the ships she saw as brutish monsters. The whole spectacle revolted her.

Frances went back to the library and studied the laws regulating slavery. She visited planters near Washington and asked them about how slavery affected young white people who were taught to consider themselves the masters of other human beings. They discussed with her the economic advantages and disadvantages of slavery. She compared its productivity with that of free labor.

But she still knew little about it. To really understand it, she would have to travel extensively through all the South.

The sisters left Washington in the last week of February. Their first stop was Montpelier, where they spent a day or two with ex-President Madison and his wife Dolly, by Lafayette's express arrangement and desire.

In the spring of 1825 Frances and Camilla journeyed south and west to New Orleans.¹⁴ Deeply disturbed by what she saw of the treatment of the slaves, an idea began forming in her mind. Her next step was to visit egalitarian communities in the west, to observe their operation and success.

The Rappites of Harmony, Illinois operated the best known and most successful commune. The commune was named after its founder, George Rapp, who had brought Lutheran peasants over from Wurttemberg, Germany, in the year 1804. Their farms were rich and productive and they were able to accumulate a good deal of money. Frances and Camilla visited them in their newly acquired home at Economy, Pennsylvania, but Frances was disappointed by what she saw. It was true that they were successful financially, but the equality she sought was lacking. George Rapp ruled his people like an iron-handed dictator, allowing no freedom or democracy. He alone decided what education the children should receive. He alone controlled all the wealth the community produced. Frances thought: "Where were the great and beautiful works of art, or libraries, or laboratories, or scientific workshops..? Where were the children trained to excellence by the spur of emulation..?" Life in the Rapp commune was grim and joyless.

¹³ *Frances Wright, Free Enquirer*, A.J.G. Perkins and Theresa Wolfson, Harper and Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1939, p. 124.

¹⁴ *Commune on the Frontier, the Story of Frances Wright*, Richard Stiller, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1972, p. 84.

Everyone played his part like an ant in an anthill. Frances decided that a cooperative society ought to be more democratic. It ought to create beauty. It should encourage scientific habits of thinking rather than religious superstition.¹⁵ She moved on.

Next, she and Camilla visited another cooperative settlement at Albion, Illinois, begun by Morris Birkbeck and George Flower. The founders were rich English Quakers, but the members of their commune were poor English farmers fleeing from hunger and poverty.

The Albion commune was not religious but political in nature. Its members believed in democracy and had strong antislavery sentiments. Under the leadership of George Flower, they went to the polls in 1823 and helped defeat a new constitution that would have made Illinois a slave state.

Young George Flower knew Lafayette, having visited him on his way to America in 1814. The general had given him a letter of introduction to Jefferson, and the former President thereafter took a fatherly interest in George.

George Flower was an unusual man: he not only held strong opinions against slavery, he actually did something to help black people, renting land to free blacks. When kidnappers tried to capture his tenants and take them south down the Wabash River to be sold into slavery in Kentucky, Flower defended them and gave them weapons. When it became clear that free black farmers could not survive in a sea of white hostility, he made arrangements to have them go to the independent black republic of Haiti. At his own expense he sent twenty-five black families to settle there.

Flower was punished for his views by his white neighbors, who hated him for taking up the cause of the blacks and giving them arms. One of his neighbors murdered George's son, Richard. Although the man who committed the murder was tried, the jury acquitted him and made it clear they would have liked to have rewarded the murderer.¹⁶

One day during her visit, while riding alone in the country near Albion, Frances came upon a young black man with his hands tied, being dragged along the road by a band of white men. They were taking him in the direction of the Wabash River six miles away.

Frances wheeled her horse and dashed back to Albion. There she got some farmers to help her. They rode back as fast as they could, but by the time they caught up the kidnappers and the young black man were in Kentucky. The farmers jumped from their horses and attacked the kidnappers. Frances untied the young man's hands. Then they took him to the sheriff, who promised to protect him for the night while Frances and her friends found a place to sleep.

"The next morning," Frances told a friend later, "everyone had disappeared, and the sheriff seemed to know nothing about it ... I must always accuse myself for giving way to fatigue and ... [leaving] the task of guarding him to others."

This experience convinced her that blacks must have protection and help to get and keep their freedom for they could not depend solely on the law. One should not turn slaves free and leave them defenseless in a world of white enemies, she was convinced. This conviction strongly influenced Frances' thinking about the emancipation of slaves.¹⁷

Frances and Camilla also visited the community of New Harmony, Indiana in late March, 1825, where they stayed for two nights and one day. William Owen, son of the initiator of New Harmony, wrote

¹⁵ *Commune on the Frontier, the Story of Frances Wright*, Richard Stiller, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1972, p. 90.

¹⁶ *Commune on the Frontier, the Story of Frances Wright*, Richard Stiller, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1972, p. 90-91.

¹⁷ *Commune on the Frontier, the Story of Frances Wright*, Richard Stiller, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1972, p. 91-92.

that Frances was "a very learned and fine woman, and though her manners are free and unusual in a female, yet they are pleasing and graceful and she improves upon acquaintance."¹⁸

New Harmony had been started by Robert Owen, a fellow Scotsman. Robert Owen was an industrialist and social innovator, who ran his factory in Scotland by very unconventional means, requiring only 10 hour work days, refusing to employ children, insisting on providing a free education for the children of his workers, and paying his workers even during those periods when the factory was shut down due to low demand. Of course, all of the other industrialists damned him, but surprisingly, he succeeded in being a financial success without the 14 hour work days, child labor and unpaid lay-offs on which the other owners depended.

Robert Owen had purchased the Rappite community of Harmony and renamed it New Harmony, and populated it with idealists in an experiment in democracy. Leaving his son Robert Dale Owen in charge, Robert Owen returned to his business in Scotland.

One of the residents of New Harmony was a middle-aged French physician, William Piquet D'Arusmont, a man of unusually advanced educational ideas, full of idealism, a dynamic and eccentric personality. In what had been the Rappite church, he was training a hundred boys in the School of Industry founded there by the educational theorist William Maclure.

This school, and the flourishing farms and orchards of New Harmony filled Frances with enthusiasm. If only people were educated for brotherhood and freedom, on rational, sensible lines, with the good path pointed out to them, surely, she believed, the wickedness and misery of the Old World would wither away.¹⁹

Although Frances was very impressed by the community, there was one point on which she and its originator disagreed. Robert Owen was prejudiced against blacks.²⁰ All his efforts for the reform of social evil and injustice were confined to the white race, to the point even that free blacks were excluded from membership in his community.²¹

Frances developed her plan of action for the slaves, a plan she felt would satisfy all, slaves and slave owners alike, while satisfying her own determination to free and elevate the slaves of her beloved adopted country.

She wrote up her plan in pamphlet form, and in September 1825, it was published. It was entitled *A Plan for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery in the United States Without Danger of Loss to the Citizens of the South*. According to her plan, the slaves were to work the land. They would form part of a commune in which all would share alike. They would be supervised by the leaders of the commune. After working long enough to pay back, through their labor, their purchase price plus 6 percent interest, they would be set free. Frances estimated that this would take about five years for the average black worker.²²

¹⁸ *The Angel and the Serpent, The Story of New Harmony*, William E. Wilson, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ill., 1964, p. 112-113.

¹⁹ *Frances Wright and the 'Great Experiment'*, Margaret Lane, Manchester University Press, Rowman and Littlefield, 1972, p. 19-20.

²⁰ *Commune on the Frontier, the Story of Frances Wright*, Richard Stiller, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1972, p. 95.

²¹ *Frances Wright, Free Enquirer*, A.J.G. Perkins and Theresa Wolfson, Harper and Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1939, p. 127.

²² *Commune on the Frontier, the Story of Frances Wright*, Richard Stiller, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1972, p. 99.

Jefferson was in favor of Frances's plan for Nashoba. "The abolition of the evil [slavery]," he wrote, "is not impossible; it ought never to be despaired of. Every plan should be adopted, every experiment tried, which do something towards the ultimate object. That which you propose is well worthy of trial. It has succeeded with certain portions of our white brethren, under the care of a Rapp and an Owen; and why may it not succeed with the men of color?"²³

According to her plan, she would buy a tract of land in one of those areas offered cheaply by the government because it was only recently cleared of its Native inhabitants, and there build a practical farming settlement to be worked by slave labour. The slaves would be bought on the open market in the usual manner, and it would be explained to them that as soon as their labour had earned a profit equal to their purchase price, they would be given their freedom. Not, she insisted, turned loose to shift for themselves, but properly settled in some suitable country other than the United States, such as Texas or California, or the new black republic of Haiti. In the meantime they were to be well housed and clothed and fed and educated, so that in the end they would take their place in the world on an equal footing with the white man.

General Andrew Jackson informed Frances that there was good land to be bought cheap in Tennessee, near the Mississippi. Frances purchased two thousand acres at nine cents an acre, and she named the property Nashoba, the Chickasaw word for wolf. She invested more of her fortune in tools and in the building of cabins. Ten slaves, six men and four women, were bought in Nashville for between four and five hundred dollars apiece.²⁴ A well-wisher from South Carolina contributed a pregnant slave to the experiment, as well as her five children. In all Frances spent eight thousand dollars to begin the experiment.²⁵

Still maintaining her ties with New Harmony, Frances started the first woman's club in the United States in 1825, calling it the Female Social Society. While this title is claimed by the Miverva Society, also started in New Harmony, Frances' group predates Minerva by 34 years.²⁶

Besides Frances and Camilla at Nashoba, there was at first her partner George Flower and his wife and family, a Scotsman named James Richardson enlisted as an overseer, and a Quaker called Richeson Whitby. Frances and James Richardson shared many viewpoints. They were both Scots, and they both were in revolt against the common prejudices of their society. In addition, they both had long ago discarded any belief in orthodox Christianity, though at the time both were still willing to admit that a belief in God's existence might be "friendly to the morals and happiness of its dupes," by encouraging good behavior through threats of divine punishment. James Richardson was quite blunt in saying, "For my part, I am an Atheist, and on the diffusion of Atheism rests my only hope of the progress of Universal Emancipation."²⁷

²³ *Commune on the Frontier, the Story of Frances Wright*, Richard Stiller, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1972, p. 97.

²⁴ *Frances Wright and the 'Great Experiment'*, Margaret Lane, Manchester University Press, Rowman and Littlefield, 1972, p. 20-21.

²⁵ *Commune on the Frontier, the Story of Frances Wright*, Richard Stiller, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1972, p. 107.

²⁶ *The Angel and the Serpent, The Story of New Harmony*, William E. Wilson, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ill., 1964, p. 197-198.

²⁷ *Frances Wright, Free Enquirer*, A.J.G. Perkins and Theresa Wolfson, Harper and Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1939, p. 171.

George Flower's wife was soon discouraged by the bad conditions, in addition to perhaps being jealous of her husband's admiration of Frances, and the family did not stay long at Nashoba.²⁸ During his tenure there, however, visitors noted the difference between the actions of slaves on standard plantations and the slaves at Nashoba, with the Nashoba slaves working harder and keeping their cabins neater.

The work was extremely hard and Frances did her share of it, rolling logs and clearing swamp and bush in the burning sun and living chiefly on corn-meal and river water. Frances worked with the men. She fell sick first with sunstroke, which brought on an agonizing form of "brain-fever" (which today is thought to have been meningitis), and then with a type of malaria which was both dangerous and debilitating. For a time she was so ill that her companions thought she would die. There was no doctor in the territory, no medical supplies, but Frances survived.

Still weak, she travelled by easy stages to New Harmony for a period of rest and recuperation. It was decided that Frances needed some time away from the terribly unhealthy conditions at Nashoba, and when Robert Dale Owen suggested a trip to Europe, she thought it might be the perfect opportunity to recruit interested reformers for Nashoba.

During her short stay in New Orleans before leaving for Europe, Frances engaged a certain Mme. Lolotte, a free woman of mixed blood with a family of nearly white children to come to Nashoba as teacher in that infant school, always so earnestly desired but not even yet established on the plantation. The eldest daughter, Josephine, was to be entered as a probationer in the new community.²⁹

While in Europe, a storm of controversy broke over Nashoba when it was learned that James Richardson and Josephine had begun living together as man and wife. Although it was plainly evident in many a slave child's complexion that white slave owners had sexual relationships with black women, James openly declared that he and Josephine were living as man and wife. Camilla wrote an article defending them, but it only served to increase the public furor, for Camilla wrote quite openly of her beliefs in free love and relationships outside the usual marriage commitment required by society. In addition, Frances learned that Richardson had been whipping the slaves to make them work, with Camilla's approval.³⁰

Frances wrote a brief description of the philosophy underlying Nashoba and sent it to all her friends and to the newspapers. This document - *Explanatory Notes, respecting the nature and object of the institution at Nashoba* - caused more trouble than anything Richardson or Camilla did or said. In it she set forth quite frankly her opinions on marriage, sex, religion and race.

What was most shocking to Americans was her belief that for the good of the country the black and white races ought to blend together.³¹ Even James Madison, who had supported Frances's plan for Nashoba, wrote to Lafayette that "her views of amalgamating the white and black population [are] ... universally obnoxious."

By the time Frances arrived back at Nashoba, in January of 1827, Camilla had married Richeson Whitby, for which she apologized, having previously said she did not believe in marriage. Frances had managed to bring a few recruits from Europe, who, as soon as they saw that the paradise Frances

²⁸ *Frances Wright and the 'Great Experiment'*, Margaret Lane, Manchester University Press, Rowman and Littlefield, 1972, p. 21-22.

²⁹ *Frances Wright, Free Enquirer*, A.J.G. Perkins and Theresa Wolfson, Harper and Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1939, p. 163.

³⁰ *Fanny Wright, Rebel in America*, Celia Morris, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1992, p. 144.

³¹ *Commune on the Frontier, the Story of Frances Wright*, Richard Stiller, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1972, p. 147.

enthusiastically promised them was actually a mosquito-infested swamp, hurriedly left. One visitor described the cabins as being only a set of walls set on dirt, with no roof to protect one from the elements. Still, Frances, who had been raised in luxury, seemed not to notice the primitiveness of her surroundings, sleeping under the stars, eating corn meal and drinking river water, and working alongside the men in clearing the land.

Conditions were so disagreeable and unhealthy, however, that by the first of April, Frances was left quite alone on the plantation. Camilla and her husband, both worn out, ill and discouraged, departed for New Harmony. Madame Lolotte had left earlier with her children. The slaves worked quietly in their quarters under a new overseer.³²

Frances added up the records for the year 1827. Instead of earning a part of their freedom by paying back Frances for their purchase, the profits from the plantation had been so poor that the slaves actually owed money to the commune, but Frances so wanted them to succeed, that she decided to cancel the accounts for the year.³³

Despite her frequent illness, her lack of success, the failure of her friends to live up to her beliefs, and the loss of about sixteen thousand dollars - half her fortune - Frances remained cheerful and optimistic.³⁴

In 1828, Frances left Nashoba, staying in New Harmony and joining Robert Dale Owen as co-editor of the *New Harmony Gazette*. The *New Harmony Gazette* had first been edited by William Owen and Robert Jennings, using a press purchased by Robert Owen in nearby Cincinnati. The motto of the editors was, "If we cannot reconcile all opinions, let us endeavor to unite all hearts"; and they promised that their pages would "ever be open to free expressions of opinions, which, however erroneous, may become useful, where reason and truth are left free to combat them." In all its one hundred and fifty-six numbers the *Gazette* continued to publish contributions that criticized the society as well as essays written in its praise.³⁵

Robert Jennings was a young Englishman who had originally been trained for a career in the military. He had become a Universalist minister instead, until he renounced that position and "made himself openly and publicly known as an Atheist."³⁶ In the early days of publishing the *New Harmony Gazette*, the paper was only mildly anti-Christian, and was losing around \$400 annually, with circulation extending only to 298 subscribers. A year after its inception, however, it had plunged into the cause of revealing the absurdity of the doctrines of original sin, future rewards, and other precepts of the Christian religion. Once Frances joined the editorial staff, a more aggressive campaign was enjoined. In addition to presenting arguments against religion, the editors promoted liberalized divorce laws, social cooperative efforts, democratic education, the abolition of slavery and other reforms far ahead of their times.

