

**GARDENER  
HELEN  
HAMILTON**

MEN, WOMEN, AND  
GODS; AND OTHER  
LECTURES

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# Helen H. Gardener

## Men, Women, and Gods; and Other Lectures

### INTRODUCTION

Nothing gives me more pleasure, nothing gives greater promise for the future, than the fact that woman is achieving intellectual and physical liberty. It is refreshing to know that here, in our country, there are thousands of women who think and express their own thoughts – who are thoroughly free and thoroughly conscientious – who have neither been narrowed nor corrupted by a heartless creed – who do not worship a being in heaven whom they would shudderingly loathe on earth. Women who do not stand before the altar of a cruel faith with downcast eyes of timid acquiescence, and pay to impudent authority the tribute of a thoughtless yes. They are no longer satisfied with being told. They examine for themselves. They have ceased to be the prisoners of society – the satisfied serfs of husbands or the echoes of priests. They demand the rights that naturally belong to intelligent human beings. If wives, they wish to be the equals of husbands – if mothers, they wish to rear their children in the atmosphere of love, liberty and philosophy. They believe that woman can discharge all her duties without the aid of superstition, and preserve all that is true, pure and tender without sacrificing in the temple of absurdity the convictions of the soul.

Woman is not the intellectual inferior of man. She has lacked – not mind – but opportunity. In the long night of barbarism physical strength, and the cruelty to use it, were the badges of superiority. Muscle was more than mind. In the ignorant age of Faith the loving nature of woman was abused, her conscience was rendered morbid and diseased. It might almost be said that she was betrayed by her own virtues. At best, she secured, not opportunity, but flattery, the preface to degradation. She was deprived of liberty and without that nothing is worth the having. She was taught to obey without question, and to believe without thought. There were universities for men before the alphabet had been taught to woman. At the intellectual feast there were no places for wives and mothers. Even now they sit at the second table and eat the crusts and crumbs. The schools for women, at the present time, are just far enough behind those for men to fall heirs to the discarded. On the same principle, when a doctrine becomes too absurd for the pulpit, it is given to the Sunday School. The ages of muscle and miracle – of fists and faith – are passing away. Minerva occupies at last a higher niche than Hercules. Now, a word is stronger than a blow.

At last we see women who depend upon themselves – who stand self poised the shocks of this sad world without leaning for support against a church – who do not go to the literature of barbarism for consolation, nor use the falsehoods and mistakes of the past for the foundation of their hope – women brave enough and tender enough to meet and bear the facts and fortunes of this world.

The men who declare that woman is the intellectual inferior of man, do not, and cannot, by offering themselves in evidence, substantiate their declaration.

Yet, I must admit that there are thousands of wives who still have faith in the saving power of superstition – who still insist on attending church while husbands prefer the shores, the woods, or the fields. In this way families are divided. Parents grow apart, and unconsciously the pearl of greatest price is thrown away. The wife ceases to be the intellectual companion of the husband. She reads the "Christian Register," sermons in the Monday papers, and a little gossip about folks and fashions, while he studies the works of Darwin, Haeckel and Humboldt. Their sympathies become estranged. They are no longer mental friends. The husband smiles at the follies of the wife and she weeps for the supposed sins of the husband. Such wives should read this book. They should not be satisfied to remain forever in the cradle of thought, amused with the toys of superstition.

The parasite of woman is the priest.

It must also be admitted that there are thousands of men who believe that superstition is good for women and children – who regard falsehood as the fortress of virtue, and feel indebted to ignorance for the purity of daughters and the fidelity of wives. These men think of priests as detectives in disguise, and regard God as a policeman who prevents elopements. Their opinions about religion are as correct as their estimate of woman.

The church furnishes but little food for the mind. People of intelligence are growing tired of the platitudes of the pulpit – the iterations of the itinerants. The average sermon is "as tedious as a twice-told tale vexing the ears of a drowsy man."

One Sunday a gentleman who is a great inventor called at my house. Only a few words had passed between us, when he arose, saying that he must go as it was time for church. Wondering that a man of his mental wealth could enjoy the intellectual poverty of the pulpit, I asked for an explanation, and he gave me the following: "You know that I am an inventor. Well, the moment my mind becomes absorbed in some difficult problem, I am afraid that something may happen to distract my attention. Now, I know that I can sit in church for an hour without the slightest danger of having the current of my thought disturbed."

Most women cling to the Bible because they have been taught that to give up that book is to give up all hope of another life – of ever meeting again the loved and lost. They have also been taught that the Bible is their friend, their defender, and the real civilizer of man.

Now if they will only read this book – these three lectures, without fear, and then read the Bible, they will see that the truth or falsity of the dogma of inspiration has nothing to do with the question of immortality. Certainly the Old Testament does not teach us that there is another life, and upon that question, even the New is obscure and vague. The hunger of the heart finds only a few small and scattered crumbs. There is nothing definite, solid, and satisfying. United with the idea of immortality we find the absurdity of the resurrection. A prophecy that depends for its fulfillment upon an impossibility, cannot satisfy the brain or heart.

There are but few who do not long for a dawn beyond the night. And this longing is born of, and nourished by, the heart. Love wrapped in shadow – bending with tear-filled eyes above its dead, convulsively clasps the outstretched hand of hope.

I had the pleasure of introducing Helen H. Gardener to her first audience, and in that introduction said a few words that I will repeat,

"We do not know, we can not say whether death is a wall or a door, the beginning or end of a day, the spreading of pinions to soar, or the folding forever of wings. The rise or the set of a sun, of an endless life that brings rapture and love to every one.

"Under the seven-hued arch of hope let the dead sleep."

They will also discover, as they read the "Sacred Volume," that it is not the friend of woman. They will find that the writers of that book, for the most part, speak of woman as a poor beast of burden – a serf, a drudge, a kind of necessary evil – as mere property. Surely a book that upholds polygamy is not the friend of wife and mother.

Even Christ did not place woman on an equality with man. He said not one word about the sacredness of home, the duties of the husband to the wife – nothing calculated to lighten the hearts of those who bear the saddest burdens of this life.

They will also find that the Bible has not civilized mankind. A book that establishes and defends slavery and wanton war is not calculated to soften the hearts of those who believe implicitly that it is the work of God. A book that not only permits, but commands religious persecution, has not in my judgment developed the affectional nature of man. Its influence has been bad and bad only. It has filled the world with bitterness, revenge, and crime, and retarded in countless ways the progress of our race.

