



### INGERSOLL ANSWERED.

#### Bishop Spalding Exposes the Fallacies of Atheism.

God Above All—America is Pre-eminently a Christian Country—Passing Sketch of the Blessings Which Christianity Has Shed Upon Humanity.

In the April number of the *Arena*, Right Rev. John L. Spalding, Bishop of Portland, Ill. replies to Robert G. Ingersoll's previous argument against recognizing the existence of God in the American constitution. Starting out with the proposition that the founders of the colonies were a strongly religious people, and that the seed of reverence for sacred things has been sown at the very foundation of our national system, Bishop Spalding argues that the framers of the constitution did not omit an acknowledgment of the divine guidance because they did not believe in it, but because they were conscious of its general acceptance by the people. What they aspired to do was to avoid religious differences in the debates, so that the main purpose of the convention—the establishment of a homogeneous nation—might not be menaced. The delegates were wise men and patriots; they did not choose to becloud the great question by surrounding it with irritating and perplexing discussions. "It was prudence then and not scepticism," says Dr. Spalding, "which induced them to leave the question of religion to the several states, and which led to the first constitutional amendment, taking from Congress the power to make laws respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." This amendment was made.

#### NOT FOR THE DESTRUCTION BUT FOR THE PROTECTION OF RELIGION

by men who believed that religion, which alone gives to the moral character of the glow of enthusiasm and the strength of abiding convictions, is the surest safeguard of free and healthful public life. Had our fathers been sceptics or anti-theists, they would not have required the President and Vice-President, the senators and representatives in Congress, and all executive and judicial officers of the United States to call God to witness that they intended to perform their duties under the constitution, like loyal citizens." Realizing that the conditions existing at the time of first constitutional convention do not prevail now, Bishop Spalding argues in favor of a full and manly recognition of God's sovereignty and providence by the nation. To this Colonel Ingersoll objects. The great agnostic buffoon says: "Intelligent people know that no one knows whether there is a God or not." This is a radical assertion. To God or not? This one knows whether or not God is, one should have a thorough comprehensive and original knowledge of the development and history of philosophy thought from Socrates to Kant and Mr. Herbert Spencer, and I venture to think there is not a dozen intelligent Americans who are willing to claim that they possess such knowledge. Nearly all intelligent men, in every age, including our own, believed in God, and have held that they had rational grounds for such faith. What new information, what deep insight, what access of mental strength have the intelligent people of Colonel Ingersoll gained, that they know that no man knows whether God is? Has any argument for God's existence, however it may have been modified, been invalidated or weakened even by the revelations of science? Kant's criticism of reason has, doubtless, affected theistic, as it has influenced all modern thought. He has shown that all our knowledge is a synthesis of contingent impressions and necessary conditions; and he and the agnostics maintain that we know only the conditioned; but they are bound to assume that we know also the conditions of thought, and these conditions are unconditioned, since they are necessary.

#### WE CANNOT KNOW THE RELATIVE WITHOUT KNOWING THE ABSOLUTE.

nor the phenomenal without knowing the noumenal. Modern agnostics, following the lead of Kant, deny the objective validity of the conditions of thought; but consciousness witnesses that the subjectivity of any true category is inconceivable. The proofs of God's existence which Kant's criticism apparently weakened, have, during the last twenty-five years, steadily gained in the estimation of the best and most impartial thinkers. Stuart Mill, who had been brought up an atheist, recognizes their force in the essays published after his death.

No believer, it is needless to say, claims that we have adequate knowledge of God, for this would be a denial of the necessity of faith. He alone can grasp His own infinite perfection, and we look to Him as to the sun with eyes blinded by the too great light. But is not all knowledge partial ignorance? So long as we walk contented through the world of fact and appearance, our path is smooth and our progress secure; but when we attempt to look beneath and ask ourselves what anything is apart from its sensible presentation, we sink into boundless regions, where intellectual light grows dim. The mind is superior to whatever it comprehends, and hence the infinite Adorable must forever clothe Himself in mystery. But our knowledge of the truth of science is not more certain or more clear than our knowledge of God's being. We know that matter is, but what it is we can only conjecture. Unless we are willing to accept the oracular realism of the uneducated, we cannot hold that matter is an object of experience. God is the idea of ideas, ultimate in thinking, without whom all thought is chaotic.