³² *Frances Wright, Free Enquirer*, A.J.G. Perkins and Theresa Wolfson, Harper and Brothers Publishers, New York and London, 1939, p. 204.

³³ *Commune on the Frontier, the Story of Frances Wright*, Richard Stiller, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1972, p. 149.

³⁴ *Commune on the Frontier, the Story of Frances Wright*, Richard Stiller, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1972, p. 150.

³⁵ *The Angel and the Serpent, The Story of New Harmony*, William E. Wilson, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ill., 1964, p. 133.

³⁶ *Popular Freethought In America, 1825-1850*, Albert Post, Ph.D., Columbia University Press, 1943, New York, p. 39.

Frances, always restless for activity, soon moved on to Cincinnati, Ohio. Cincinnati was a busy river port of twenty thousand inhabitants on the edge of the backwoods, and it was the largest city in the Mississippi Valley.

What struck her as especially disagreeable in Cincinnati was the lack of social freedom for women in Cincinnati. There was nothing they were allowed to do for their own enjoyment in public except go to church. The theater was off limits for ladies. It was considered un-Christian for a woman to be seen in a theater.

A revival campaign held in Cincinnati in the summer of 1828 was part of a carefully planned national effort on the part of the churches of the East, who were alarmed at the free spirit and freethinking ways of the West. They had launched a great crusade for religious observance, and they asked for government support. The church groups wanted federal laws passed forbidding travel on post roads on Sundays. They wanted laws forbidding the delivery of mail or the operation of any business on Sunday. They wanted all nonchurch activity on Sunday forbidden by law. In this way they hoped to force people back into the churches they had left of their own free will. They tried to organize a Christian party in politics to work for these laws.³⁷

Frances wrote, "The city of Cincinnati had stood for some time conspicuous for the enterprise and liberal spirit of her citizens, when...by the sudden combination of the clergy of three orthodox sects, a *revival*, as such scenes of distraction are wont to be styled, was opened in houses, churches, and even on the Ohio river." Obviously appalled, she continued, "The victims of this odious experiment on human credulity and nervous weakness, were invariably women. Helpless age was made a public spectacle, innocent youth driven to raving insanity, mothers and daughters carried lifeless from the presence of the ghostly expounders of damnation; all ranks shared the contagion, until the despair of Calvin's hell itself seemed to have fallen upon every heart, and discord to have taken possession of every mansion."³⁸

"It was in 1828," Frances says in her autobiography, referring to herself in third person, "that the standard of the Christian party in politics was openly unfurled. Of this party, which had been long secretly at work, Frances Wright had previously detected the maneuvers, in all sections of the country. This was an evident attempt, through the influence of the clergy over the female mind, to effect a union of Church and State, and thus effectually to prostrate the independence of the people and the institutions of the country. Clearly distinguishing the nature of the move, she determined to arouse the whole American people to meet it at whatever cost to herself."³⁹

By 1828 many state laws limiting the vote to men with property had been changed. Poor and lower-middle class white men had now become voters. Frances became determined to influence these new voters towards the reforms she felt would help them retain and expand their freedoms, such as education reform, rights for women, church/state separation, and abolition.

The first speech Frances gave was at New Harmony, on July 4, 1828, but she soon moved on to the Cincinnati audience, addressing these topics. Predictably, reaction was hostile, with the *Louisville Focus* writing of her "Miss Wright...has with ruthless violence, broken loose from the restraints of decorum, which

³⁷ *Commune on the Frontier, the Story of Frances Wright*, Richard Stiller, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1972, p. 161.

³⁸ "Preface," "Course of Popular Lectures with Three Addresses," *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-1844*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. viii.

³⁹ *Heroines of Freethought*, Sara A. Underwood, Charles P. Somerby Publisher, New York, 1876, p. 199-228.

draw a circle round the life of women; ... she has leaped over the boundary of feminine modesty."⁴⁰ Despite the reaction of the press, Frances was delighted with the response to her lectures, writing that they had generated "a kindling of wrath among the clergy, a reaction in favour of common sense on the part of their followers, an explosion of the public sentiment in favour of liberty, liberality, and instructional reform, and a complete exposure of the nothingness of the press."⁴¹

Frances continued lecturing, making a tour as far west as St. Louis, and south to New Orleans, lecturing at all the principal towns and cities. From St. Louis, she returned eastward to Baltimore and New York and Boston. Her advent as a lecturer created quite a furor. She was often bitterly opposed, and met with many difficulties, but, with indomitable energy and perseverance, she conquered them all. She decided, after visiting many cities, that New York would be the best center for her activities and so moved there.

In 1828, Frances and Robert Dale Owen issued a prospectus for the *Free Enquirer*,⁴² as they renamed *The New Harmony Gazette* on moving to New York. In it, they included their views on religion, saying it was "it is not useless only, it is mischievous by its false morality; it is mischievous by its hypocrisy; by its fanaticism; by its dogmatism; by its threats; by its hopes; by its promises; and last though not least, by its waste of public time and public money. True or false, indifferent it can never be, so long as men love happiness or deprecate misery."⁴³ The editors deplored the emphasis society placed on religion and "invisible beings" when so much remained to be done here on earth, promoting the philosophy that man must study himself and nature instead of imagining himself to be an "heir of heaven." Theology, wrote Robert Dale Owen, is a wasteful study of which no true knowledge can be obtained by humans; theologians create a race of trembling, cowardly sycophants which they exploit by teaching fear of God's wrath. In addition to their own compositions the editors levied on famous freethinkers like Volney and Voltaire. Excerpts from *The Ruins* and *The Philosophical Dictionary* were reprinted for consideration by subscribers.⁴⁴ The *Free Enquirer's* subscription list rose to 1,000 and the paper was earning \$3,000 annually.

Continuing her efforts at speaking and writing, in 1829, a New York editor called her "The Red Harlot of Infidelity - a bold blasphemer and a volumptuous preacher of licentiousness." Frances was called "The High Priestess of Infidelity," the "whore of Babylon," "a female monster," an infidel "in an Angel's

⁴⁰ *Commune on the Frontier, the Story of Frances Wright*, Richard Stiller, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1972, p. 165.

⁴¹ "Preface," "Course of Popular Lectures with Three Addresses," *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-1844*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. viii.

⁴² It is interesting to note that the great 18th century Deist, Peter Annet (1693-1769), also founded a periodical entitled *The Free Inquirer*, containing statements and ideas considered so blasphemous that he was, at the age of sixty-eight, condemned to the pillory and a year's hard labor (*A Biographical Dictionary of Modern Rationalists*, Joseph McCabe, London, Watts & Co., 1920, p. 21-22). Whether Robert Dale Owen and Frances Wright named their paper in honor of this pioneer of Freethought is unknown to me, however, it is a possibility, as both were thoroughly educated in the history of the role of religion in society, and must have known of Annet's life story.

⁴³ *New-Harmony Gazette*, July 30, August 6, September 17, October 22, 1828; *New-Harmony and Nashoba Gazette, or the Free Enquirer*, October 29, 1828.

⁴⁴ *Popular Freethought in America, 1825-1850*, Albert Post, Ph.D., Columbia University Press, 1943, New York, p. 38.

Garb," and a Baltimore minister said she was neither man nor woman but someone sent from hell.⁴⁵

So many jammed in to hear her speak that people fainted from the press of bodies. People tried to stop her speeches, cutting off gas to the lights, igniting a barrel of turpentine at the entrance door, sending smoke through the hall. In Baltimore, she was threatened with murder if she spoke, but she replied that she thought she knew the American people, and for every riotous fanatic that might annoy her, a hundred good citizens would protect her, and she was not afraid to place herself in their hands.⁴⁶ Luckily, she was proven to be correct.

Editors wrote of her "she recommends the encouragement of early prostitution...contemns and discards altogether the marriage contract and in effect recommends transforming this glorious world into one vast immeasurable brothel; and concludes by anticipating the blending of the black and white population, as the social millennium." "She wants girls to be instructed as boys are, but does not state who is to attend to plain and ornamental sewing, making pies and nursing children."

Still, after her speeches she was cheered and carried on the shoulders of her listeners. Not one editor supported her. A *Course of Popular Lectures*, the record of her speeches, was published in New York in 1829, in which she boldly gave her views on religion.⁴⁷

On her first lecturing tour, her lectures were mainly of an anti-religious character, and to this fact is probably due much of the opposition she received at that time. When afterward she lectured on political subjects, she met with a somewhat better reception.

In January, 1829, Camilla, living alone in Memphis, delivered a baby boy. Luckily, she had the help of Mme. Lolotte to help her through this time. Frances encouraged Camilla to join her in New York, which she did as soon as her health allowed. Unfortunately, Camilla's child did not live out the year.

In 1829, Frances bought the Ebenezer Baptist Church in New York for \$7,000 and turned it into The Hall of Science. Lectures held were in math, natural history, anatomy, reading, writing and public speaking. The Hall of Science sold books by Paine, Shelley, Godwin and Carlile with sales reaching \$2,000 a year. Soon free medical treatment was added.

In her speeches at the Hall, Frances called for a national school system, in which rich and poor, black and white, male and female could be educated. She proposed that the states mark out school districts and teach children as young as two. These would be boarding schools which parents could visit but with which they could not interfere. The schools would be supported by a property tax and a tax on parents for each of their children to discourage parents from having more children than they could afford.

⁴⁵ *New-York Observer*, January 10, January 17, 1829; *Nile's Weekly Register*, January 24, 1829; *Aurora and Pennsylvania Gazette*, Philadelphia, January 8, 10, 24, 29, 1829; *New-York American*, January 26, 29, February 5, 7, 1829; *New-Harmony and Nashoba Gazette*, February 4, 11, 1829.

Fanny Wright, Rebel in America, Celia Morris, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1992, p. 184.

"Frances Wright: Petticoat Lecturer," Eva Catafygiotu Topping, *The Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin*, Spring, 1978, Vol. 36, No. 1, p. 44.

Popular Freethought in America, 1825-1850, Albert Post, Ph.D., Columbia University Press, 1943, New York, p. 39.

⁴⁶ *World's Sages, Thinkers and Reformers*, D.M. Bennett, Liberal and Scientific Publishing House, New York, 1878, p. 728.

⁴⁷ *A Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers of All Ages and Nations*, by J.M. Wheeler, Progressive Publishing Company, 1889, p. 336.

The Hall of Science was the only place in the United States in the 1820's and 30's where a young mechanic or workingman could get any sort of higher education. Its library, its public debates, its meeting halls were always available. The Hall played an important part in the development of that zeal for reform. Out of it came a new political organization, the Working Men's Party, and its newspaper, *The Working Man's Advocate*. This new political party arose out of the grievances of the city's wage earners. One of their bitterest complaints was against the law that put a man in debtor's prison if he could not pay his bills. Two thousand debtors in were in jail in New York City alone that year.

Another complaint of the working men was that in New York there were no free public schools for their children to attend. Close to one million American children between the ages of five and fifteen did not go to school. All of them grew up without ever learning how to read and write. In New York City alone there were about twenty-five thousand children who had no schooling.

The workingmen had other complaints. They objected to the fact that church property was exempt from taxation. They objected to the fact that they had to serve in the state militia, and that if they did not turn out for duty they were put in jail. If the rich did not turn out, they had only to pay fines.

The workingmen objected to the fact that strikes and unions were forbidden by law. They objected to the banking system which lent money to the rich and offered nothing to the poor. They objected to the fact that they were often paid their wages in goods - in barrels of wheat or yards of cloth - or in paper scrip, instead of cash they could exchange for whatever they needed.

They objected to attempts to make them work more than ten hours a day.

The working men liked portions of Frances's educational plan. Under this plan children would be educated in national boarding schools at government expense until they reached maturity. They would also be fed, clothed, and cared for at government expense.

There were parts of Frances's ideas on education that were unpopular also, such as the idea that the children would be taken from their parents. According to Frances's plan, parents could visit their children, but they could not take them away from the school, and they could not interfere in their education. All children would be treated alike regardless of sex or color. There would be no distinctions. They would wear the same clothing, do the same class work, and eat the same food. There would be no religious instruction.

The General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath, a new organization formed in 1828, worried independent-minded Christians as well as Jews and nonbelievers. This organization wanted to introduce religious textbooks into the public schools. It sought to inject religion into education.

The young mechanics and factory workers saw the religious revival movement as a threat to their demands for shorter hours, higher wages, and better working conditions. Its newspapers were hostile to their needs. Its clergymen preached sermons telling them to rely on prayer. Whenever workers went on strike, religious leaders opposed them and sided with the factory owners.⁴⁸

Although Frances had no part in deciding policy for the Working Men's Party, the group was dubbed the "Fanny Wrightists." Editorials against them were written, such as one appearing in the *Commercial Advertiser*, in which the Working Men were labeled as "poor and deluded followers of a crazy atheistical woman...Lost to society, to earth and to heaven, godless and hopeless, clothed and fed by stealing and blasphemy - such are the apostles who are trying to induce a number of able-bodied men in this city to follow in their course... to disturb the peace of the community for a time; go to prison and have the mark of Cain imposed upon them; betake themselves to incest, robbery and murder; die like ravenous wild beasts, hunted down without pity; and go to render their account before a God, whose existence they believed in their miserable hearts, even while they were blaspheming him in their ignorant, sniveling and puerile

⁴⁸ *Commune on the Frontier, the Story of Frances Wright*, Richard Stiller, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1972, p. 184.

speculations. Such is too true a picture, in all its parts, of some of the leaders of the new political party which is emerging from the slime of this community and which is more beastly and terrible than the Egyptian Typhoon."⁴⁹

In the November elections, the New York City Working Men's party ticket polled 6,090 votes out of 21,000, elected one of its own to the New York State Assembly, and brought six other candidates close to office.

By this time, Frances had to admit that the Nashoba experiment had been a failure. After Frances and George Flower had left, few of the slaves had worked without coercion and none had apparently grasped Frances's vision for the future freedom of all slaves. But then, why should they? Although no record was kept of their thoughts of the experiment, it must have been, at the least, confusing to them. The slaves had been raised in an environment of dehumanization, where the whip prevailed. They had been "property" all their lives, told what to do, when to do it, and beaten if the assigned task was not done in a timely manner. Suddenly purchased by a woman promising freedom for work, they must have been at least skeptical, and when told the whip would no longer be used, they had tested this promise by working as little as possible. But the woman did not stay, and her words were empty to them, for they were told they were to develop independence, yet had no voice in this community, and found that the whip was indeed used, despite what she had told them. They were not part of a democracy at Nashoba, for the whites still ran the plantation. The promise of freedom might be just as illusory as the promise she had made that the whip would not be used.