The writer of this little volume has read the Bible with open eyes. The mist of sentimentality has not clouded her vision.

She has had the courage to tell the result of her investigations. She has been quick to discover contradictions. She appreciates the humorous side of the stupidly solemn. Her heart protests against the cruel, and her brain rejects the childish, the unnatural, and absurd. There is no misunderstanding between her head and heart. She says what she thinks, and feels what she says.

No human being can answer her arguments. There is no answer. All the priests in the world cannot explain away her objections. There is no explanation. They should remain dumb, unless they can show that the impossible is the probable – that slavery is better than freedom – that polygamy is the friend of woman – that the innocent can justly suffer for the guilty, and that to persecute for opinion's sake is an act of love and worship.

Wives who cease to learn – who simply forget and believe, will fill the evening of their lives with barren sighs and bitter tears. The mind should outlast youth.

If, when beauty fades, Thought, the deft and unseen sculptor, hath not left his subtle lines upon the face, then all is lost. No charm is left. The light is out. There is no flame within to glorify the wrinkled clay.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

Hoffman House,

New York, July 22, 1885.

## MEN, WOMEN, AND GODS

IT is thought strange and particularly shocking by some persons for a woman to question the absolute correctness of the Bible. She is supposed to be able to go through this world with her eyes shut, and her mouth open wide enough to swallow Jonah and the Garden of Eden without making a wry face. It is usually recounted as one of her most beautiful traits of character that she has faith sufficient to float the Ark without inspecting the animals.

So it is thought strange that a woman should object to any of the teachings of the Patriarchs. I claim, however, that if she honestly thinks there is anything wrong about them, she has a right to say so. I claim that I have a right to offer my objections to the Bible from the standpoint of a woman. I think that it is fair, at least, to put the case before you as it looks to me, using the Bible itself as my chief witness. That Book I think degrades and belittles women, and I claim the right to say why I think so. The opposite opinion has been stated by hundreds of people, hundreds of times, for hundreds of years, so that it is only fair that I be allowed to bring in a minority report.

Women have for a long time been asking for the right to an education, for the right to live on an equal footing with their brothers, and for the right to earn money honestly; while at the same time they have supported a book and a religion which hold them as the inferiors of their sons and as objects of contempt and degradation with Jehovah. They have sustained a so-called "revelation" which holds them as inferior and unclean things. Now it has always seemed to me that these women are trying to stand on both sides of the fence at the same time – and that neither foot touches.

I think they are making a mistake. I think they are making a mistake to sustain any religion which is based upon faith. Even though a religion claim a superhuman origin – and I believe they all claim that – it must be tested by human reason, and if our highest moral sentiments revolt at any of its dictates, its dictates must go. For the only good thing about any religion is its morality, and morality has nothing to do with faith. The one has to do with right actions in this world; the other with unknown quantities in the next. The one is a necessity of Time; the other a dream of Eternity. Morality depends upon universal evolution; Faith upon special "revelation;" and no woman can afford to accept any "revelation" that has yet been offered to this world.

That Moses or Confucius, Mohammed or Paul, Abraham or Brigham Young asserts that his particular dogma came directly from God, and that it was a personal communication to either or all of these favored individuals, is a fact that can have no power over us unless their teachings are in harmony with our highest thought, our noblest purpose, and our purest conception of life. Which of them can bear the test? Not one "revelation" known to man to-day can look in the face of the nineteenth century and say, "I am parallel with your richest development; I still lead your highest thought; none of my teachings shock your sense of justice." Not one.

It is faith in "revelation" that makes a mother tear from her arms a tender, helpless child and throw it in the Ganges – to appease the gods! It is a religion of faith that teaches the despicable principle of caste – and that religion was invented by those who profited by caste. It was our religion of faith that sustained the institution of slavery – and it had for its originators dealers in human flesh. It is the Mormon's religion of faith, his belief in the Bible and in the wisdom of Solomon and David, that enables the monster of polygamy to flaunt its power and its filth in the face of the morality of the nineteenth century, which has outgrown the Jehovah of the Jews.

Every religion must be tried at the bar of human justice, and stand or fall by the verdict there. It has no right to crouch behind the theory of "inspiration" and demand immunity from criticism; and yet that is just what every one of them does. They all claim that we have no right to use our reason on their inventions. But evil cannot be made good by revelation, and good cannot be made evil by persecution.

A "revelation" that teaches us to trample on purity, or bids us despise beauty – that gives power to vice or crushes the weak – is an evil. The dogma that leads us to ignore our humanity, that asks us to throw away our pleasures, that tells us to be miserable here in order that we may be happy hereafter, is a doctrine built upon a false philosophy, cruel in its premises and false in its promises. And the religion that teaches us that believing Vice is holier than unbelieving Virtue is a grievous wrong. Credulity is not a substitute for morality. Belief is not a question of right or wrong, it is a question of mental organization. Man cannot believe what he will, he must believe what he must. If his brain tells him one thing and his catechism tells him another, his brain ought to win. You don't leave your umbrella at home during a storm, simply because the almanac calls for a clear day.

A religion that teaches a mother that she can be happy in heaven, with her children in hell – in everlasting torment – strikes at the very roots of family affection. It makes the human heart a stone. Love that means no more than that, is not love at all. No heart that has ever loved can see the object of its affection in pain and itself be happy. The thing is impossible. Any religion that can make that possible is more to be dreaded than war or famine or pestilence or death. It would eat out all that is great and beautiful and good in this life. It would make life a mockery and love a curse.

I once knew a case myself, where an eldest son who was an unbeliever died. He had been a kind son and a good man. He had shielded his widowed mother from every hardship. He had tried to lighten her pain and relieve her loneliness. He had worked early and late to keep her comfortable and happy. When he died she was heartbroken. It seemed to her more than she could bear. As she sat and gazed at his dear face in a transport of grief, the door opened and her preacher came in to bring her the comfort of religion. He talked with her of her loss, and finally he said, "But it would not be so hard for you to bear if he had been a Christian. If he had accepted what was freely offered him you would one day see him again. But he chose his path, he denied his Lord, and he is lost. And now, dear madam, place your affections on your living son, who is, thank God, saved." That was the comfort he brought her. That was the consolation of his religion. I am telling you of an actual occurrence. This is all a fact. Well, a few years later that dear old lady died in her son's house, where she had gone on a visit. He broke her will – this son who was saved – and brought in a bill against her estate for her board and nursing while she was ill! Which one of those boys do you think would be the best company for her in the next world?