#### KNOWLEDGE BEGINS AND ENDS IN BELIEF.

The atheist and agnostic advance, with confidence to prove there is no God, of that

man cannot know there is, but the human soul, in the midst of a transitory and shadowy world, cleaves to the Eternal, the source of life, and love, and hope. Americans believe in God, believe they know He is, and to assure them, as Colonel Ingersoll does, that such faith is evidence of lack of intelligence, will, I imagine, leave the fact unchanged.

But, if we are, as a nation, to recognize there is a God, what God, asks Colonel Ingersoll, shall we choose: the God of the Catholics, of the Presbyterians, of the Methodists, or the Baptists? This objection is childish, and it is enough to answer that, whatever doctrinal differences on other points may exist among them, Christians and Jews acknowledge one and the same God, as Republicans and Democrats have the same country, as men of science have for the object of their investigations one and the same nature, however various and contradictory even their views and conclusions may be.

"The government of God," Colonel Ingersoll adds, "has been tried," and he thinks, has been found wanting. It was tried in Palestine; in Europe, during the middle ages; in Geneva, under Calvin; in Scotland, under the Presbyterians; in New England, under the Puritans; and as Colonel Ingersoll holds, to result, in every case, was failure, cruelty, and misery. But we are indebted to the government of God in Palestine for our moral earnestness and strength, our passion for justice and righteousness.

#### THE INFLUENCE WHICH RADIATED FROM JERUSALEM

has stimulated and invigorated every people which during the last 1900 years have risen to a higher, purer and more intelligent life. The middle ages sprang from the chaos which resulted from the ruin of pagan civilization and the incursions of the barbarians. It brought order out of chaos, saved Europe from Mahometanism, created parliaments, instituted trial by jury, invented the printing press and gunpowder, built the social structure upon the monarchical family, preserved the literature of Greece and Rome, introduced the scientific and strictly kind of life which made Shakespeare possible, and which has made immortal, and created the charter of popular rights from tyrant's hands, and when it was about to fade away before the coming age, as the moon grows pale when the sun

"Tricks his beams, and with new spangled ore,  
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky,"  
It sent Columbus to open another world to human Olympus.

The government of God has, indeed, been tried; but has the government of atheism or agnosticism been tried? If there has ever been a government of atheism, it has existed only among the lowest savages; and as a system of thought, atheism gains acceptance only in epochs of decadence.

#### IT IS A CREED OF DESPAIR.

Replying to another of Ingersoll's flippant and senseless charges against the Christian religion, Bishop Spalding says: To affirm there can be no room for God and man in the constitution or anywhere, if it have any meaning at all, is bald atheism. If to recognize God in the constitution would prove the American people to be ignorant and superstitious, to believe in God at all is evidence of "ignorant superstition, and since Americans, as a matter of fact, with few exceptions, do believe in Him, Colonel Ingersoll must hold that they are ignorant and superstitious. To affirm there can be no such thing as a Christian nation is to be sceptical. Nation is an abstraction, and an abstraction cannot be Christian, but neither can it be free, and therefore there can be no such thing as a free nation. "The church has," says Colonel Ingersoll, "been the sworn enemy of investigation and intellectual development." The church preserved the literatures of Greece and Rome, and by the genius which forever burns there, the modern mind has been set aglow, and the classics are still the best school of the most perfect intellectual culture. The authors of scientific investigation are DesCartes and Bacon. Both were Christians; DesCartes, a Catholic, educated by the Jesuits, and all his life the intimate friend of the priests; Bacon, a Protestant. Not only the originators of modern science, but nearly all the greatest investigators of physical truth—Copernicus, Kepler, Newton, Leibnitz, Ampere, Lavoisier, Fresnel, Faraday, Mayer, Agassiz, Van Beneden, Pasteur—