When the women attempted to complain that the male slaves entered their cabins and raped them, and requested locks for their doors, they were told by the white masters that they must learn mutual respect and trust for one another, and so no locks were given to them. The lesson they learned was that their opinions meant nothing, as usual. The whites of Nashoba showed that they did not respect and trust the slaves enough to give them a voice in the community, and so the status quo continued of the slaves being told what they were to do and obeying the commands given them. Two of the slaves had even been sent to other plantations due to their behavior in testing Frances's promise of self-rule, so it is no wonder that they did not enthusiastically embrace Frances's ideas.

Frances was still committed to freedom for the slaves, but did not want to simply release them in the United States, knowing prejudice would hinder their attainment of equality. In many northern states the white workers who had just won the right to vote supported laws that took that right away from free blacks who owned property. In New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut the black right to vote was abolished by law. In New York, the vote was limited to blacks who owned property.

Less than a year after Frances left Nashoba, the city authorities of Cincinnati ordered all black citizens to leave their homes within thirty days. When black leaders asked for time to find a place to go,

⁴⁹ *Commercial Advertiser*, editorial, October 31, 1829.

Cited in *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, Philip S. Foner, Vol. I, New York: International Publishers, 1947, p. 133.

Cited in *Freethought History*, Fred Whitehead, #13, 1995.

Cited in part in *Fanny Wright, Rebel in America*, Celia Morris, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1992, p. 217.

white mobs roared through the African American districts burning houses and attacking black citizens. Between one and two thousand free black Americans had to flee. Most of them went to Canada, where they were welcomed by the royal governor.⁵⁰

Seeing the burdens under which "free" blacks existed in the United States, Frances, with Phiquepal D'Arusmont, the teacher from New Harmony, traveled with her slaves to Haiti, a free black republic, in 1829. The President of Haiti had agreed to help her slaves assimilate into the free black population. Frances took advantage of the beautiful surroundings and warm weather to take a much needed, restful vacation. By the time she and Phiquepal left Haiti in March, 1830, they were lovers.

Frances did not mind being the lover of Phiquepal D'Arusmont, but when she learned she was pregnant that summer, she had much to consider. She must reach a decision as to what course to take now. Those arguments she considered against the idea of marriage included all she believed about legal restraints being placed upon women who were married. She thought about how much she was finally enjoying life doing work in which she truly believed. She had said she would never marry, and she knew that almost all of her friends disliked Phiquepal, calling him a fraud, conceited, and irritable. Yet, she thought that the parents of a child owed it a responsibility, and conceded that in the society in which she lived, an illegitimate child would be viciously treated. She was to give the problem much thought, debating with herself what course to take.

First, however, she returned to New York and her beloved Camilla. In the six months Frances had been in Haiti the Working Men's Party had lost ground. Bitter internal arguments had divided it. In Albany, the Democratic legislature had hurriedly passed laws abolishing imprisonment for debt, allocating money to the city's public school, and establishing a mechanic's lien law. That was all many Working Men's Party voters wanted anyway and the Party was disintegrating.

The whole of the Nashoba adventure had cost Frances a good half of her fortune, but to this she was characteristically indifferent. She would now campaign for a free national system of education for every child in the United States, whether white or black; for the gradual abolition of slavery; for the repeal of the death penalty and of imprisonment for debt; for the education and emancipation of women, which was to include financial, political and legal equality with men, as well as the teaching of birth control; for freedom from superstition and 'revealed' religion; and, of course, for radical socialist reforms in the government of the country.⁵¹

At a lecture in Philadelphia in 1830, she was accompanied on to the platform of the Arch-street Theater by a body-guard of Hicksite Quaker ladies. These women, followers of the dissenting liberal Quaker, Elias Hicks, believed in a personal religion, in which each person listened only to his own conscience and did what he personally thought was right and moral. To the Hicksite Quakers Frances's ideas about free inquiry seemed familiar and agreeable.⁵² Her last speech, given in New York, was crowded with

⁵⁰ *Commune on the Frontier, the Story of Frances Wright*, Richard Stiller, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1972, p. 211.

⁵¹ *Frances Wright and the 'Great Experiment'*, Margaret Lane, Manchester University Press, Rowman and Littlefield, 1972, p. 30.

⁵² *Commune on the Frontier, the Story of Frances Wright*, Richard Stiller, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1972, p. 170-1.

3,000 people, half of them women. Later, when both Frances and Robert Dale Owen left the United States for Europe, the *Free Enquirer* was published for a time by a Hicksite Quaker, Amos Gilbert, who was expelled from his meeting [church] because of the affiliation with the paper.⁵³

Camilla was ill again, and Frances could no longer delay a decision about her future as a mother. Frances and Dale agreed she would go to Europe and write articles for the *Free Enquirer*. On July 1, 1830, Frances and Camilla sailed for England. A short time later, D'Arusmont joined them. Frances went into hiding, her friends searching for her in vain. In October, 1830, she wrote to tell Lafayette that she was in France.

In January, 1831, Frances's child, a daughter she named Sylva, was born.

Once Frances had left the United States, the religious press could fully vent its feelings about her. Philip Hone wrote "Let her [Frances Wright] go home or go to the Devil, so that she never visits us again." The *New York Evangelist* asked "Shall a puny, hairbrained youth and a public courtesan of infamous character give us the least alarm? They might as well undertake to stop the cataract of Niagara with a feather or overturn Gibraltar by shooting straws against it as try to obstruct the mighty impetus of religious truth." In a series of editorials the same religious paper, after the leading actors had temporarily retired, acclaimed the defeat of infidelity, asserting that freethinkers had completely failed to ameliorate the condition of their followers in spite of their alliance with the workingmen, and maintaining that social reform could be expected only by the retention of Christianity. As happens today, religionists even blamed crime on infidelity; but whereas today a supposedly "liberal media" is blamed, at this time it was blamed on Frances Wright.⁵⁴

In February, Camilla, alone and sick, travelled south to escape the bitter Paris winter of 1830-31, taking an apartment by herself. Frances stayed with Piquepal and Sylva in Paris. A few days later Camilla died.

Frances suffered what is now described as a nervous breakdown. She saw no one, wrote to no one. During this time, D'Arusmont became the strong partner. He took care of Camilla's funeral arrangements. He witnessed the death certificate. He went back to America to take care of their financial affairs.

D'Arusmont found the free enquirers on the verge of breaking up. The churches had been defeated in their attempt to compel religious observance, and so the public passion against them had died down. Robert Dale Owen still put out the *Free Enquirer*, but the Hall of Science had been sold to a Methodist congregation.

Frances and Piquepal were married in the Mayor's office in Paris, in July 1831, and General Lafayette was one of the witnesses.⁵⁵

In April of the following year Frances gave birth to another daughter. The baby died before it was two months old. Frances gave this child's birthdate to Sylva to further legitimize her, and Sylva kept the false birthdate to the end of her life.

⁵³ *Popular Freethought in America, 1825-1850*, Albert Post, Ph.D., Columbia University Press, 1943, New York, p. 41.

⁵⁴ *New York Evangelist*, January 1, 1831, November 17, 1832-January 12, 1833.

The Spirit of the Pilgrims, April 1833, pp. 204-215.

Popular Freethought in America, 1825-1850, Albert Post, Ph.D., Columbia University Press, 1943, New York, p. 89.

⁵⁵ *Frances Wright and the 'Great Experiment'*, Margaret Lane, Manchester University Press, Rowman and Littlefield, 1972, p. 37.

For Phiquepal D'Arusmont it was all very well to talk of women's rights and of equality between the sexes. The actual experience of marriage and family life was something different. For years he had admired Frances's eloquence, wit, learning, and courage. But like most men, he expected his home to revolve around his own needs and interests. It was true that Frances Wright had spoken in public and edited a newspaper, but now she was Mme. D'Arusmont, and respectable married women did not do such things.

D'Arusmont was considerably older than Frances, less attractive, less intelligent, and had less money. He had published no books, made no speeches, edited no newspapers. He had not chatted with presidents, had not known generals and philosophers. He could hardly claim superior ability to Frances. Still, he was the man of the family, and therefore by law and custom its absolute ruler.

Frances tried to be a good wife and mother. But nothing in her life had prepared her for the sudden drudgery of housework at the age of thirty-five. She tried to adjust to the new life she thought duty required her to live. She ignored the world outside her bedroom and her kitchen and tried to do her duty. By becoming a virtual hermit, she alienated all her old friends. Naturally, to one who had been so active, Frances found this life very confining. D'Arusmont, for his part, was insecure and envious. He could never tolerate the slightest freedom for his wife.

In 1834, Lafayette died. There is no record of Frances's reaction to this news, but with the death of Camilla and Lafayette, she had lost the last of the people she loved before her marriage. Whether or not she reached a conscious decision that married life was not for her, she began to take steps towards securing her former liberty.

In 1834, when Robert Owen invited Frances to come to England to lecture on education and rational knowledge, Frances accepted and left her home in Paris. Liberal English audiences received her with enthusiasm and she found herself enjoying life again. Yet D'Arusmont persistently wrote to her from Paris, asking her to return to her duties as wife and mother, attempting to make her feel guilty for leaving their daughter.

In 1835 D'Arusmont had to go to America to take care of what had been Frances's property in Cincinnati, and was now, of course, his own as her husband. Frances insisted on going with him, leaving three-year-old Sylva with friends. It was supposed to be a short business trip, but Frances did not return to Paris and did not see her daughter again for four years.

Great issues divided America in 1835. One was slavery. Once more Frances felt the call to lecture to the American audience. She retraced her lecture tour of 1828, beginning in Cincinnati. At a speech in Philadelphia, a mob tried to break up her meeting. Hoodlums rioted and threw stones that injured members of the audience. The police stood by and did nothing. Frances persisted, however, speaking in many cities, including New York and Boston.

She settled in Philadelphia and began to edit a journal, *Manual of American Principles*, editing and publishing it herself. The paper addressed the need for the people to more equally distribute wealth, but she discontinued the paper after July, 1837, due to the public's lack of interest in it.

In the time she had been gone, much had changed and she found herself quite alone. Robert Dale Owen had married. She and he had nothing more to do with each other. James Richardson had sent his wife Josephine and their two children to Haiti "where their name [is] no longer nigger." He was a tutor for a rich planter family in Memphis, trying to earn enough money to join them.

The Democrats supported, apologized for, and defended slavery. The Whigs, especially the northern Whigs, were less friendly to slavery. Most of the old workingmen radicals hated the abolitionists for their political and economic conservatism. Some supported slavery out of racism. Frances herself, while opposing slavery, disliked the abolitionists because they were religious.

In 1836 she spoke in New York to full houses, advocating the election of Martin Van Buren. She went on to speak in Boston, Philadelphia and Wilmington, Delaware. The press, for the most part, simply ignored her.

In 1838 she campaigned for the Democrats in the congressional elections. In New York a mob shouted her down. Someone yelled, "Put her out! Put the old bitch out!"

She had not lost her old coolness. "After the platform on which she held forth was demolished, she has been seen descending from the second story of a building after she had finished a lecture, with thousands of grim faces peering upon her, giving savage indications of murderous intent, so soon as their masters should give the word 'go.' But her calm intrepidity awed them, and she was permitted to pass through the formidable crowd to the carriage unscathed.

"When she was ensconced out of sight in the vehicle - when her tranquil firmness was invisible to them - they several times lifted and leaned the carriage, trying themselves, whether they had the audacious courage to throw it over. Prudent, resolute men walked slowly before the horses, repeating 'steady, steady' ... Meantime Frances sat gently fanning herself, and in easy conversation with her friends."⁵⁶

Former President Andrew Jackson attacked her when he learned that her opposition to slavery was hurting the Democrats.

A year later the *Colored American* attacked her for not knowing her place as a woman. "Fanny Wright's first steps toward skepticism," it said, "were her masculine assumptions. Male speculations and male achievements engrossed her soul. The fatal result was to be expected - she is now a leader in *masculine infidelity* - one of the grossest skeptical disorganizers that ever cursed the world.

"Ladies are *lovely, truly lovely* in their place, but alas! when they abandon it!"⁵⁷

During this time, Phikepal was raising Sylva, who Frances saw infrequently. The couple still wrote to each other, but did not live together.

In 1838, she delivered a series of lectures in New York. On October 21, five thousand people came to hear her speak, with 10,000 in the streets outside the hall, many hostile to her opinions. Police officers protected interested listeners from the mobs. Still, after the elections proved a defeat of her opinions by the voters, people suddenly lost interest in her.

It was hard becoming inconsequential after being the center of attention for so long. Now, when she spoke, it was mostly to empty seats.

Elizabeth Oakes Smith, in relating her brief encounter with Frances in 1839, wrote, "Frances Wright was most grievously aspersed on every side, and she must have felt to the core her innate worthiness, to bear it as she did. They said she was an 'Infidel,' using the word precisely as a Turk might have applied it to a Christian, omitting the expletive 'dog.' This was made the basis of the hue and cry against her, though the true meaning of it was, that simple-minded men were scared out of their wits lest their wives should learn from her example something that would induce them to question masculine supremacy. It was a cold winter's night when I prevailed upon my honored husband to go with me and hear the famous woman. There might have been fifty persons - not more - present, and these began to shuffle and call for the speaker. It was all so much more gross and noisy than anything I had ever encountered where a woman was concerned, that I grew quite distressed. At length, the door in the rear of the desk opened, and a neat foot was placed upon the platform. She was a full-sized woman, with well-developed muscle, and handsomely shaped, dressed in black silk, with plain linen collar and cuffs; her head was large, but not handsome, comparatively low, but broad, indicating force and executive ability. She wore her hair short, waving slightly. Her features were all good, and the smile sweet, with a touch of feminine sadness; eyes well set under the broad brows. She was pale, but not sallow, and there was an earnestness and wholesomeness about

⁵⁶ *Commune on the Frontier, the Story of Frances Wright*, Richard Stiller, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1972, p. 235-6.

⁵⁷ *Commune on the Frontier, the Story of Frances Wright*, Richard Stiller, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1972, p. 236.

Frances Wright that made their way to the mind and heart. The lecture was entirely political, and very democratic. She was at intervals applauded, but did not seem to expect or care for it. Her self-poise was very fine. She was at home on her subject, and did not beat the air with vain efforts to say what was but half-digested in her own mind."⁵⁸ Elizabeth Oakes Smith further reported that Frances' was "so altogether superior to her audience, that I felt at once a sympathy with those who came to hear, and regret that any prejudice should debar intelligent people from listening to a discourse so much above the average to which we all listen of a Sunday night."⁵⁹

Sometime in March, 1839, Frances conceded defeat. She said that either the time was unpropitious or the people who came to hear her had no other reason than curiosity. She left with Sylva for Paris June 20, 1839.

In 1843, Frances returned to the United States. She had given up her vision of America as a better world, but she still preferred to live there. Going first to Nashoba, she finally settled in Cincinnati.