It has always seemed to me that I would rather go to hell with a good son than to heaven with a good Christian. I may be wrong, but with my present light that is the way it looks to me; and for the sake of humanity I am glad that it looks that way.

## ACCIDENT INSURANCE

A church member said to me some time ago that even though the Bible were not "the word of God," even though it were not necessary to believe in the creed in order to go to heaven, it could not do any harm to believe it; and he thought it was "best to be on the safe side, for," said he, "suppose after all it should happen to be true!"

So he carries a church-membership as a sort of accident insurance policy.

I do not believe we have a right to work upon that basis. It is not honest. I do not believe that any "suppose it should be" gives us the right to teach "I know that it is." I do not believe in the honesty and right of any cause that has to prop up its backbone with faith, and splinter its legs with ignorance. I do not believe in the harmlessness of any teaching that is not based upon reason, justice, and truth. I do not believe that it is harmless to uphold any religion that is not noble and elevating in itself. I do not believe that it is "just as well" to spread any dogma that stultifies reason and ignores common-sense. I do not believe that it is ever well to compromise with dishonesty and pretence. And I cannot admit that it "can do no harm" to teach a belief in the goodness of a God who sends an Emerson or a Darwin to hell because Eve was fond of fruit, and who offers a reserved seat in heaven to Christine Cox because a mob murdered Jesus Christ. It does not seem to me good morals, and it is certainly poor logic.

And speaking of logic, I heard a funny story the other day about one of those absurdly literal little girls who, when she heard people say they "wanted to be an angel," did not know it was a joke.. She thought it was all honor-bright. She was standing by the window killing flies, and her mother called her and said, "My child, don't you know that is very wicked? Don't you know that God made those dear little flies, and that he loves them?" (Just imagine an infinite God in love with a blue-bottle fly!) Well, the little girl thought that was queer taste, but she was sorry, and said that she would not do it any more. By and by, however, a great lazy fly was too tempting, and her plump little finger began to follow him around slowly on the glass, and she said, "Oh you nice big fly, did dod made you? And does dod love you? And does you love dod?" (Down came the finger.) "*Well, you shall see him.*"

Yet we all know Christians who love God better than anything else – "with all their hearts and soul and strength" – who prefer to postpone seeing him till the very last minute. They say it is because they have not "fulfilled their allotted time." Why not be honest and say it is because they like to live? They "long to put on immortality;" but their sleep is sounder if they live next door to a good doctor.

People say that men are infidels because it is easier – to rid themselves of responsibility. But it seems to me that anyone who advances the doctrine of "morality and works" instead of that of "repentance and faith," on the ground that it is easier, is laboring under a mistake. I don't see how any one could ask for an easier way of getting rid of his sins than the plan that simply unloads them on to another man. I fail to see anything hard about that – except for the man who catches the load; and I am unable to see anything commendable about it either. But it is not always easy for a man to be brave enough to be responsible for his own mistakes or faults. It is not always easy for a man to say "I did it, and I will suffer the penalty." That is not always easy, but it is always just. No one but a coward or a knave needs to shift his personal responsibility on to the shoulders of the dead. Honest men and women do not need to put "Providence" up between themselves and their own motives.

A short time ago the wife of a very devout man apparently died, but her body remained so lifelike and her color so natural that her relatives decided that she could not be dead, and they summoned a physician. The husband, however, refused to have him administer any restoratives. He said that if the Lord had permitted her to go into a trance and was anxious to bring her out alive he would do it. Meanwhile he did not intend to meddle with Providence. His maxim was, "Whatever else you do, don't interfere with Providence. Give Providence a good chance and if it doesn't come round all right for Betsy, I think I can bear it – and she will have to."

If we take care of our motives toward each other, "Providence" will take care of itself.

Did you ever know a pious man do a real mean thing – that succeeded – who did not claim that Providence had a finger in it? The smaller the trick, the bigger the finger. He is perfectly honest in his belief too. He is the sort of man that never has a doubt about hell – and that most people go there. Thinks they all deserve it. Has entire confidence that God is responsible for every word in the Bible, and that all other Bibles and all other religions are the direct work of the devil. Probably prays for people who don't believe that way. He is perfectly honest in it. That is simply his size, and he usually pities anybody who wears a larger hat.

## CHIEFLY WOMEN

But they say this is not a matter of reason. This is outside of reason, it is all a matter of faith. But whenever a superstition claims to be so holy that you must not use your reason about it, there is something wrong some place. Truth is not afraid of reason, nor reason of truth.

I am going to say something to-night about why I do not believe in a religion of faith. I am going to tell you some of the reasons why I do not believe that the Bible is "inspired;" why I, as a woman, don't want to think it is the word of God; why I think that women, above all others, should not believe that it is. And since women are the bulwarks of the churches to-day, it seems to me they have the right, and that it is a part of their duty, to ask themselves why. Since about seven-tenths of all church-members are women, surely the churches should not deny them the right to use their reason (or whatever serves them in that capacity) in regard to their own work.

I saw some ladies begging the other day for money to pay off the debt of a \$200,000 church, on the corner-stone of which were cut the words, "My kingdom is not of this world;" and I wondered at the time what the property would have been like if the kingdom had been of this world. It seemed to me that a few hundred such untaxed houses would be a pretty fair property almost anywhere.

One of our prominent bishops, when speaking recently of church-membership, said, "The Church must recruit her ranks hereafter almost entirely with children;" and he added, "the time has passed when she can recruit her ranks with grown men." Good! And the New York *Evangelist* (one of the strongest church papers) says, "Four-fifths of the earnest young men of this country are sceptics, distrust the clergy, and are disgusted with evangelical Christianity." Good again.

The Congregational Club of Boston has recently been discussing the question how to win young men to Christianity. The Rev. R. R. Meredith said: "The churches to-day do not get the best and sharpest young men. They get the goody-goody ones easily enough; but those who do the thinking are not brought into the church in great numbers. You cannot reach them by the Bible. How many did Moody touch in this city during his revival days? You can count them on your fingers. The man who wants them cannot get them with the Bible under his arm. He must be like them, sharp. They cannot be gathered by sentimentality. If you say to them, 'Come to Jesus,' very likely they will reply, 'Go to thunder.' [In Boston!] The thing to be done with such a man is to first get into his heart, and then lead him into salvation before he knows it."