#### RELIGIOUS MEN HAVE BEEN THE DOERS.

Colonel Ingersoll's love of outrageous assertion is a will-of-the-wisp which leads him into quagmires where there is no solid ground of fact or theory. A destructive critic necessarily stumbles, when his styles jolt from epigram to epigram. Then Colonel Ingersoll is too indignant. Indignation is a passion of which we soon weary, and one which a good writer will rarely indulge, and his wrath at the ways of God and religious men, the sublime fury which the sight of priests or a preacher arouses within him, have ceased to be interesting. "It is easy to find fault with those whose deeds have left an impress on the world's history, and believers in God and in Christ have been doers, while sceptics and infidels have for the most part been content to drift on the infinite ocean of talk and discussion. To insist upon the failure of religion and to ignore its success is to be unfair. Are the crimes and misdeeds, the murders and lynchings, the adulteries and prostitutions, the abortions and infanticides, the dishonesties and official venalities, the drunkenness and rowdiness, which is so common in our country, an argument against popular government? Tyrants think so, but

#### THOSE WHO LOVE LIBERTY FORGET THE EVIL

in contemplating the good wrought by free institutions; and so sophists may hold that the lynchings and the burning of Servetus and Bruno are proofs of the harmfulness of religion, but the wise and the judicious know that accidental wrongs leave the infinite good of faith in a divine order of things untouched. The 70,000 or 80,000

Christian ministers in the United States today, Protestant and Catholic, are free from all theocratic pretensions; they would repeal, if it could be made, any oath of union of church and state; they are lovers of liberty, civil and religious; they accept science as the natural revelation of God and the friend of man; they with their brethren are busy with every kind of work, which can comfort, console, strengthen, uplift, enlighten and purify the children of men. That here and there some should fall is insignificant. The great army still moves forward, bearing the banner of faith towards God and towards immortal life. We are a Christian people—why should we be ashamed to confess our faith? What true American would not resent as an insult the imputation that ours is a godless nation? Both Houses of Congress open their proceedings each day with prayer, the President appoints each year a day of thanksgiving and prayer, and when occasion requires, a day of fasting and humiliation. Christianity, in fact, through no legally established, is understood to be

#### THE NATIONAL RELIGION.

No political party is hostile to it, or to any particular body of Christians. The churches are as popular as any of our other institutions. Though the Puritan Sabbath is gone, the observance of Sunday is general. The interest in theological questions, however controversial methods may have changed, is still keen, and if now the wave of agnosticism seems to be rising, it will break and subside, like many another wave of unbelief in the past. Nearly all the works of active beneficence, in which no country surpasses the United States, are carried on by religious men and women. Our moral and civil Christian and religious faith is the chief impulse to good. No people has ever become civilized without the guidance of religion; and if a race of men could be found who should think there is no God and that they are the highest beings in the universe, it is impossible to imagine that they should not sink to lower and lower places of life.

#### A LUDIBRUM OF SENSUAL DELIGHT.

Nay; is not the dream of heaven better than the things we see and touch? Hither and thither, at all events, civilized society has retired on religion and free government has prepared only in religious nations; and, if we are wise, we shall not imagine that we can come from this law. A free statesman will look to the other things than questions of science and the machinery of government. He will seek to keep the inner sources of life strong and pure, and will know that nothing has such power to do this as true religion. What good reason, then, is there why we should not write God's holy name upon the title page of our organic law? The doing this would add to patriotic zeal something of the glow and fervor of religious faith. It would be a recognition of the fact that man's soul craves for infinitely more than any government can give; it would awaken in us a deeper consciousness of the providential mission, which, as a nation, we are called to fulfill; and it would infringe upon the rights of no human being.

#### DENOUNCED BY THE POPE.

#### A Stirring Scene in St. Peter's.

Rome, April 21.—The Pope made a stirring speech yesterday to five thousand Italian pilgrims in the hall over the vestibule of St. Peter's. Twelve cardinals and twenty archbishops and bishops were present, besides many of the Roman nobility. As the Pope, arrayed in flowing white robes, denounced his enemies the building rang with cheers and shouts of "Long live the Pope." It was an exciting scene. After the pilgrims had laid their address at his feet Leo XIII. stood up and began his indictment of the Italian Government. He said: "Among the grave solitudes of the apostolic ministry which we exercise, one of the bitterest and most poignant is that which concerns the condition of the Church in Italy and the faith of the Italian people. If we have always to signalize the dangers that menace us this time we have a long and arduous task before us. 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