In Cincinnati in the early 1840's a group of bright young workingmen organized a club called the Franklin Institute. They hoped to create something like the old New York Hall of Science. In the Franklin Institute the young mechanics organized courses and lecture series to improve their education.

Every Wednesday night there were debates. On Sundays, instead of going to church, they came to their club room and listened to a lecture. Often they invited Frances to speak to them.

At the club she met a radical young carpenter, Joel Brown. He became a great friend of Frances's.

"In fifty years," Brown remembers her saying, "the whole United States would be literally covered with railroads; cities would spring up in every quarter of the country; the capitalists would grab up all the land; it would be difficult for a working man to get a home...the center of railroad traffic would be in New York and other large cities, creating millionaires by the score... millionaires are a dangerous class ...[they] will control the politics of the United States."

A brief account written by Joel Brown, who worked for her during the rebuilding of the Cincinnati house, suggests that failure and misfortune had done little to change her. "After the building was partly enclosed," he wrote, "I moved my bench into it. In those days carpentering work was all done by hand, and at the same time Frances Wright also moved in a few things, a charcoal furnace, a sleeping cot, two or three chairs, a table and a writing desk. Her food consisted of a boiled potato or two, a boiled egg, a piece of boiled beef, crackers, tea or coffee. She was a plain liver. My wife says she was the most ignorant housekeeper she ever saw... She regretted this very much. 'How much better would it have been for me,' she often said, 'if I had been taught general housework when I was a child, instead of the aristocratical nonsense I learned while with my guardian.'"

At first, he says, "I didn't like the idea of her moving into the building before it was finished, thinking that she hoped that way to get more work out of me and my brother, for my brother was working with me; but I soon found out my mistake. She didn't seem to have any desire to hurry us, in fact it was the other way. She actually hindered us by talking to us, advancing her theories for the advancement of working men. We carried our own dinners with us, but she insisted we should eat our dinners at her table. In this

⁵⁸ *Heroines of Freethought*, Sara A. Underwood, Charles P. Somerby Publisher, New York, 1876, p. 199-228, from original article in *The Revolution*, 4/29/1869.

⁵⁹ -*The Revolution*, 4/29/1869.

way I learned a great deal about her private thoughts on different subjects... She could entertain you by the hour on ancient or modern history, on the sciences, geology, chemistry, astronomy or natural history. She was a walking encyclopedia, an orator inferior to none, and superior to any I ever heard."⁶⁰

Meanwhile, Sylva was growing up estranged from her. D'Arusmont had won the girl's heart and according to Elizabeth Oakes Smith, when Frances wished to educate Sylva to become a public speaker, D'Arusmont took Sylva away from her and kept her away until her mother's death.⁶¹

Then, in 1844, a letter came from the British Embassy in Washington. Her father's cousin Margaret had died. This left Frances the only living member of the Wright family and the heir to all the wealth and property accumulated by her grandfather Alexander Wright. She was an extremely rich woman.

She went to Dundee to settle the legal details of her inheritance. While she was there, she worked on her last book, *England the Civilizer*. Then she went to Paris to stay with D'Arusmont and Sylva, returning to the United States in 1845.

D'Arusmont was even more bitter now that Frances was very wealthy again. He was an old man who had never earned an independent living.

He asked her to sign an agreement putting all her property in Sylva's name in case she died, and providing also that as long as he lived he would have a sufficient income. She did so. Still he continued to pursue her wealth.

In the end Frances had to bring suit for divorce in 1850. In the United States at that time this was the only way a married woman could regain control of her property. When D'Arusmont heard that she was suing him, he wrote her a long, self-pitying letter in which he mixed threats with his insistence that he truly loved her.

But Frances continued her suit, pointing out to the court that while her estate was worth \$150,000, Phikepal had brought nothing to the marriage, and had worked to alienate her and Sylva since 1844. Despite D'Arusmont's threats, she won her divorce, January 21, 1851. Immediately after that, she won her case in a Cincinnati court for the return of full control over her property.

She had hoped that after it was all over she and Sylva would be able to love one another. A meeting was arranged by Frances's lawyer. But it was a failure. Sylva was bitter and supported her father.

In the last part of her life, Frances lived alone and practically friendless. She traveled a great deal, crossing the Atlantic seven times in the last 13 years of her life. She was also afflicted with nervous breakdowns.

In January, 1852, Frances fell on the ice in her front yard and broke her hip. She lay in bed all through 1852 in great pain. She did not heal. She spent nearly a year in unbearable pain.

On Monday morning, December 13, 1852, she wrote her will. She left small sums to various friends and to her lawyer. "I give the rest of my property," she wrote, "to my daughter Frances Sylva D'Arusmont, who has been alienated from me, but to whom, with said property, I give my blessing and forgiveness for the sorrows she has caused her mother."

Then she died.

She was buried in Spring Grove Cemetery, in Cincinnati. She had placed responsibility for the arrangement of her funeral with her attorney, Judge Timothy Walker, who, much to the horror of her friends, invited a clergyman to preside over the ceremonies. Thus this woman, who had fought organized

⁶⁰ *Frances Wright and the 'Great Experiment'*, Margaret Lane, Manchester University Press, Rowman and Littlefield, 1972, p. 44-45. Quoted from Joel Brown, Unpublished account of Frances Wright, quoted in Perkins and Wolfson, *Frances Wright, Free Enquirer*, 1939.

⁶¹ -The Revolution, 4/29/1869.

religion all her life, was subjected to a religious ceremony of which she would never have approved.⁶² Frances' death was barely noticed: a few lines in the *Cincinnati Gazette*, a rather longer obituary in *The New York Daily Times*.

A little more than twenty years after Frances' death, in 1874, her daughter Sylva, now a middle-aged married woman with two sons, and an ardent Christian, testified before the Committee of the Judiciary of the House of Representatives. This committee was considering the request that women living in Washington, D.C., be permitted to vote. Mrs. Guthrie, Sylva's married name, was opposed to giving women this right.

"She held that the ballot in the hands of woman would demoralize society, undermine the state, and tend to detract from the finer qualities of the sex, and consequently destroy her usefulness as a mother, wife, and citizen," a Washington newspaper reported.

Her grandson, Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie, editor of *The Prophet*, recognized his grandmother's great contribution to history, and upon the death of his mother, who, for some unknown reason was buried beside her mother, and not her father, Kenneth donated Frances Wright's papers to the Workingmen's Institute Library at New Harmony, Indiana, and reissued her philosophical work, *A Few Days in Athens*.⁶³

Frances was so far ahead of her time that she was doomed to failure in her lifetime, for the people for whom she worked were not yet prepared for her message. In 1825, she was the first woman in America to act publicly to oppose slavery, acting upon her principles as well as speaking of them.

She had fought the brain-numbing effects of religion, and had cited Jefferson to prove that George Washington was not a Christian, when Jefferson said "He believed not in the priest's God, nor in the divine authority of the priest's book." She explained that John Adams had distinguished between sectarian dogmas, about which everyone argued, and the moral imperative to behave justly to one's fellow. Jefferson and Franklin, Ethan Allen and Horatio Gates, were what the clergy would call infidels. She told her audiences that "all disbelieved the compound Jewish and Christian system, and looked upon its mysteries and its miracles as upon nursery tales."⁶⁴

When women began working towards the attainment of their due equal rights in society, they remembered Frances Wright's efforts in their behalf and honored her. Elizabeth Cady Stanton kept Frances's books on her library table and her picture was used as the frontispiece for the *History of Woman Suffrage*.

In 1860, Ernestine Rose saluted Frances as the first woman in America to speak for sexual equality, saying, "Frances Wright was the first woman in this country who spoke on the equality of the sexes. She had indeed a hard task before her. The elements were entirely unprepared. She had to break up the time-hardened soil of conservatism, and her reward was sure - the same reward that is always bestowed upon those who are in the vanguard of any great movement. She was subjected to public odium, slander, and persecution. But these were not the only things that she received. Oh, she had her reward! - that reward of which no enemies could deprive her, which no slanders could make less precious - the eternal reward of knowing that she had done her duty; the reward springing from the consciousness of right, of endeavoring to benefit unborn generations. How delightful to see the molding of the minds around you, the infusing of your thoughts and aspirations into others, until one by one they stand by your side, without knowing how they came there! That reward she had. It has been her glory, it is the glory of her memory; and the time will come when society will have outgrown its old prejudices, and stepped with one foot, at least, upon the

⁶² "Frances Wright: Petticoat Lecturer," Eva Catafygiotu Topping, *The Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin*, Spring, 1978, Vol. 36, No. 1, p. 44.

⁶³ "Frances Wright," *The Woman's Tribune*, October 10, 1903, p. 102.

⁶⁴ *Fanny Wright: Rebel in America*, Celia Morris Eckhardt, p. 215.

elevated platform on which she took her position. But owing to the fact that the elements were unprepared, she naturally could not succeed to any great extent."⁶⁵

Thanks to the efforts of Joe Levee, Peter Lloyd, Elizabeth Oldiges and the Cincinnati based Free Inquiry Group, September 6, 1995 was proclaimed by Mayor Roxanne Qualls to be "Frances Wright Bicentennial Day" in the city of Cincinnati.⁶⁶

In her *Explanatory Notes on Nashoba*, Frances had written of her dream: "To develop all the intellectual and physical powers of all human beings, without regard to sex or condition, class, race, nation or color." This is a dream still unrealized, but by giving this magnificent woman the honor and respect she deserves for her vision of a better world for all people, we may keep uppermost in our minds the ideals for which we all must strive - the ideals promoted by Frances Wright for the improvement of all humankind.

Quotes

It is not as of yore. Eve puts not forth her hand to gather the fair fruit of knowledge. The wily serpent not hath better learned his lesson; and, to secure his reign in the garden, beguileth her *not* to eat. - *Course of Popular Lectures*, 1829; *The New Quotable Woman*, edited by Elaine Partnow, Meridian, Penguin Books Ltd., Middlesex, England, 1993, p. 163.

Let, then, morals, or *the science of human life*, assume, among a people boasting themselves free, (and free, rightly interpreted, would mean *rational*,) the place of religion. Let us, instead of speculating and disputing where we can discover nothing, observe and inquire where we can discover every thing. - "Address III", delivered at the opening of the Hall of Science, New York, on Sunday, April 26, 1829, *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 153.

Let us listen to sermon, peruse religious tract, or religious essay, yea, or political journal under orthodoxy influence, or clerical dictation, what find we but exhortations to passive obedience: laudatory apostrophes to thrones, dominations, and powers? insidious reflections, or open denunciations against inquiry, under the name of infidelity; against honest opinion, under the name of heresy; against self-respecting virtue, under the name of vice; against resistance to oppression, under the name of sedition; and against revolution, under the name of rebellion?

- "Reply to the Traducers of the French Reformers of the Year 1789, as given by Frances Wright, in the Park Theatre, New York, January 31st, 1829, at the close of her discourse on Religion", *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 159.

Let superstition spread her mists, and thick clouds of darkness; they shall be dispersed by the sun of knowledge. Let false pretension and false wealth, spring their mind under the citadel of the state; the people, though they slumber, yet shall they awake, detect the ambush, and defeat the treachery. Let priestcraft devise his nets, multiply his emissaries, pour his wily lesson into female ears - let him "eat the fat, and drink the sweet," and make heavy the strong box of his treasure - let him bribe, and threaten, and flatter, and slander, and persecute, all *in the name of the Lord*; and, under the false colours of truth, where there is only error; humility, where there is only pride; and peace, where there is deadliest war - let priestcraft so

⁶⁵ Ernestine Rose, "Addresses of Anthony, Rose, and Jones, 1860", *The Concise History of Woman Suffrage* by Stanton, Anthony, Gage and Harper, (1881, 1886, 1887, 1902, 1922), edited by Mari Jo and Paul Buhle, University of Illinois Press, 1978, p. 162.

⁶⁶ *FIG Leaves*, Volume 4, Issue 9, September, 1995, p. 7.

strive, with poisoned arrow and dagger aimed in darkness, against the true interest of man, the true dignity of woman, and the weal of the human race - let priestcraft, I say, so strive, unarmed truth shall baffle his wiles, and break his sword of flesh with the sword of the mind.

- "Address of the State of the Public Mind and the Measures Which it Calls For, delivered in New York and Philadelphia, in the Autumn of 1829", *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 177-8.

True it is, that all the great intellects of every generation have discarded the particular superstition of that generation; and equally true it is, that their heresy has, for the most part, been known only to the initiated like themselves, while the subtle scribes and pharisees of the day, trusting to their silence and the people's credulity, have belied the principles, and taken in vain the names of patriots and philosophers, making the reputations of wise and good men the props of their craft and the vouchers for their impositions. Thus has it been in every age, and every nation of the world, where religion has been made a craft, and where the interests of priests have been allied with the worship of the popular deities. But thus has it most grossly been in this free country, where the priesthood, being despoiled of direct power, had only to reign by influence. And truly that *have* reigned by an influence the most extraordinary - an influence, not only established and sustained by ever art and artifice possible to human ingenuity, but consecrated by ever sacred name that fraudulent pens and tongues could steal from history or wrest from philosophy, to palm upon the ignorance of mankind for orthodox believers in a superstition they disclaimed, and obedient sons of a church they suspected. Would not the American people do better to seek the opinions of their great men in their own works and those of their confidential contemporaries, than in the trash of the tract house and the libels of the pulpit? Would they not do well to understand, before they take alarm at the senseless cry of "infidel," that Washington, that Jefferson, that Franklin, that John Adams, that Ethan Allen, that Horatio Gates, and all the nobler host of worthies, who secured this country's independence, were all, according to the priestly acceptance of a meaningless word, *infidels* - that is, all disbelieved the compound Jewish and Christian system, and looked upon its mysteries and its miracles as upon nursery tales.

- "Address of the State of the Public Mind and the Measures Which it Calls For, delivered in New York and Philadelphia, in the Autumn of 1829", *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 191.

The suspicion is afloat, that religion, as publicly taught in this land, at a cost exceeding twenty millions per annum, is a *chimera*; that the clerical hierarchy, and clerical craft, which have been elevated upon this chimera, are the two deadliest evils which ever cursed society; that our system of law is powerless for the object it ostensibly has in view, *the just regulation of the conduct of men one towards the other*, and rather omnipotent to effect the reverse of that intent, namely, to effect the perversion of the human understanding, the corruption of the moral feelings, and the utter destruction of all the social relations of the great human family; and, finally, that government, as executed to this hour, is inadequate to secure what it proposes, *the happy existence of the governed*. I say, that the suspicion is afloat, that something is wrong in the whole fabric of civil polity, and that hourly this suspicion is strengthening into conviction.

- "Address of the State of the Public Mind and the Measures Which it Calls For, delivered in New York and Philadelphia, in the Autumn of 1829", *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 174.