I don't know how good this recipe is, but I should infer that it is a double-back-action affair of some sort that could get into a man's heart and lead him into salvation before he knew it, and that if the Church can just get a patent on that she is all right; otherwise I suspect that the goody-goody ones are likely to be about all she will get in large numbers.

Do I need any stronger, plainer evidence than this to show that the thought of the world is against it, and that it is time for women to ask themselves whether a faith that can hold its own only by its grasp upon the ignorance and credulity of children, a faith that has made four-fifths of the earnest men sceptics, a faith that has this deplorable effect upon Boston manners, is one that does honor to the intellect and judgment of the women of to-day?

We hear women express indignation that the law classes them with idiots and children; but from these orthodox statements it would seem that in the Church they voluntarily accept about this classification themselves. If only these church-people go to heaven, what a queer kindergarten it will be, to be sure, with only a few male voices to join in the choruses – and most of those tenor.

This religion and the Bible require of woman everything, and give her nothing. They ask her support and her love, and repay her with contempt and oppression. No wonder that four-fifths of the earnest men are against it, for it is not manly and it is not just; and such men are willing to free women from the ecclesiastical bondage that makes her responsible for all the ills of life, for all the pains of deed and creed, while it allows her no choice in their formation, no property in their fruition.

Such men are outgrowing the petty jealousies and musty superstitions of narrow-minded dogmatists sufficiently to look upon the question not as one of personal preference, but as one of human justice. They do not ask, "Would *I* like to see woman do thus or thus?" but, "Have *I* a right to dictate the limit of her efforts or her energy?" – not, "Am I benefited by her ecclesiastical bondage and credulity? Does it give me unlimited power over her?" but, "Have I a right to keep in ignorance, have I a right to degrade, any human intellect?" And they have answered with equal dignity and impersonal judgment that it is the birthright of no human being to dominate or enslave another; that it is the just lot of no human being to be born subject to the arbitrary will or dictates of any living soul; and that it is, after all, as great an injustice to a *man* to make him a tyrant as it is to make him a slave.

Whenever a man rises high enough to leave his own personality out of the question, he has gone beyond the stage of silly platitudes. His own dignity is too secure, his title to respect too far beyond question, for him to need such little subterfuges to guard his position, either as husband, as household-king, or as public benefactor. His home life is not founded upon compulsory obedience; but is filled with the perfume of perfect trust, the fragrance of loving admiration and respect. It is the domestic tyrant, the egotistic mediocre, and the superstitious Church that are afraid for women to think, that fear to lose her as worshipper and serf.

You need go only a very little way back in history to learn that the Church decided that a woman who learned the alphabet overstepped all bounds of propriety, and that she would be wholly lost to shame who should so far forget her modesty as to become acquainted with the multiplication table.

And to-day, if she offers her opinion and her logic for what they are worth, the clergy preach doleful sermons about her losing her beautiful home character, about her innocence being gone, about their idea of her glorious exaltation as wife and mother being destroyed. Then they grow florid and exclaim that "man is after all subject to her, that he is born for the rugged path and she for the couch of flowers!"<sup>1</sup>

You recognize it all, I see. You seem to have heard it somewhere before. I recall one occasion when I heard it from a country clergyman, who knew so much about heaven and hell that he hardly had time to know enough about this world to enable him to keep out of the fire unless he was tied to a chair. It was in the summer of 1876, and I remember the conversation began by his asking a lady in the room about the Centennial display, from which she had just returned. He asked her if she would advise him to take his daughter. She said she thought it would be a very nice thing for the girl, and she added, "It will be good for you. You will see so much that is new and wonderful. It will be of use to you in your work, I am sure." He said, "Well, I don't know about that. There won't be anything much that is new to me. I've seen it all. *I was in Philadelphia in 1840.*" Then he gave us quite a talk on "woman's sphere." He could tell you in five minutes just what it was; and the amount of information that man possessed about the next world was simply astonishing. He knew pretty nearly everything. I think he could tell you, within a fraction or two, just how much material it took to make wings for John the Baptist, and whether Paul sings bass or tenor. His presbytery says he is a most remarkable theologian – and I don't doubt it. According to the law of compensation, however, what he does not know about this world would make a very comprehensive encyclopedia.

But seriously, did it ever occur to you to ask any of these divine oracles why, if all these recent compliments are true about the superior beauty and virtue and truth and power resting with women

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<sup>1</sup> "A pertinacious adversary, pushed to extremities, may say that husbands indeed are willing to be reasonable, and to make fair concessions to their partners without being compelled to it, but that wives are not; that if allowed any rights of their own, they will acknowledge no rights at all in any one else, and never will yield in anything, unless they can be compelled, by the man's mere authority, to yield in everything. This would have been said by many persons some generations ago, when satires on women were in vogue, and men thought it a clever thing to insult women for being what men made them. But it will be said by no one now who is worth replying to. It is not the doctrine of the present day that women are less susceptible of good feeling and consideration for those with whom they are united by the strongest ties, than men are. On the contrary, we are perpetually told that women are better than men by those who are totally opposed to treating them as if they were as good; so that the saying has passed into a piece of tiresome cant, intended to put a complimentary face upon an injury." – John Stuart Mill.

– why it is that they always desire as heirs sons rather than daughters? You would think their whole desire would be for girls, and that, like *Oliver Twist*, their chief regret would be that they hadn't "more." But the Bible (and the clergy, until quite recently) pronounces it twice as great a crime to be the mother of a girl as to be the mother of a boy. A crime to be the mother of a little child – a double crime if the child should be a girl.<sup>2</sup>

It is often urged that women are better off under the Christian than under any other religion; that our Bible is more just to her than other Bibles are. For the time we will grant this, and respectfully inquire – what does it prove? If it proves anything it is this – that all "divine revelations" are an indignity to women, and that they had better stick to nature. Nature may be exacting, but she is not partial. If it proves anything, it is that all religions have been made by men for men and through men. I do not contend for the superiority of other Bibles, I simply protest against the wrong in ours. One wrong cannot excuse another. That murder is worse than arson does not make a hero of the rascal who fires our homes. If Allah were more cruel than Jehovah, that would be no palliation of the awful crimes of the Old Testament. That slaves have better clothes than savages cannot make noble traffic in human blood. A choice of evils is often necessary, but it does not make either of them a good. But there is no book which tells of a more infamous monster than the Old Testament, with its Jehovah of murder and cruelty and revenge, unless it be the New Testament, which arms its God with hell, and extends his outrages throughout all eternity!

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix K.