No! let Presbyterian ambition ring her peal; it shall be answered by the alarm of freedom! Let superstition spread her mists, and thick clouds of darkness; they shall be dispersed by the sun of knowledge. Let false pretension and false wealth, spring their mind under the citadel of the state; the people, though they slumber, yet shall they awake, detect the ambush, and defeat the treachery. Let priestcraft devise his nets, multiply his emissaries, pour his wily lesson into female ears - let him "eat the fat, and drink the sweet," and

make heavy the strong box of his treasure - let him bribe, and threaten, and flatter, and slander, and persecute, all *in the name of the Lord*; and, under the false colours of truth, where there is only error; humility, where there is only pride; and peace, where there is deadliest war - let priestcraft so strive, with poisoned arrow and dagger aimed in darkness, against the true interest of man, the true dignity of woman, and the weal of the human race - let priestcraft, I say, so strive, unarmed truth shall baffle his wiles, and break his sword of flesh with the sword of the mind.

- Address of the State of the Public Mind and the Measures Which it Calls For, delivered in New York and Philadelphia, in the Autumn of 1829", *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 177-8.

..the American people are not to be deceived when once truth hath met their ears....I judged it useful to pursue..the indispensable necessity of assaulting many established interests and powerful influences, and thus, while my object was simply the good of all, of rousing the hostility of many. Foremost among these interests and influences, indispensable to assail and expose, stood those of a craft which has never existed in any country without sapping the liberties and poisoning the mortality of the people. In the clergy, every lover of freedom, in every country, has seen freedom's worst enemy. No honest patriot, whatever his faith, whatever his religious zeal, ever loved or trusted, as a *body*, the servants of the temple. Their interests are one, and the people's are another; no faithful guardian, therefore, of the public weal, could ever view without distrust the movements of the tribe of Levi. Without distrust they never *have* viewed them. To look no farther than this Republic and its history. Who among the fathers of the national liberties and independence, but have left us pledges, more of less direct or indirect, private or public, according to the greater or less boldness of their individual characters, or the temper of the times and nature of the circumstances in which they stood - who among the founders of this nation's greatness, betrayed no doubts, no bequeathed, no warnings touching the character of the clerical functions? Washington!-too wise and prudent to agitate a question prematurely, or to risk the conversion of doubtful friends into open foes at a period when enemies were many and friends but few - Washington! ever cautiously silent or evasive through life, firmly refused in death the aid and services of men who would fain have engraven upon his tomb, "Washington, the Christian apostle!" instead of "Washington, the patriot hero!"

This trait would suffice us for all that regards the public character of Washington touching the matter of religion. This trait, as showing him opposed to the profession and office of the clergy, would supply every information respecting the religious views of that great man, which could be of any real importance to his fellow citizens to possess; for, will not all exclaim, "what matter the faith, or the want of faith, of an honest man and a faithful citizen!" Who but the wildest fanatic will dissent from this? Yet who, possessing common sense, and cherishing human peace and human liberty, but must also own that he were unfit to be a ruler in a young Republic, who viewed not with jealous eyes the priestly calling. That Washington thus viewed it, the manner of his death declared. For the rest, in silence might we leave *his* opinions whose practice was pure, did not incendiary tongues ever labour to confound skepticism and heresy with vice and disorder, and essay to prop up error by coupling it with sacred names: - if also it were not important to meet boldly the ungenerous prejudice so artfully inculcated by designing teachers, that all good men must believe after a certain fashion, and that all who do not so believe are bad men. For these reasons, and for these reasons only, is it important that we now hold, upon the authority of Jefferson, what was always surmised by the more intelligent portion of the public, and asserted privately by the surviving confidential intimates of the father of his country. *Washington was not a Christian* - that is: he believed not in the priest's God, nor in the divine authority of the priest's book.

- "Address of the State of the Public Mind and the Measures Which it Calls For, delivered in New York and Philadelphia, in the Autumn of 1829", *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 188-190.

It is not that religion is merely useless; it is mischievous. It is mischievous by its idle terrors; it is mischievous by its false morality; it is mischievous by its hypocrisy, by its fanaticism, by its dogmatism, by its threats, by its hopes, by its promises. Consider it under its mildest and most amiable form, it is still mischievous, as inspiring false motives of action, as holding the human mind in bondage, and diverting the attention from things useful to things useless. The essence of religion is fear, as its source is ignorance.

- Frances Wright, quoted in *The Truth Seeker*, January 16, 1897.

To awaken the people's attention...to the affairs of earth, it was necessary first to draw their thoughts from the clouds. It was necessary to engage them in calm examination of the nature of truth, and by leading them to seek and to find *what is*, to prepare them quietly to discard *what is not*. Now, during this process of preliminary inquiry, I meddled neither with the faiths nor the forms of the popular superstition. I neither discussed the Trinity nor the Unity; I called not in question the existence of a devil, nor questioned the possibility of our thoughts and feelings, or (to use the term familiarly applied to them) *our souls* existing hereafter in some unknown world apart from our thinking and feeling organs. I discussed none of these topics, I criticized neither Bible nor catechism, objected to no translations, quarrelled with no readings, challenged no discussion, but ventured the remarks - that theology was very expensive, its disputes very injurious, and its teachers very intermeddling, and encouraged the public to examine, whether its utility was equal to its cost; whether its quarrels added to the comfort of society; whether its doctrines were consistent with human experience; whether its teachers were what they professed to be - meek and lowly in heart, despisers of the goods of earth, and layers up only of spiritual treasures in a spiritual Jerusalem, and whether training up human beings wisely in youth, would not produce a better state of society, than scolding them once a week when full grown, and roasting them eternally when dead? These questions were plain and simple, and the clergy, apprehensive apparently that the answer would be unfavourable to their calling, declared, that to have heard them was immorality, but that to answer them would be atheism, which last term they explained to signify the infraction of all the laws of the decalogue, and of the states and the United States into the bargain.

- "Address of the State of the Public Mind and the Measures Which it Calls For, delivered in New York and Philadelphia, in the Autumn of 1829", *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 194.

...The same word [infidelity] was sounded against him who stamped on this country the character of a republic and a democracy, who set forth in the name of the American nation the equal rights of human kind, and who, at all times and under all circumstances, encouraged and vindicated the free exercise of the rights he had proclaimed; seeing that against him - the noble, generous, enlightened, consistent patriot and statesman, Thomas Jefferson - the same cry of infidelity was raised, that is now raised against honest reformers at the present time; let us receive the intended insult both as an honourable compliment and as a good omen - as a compliment to the soundness of our principles, and as an omen of our success. Let none, then, be alarmed at a word which, in the mouths of office-hunters, signifies *political honesty*, and in the mouths of priests signifies *common sense*. Let it be remembered, that the cry of infidelity preceded the administration of Jefferson and that, if doubters in miraculous revelations and biblical theology, are to be styled infidels, they can only wear the name in common with all the wisest and boldest patriots of America's revolution.

- "Address of the State of the Public Mind and the Measures Which it Calls For, delivered in New York and Philadelphia, in the Autumn of 1829", *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 195-6.

Theology, from the Greek *theos, logos*, renders distinctly the meaning of the subject it attempts to treat. *Theos*, God, or Gods, unseen beings and unknown causes. *Logos*, word, talk, or - if we like to

employ yet more familiar and expressive terms - prattle or chatter. *Talk, or prattle, about unseen beings or unknown causes.* The idleness of the subject, and inutility - nay! absolute insanity of the occupation, sufficiently appear in the strict etymological meaning of the words employed to typify them. The danger, the mischief, the cruelly immoral, and, if I may be permitted to coin a word for the occasion, the *unhumanizing* tendencies both of the subject and the occupation - when and where these are (as they have for the most part ever been throughout the civilized world) absolutely protected by law and upheld by government - sufficiently appear also from the whole page of human history.

Religion, from the Latin *religo, religio*, renders with equal distinctness the thing signified. *Religo*, to tie over again, to bind fast; *religio*, a binding together, a bond of union. The importance of the great reality, here so accurately shadowed out, appears sufficiently in the etymological signification of the word. Its utility will be evident, if we read, with intelligence, the nature, the past history, the actual condition, and the future destiny of man.

But now, taking these two things in the most strict etymological sense of the words which express them, it will readily be distinguished that the first is a necessary creation of the *human intellect* in a certain stage of inquiry; the second, a necessary creation of the *human soul* (by which I understand both our intellectual and moral faculties, taken conjointly,) in any and every stage of human civilization.

Theology argues, in its origin, the first awakening of human attention to the phenomena of nature, and the first crude efforts of human ingenuity to expound them.

...Such, then, is Theology in its origin; and, in all its stages, we find it varying in grossness according to the degree of ignorance of the human mind, and refining into verbal subtleties and misty metaphysics in proportion as that mind exchanges, in its progress from darkness to light, the gloom of ignorance for the mazes of error."

- "Letter II", *Biography, Notes, and Political Letters of Frances Wright D'Arusmont from the First British Edition, No. 2, Containing the Political Letters*, New York, Published by John Windt, 1844; *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 11-13.

Religio, I tie. And Religion alone *has* tied - according to the state of progress of human thought and human practice, on various spots of the globe, and at various epochs of time - Religion alone *has* tied the slave to his master, the subject to his king, the citizen to his brother citizen, the patriot to liberty; and - even under the most erroneous systems of government and defective forms of civilization - all classes of society and sects of opinion to the ark of public safety, and the altar of a common country and a common cause! ...And woe be to the hand which rashly seeks to sever those bands, loose as they are and rotten, which still hold a diseased society together, without supplying stronger and better ties - nay! chains of adamant, wherein to receive and hold cemented the falling fabric of, defective indeed, but still sacred and improvable, civilization! ...At all times the character of the religious bond decided that of the civilization. In other words, the religion of a country presents, at once, the principle and the theory of its political association. ...Wherever there is ignorance, there is superstition...

- "Letter III", *Biography, Notes, and Political Letters of Frances Wright D'Arusmont from the First British Edition, No. 2, Containing the Political Letters*, New York, Published by John Windt, 1844; *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 13-17.

It is here curious to remark, that though the Christian Gospels were not penned before the age of Constantine, and, though the new religion of servitude was only then systematized and incorporated with the state, the expiatory sacrifice of the Man-God was dated from the reign of Augustus; thus marking the final death of the Republic, and its religion of love of country, and the birth of the Monarchy, and its religion of servitude.

It is curious to remark also, that though the principle of Christianity is self-abasement and innate human depravity, and the direct object and tendency of its theory is to hold men bound as helpless slaves to

the "powers that be," yet that the curious mass of disjointed inconsistencies which compose the sacred books of the Christian system, are besprinkled with sentences and axioms leaning to democracy. If the page of history be present to the mind, and if the position and object of the priest of Egypt, and equally those of the Roman Caesar, to whose aid the priest of Egypt came, be held in view, the necessity of shaping the new system to as best to make it appear all things to all men, and to make it look toward classic freedom while it moved toward Asiatic despotism, will become evident."

- "Letter IV", *Biography, Notes, and Political Letters of Frances Wright D'Arusmont from the First British Edition, No. 2, Containing the Political Letters*, New York, Published by John Windt, 1844; *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 20.

Is any discovery made in science, tending to open to us farther the book of knowledge, and to purge our minds of superstitious beliefs in occult causes and unsubstantiated creeds - where has it ever found opposers - or, might we not say, persecutors? Even among our hired preachers and licensed teachers of old doctrines and old ways. Is any inquiry instituted into the truth of received opinions and the advantage of existing practice - who are the last to encourage it? nay, the foremost to cry out "heresy!" and stop the mouth of knowledge? Who but those who live by the ignorance of the age, and the intolerance of the hour? Is any improvement suggested in our social arrangements, calculated to equalize property, labour, instruction, and enjoyment; to destroy crime by removing provocation; vice, by removing ignorance; and to build up virtue in the human breast by exchanging the spirit of self abasement for that of self respect - who are the foremost to treat the suggestions as visionary, the reform as impossible? Even they who live by the fears and the vices of their fellow creatures; and who obtain their subsistence on earth by opening and shutting the door of heaven.

- "Lecture I: On the Nature of Knowledge", *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 18.

...we know that they [preachers] have stifled enquiry, wherever started, in every age and every nation on the globe; and that hardly a fact in science or a truth in philosophy, but has been purchased with the blood, or the liberty, or the domestic peace of a martyr. We have traced this conduct of your teachers to its cause. Remove the cause, and the effect shall cease. Give premiums for the discovery and revelation of knowledge, not for its repression! Take for your teachers experimental philosophers, not spiritual dreamers! Turn your churches into halls of science, and devote your leisure day to the study of your own bodies, the analysis of your own minds, and the examination of the fair material world which extends around you! Examine the expenses of your present religious system. Calculate all that is spent in multiplying churches and salarizing their ministers; in clothing and feeding travelling preachers, who fill your streets and highways with trembling fanatics, and your very forests with frantic men and hysterical women. Estimate all the fruits of honest industry which are engulfed in the treasuries of Bible societies, tract associations, and christian missions; in sending forth teachers to central Africa and unexplored India, who know not the geography of their own country; and, hardly masters of their native tongue, go to preach of things unseen to nations unknown; compassing the earth to add error to ignorance, and the frenzy of religious fanaticism to the ferocity of savage existence. See the multitude and activity of your emissaries! Weight the expenses of your outlay and outfit, and then examine if this cost and this activity could not be more usefully employed. By a late estimate, we learn the yearly expenses of the existing religious system, to exceed in these United States twenty millions of dollars. Twenty millions! For teaching what? Things unseen, and causes unknown! Why, here is more than enough to purchase the extract of all *just* knowledge - that is, of things *seen* and causes *known*, gathered by patient philosophy through all past time up to the present hour. Things unseen sell dear. Is it not worth our while to compare the value with the cost, and to strike the balance between them?

- "Lecture III: Of the more Important Divisions and Essential Parts of Knowledge", *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 45-50.

My friends, I am no Christian, in the sense usually attached to the word. I am neither Jew nor Gentile, Mahomedan nor Theist; I am but a member of the human family, and would accept of truth by whomsoever offered - that truth which we can all find, if we will but seek - in things, not in words; in nature, not in human imagination; in our own hearts, not in temples made with hands.

- "Lecture VI: Formation of Opinions", *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 100-101.

Many evils are abroad on the earth, and never did supineness threaten greater dangers than at the present moment. Old superstitions are shaken to their foundation. The false restraints imagined in ages of primeval ignorance are loosened from the mind. Men have grown out of the fear of devils and eternal brimstone, and, applying their ingenuity to evade the laws of earth, laugh in secret at the hobgoblin tales of hell. What then must ensue, if, while old things are passing away, we seek not to discover new? If, while the chains of superstition are falling from the mind, we build not up therein a moral bulwark, nobly to replace the Gothic barriers that are withdrawn, nor apply ourselves to lead by persuasion and conviction that nature which may be no longer cowed by superstition, nor mastered by force? Man is no longer in leading strings, nor submissive to the rod. He is at this hour too knowing to be driven, and too ignorant to walk alone. Let a free people look to it in time, nor waiting, until law and religion are alike under foot, they shall have to devise remedies in the midst of confusion, and to school the human mind and the human heart in the depths of their corruption. Enough hath been said - the path lies clear. Virtue and truth dwell only with knowledge, and as, when a people shall possess knowledge, they will form on all subjects just opinions so will they also, in all the relations of life, as citizens, parents and fellow creatures, discover and pursue a just practice.

- "Lecture VI: Formation of Opinions", *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 101.

...I visited this country in person. The "Views" then rapidly formed I published on my return to England, with the single object of awakening the attention of European reformers to the great principles laid down in American government...During my first visit to America, I seemed to hear and see her declaration of independence every where. I studied her institutions, and mistook for the energy of enlightened liberty what was, perhaps, rather the restlessness of commercial enterprise. I saw her population active and thriving, and conceived that to be the effect of wise social regulations, which had, perhaps, rather its source in the temporary state of an artificial market. I saw neither princes nor bayonets, nor a church married to the state, and conceived, in very truth, that liberty had here quickened the human mind until it was prepared to act under the influence of reason instead of fear....my own enthusiasm doubtless conspired to throw a Claude-Lorraine tint over a country which bore the name of Republic. It required a second visit, and more minute inspection, to enable me to see things under the sober light of truth, and to estimate both the excellences that are, and those that are yet wanting.

- "Preface", *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. v-vi.

The spread and increase of knowledge alone can enable man to distinguish that the true interests of each point to the equal liberties, equal duties, and equal enjoyments of all; and that then only, will the principles set forth in the first national instrument of American government, the declaration of independence, be practically exhibited - when the law of force shall give place to the law of reason, when wealth shall be the reward of industry, and all things shall be estimated in a ratio calculated in the order of their utility.

- "Preface", *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. vii.

In the citadel of human error, as exhibited in this country, it is easy to distinguish two main strong holds, which, if once carried, the fastness would probably surrender at the first summons. These are: First, the neglected state of the female mind, and the consequent dependence of the female condition. This, by placing the most influential half of the nation at the mercy of that worst species of quackery, practiced under the name of religion, virtually lays the reins of government, national as well as domestic, in the hands of a priesthood, whose very subsistence depends, of necessity, upon the mental and moral degradation of their fellow creatures.

- "Preface", *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. vii.

Is any discovery made in science, tending to open to us farther the book of knowledge, and to purge our minds of superstitious beliefs in occult causes and unsubstantiated creeds - where has it ever found opposers - or, might we not say, persecutors? Even among our hired preachers and licensed teachers of old doctrines and old ways. Is any inquiry instituted into the truth of received opinions and the advantage of existing practice - who are the last to encourage it? nay, the foremost to cry out "heresy!" and stop the mouth of knowledge? Who but those who live by the ignorance of the age, and the intolerance of the hour? Is any improvement suggested in our social arrangements, calculated to equalize property, labour, instruction, and enjoyment; to destroy crime by removing provocation; vice, by removing ignorance; and to build up virtue in the human breast by exchanging the spirit of self abasement for that of self respect - who are the foremost to treat the suggestions as visionary, the reform as impossible? Even they who live by the fears and the vices of their fellow creatures; and who obtain their subsistence on earth by opening and shutting the door of heaven.

- "Lecture I: On the Nature of Knowledge", *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 18.

However novel it may appear, I shall venture the assertion, that, until women assume the place in society which good sense and good feeling alike assign to them, human improvement must advance but feebly. It is in vain that we would circumscribe the power of one half of our race, and that half by far the most important and influential. If they exert it not for good, they will for evil; if they advance not knowledge, they will perpetuate ignorance. Let women stand where they may in the scale of improvement, their position decides that of the race. Are they cultivated? - so is society polished and enlightened. Are they ignorant? - so is it gross and insipid. Are they wise? - so is the human condition prosperous. Are they foolish? - so is it unstable and unpromising. Are they free? - so is the human character elevated. Are they enslaved? - so is the whole race degraded. Oh! that we could learn the advantage of just practice and consistent principles! that we could understand, that ever departure from principle, how speciously soever it may appear to administer to our selfish interests, invariably saps their very foundation! that we could learn that what is ruinous to some is injurious to all! and that whenever we establish our own pretensions upon the sacrificed rights of others, we do in fact impeach our own liberties, and lower ourselves in the scale of being!

- "Lecture II: Of Free Inquiry, considered as a means for obtaining just Knowledge", *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 24.

For myself, in exposing the duplicity of the clergy, I neither marvel at, nor judge it in severity. Hypocrisy is the vice of the age, and hypocrites are made to be its teachers!

- "Lecture III: Of the more Important Divisions and Essential Parts of Knowledge", *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 44.

...you will say, the clergy are moral teachers no less than religious. They form and amend our practice as well as dictate our belief.

My friends! we have ascertained the contrary. We have seen that from Maine to Missouri - from hence each way to our antipodes - the hired preachers of all sects, creeds, and religions, never do, and never can, teach any thing but what is in conformity with the opinions of those who pay them. We have substantiated the fact, that they never did, and never can, touch the master-vice, whatever it be, and wherever found. We know that they ever have, and ever must, persecute truth, by whomsoever discovered - by Galileo, or by Leslie and Lawrence; we know that they have stifled enquiry, wherever started, in every age and every nation on the globe; and that hardly a fact in science or a truth in philosophy, but has been purchased with the blood, or the liberty, or the domestic peace of a martyr. We have traced this conduct of your teachers to its cause. Remove the cause, and the effect shall cease. Give premiums for the discovery and revelation of knowledge, not for its repression! Take for your teachers experimental philosophers, not spiritual dreamers! Turn your churches into halls of science, and devote your leisure day to the study of your own bodies, the analysis of your own minds, and the examination of the fair material world which extends around you! Examine the expenses of your present religious system. Calculate all that is spent in multiplying churches and salaried their ministers; in clothing and feeding travelling preachers, who fill your streets and highways with trembling fanatics, and your very forests with frantic men and hysterical women. Estimate all the fruits of honest industry which are engulfed in the treasuries of Bible societies, tract associations, and christian missions; in sending forth teachers to central Africa and unexplored India, who know not the geography of their own country; and, hardly masters of their native tongue, go to preach of things unseen to nations unknown; compassing the earth to add error to ignorance, and the frenzy of religious fanaticism to the ferocity of savage existence. See the multitude and activity of your emissaries! Weigh the expenses of your outlay and outfit, and then examine if this cost and this activity could not be more usefully employed. By a late estimate, we learn the yearly expenses of the existing religious system, to exceed in these United States twenty millions of dollars. Twenty millions! For teaching what? Things unseen, and causes unknown! Why, here is more than enough to purchase the extract of all *just* knowledge - that is, of things *seen* and causes *known*, gathered by patient philosophy through all past time up to the present hour. Things unseen sell dear. Is it not worth our while to compare the value with the cost, and to strike the balance between them?

If we consider that there is no arriving at just practice by through just opinions, and no arriving at just opinions but through just knowledge, we must perceive the full importance of the proposed inquiry. Twenty millions would more than suffice to make us wise; and alas! do they not more than suffice to make us foolish? I entreat you, but for one moment, to conceive the mental and moral revolution there would be in this nation, were these twenty millions, or but one half - but one third of that sum, employed in the equal distribution of accurate knowledge. Had you, in each of your churches, a teacher of elementary science, so that all the citizens, young and old, might cultivate that laudable curiosity without which the human animal is lower than the brute, we should not then see men staggering under intoxication, nor lounging in imbecile idleness; nor should we hear women retailing scandal from door to door, nor children echoing ribaldry in the streets, and vying with the monkey in mischief.

"But" you will say, "the clergy preach against these things." And when did mere preaching do any good? Put something in the place of these things. Fill the vacuum of the mind. Awaken its powers, and it will respect itself. Give it worthy objects on which to spend its strength, and it will riot no more in wantonness. Do the clergy this? Do they not rather demand a prostration of the intellect - a humbling and

debasement of the spirit? Is not their knowledge that of things unseen, speaking neither to the senses, nor to the faculties? Are not their doctrines, by their own confession, incomprehensible? Is not their morality based upon human depravity? Preach they not the innate corruption of our race? Away with this libel of our nature! Away with this crippling, debasing, cowardly theory! Long, long enough hath this foul slander obscured our prospects, paralyzed our efforts, crushed the generous spirit within us! Away with it! such a school never made a race of freemen. And, see: in spite of the doctrine, to what heights of virtue and intelligence hath not man attained! Think of his discoveries in science - spite of chains, and dungeons, and gibbets, and anathemas! Think of his devotion to principle! Even when in error, great in his devotion! Think of the energy stronger than power, the benevolence supreme over selfishness, the courage conquering in death, with which he fought, and endured, and persevered through ages, until he won his haven of liberty in America! Yes! he has won it. The noble creature has proved his birthright. May he learn to use and enjoy it.

But how shall he do this? Sons and daughters of America! 'tis for you to answer. When will ye improve the liberty for which your fathers sought an unknown world? When will ye appreciate the treasure they have won? When will ye see, that liberty leans her right arm on knowledge, and that knowledge points you to the world ye inhabit?"

Consider that world, my friends! Enable yourselves, by mastering the first elements of knowledge, to judge of the nature and importance of all its different branches. Fit yourselves for the examination of your opinions, and then *examine your opinions*. Read, inquire, reason, reflect! Wrong not your understandings by doubting their perception of moral, any more than of physical, truth. Wrong not the God ye worship by imagining him armed with thunders to protect the tree of knowledge from approach. If ye conceive yourselves as holding from one great being your animate existence, employ his first best gift - your reason. Scan with your reason that which ye are told is his word, scan with your senses those which ye are told are his works. Receive no man's assertion. Believe no conviction but your own; and *respect not your own* until ye *know* that ye have examined both sides of every question; collected all evidence weighed, compared, and digested it: sought it at the fountain head; received it never through suspicious channels - altered, mutilated, or defaced; but pure, genuine, from the authorities themselves. Examine ye things? look to the fact. Examine ye books? to the text. And when ye look and when ye read, be *sure that ye see, and be sure that ye understand*. Ask *why* of every teacher. Ask *why* over every book. While there is a doubt, suspend judgment; while one evidence is wanting, withhold assent.

Observe here the advantage of material science. Does the physician - (I use the word here, as I shall often have occasion to use it hereafter, to signify the student of physics, or the observer of nature) - does the physician tell you that water is compounded of gases? He [Then?] perform the experiment. That the atmosphere is another compound? The same. That more of or less of activity is in all matter? He shows you the formation of crystals in their bed, and composes and decomposes them before ye. Does he tell you that matter is ever changing, but never losing? He analyzes the substance before your eyes, and gives you its elements with nothing wanting. Do the anatomists and physiologist describe the structure and texture of your bodies? They show you their hidden arcana, dissect their parts, and trace their relation; explain the mechanism of each organ, and observe, with you its uses and functions. Do the geologist and mineralogist speak to us of the structure and component parts of this globe? They explain to us the strata of earths; the position of rocks; the animal remains they envelope: the marks they exhibit of convulsion or of rest - of violent and sudden, or of gradual and silent, phenomena. See, then, the superiority of physical science! The proof comes with the assertion; the fact constitutes the truth.

But, you will say, there is other evidence than the physically tangible - other truths than those admitted through the senses. There is the more *immediate* and the more *remote* testimony of our senses; nothing more, nothing less. Will you appeal to numerical and geometrical truth? Had we no senses, could we know any thing of either? Were there no objects, no substances and existences around you, how could you conceive of number or of form? If the child see not *four things*, how shall he understand the meaning of

four? If he see not two halves, put them together, divide them, compare them, measure, weigh them, how shall he *know* that two halves are equal to a whole? or a whole greater than its part? These are the simple truths conceived by the philosopher of nature, Pestalozzi. Here are the leading beauties of that system of experimental instruction which he so long strove to put in practice, and which time may enable others successfully to develop.

But, I hear you again object, that there are truths appealing only to the mind, or directly to the feelings: such are *moral truths*. The varying degree of sensibility evinced by individuals towards the joys and sorrows of others is apparent to every observer. This sensibility forms the basis of virtue; and, when by means of experience we have distinguished painful from pleasurable sensations in our own case, this sensibility assists us to estimate them in the case of others. Yet have we no doors by which to admit knowledge but the senses. We ascertain what is good or evil by experience. The beneficial or injurious consequences of actions make us pronounce them virtuous or vicious. The man of cultivated sensibility then refers his sensations and applies his experience to others, and sympathises [sympathizes] in the pain or the pleasure he conceives them to feel. But, here are our moral truths also based upon fact. There is no test of these but experience. That is good which produces good; that evil, which produces evil; and, where [were] our senses different from what they are, our virtue and our vice would be different also. Let us have done with abstractions! Truth is fact. Virtue is beneficial action; vice, mischievous action; virtuous feelings are those which impart pleasure to the bosom; bad feelings, those which disturb and torment it. Be not anxious in seeking your rule of life. Consult experience; your own sensations, the sensations of others. These are surer guides than laws and doctrines and when the law and the doctrine coincide not with the evidence of your senses, and the testimony of your reason, be satisfied that *they*, that is, the *law* and the *doctrine*, are false.

Think of these things! Weigh the truth of what I advance! Go to your churches with your understandings open. Inquire the meaning of the words ye hear - the value of the ideas. See if they be worth twenty millions of dollars! And, if they be not, withhold your contributions. But - ye will be afraid. Afraid! of what? - of acting conscientiously? of acting reasonably? Come! learn, then, of a stranger and a woman! Be bold to speak what ye think and feel; and to act in accordance with your belief. Prefer your self respect to the respect of others. Nay! *secure* your own respect, and *command* that of others.

I speak with warmth. I *feel* warmly. The happiness, the honour, the dignity of man, are dear to my heart. His ignorance afflicts me; his cowardice afflicts me; his indifference afflicts me. He feels not for himself, he feels not for his race.

But - ye will wipe off this stain. Ye will awake to the uses of things. Ye will inquire. Ye will collect just knowledge. Ye will cultivate your reason. Ye will improve your nature.

- "Lecture III: Of the more Important Divisions and Essential Parts of Knowledge", *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 45-50.

Look to your jails, your penitentiaries, your poor-houses! Look to your streets, your haunts of vice, your hovels of wretchedness! Look to the unhappy victims of poverty, of passion, gambling, drinking. Alas, the heart turns sick, and the tongue falters, under the enumeration of all the shapes and sounds of suffering which affright the eye and the ear of humanity!

And what is the cause of all this? Ignorance! Ignorance! There is none other. Oh! then, be up and be doing! Rich and poor, be up and be doing. Are ye not all fellow creatures? Are ye not all of one form, of one nature? Have ye not all the same wants? Oh! then, why have ye not the same interests? And ye have - ye have. Oh that ye could believe it! Oh that ye could see it! Oh that ye would unite under the wings of liberty as brothers, as equals, as fellow men! Oh that ye would enter as one family, the courts of knowledge, and cast down at her feet your prejudices, your dissensions, your jealousies, your fears!... Unite-unite for the promotion of knowledge. Exchange the spirit of sectarianism for that of universal love, charity, and toleration. Turn from the teachers of strife, and seek ye out inquirers after truth. Look around first among

yourselves. Seek out the talent that is at home, and when ye find it not, invite it from afar. Encourage the wise to come among ye instead of the foolish; the peaceful and enlightened instead of the noisy ignorant; the reasoner instead of the declaimer; the child of science who will give you all he knows, and seek with you what he knows not, instead of the master by right divine, who promulgates doctrines without advancing evidence, and who stuns our human reason, as our human ears, with absurdities which, *he* says, come from heaven.