## WHY WOMEN SUPPORT IT

Another argument is that if orthodox Christianity were not good for women they would not support and cling to it; if it did not comfort them they would discard it. In reply to that I need only recall to you the fact that it is the same in all religions. Women have ever been the staunchest defenders of the faith, the most bitter haters of an infidel, the most certain that their form of faith is the only truth.<sup>3</sup> Yet I do not hear this fact advanced to prove the divinity of the Koran or the book of Mormon. If it is a valid argument in the one case it is valid in the others. The trouble with it is it proves too much. It takes in the whole field. It does not leave a weed, from the first incantation of the first aborigine to the last shout of the last convert to Mormonism, out of its range; and it does, and always has done, just as good service for any one of the other religions as it does for ours. It is a free-for-all, go-as-you-please argument; but it is the sort of chaff they feed theological students on – and they sift it over for women. It is pretty light diet when it gets to them – but it is filling.

Recently I heard a clergyman give the following as his reason for opposing medical, or scientific training of any sort, for women: "Now her whole energy and force of action (outside of the family) must be expended upon religion. If she were allowed other fields of action or thought, her energy, like that of man, would be withdrawn from and *fatally cripple the Church.*"

To me, however, it seems that any organization that finds it necessary to cripple its adherents in order to keep them has a screw loose somewhere.

And it also seems to me that it is time for women to try to find out where the trouble is. They will not want for aid from the men who think – the men who hold self vastly inferior to principle and justice – the rare noblemen of nature, honorable, fair, just, tender, and thoughtful men – men who love to see the weakest share with them the benefits of freedom – men who know that they are not the less men because they are tender, that women are not the less women because they are strong; and no land under the sky holds so many such as ours.

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix G.

## WHAT IT TEACHES

It seemed to me that the time had come when women should know for themselves what the Bible teaches for them and what the pulpit has upheld; so I have looked it up a little, and although I cannot soil my lips nor your ears with much of it, there is enough, I think, that I may use to make any self-respecting, pure woman blush that she has sustained it by word or act.

The Bible teaches that a father may sell his daughter for a slave,<sup>4</sup> that he may sacrifice her purity to a mob,<sup>5</sup> and that he may murder her, and still be a good father and a holy man. It teaches that a man may have any number of wives; that he may sell them, give them away, or change them around, and still be a perfect gentleman, a good husband, a righteous man, and one of God's most intimate friends; and that is a pretty good position for a beginning. It teaches almost every infamy under the heavens for woman, and it does not recognize her as a self-directing, free human being. It classes her as property, just as it does a sheep: and it forbids her to think, talk, act, or exist, except under conditions and limits defined by some priest.

If the Bible were strictly followed, women and negroes would still be publicly bought and sold in America. If it were believed in as it once was, if the Church had the power she once had, I should never see the light of another day, and your lives would be made a hell for sitting here to-night. The iron grasp of superstition would hold you and your children forever over the bottomless pit of religious persecution, and cover your fair fame with infamous slander, because you dared to sit here and hear me strike a blow at infinite injustice.

Every injustice that has ever been fastened upon women in a Christian country has been "authorized by the Bible" and riveted and perpetuated by the pulpit. That seems strong language, no doubt; but I shall give you an opportunity to decide as to its truth. I will now bring my witnesses. They are from the "inspired word" itself, and therefore must be all that could be desired. I will read you a short passage from Exodus xx. 22; xxi. 7-8:

22 And the Lord said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I talked with you from heaven. \*\*\*\*\*

7 And if a man sell his daughter to be a maid-servant, she shall not go out as the men-servants do.

8 If she please not her master, who hath betrothed her to himself, then shall he let her be redeemed: to sell her unto a strange nation he shall have no power, seeing he hath dealt deceitfully with her.

The Lord doesn't object to a man selling his daughter, but if any one thing makes him angrier than another it is to have her go about as the men-servants do after she is sold. On a little point like that he is absolutely fastidious. You may here notice that God took the trouble to come down from heaven to tell the girl what not to do after she was sold. He forgot to suggest to her father that it might be as well not to sell her at all. He forgot that. But in an important conversation one often overlooks little details. The next is Joshua xv. 16-17:

16 And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife.

17 And Othniel the brother of Caleb [and consequently the girl's uncle] took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.

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<sup>4</sup> Ex. xxi. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Judges xix. 24; Gen. xix. 8

Please to remember that the said Caleb was one of God's intimates – a favorite with the Almighty. The girl was not consulted; the father paid off his warriors in female scrip. The next is Gen. xix. 5-8:

5 And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where *are* the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us that we may know them,

6 And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him,

7 And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes; only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my root

These men had come under the shadow of Lot's roof for protection, it seems, and Lot felt that his honor demanded that he should shield them even at the cost of the purity and safety of his own daughters! Do you know I have always had a mild curiosity to know what his daughters were under the shadow of his roof for. It could not have been for protection, I judge, since Lot was one of God's best friends. He was on all sorts of intimate terms with the Deity – knew things were going to happen before they came – was the only man good enough to save from a doomed city – the only one whose acts pleased God; and this act seems to have been particularly satisfactory. These men were "angels of God" who required this infamy for their protection! If it takes all the honor out of a man when he gets to be an angel, they may use my wings for a feather-duster.

Now here is a little property law. Num. xxvii.:

6 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

8 And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a man die, *and have no son*, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter.

And our law works a little that way yet; being the result of ecclesiastical law it naturally would.<sup>6</sup> Next we have Num. xxxvi.:

8 And every daughter that possesseth an inheritance in any tribe of the children of Israel, *shall be wife* unto one of the family of the tribe of her father, *that the children of Israel may enjoy every man the inheritance of his fathers*.

9 Neither shall the inheritance remove from *one* tribe to another tribe; but every one of the tribes of the children of Israel shall keep himself to his own inheritance.

10 *Even as the Lord commanded Moses, so did the daughters of Zelophehad*.

That is all the women were for – articles of conveyance for property. Save the land, no matter about the girls. Now these silly women actually believed that God told Moses whom they had to marry just because Moses said so! I tell you, ladies and gentlemen, it is not safe to take heavenly communications at second-hand. Second-hand articles are likely to be varnished over, and have to be taken at a discount. And it seems to me that, if the Lord is at all particular as to whom a girl should marry, she is the one for him to discuss the matter with. Moses didn't have to live with the *sons* of Zelophehad, and consequently wasn't the one to talk the matter over with. But, you see, it won't do to question what Moses said God told him, because upon his veracity the whole structure is built. He had more personal interviews with the Deity than any other man – he and Solomon – and hence they are the best authority.