With such guides, and engaged in such investigations and undertakings, as I have ventured to recommend, you will all meet on common ground. You will no longer see in each other Calvinists, Baptists, Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, and I know not what; you will see only human beings. The halls of science are open to all; her truths are disputed by none. She says not to one, "*eat no meat on Fridays*;" to another, "*plunge into the river*;" to a third, "*groan in the spirit*;" to a fourth, "*wait for the spirit*;" to a fifth, "*eat bread in the Lord*;" to a sixth, "*eat the Lord in bread*;" to a seventh, "*dance in divine praise*;" to a[n] eighth, "*dance not at all*;" to a ninth, "*perceive in things visible the shadows of things unseen*;" to a tenth, "*there is for you salvation*;" and to nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths of the human race, "*ye were born for eternal fire*." Science says nothing of all this. She says, only, "observe, compare, reason, reflect, understand;" and the advantage is, that we can do all this without quarreling.

- "Lecture III: Of the more Important Divisions and Essential Parts of Knowledge", *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 51-53.

In her *Explanatory Notes on Nashoba* she had written of her dream: "To develop all the intellectual and physical powers of all human beings, without regard to sex or condition, class, race, nation or color..."

- *Commune on the Frontier, the Story of Frances Wright*, Richard Stiller, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1972, p. 245.

The hired preachers of all sects, creeds, and religions, never do, and never can, teach any thing but what is in conformity with the opinions of those who pay them.

- *Fanny Wright: Rebel in America*, Celia Morris Eckhardt, University of Illinois Press, 1992, p. 174.

Religion was "mischievous by its idle terrors...its false morality...its hypocrisy...its fanaticism...its dogmatism... its threats...its hopes...its promises; and last though not least by its waste of public time and public money.

- Frances Wright and Robert Dale, prospectus for the paper they were founding, *Free Enquirer*. *Fanny Wright: Rebel in America*, Celia Morris Eckhardt, University of Illinois Press, 1992, p. 180.

If doubters in miraculous revelations and biblical theology, are to be styled infidels, they can only wear the name in common with all the wisest and boldest patriots of America's revolution.

- *Fanny Wright: Rebel in America*, Celia Morris Eckhardt, University of Illinois Press, 1992, p. 215.

Religion.

I have selected for our consideration this evening a subject which we are generally accustomed to consider as of vital importance; which is usually made to occupy the human mind from the cradle to the grave, and which, however varying in the views and interpretations of its expounders, is conceived to constitute the polar star of human conduct; to be our only guide towards virtue, our only bar from vice, our source of comfort, our anchor of hope, and at once the alarming deterrer from crime and its terrific avenger. My hearers will already have divined that our subject is RELIGION.

To those who may already have substantiated with me those first premises, which I am ever desirous should be seen and understood before I enter on the discussion of isolated topics, or approach the tests of reason and experience to all or any of the multiform tribe of human opinions - to those, I say, among this audience, who may have attended the three preliminary discourses on knowledge, closed last evening, I might consider all prefatory observations on the present occasion unnecessary. But, as in all probability, I am addressing a portion of this audience for the first time, I feel unwilling to launch with undue precipitancy into a discussion calculated perhaps to alarm the fears of some, and the honest prejudices of others.

Myself a scholar, not a teacher, who have purchased such knowledge as I possess, by years of self-directed study, persevering observation, and untiring reflection, I can well conceive, for I myself have experienced, the doubts, difficulties, hopes, fears, and anxieties, which beset the awakening mind in the early stage of inquiry; the indistinct and, often, evanescent perceptions which encourage, and then check, and then again encourage, again to intimidate its advance; the conflicting thoughts and feelings with which it has to struggle ere it can vanquish early impressions, and consent to receive new ones, admit ideas subversive of those which had grown with its growth, and which, associated with tender recollections, cling to the heart as well as the head, or not unfrequently, grafted on the imagination of childhood, by an education as cruel as erroneous, continue to alarm the fancy and agitate the nerves even after the judgment has pronounced them chimeras. All this I can understand, for all this I have either felt or observed in others. Anxiously, therefore, would I temper my words to the timid, and, if possible, the truths themselves, which we are met to search out and investigate.

If, then, in manner or in matter, I should touch too harshly on the opinions of some, or the feelings of any, I will pray them to absolve me of every desire but that of eliciting truths important to the well-being of man; of every intention but that of administering to the instruction, and consequently, to the happiness of those I may address. But, will it be asked, why I conceive myself fitted to impart instruction, and increase the sum of human happiness? For I must observe, that the individual who should successfully attempt the one, *must* succeed in the other; error and misery being inseparable companions, and knowledge and happiness the same. If I have thus conceived of myself, it has been neither (as I at least believe) through too high a valuation of my own acquirements, nor too eager a desire to assume that tone of dictation which I am accustomed to deprecate in others. I have advanced just too far in knowledge to overrate my attainments; just far enough at once to understand my own deficiencies, and to have detected the false pretensions of many self-called wise. It is to render apparent the simplicity of real, and the charlatanism of false learning, that I have volunteered - not, I request you to believe, without due reflection, and a thorough understanding of all the criticism, censure, and, I may say, unseemly abuse, which I was about to encounter: - that I have volunteered, I say, to impart to others, what I myself know, and, more than all, to enlighten them as to what *can really be known*. This has been the more especial object of my previous discourses on knowledge: and, as we then observed, so must I now repeat, that until we see clearly what *knowledge is*, we can perceive truth, detect error, nor possess one really accurate, reasoned, and consistent opinion.

Knowledge, we ascertained to consist in an accumulation of facts. The doors by which we admit these facts, are our senses; and the means we possess for judging, comparing, analyzing, and arranging these facts, are supplied by our faculties, intellectual and moral. Had we *only* senses, each impression would disappear with the object which excited it; in which case, no knowledge, or accumulation of facts, could

exist for us. But, having memory, we can retain each impression, by whichever of our senses received; having judgment, we compare and arrange these impressions; having imagination, we ingeniously combine impressions, however removed as to time, distant as to place, or slightly assimilated by affinity or resemblance. And, having moral feelings, we consider all occurrences with a reference to the good or evil they may induce to our race.

By these cursory remarks, it is my object to lead to the observation, that nothing can be known where there is nothing to operate on our senses; or, to place more accurately the position, *where we have no primary sensations to constitute elementary facts.*

In my opening discourse upon the nature of knowledge, I had occasion to insist especially on this truth; reminding my then audience, that the sciences but too generally taught on the erroneous principle of *assumed* instead of *substantiated* data, (we here instanced arithmetic, geometry, and morals,) were in reality based upon demonstrations supplied by positive sensations. I will not say that the teachers of unreal science, and dogmatical declaimers upon imaginary subjects and unmeaning words, are aware of the stumbling-block thrown in the way of the human intellect by the old; and, alas, still the customary method of imparting these most important branches of knowledge; but I will say, that whether awake or blind to the consequences, those consequences are as favourable to the reign of their errors, as they are fatal to the progress of truth and the vital interests of man. Were every teacher called upon to substantiate the elementary facts upon which he builds the fabric of his science, how would the number of our dogmatical assertions and unsubstantiated doctrines - ay! and the list of our sciences themselves, be curtailed!

In that dawn of intellect, however brilliant, which broke on ancient Greece, when the range of human observation was circumscribed within the limits imposed by a clumsy and imperfect system of navigation, and by a world of unbroken forest, and widely-extended barbarism, and farther circumscribed within the limits of the human vision, unaided by telescope or microscope, and all the ingenious material which now aids the labours of the physician, and has revealed to us the anatomy of matter, with all its wonder working qualities - such as we are accustomed to distinguish by the names of attraction, electricity, resistance, form, colour, motion, rest, and we may add, feeling, thought, and life. In that bright, but only opening dawn of human inquiry, science had hardly an existence. Facts were wanting; the means for accumulating these were not devised, and therefore, while excelling in all the arts for which the state of his knowledge, the form of his government, and his exquisite physical organization combined to fit him, (we may here more especially particularize painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry, and oratory.) we observe the ingenious Athenian to have been invariably a false logician, and an absurd physician. Physician indeed was a word inapplicable to him, for he knew nothing of physics. With him, all was theory and nothing fact; and knowledge, let it ever be remembered, is all fact, and never theory.

But, before we leave the interesting people to whom we have alluded, I would request you to observe, that while the moderns have opened a field of inquiry unknown to the ancients - while they have substantiated facts subversive of all their dreams - we are still in the habit of employing in our seminaries of learning, such of their elementary books, as the devastation of time and of early Christian fanaticism have spared to us, and of following out their method of instruction wherever it was most defective. Thus are we still in the habit of imparting to a child a first idea of number through the medium of allegorical ciphers, instead of tangible and visible objects; thus do we still persist in substantiating solely by a process of abstract reasoning, based upon verbal sophisms, the truths involved in geometrical science, instead of first submitting those truths in the form of facts to the eye; and thus also are we wise enough to persecute such teachers as have judgment sufficient to distinguish the better method, and courage sufficient to attempt its adoption. We might here further observe, that the logic of Aristotle, with its text additionally obscured and confounded by the labours of puzzle-headed commentators, was, till within a few years, held in vulgar respect, and vulgar use, throughout the seminaries of the world. And, should we examine, we might find, in spite of the labours of a Locke and a Condillac, and others, wiser yet, because aided by the light previously thrown on the path of knowledge by a succession of giant intellects, that the erroneous mode of reasoning admired in

ancient Greece, yet lives, under modified but, perhaps therefore, more dangerous forms, in the schools, colleges, and churches in modern Europe, and revolutionized America.

I may be alluding here to subjects unfortunately foreign to the apprehension of a large portion of this audience. Unfortunately, say I? ay! and most inconsistently and unjustly: inconsistently, if we consider the nature of the national institutions which secure equal rights, and consequently, equal instruction, (necessary, as I have formerly shown, to the understanding, protection, and just exercise of those rights,) to all the citizens; and unjustly, if we consider the great principle of liberty, which proclaims to the enlightened mind the equal rights of all humankind. If the prefatory observations which I have felt necessary for the elucidation of our subject, should prove difficult of apprehension to any present, may it serve as an additional stimulus towards the adoption of some measures for the popular instruction, by devoting some of the now misspent time, and misspent money to this desirable object. Now, as on all other occasions, my utmost ingenuity is applied as well to simplify my words as my arguments; and I wish the least informed of my hearers could believe that all the facts to which I refer, and all the learning to which I find myself constrained to allude, are of most easy attainment: far, far easier than are the errors over which they are now perhaps weekly stumbling in the churches of this city.

But, to return from our digressions, and to point out more distinctly the conclusions towards which my previous observations have aimed: - it is a fact well known to the really enlightened, and well known also, I believe, to the designing, who live by the ignorance of the multitude, that every thing depends upon the *manner* of conveying instruction, and upon the first premises from which subsequent arguments are deduced, and thus final conclusions established.

It is not many years, since a native of Switzerland, whose opportunities were confined within the limits prescribed by poverty, and to the society of a simple mountain peasantry, but whose native intellect and unsophisticated observation, led him to distinguish some first principles, which the more learned have been accustomed to overlook; and, above all whose beautiful moral feelings, led him to see in every human being, a brother - it is only as it were yesterday, that this simple philosopher, among a simple people, caught a first glimpse of a true and rational method of instruction; namely by first addressing the senses, and through them, awakening the faculties commanding the attention, and convincing the reason. Led by his example, other generous minds have laboured to improve the idea he had originated; and the day must be fast approaching, when the same correct principle will be applied to every branch of knowledge, and prevail throughout the civilized world.

And yet, hitherto, the enemies of human improvement, have shown a quicker scent to the consequences of the radical reform, suggested by Pestalozzi, than have the nations who are to profit by it. Even the leaden faculties of the despot of Austria, quickened by the imperial anxiety, as he himself expressed it, to possess within his dominions, *not wise men but obedient subjects*, could perceive the danger to kingcraft, and its coadjutor priestcraft, in a mode of instruction which taught the opening mind to see through the eye, and hear through the ear, and believe only upon the testimony of fact, experiment, and experience. The young Pestalozzian schools started by the patriots of Italy, in the short dawn of liberty which so lately broke on their unhappy country, only to close in darker night, were overthrown, and their very foundations ploughed up, by the soldiers of the holy ally. In Spain, similar efforts met of course with a similar fate. In Switzerland, Pestalozzi's native Switzerland, the aristocratic cantons saw the threatened danger to the pretensions of the few in the simple labours of the friend of the many. In France, the Jesuits, resuscitated for a while by the imbecile Bourbons, persecuted alike all instruction but that patronized by the servants of religion: and, even here, in republican America, such has been the influence of superstition, and of the teachers of superstition, that the efforts of Pestalozzian disciples, have been for the most part paralyzed, and invariably impeded.

And why in all countries - why in either world this persecution?

Because educators of youth, who speak to the mind, by tangible objects presented to the senses, and who encourage their disciples to look to things, and to seek the proof in the fact, have been supposed to

prepare unmanageable subjects for kings, and troublesome disciples for priests. And most wise this apprehension on the part of those who would command the blind obedience, or the blind belief of their fellow men! Most wise this apprehension on the part of those whose power lies in the weakness of those they rule, or in the ignorance of those they lead! They alone, who have justice on their side, fear not to have to do with free minds; they alone, who have truth on their side, fear not to encounter knowledge.

But, would we not have truth and justice on our side? What interest have we to fear from the bold inquiry of free intellects? Why should we shrink from the fulness and from the universality of knowledge?

But what is knowledge? Again must we put the question. Again must we repeat the answer: for on this answer, my friends, depends the truth or the falsehood of every opinion we hold, the reality or unsubstantiality of every subject presented for our investigation.

Knowledge signifies *things known*. When there are no *things known*, there is no *knowledge*. Where there are no *things to be known*, there *can be no knowledge*. We have observed that every science, that is, every branch of knowledge, is compounded of certain facts, of which our sensations furnish the evidence. Where no such evidence is supplied, we are without *data*; we are without first premises; and when, without these, we attempt to build up a *science*, we do as those who raise edifices without foundations. And what do such builders construct? *Castles in the air*.

Having now, I trust, substantiated the nature of knowledge, and the basis of all true science, I would suggest the propriety of examining into the reality of the science, current among us under the varying name of religion, theology, or divinity. As this science now draws from the surplus industry of the American nation, twenty millions per annum, and as it is legally authorised to consume all the leisure days of the industrious classes, and farther recommended to consume all the leisure hours snatched from their days of labour, I think we must admit the examination to be not uncalled for.

It will be conceded that religion engulfs more money and more time, than any subject which ever agitated the inquiring mind of man. You will reply, that it is because it involved his most important interests. Such indeed ought to be the case, judging from all that is expended upon it.

Admitting religion to be the most important of all subjects, its truths must be the most apparent; for we shall readily concede, both that a thing true, must be always of more or less importance - and that a thing essentially important, must always be indisputably true. Now, again, I conceive we shall be disposed to admit, that exactly in proportion to the indisputability of a truth, is the proof it is capable of affording; and that, exactly in proportion to the proof afforded, is our admission of such truth and belief in it.

If, then, religion be the most important subject of human inquiry, it must be that also, which presents the most forcible, irrefragable, and indisputable truths to the enquirer. It must be that on which the human mind can err the least, and where all the minds must be the most agreed. If religion be at once a science, and the most true of all sciences, its truths must be as indisputable as those in any branch of the mathematics - as apparent to all the senses, as those revealed by the chemist, or observed by the naturalist, and as easily referred to the test of our approving or disapproving sensations, as those involved in the science of morals.

To ask if this be the case, might seem putting a question in satire. And it is not I who will use a weapon of ridicule, where the opinions and feelings of my fellow creatures are concerned. Against designing teachers of error, I will use any and every weapon within the compass of my talents and acquirements to wield; and against error itself, considered apart from those who may misconceive of its nature, the same. But ill-fitted to assist in letting down the barrier which holds back the many from the courts of knowledge - ill-fitted, I say, were I to address the popular mind, if I could idly wound the popular feeling; - ill-fitted and unworthy, to approach the tests of reason and experience, to human practice and opinion, if I should treat with levity one honest error, or make truth a cause of offense to one conscientious bosom. Far be such consequences from my words, as they are from my heart, while we weight in the balance that - must we call it science? - whose value is now estimated at a yearly tax of twenty millions.

Must we call it science, I asked? Is religion a science? Is it a branch of knowledge? Where are the *things known* upon which it rests? Where are the accumulated facts of which it is compounded? What are the human sensations to which it appeals?

I request your undivided attention to the present investigation. I request you to keep in view what we have ascertained all knowledge to be, and how we have observed all knowledge to be acquired. Unless these simple primary truths be ever present to the mind, it is without a standard by which to judge any fact or any opinion; and reflection or reasoning, to any useful purpose, with any chance of rational results, is absolutely impossible to it.

Knowledge, then, (my hearers will forgive the reiteration,) is compounded of *things known*. It is an accumulation of facts gleaned by our senses, within the range of material existence, which is subject to their investigation. As I observed on a former occasion, the number of objects comprised within the circle of human observation is so multiplied, and the properties or qualities of these objects so diversified, that, with a view to convenient and suitable division in the great work of inspecting the whole, and also with a view to the applying more order and method in the arrangement of the facts collated in the wide field of nature, they have been placed under different heads, each of which we may call a *branch of knowledge*, or, more succinctly, a *science*. Thus, do we consider the various living tribes which people the elements? we class our observations under the head of natural history. Do we direct our attention to the structure and internal mechanism of their bodies? we designate the results of our inspection under the heads anatomy and physiology. Do we trace the order of occurrences and appearances in the wide field of nature? we note them under natural philosophy. Do we analyze substances, and search out their simple elements? chemistry. Do we apply ourselves to the measurement of bodies, or calculate the heights and distances of objects? geometry. And so on through all the range of human observation, extending from the relative position of the heavenly bodies, and accurate calculation of their courses, to the uses, habits, structure and physiology of the delicate plant which carpets our earth.

It may be here suggested, in accordance with the vague notions still current respecting the nature of knowledge, that there is yet a science, which rests not upon the evidence of common individual sensations, namely, history, which is supplied by the recorded sensations of others.

I have already observed, in my opening discourses upon knowledge, that history is not, properly speaking *knowledge*, only *probability*. This probability is less or greater, according to the proximity or remoteness of the circumstances it relates; according to the style of the narrator, the accuracy and extent of the knowledge he displays, the consistency of his statements one with another, and, above all, with the results of our (the reader's) own observation and experience. Human tradition, written or spoken, is only *history* so long as it relates probabilities; when it relates improbabilities, it is *fable*. Even the histories best authenticated by the testimonies of concurring probabilities, living witnesses or surviving monumental remains, are doubtless filled with erroneous statements; and the judicious reader, in admitting the general outline or thread of the relation, is well aware that his acquaintance with the whole must be very imperfect, and his conceptions of the details both confused and mistaken.

The knowledge, then, supplied by history, is not positive, but only relative. It cannot be admitted as knowledge, until it is corroborated by all the knowledge accumulated by our experience; and, whenever our observation of the phenomena of nature refutes the assertions of the historian, we distinguish the latter immediately for erroneous. History, therefore, can only testify to itself; that is, to its own probability. If it relate circumstances in accordance with the nature of man, and the nature of things, we receive it as credible; if it relate circumstances in violation of these, we discard it as spurious. We may here remark as a consequent, that no history can be received in testimony of any occurrence opposed to the established course of natural phenomena; since this would be to receive the reported or traditionary experience of others in preference to our own, which, in the case of a rational being, would be impossible.

Now let us see where, in the table of knowledge, we may class religion. Of what part or division of nature, or material existence, does it treat? What bodies, or what properties of tangible bodies, does it place in contact with our senses, and bring home to the perception of our faculties.

It clearly appertains not to the table of human knowledge, for it treats not of objects discoverable within the field of human observation. "No," will you say? "but its knowledge is superhuman, unearthly - its field is in heaven."

My friends, the knowledge which is not human, is of slippery foundation to us human creatures. Things *known*, constitute knowledge; and here is a science treating of things unseen, unfelt, uncomprehended! Such cannot be *knowledge*. What then is it? Probability? possibility? theory? hypothesis? tradition? written? spoken? by whom? when? where? Let its teachers - nay, let all earth reply!

But what confusion of tongues and voices now strike on the ear!

From either Indies, from torrid Africa, from the frozen regions of either pole, from the vast plains of ancient Asia, from the fields and cities of European industry, from the palaces of European luxury, from the soft chambers of priestly ease, from the domes of hierarchal dominion, from the deep cell of the self-immolated monk, from the stony cave of the self-denying anchorite, from the cloud-capt towers, spires, and minarets of the crescent and the cross, arise shouts, and hosannas, and anathemas, in the commingled names of Brama, and Beeshnu, and Creeshna, and Juggernaut; heavenly kings, heavenly queens, triune deities, earth-born gods, heaven-born prophets, apotheosized monarchs, demon-enlightened philosophers, saints, angels, devils, ghosts, apparitions, and sorceries!

But, worse than these sounds which but stun the ear and confound the intellect, what sights, oh humankind! Appall the heart! The rivers of earth run blood! Nation set against nation! Brother against brother! Man against the companion of his bosom; and that soft companion, maddened with the frenzy of insane remorse for imaginary crimes, fired with the rage of infatuated bigotry, or subdued to diseased helplessness and mental fatuity, renounces kindred, flies from social converse, and pines away a useless or mischievous existence in sighings and tremblings, spectral fears, uncharitable feelings, and bitter denunciations! Such are thy doings, oh religion! Or, rather, such are thy doings, oh man! While standing in a world so rich in sources of enjoyment, so stored with objects of real inquiry and attainable knowledge, yet shutting thine eyes, and, worse, they heart, to the tangible things and sentient creatures around thee, and winging thy diseased imagination beyond the light of the sun which gladdens thy world, and contemplation of the objects which are here to expand thy mind and quicken the pulses of thy heart!

"But," say the teachers of that which is not knowledge, which may not be called a science, but which devours the treasure of nations and maddens the intellects of men, "that which we teach, unseen, unknown, unfelt by others, is revealed to us: uncomprehended of others, is understood by us; unknown to others, is by us ascertained."

Ha! has their God of justice children of preference? Does their God of wisdom open worlds to the observation of a few especial ministers, who have not senses to investigate the objects presented to them, or, at the least, faculties to describe those objects intelligibly to others? Does their God of beneficence reveal his nature to those who can neither comprehend nor portray it? his will, to creatures who, in expounding it, convulse human society to its centre? Are we to believe this? Oh, my fellow-beings! have we believed this so long?

Sisters and brothers! ye more especially, who, knowing the least of things, believe the most in doctrines; who, rocked perhaps in the cradle by fond but mistaken mothers, closed nightly your infant eyes to troubled sleep, upon tales of wicked angels, and tempting devils; and opened them, to shrink under the blessed light of morning, from the imaginary frown of a revengeful God - on ye, more especially, do I call, to arouse the faculties which superstition may have benumbed; and to put the question to your reason, if all the doctrines of the servants of religion are not inconsistent with their own assumed first premises? Could a Being of Wisdom demand of ye to spend your time and torture your faculties in imagining things which ye

never saw? worlds beyond the reach of human ken, and existences of whose nature ye can form no conception? Could a Being of Justice command ye to prostrate the reason he should have given, and swear credence to doctrines, which they even who teach, pretend not to understand? Could a Being of Beneficence visit in anger the errors of the children of his hand, and delight in the torment of those, whose ignorance he could enlighten, and whose sorrows he could heal?

Oh, my fellow beings! let us leave these inconsistencies to those who teach them! Let us leave things unseen and causes unknown, to those who vend them in this land for twenty millions of dollars; and, in other lands less free and more benighted than ours, for that sum twenty times told. Let us turn from that which is *not* knowledge, to all which *is* knowledge. Let us leave theory for fact; the world of the imagination for that of the eye; laws graven on stones for those graven on the heart! Let reason be our guide, observation our teacher, our own bosoms our judges!

But, alas! ere this may be done, our reason must be exercised, our observation awakened, our feelings quickened, by that spirit of charity and brotherhood, which jarring creeds have through ages stifled, and which just knowledge can alone impart!

It has been my object in this, as in my previous discourses, to develop with you the nature of knowledge, to substantiate in what it consists, and where and how it may be found. I have farther, on the present occasion, attempted to prove that you are now engaged in the pursuit of what is *not* knowledge. That you are now paying your quota of the twenty millions per annum towards the support of a system or error, which from the earliest date of human tradition, has filled the earth with crime, and deluged its bosom with blood, and which, at this hour, fills your country with discord, and impedes its progress in virtue, by lengthening the term of its ignorance.

The conclusions I am desirous should be drawn from our investigations of this evening, are the same which our judgements must draw from observation of, and reflection upon, the events passing before our eyes in the walks of life. How do these events exhibit the danger of looking out of our own nature and our own world for subject of inquiry! How do these admonish us of the errors of our ways, and check the important presumption of our perverted curiosity, which, aiming at things beyond our vision and so beyond our comprehension, neglects the fair field of nature it is ours to admire; the human duties and charities it is ours to fulfil; and the human delights it is ours to administer and to enjoy.

I will pray ye to observe how much of our positive misery originates in our idle speculations in matters of faith, and in our blind, our fearful forgetfulness of facts - our cold, heartless, and, I will say, *insane* indifference to visible causes of tangible evil, and visible sources of tangible happiness? Look to the walks of life I beseech ye - look into the public prints - look into your sectarian churches - look into the bosoms of families - look into your own bosoms, and those of your fellow-beings, and see how many of our disputes and dissensions, public and private - how many of our unjust actions - how many of our harsh judgments - how many of our uncharitable feelings - spring out of our ignorant ambition to rend the vail which wraps from our human senses the knowledge of things unseen, and from our human faculties the conception of causes unknown? And oh, my fellow beings! do not these very words *unseen* and *unknown*, warn the enthusiast against the profanity of such inquiries, and proclaim to the philosopher their futility? Do they not teach us that religion is no subject for instruction, and no subject for discussion? Will they not convince us, that as beyond the horizon of our observation, we can *know* nothing, so within that horizon is the only safe ground for us to meet in public?

I know how far from this simple conviction we now are. Perhaps at this very moment, the question, *what does she believe*, is uppermost in the thoughts of two-thirds of my hearers. Should such be their thoughts, I will reply to them.

With respect to myself, my efforts have been strenuously directed to ascertain what *I know*, to understand what *can be known*, and to increase my *knowledge* as far as possible. In the next place, I have endeavoured to communicate my *knowledge* to my fellow-creatures; and strictly laid down to myself the rule, never to speak to them of that of which I have *not* knowledge. If beyond the horizon of things seen -

without the range of our earthly planet, and apart from the nature of our human race, any speculations should force themselves on my fancy, I keep them to myself, even as I do the dreams of my nightly sleep, well satisfied that my neighbour will have his speculations and his dreams also, and that his, whatever they may be, will not coincide precisely with mine.

Satisfied by experience, no less than observation, of the advantage to be derived from this rule of practice, viz. to communicate with others only respecting my knowledge, and to keep to myself my belief, I venture to recommend the same to my fellow creatures; and, in conformity with this rule, would urge them, as soon as possible, to turn their churches into halls of science, and exchange their teachers of faith for expounders of nature. Every day we see sects splitting, creeds new modelling, and men forsaking old opinions only to quarrel about their opposites. I see three Gods in one, says the trinitarian, and excommunicates the socinian, who sees a godhead in unity. I see a heaven but no hell, says the universalist, and disowns fellowship with such as may distinguish less. "I see a heaven and a hell also, beyond the stars," said lately the orthodox friend, and expelled his shorter-sighted brethren from the sanctuary. I seek them both in the heart of man, said the more spiritual follower of Penn, and straightway builded him up another temple, in which to quarrel with his neighbour, who perhaps only employs other words to express the same ideas. For myself, pretending to no insight into these mysteries, possessing no means of intercourse with the inhabitants of other worlds, confessing my absolute incapacity to see either as far back as a first cause, or as far forward as a last one, I am content to state to you, my fellow creatures, that all my studies, reading, reflection, and observation, have obtained for me no knowledge beyond the sphere of our planet, our earthly interests, and our earthly duties; and that I more than doubt, whether, should you expend all your time and all your treasure in the search, you will be able to acquire any better information respecting unseen worlds, and future events, than myself. Whenever you shall come to the same conclusion, you will probably think the many spacious edifices which rear their heads in your city, are somewhat misapplied, and the time of the individuals who minister therein, somewhat misemployed: you will then doubtless perceive that they who wish to muse, or pray, had better do it after the manner designated by the good Jesus, namely, by entering their closet and shutting the door; and farther perceive, that the true Bible is the book of nature, the wisest teacher he who most plainly expounds it, the best priest our own conscience, and the most orthodox church a hall of science. I look round doubtless upon men of many faiths, upon calvinists, unitarians, methodists, baptists, catholics, and I know not what beside, and yet, my friends, let us call ourselves by what names we will, are we not creatures occupying the same earth, and sharing the same nature? and can we not consider these as members of one family, apart from all our speculations respecting worlds, and existences, and states of being, for which, in ages past, men cut each other's throats, and for which they now murder each other's peace?

And now, if among my hearers there should be one, whose opinions I have too rudely jarred, or, worse, whose feelings I have wounded, more deeply than he will I lament the offense, and lament it the rather because of its necessity. Had your public teachers employed their twenty millions in shedding peace on earth, and knowledge among men, I had not been here to startle the flock nor alarm the shepherd; I had not stepped forth from the studies and retirement which I love, into a world distracted with dissension and profaned with vice; I had not thus ventured, and thus endured, in the cause of human reason, happiness, and tranquillity, if the teacher had done his duty, and the people had grown wise under his tuition.

At our next meeting, I propose to call your attention to a subject of vital importance. I purpose to develop with you that just rule of life, which no system of religion ever taught, or can ever teach; which exists apart from all faith, all creeds, and all written laws, and which can alone be found by following, with

an open eye, a ready ear, and a willing heart, the steps of knowledge; by exercising the senses, faculties, and feelings, which appertain to our nature; and, instead of submitting our reason to the authority of fallible books and fallible teachers, by bringing always the words of all books and all teachers to the test of our reason.

- "Lecture IV: Religion", *Life, Letters and Lectures 1834-44*, Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Arno Press, New York, 1972, p. 53-68.

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