I have here the 31st chapter of Numbers, but it is unfit to read. It tells a story of shame and crime unequalled in atrocity. It tells that God commanded Moses and Eleazar, the priest, to produce vice and perpetrate crime on an unparalleled scale. *It tells us that they obeyed the order, and that*

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix N. 5 and P. 5.

*16,000 helpless girls were dragged in the mire of infamy and divided amongst the victorious soldiers. They were made dissolute by force, and by direct command of God!*

This one chapter stamps as false, forever, the claim of inspiration for the Bible. That one chapter would settle it for me. Do you believe that God told Moses that? Do you believe there is a God who is a thief, a murderer, and a defiler of innocent girls? Do you believe it? Yet this religion is built upon Moses' word, and woman's position was established by him. It seems to me time for women to retire Moses from active life. Coax him to resign on account of his health. Return him to his constituency. He has been on the supreme bench long enough. Don't let your children believe in such a God. Better let them believe in annihilation. Better let them think that the sleep of death is the end of all! Better, much better, let them believe that the tender kiss at parting is the last of all consciousness for them, and after that eternal rest! Don't let their hearts be seared, their lives clouded, their intellects dwarfed by the cruel dread of the God of Moses! Better, thrice better, let the cold earth close over the loved and loving dust forever, than that it should enter the portals of infinite tyranny.

Next we will take Deut. xx. 10-16:

10 When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. [Good scheme!]

11 And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, *that* all the people *that* is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee.

12 And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it:

13 *And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thy hands*, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword:

14 But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, *even* all the spoil thereof, *shalt thou take unto thyself*; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thy enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee.

15 Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations.

16 But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth.

The injunction to proclaim peace unto a city about to be attacked and plundered strikes me as a particularly brilliant idea. When you go to rob and murder a man, just tell him to keep cool and behave like a gentleman and you won't do a thing to him but steal all his property and cut his throat and retire in good order, God always seemed to fight on the side of the man who would murder most of his fellow-men and degrade the greatest number of women. He seemed, in fact, to rather insist on this point if he was particular about nothing else. And, by the way, if you had happened to live in one of those cities, what opinion do you think you would have had of Jehovah? Would he have impressed you as a loving Father? Here we have 2 Samuel v. 10, 12-13:

10 And David went on, and grew great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him.

12 And David perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake.

13 And David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron: and there were yet sons and daughters born to David.

The nearer he got to God – the more God was "with him," the more wives he wanted. Next we have 2 Samuel xx. 3:

3 And David came to his house at Jerusalem, and the king took the ten women, his concubines, whom he had left to keep they were shut up unto the day of their death, living in widowhood.

Now what did David do that for? I don't know. It was such a trifling little matter that it was not thought necessary to give any reason. Perhaps he had eaten too much pie and felt cross; and what else were those women for but to be made stand around on such occasions? Weren't they his property? Didn't those ten women belong to David? Hadn't he a perfect right to shut them up and feed them if he wanted to? Don't you think it was kind of him to feed them? I wonder if he sang any of his psalms to them through the key-hole. His son Absalom had just been killed, and he felt miserable about that. He had just delivered himself of that touching apostrophe we often hear repeated from the pulpit to-day, to awaken sympathy for God's afflicted prophet: "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" And I haven't a doubt that there were at least ten women who echoed that wish most heartily. It must have been carried in the family without a dissenting vote.

To this God of the Bible a woman may not go unless her father or husband consents. She can't even promise to be good without asking permission. This God holds no communication with women unless their male relations approve. He wants to be on the safe side, I suppose. I'll read you about that. It is in one of the chapters that are not commonly cited as evidence that God is no respecter of persons, and that the Bible holds woman as man's equal; nevertheless it is as worthy of belief as any of the rest of it, and its "Thus saith the Lord" and "as the Lord commanded Moses" are "frequent and painful and free," as Mr. Bret Harte might say. The chapter is Numbers xxx.:

And Moses spake unto the heads of the tribes concerning the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the Lord hath commanded.

2 If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.

3 If a woman also vow a vow unto the Lord, and bind herself by a bond, being in her father's house in her youth;

4 And her father hear her vow, and her bond wherewith she hath; bound her soul, and her father shall hold his peace at her; then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she hath bound her soul shall stand.

5 But if her father disallow her in the day that he heareth; not any of her vows, or of her bonds wherewith she hath bound her soul, shall stand: and the Lord shall forgive her, because her father disallowed her.

6 And if she had at all an husband, when she vowed, or uttered aught out of her lips, wherewith she bound her soul;

7 And her husband heard *it*, and held his peace at her in the day that he heard *it*; then her vows shall stand, and her bonds wherewith she bound her soul shall stand.

8 But if her husband disallowed her on the day that he heard *it*; then he shall make her vow which she vowed, and that which she uttered with her lips, wherewith she bound her soul, of none effect: and the Lord shall forgive her.

9 But every vow of a widow, and of her that is divorced, wherewith they have bound their souls, shall stand against her.

10 And if she vowed in her husband's house, or bound her soul by a bond with an oath;

11 And her husband heard *it*, and held his peace at her, *and* disallowed her not; then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she bound her soul shall stand.

12 But if her husband hath utterly made them void on the day he heard *them*; then whatsoever proceeded out of her lips concerning her vows, or concerning the bond of her soul, shall not stand: her husband hath made them void; and the Lord shall forgive her.

13 Every vow, and every binding oath to afflict the soul, her husband may establish it, or her husband may make it void.

14 But if the husband altogether hold his peace at her from day to day; then he establisheth all her vows, or all her bonds, which are upon her: he confirmeth them, because he held his peace at her in the day that he heard them.

15 But if he shall any ways make them void after that he hath heard them; then he shall bear her iniquity.

16 These are the statutes, which the Lord commanded Moses, between a man and his wife, between the father and his daughter, *being yet* in her youth in her father's house.

Between man and his God they tell us there is no one but a Redeemer; but between woman and man's God there seems to be all her male relations, which, I should think, would prevent any very close intimacy. And by the time the divine commands to woman were filtered through the entire male population, from Moses to the last gentleman who, in the confusion natural to the occasion, misquotes "with all *thy* worldly goods I *me* endow," I should think it not impossible that some slight errors may have crept in, and the Church should not feel offended if I were to aid her in their detection.

Here we have two or three passages that are said to be the words of Jesus. I hope that is not true. But I, believing him to have been a man, can understand how they might have been the words of even a very good man in that age and with his surroundings; but the words of a perfect being – never! Of course I know that we have no positive knowledge of any of the words of Jesus, since no one pretends that they were ever written down until long after his death; but I am dealing now with the theological creation upon the theologian's own grounds. My own idea of Jesus places him far above the myth that bears his name.

3 And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.

4 Jesus saith unto her, *Woman, what have I to do with thee?*

– John ii, 3-4.

I hope that Christ did not say that – for his manhood I hope so. I would rather believe that this is the mistake of some "uninspired" writer than think that one who in much had so gentle and tender a nature, was unkind and brutal to his mother. No one would attempt, in this age, to apologize for such a reply to so simple a remark made by a mother to her son. But they say "he was divine." They also tell us he was a perfect example; but with this evidence before me, I am glad our men are human. Still I cannot pretend to say that this is not divine – never having made any divine acquaintances. I can only say, humanity is better.

Then again he is reported to have said a most cruel thing to the broken-hearted mother of a dying child, and I would rather believe the Bible uninspired and keep my respect for Jesus, the man. It will be better for this world to believe in Jesus, the brave, earnest man, than in Jesus, the cruel God.

21 Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

22 And behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

23 But he answered her not a word.

25 Then came she and worshiped him, saying, Lord, help me.

26 But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.

27 And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

– Matt. xv.

Do you think that was kind? Do you think it was godlike? What would you think of a physician, if a woman came to him distressed and said, "Doctor, come to my daughter; she is very ill. She has lost her reason, and she is all I have!" What would you think of the doctor who would not reply at all at first, and then, when she fell at his feet and worshiped him, answered that he did not spend his time doctoring dogs? Would you like him as a family physician? Do you think that, even if he were to cure the child then, he would have done a noble thing? Is it evidence of a perfect character to accompany a service with an insult? Do you think a man who could offer such an indignity to a sorrowing mother has a perfect character, is an ideal God? I do not. And I hope that Jesus never said it. I prefer to believe that that story is a libel.

It won't do. We have either to give up the "inspiration" theory of the Bible, and acknowledge that it is the work of men of a crude and brutal age, and like any other book of legend and myth of any other people; or else to give up the claim that God is any better than the rest of us. You can take your choice.

Whenever a theologian undertakes to explain matters so as to keep the Bible and the divine character both intact, I am always reminded of the story of the Irishman who was given a bed in the second story of a lodging-house the first night he spent in New York. In the night the fire-engines ran past with their frightful noise. Aroused from a deep sleep and utterly terrified, Mike's first thought was to get out of the house. He hastily jerked on the most important part of his costume, unfortunately wrong side before, and jumped out of the window. His friend ran to the window and exclaimed, "Are ye kilt, Mike?" Picking himself up and looking himself over by the light of the street lamp, he replied, "No, not kilt, Pat, but I fear I am *fatally twishted*."

Next we have God's opinion (on Bible authority) as to the use of wives. They were to be forcibly changed around *as a punishment to their husbands* and for offences committed by the latter.

11 Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thy own house, and I will take thy wives before thy eyes and give them unto thy neighbor.

– 2 Sam. xii.

The latter part of the verse is omitted as being unfit to read. Don't understand that I think any of it is exactly choice literature; but that cover has been used to silence objection long enough. If it is fit to teach as the word and will of God for women, it ought to be fit to read in a theatre – but it is not.

What do you think of a religion that upholds such morals and such justice as that just quoted? What do you think of women supporting the Bible in the face of that as the will of God? Of all human beings a woman should spurn the Bible first. She, above all others, should try to destroy its influence; and I mean to do what little I can in that direction. The morals of the nineteenth century have outgrown the Bible. Jehovah stands condemned before the bar of every noble soul. What Moses and David and Samuel taught as the word and will of God, we, who are fortunate enough to live in the same age with Charles Darwin, know to be the expression of a low social condition untempered by the light of science. Their "thus saith the Lord," read in the light of to-day, is "thus saith ignorance and fear" – no more, no less.

If you will read the 12th chapter of Leviticus, which is unfit to read here, you will see that the Bible esteems it twice as great a crime to be the mother of a girl as to be the mother of a boy; so highly esteemed was woman by the priesthood; so great a favorite was she of Jehovah.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix K.

And do you know there is a law in the Bible\* which "the Lord spake unto Moses" that says if a man is jealous of his wife, "whether he have cause or not," he is to take her to a priest, and take a little barley meal (if you ever want to try it, remember it must be barley meal; I don't suppose the priest could tell whether she was guilty or not if you were to take corn meal or hominy grits) and put it in the wife's hands. And the priest is to take some "holy" water and scrape up the dirt off the floor of the Tabernacle, and put the dirt in the water and make the wife drink it. Now just imagine an infinite God getting up a scheme like that! Then the priest curses her and says if she is guilty she shall rot... "and she shall say Amen." That is her defence! Then the priest takes the stuff she has in her hands – this barley-meal "jealousy offering" – and "waves it before the Lord." (I suppose you all know what that part is done for. If you don't, ask some theological student with a number six hat-band; he'll tell you.) And then he burns a pinch of it (that is probably for luck), and at this point it is time to make the woman drink some more of the filthy water (which he does with great alacrity), and "if she be guilty the water will turn bitter within her," ... "and she shall be accursed among her people." (You doubtless perceive that her defence has been most elaborate throughout.) Do you think that water would be bitter to the priest?<sup>8</sup>

But if she does not complain that the water is bitter, and if her "Amen" is perfectly satisfactory all round, and she be pronounced innocent, what then? Is the husband in any way reprov'd for his brutality? Did the Lord "reveal" to Moses that he should drink the rest of that holy water and dirt? No! That wasn't in Moses' line. Neither he nor the husband drink the rest of that water – priest doesn't either; they don't even take a pinch of the barley. But after she is subjected to this, and the show is over, "if she be innocent, then shall she go free!" Oh, ye gods! what magnificent generosity! I should have thought they would have hanged her then for being innocent.

"And then shall the man be guiltless of iniquity, and the woman shall bear her iniquity."

*If she is innocent she shall bear her iniquity.* You all see how that is done I suppose. If you don't, ask your little number six theological student, and he will tell you all about it, and he will also prove to you, without being asked, that he and God are capable of regulating the entire universe without the aid of General Butler.

But I am told that I ought to respect and love the Bible; that all women ought to take an active part in teaching it to the heathen, to show them how good Jehovah is to his daughters. But if he is, he has been unusually unfortunate in his choice of executors.

Nor is it only in the Old Testament that such morals and such justice are taught. The clergy put that part off by saying – "Oh, that was a different dispensation, and God, the Unchangeable, has changed his mind." That is the sole excuse they give for all the "holy" men, who used to talk personally with God, practicing polygamy and all the other immoralities. They maintain that it was God's best man who upheld polygamy then, and that it is the Devil's best man who does it now. Odd idea, isn't it? Simply a question of time and place; and as Col. Ingersoll says, you have got to look on a map to see whether you are damned or not. But it does seem to me that a God that did not always know better than that, is not a safe chief magistrate. He might take to those views again, They say history is likely to repeat itself. Anyhow, I would rather be on the safe side and just fix the laws so that he couldn't. It would be just as well.

But now we have come to "St." Paul and his ideas on the woman question. He worked the whole problem by simple proportion and found that man stands in the same relation to woman as God stands to man. That is, man is to woman as God is to man – and only a slight remainder. I'm not going to misrepresent this gifted saint. I shall let him speak for himself. He does it pretty well for a saint, and much more plainly than they usually do.

33 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, *as unto the Lord,*

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<sup>8</sup> See Numbers v. 11-31.

33 For the husband is the head of the wife, *even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.*

– Ephesians v.

The husband is the saviour of the wife! Pretty slim hold on heaven for most women, isn't it? And then suppose she hasn't any husband? Her case is fatal.

34 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

– Ephesians v.

Paul was a modest person in his requirements.

9 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array.

– 1 Timothy ii.

It does seem as if anybody would know that braided hair was wicked; and as to "gold and pearls and costly array," all you have to do to prove the infallibility of Paul – and what absolute faith Christians have in it! – is to go into any fashionable church and observe the absence of all such sinfulness:

10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

11 *Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.*

12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve.

14 And *Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived* was in the transgression.

– 1 Timothy ii.

According to the reasoning of verse 13 man should be subject to all the lower animals, because they were first formed, and then Adam. Verse 14 tells us that Adam sinned knowingly; Eve was deceived, so she deserves punishment. Now I like that. If you commit a crime understandingly it is all right. If you are deceived into doing it you ought to be damned. The law says, "The criminality of an act resides in the intent;" but more than likely St. Paul was not up in Blackstone and did not use Coke.

This next is St. Peter, and I believe this is one of the few topics upon which the infallible Peter and the equally infallible Paul did not disagree:

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;

2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

– 1 Peter iii.

I should think that would be a winning card. If the conversation of a wife, coupled with a good deal of fear, would not convert a man, he is a hopeless case.

But here is Paul again, in all his mathematical glory, and mortally afraid that women won't do themselves honor.

3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head.

5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered, dishonoreth her head; for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man:

8 For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man.

9 Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man.

– 1 Cor. xi.

And that settles it, I suppose. But what on earth was man created for? I should not think it could have been just for fun.

34 Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.

35 And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.

– 1 Cor. xiv.

That is a principle that should entitle St. Paul to the profound admiration of women. And yet, when I come to think of it, I don't know which one gets the worst of that either. Whenever you want to know anything, ask your husband, at home! No wonder most husbands don't have time to stay at home much. No wonder they have to see a man so often. It would unseat any man's reason if he lived in constant fear that he might, any minute, be required to explain to a woman of sense, how death could have been brought into this world by Eve, when every one knows that long before man could have lived upon this earth animals lived and died. It would make any man remember that he had to "catch a car" if he were asked suddenly to explain the doctrine of the Trinity. I would not blame the most sturdy theologian for remembering that it was club night, if his wife were to ask him, unexpectedly, how Nebuchadnezzar, with his inexperience, could digest grass with only one stomach, when it takes four for the oxen that are used to it. That may account, however, for his hair turning to feathers.

I don't believe St. Paul could have realized what a diabolical position he was placing husbands in, when he told wives to ask them every time they wanted to know anything – unless he wanted to make marriage unpopular. There is one thing certain, he was careful not to try it himself, which looks much as if he had some realizing sense of what he had cut out for husbands to do, and felt that there were some men who would rather be drafted – and then send a substitute.

But why are his commands not followed to-day? Why are not the words, sister, mother, daughter, wife, only names for degradation And dishonor?

Because men have grown more honorable than their religion, and the strong arm of the law, supported by the stronger arm of public sentiment, demands greater justice than St. Paul ever dreamed of. Because men are growing grand enough to recognize the fact that right is not masculine only, and that justice knows no sex. And because the Church no longer makes the laws. Saints have been retired from the legal profession. I can't recall the name of a single one who is practicing law now. Have any of you ever met a saint at the bar?

Women are indebted to-day for their emancipation from a position of hopeless degradation, not to their religion nor to Jehovah, but to the justice and honor of the men who have defied his commands. That she does not crouch to-day where Saint Paul tried to bind her, she owes to the men who are grand and brave enough to ignore St. Paul, and rise superior to his God.

And remember that I have not read you the worst stories of the Bible. The greater number of those which refer to women are wholly unfit to read here. Are you willing to think they are the word of God? I am not. Believe in a God if you will, but do not degrade him by accepting an interpretation of him that would do injustice to Mephistopheles! Have a religion if you desire, but demand that it be free from impurity and lies, and that it be just. Exercise faith if you must, but temper it wisely with reason. Do not allow ministers to tell you stories that are sillier than fairy tales, more brutal than

barbaric warfare, and too unclean to be read, and then assure you that they are the word of God. Use your reason; and when you are told that God came down and talked to Moses behind a bush, and told him to murder several thousand innocent people; when you are told that he created a vast universe and filled it with people upon all of whom he placed a never-ending curse because of a trivial disobedience of one; give him the benefit of a reasonable doubt and save your reputation for slander.

Now just stop and think about it. Don't you think that if a God had come down and talked to Moses he would have had something more important to discuss than the arrangement of window curtains and the cooking of a sheep? Since Moses was the leader of God's people, their lawgiver, the guardian of their morals, don't you think that the few minutes of conversation could have been better spent in calling attention to some of the little moral delinquencies of Moses himself? Don't you think it would have been more natural for an infinite and just ruler to have mentioned the impropriety of murdering so many men, and degrading so many young girls to a life worse than that of the vilest quarter of any infamous dive, than to have occupied the time in trivial details about a trumpery jewel-box? Since God elected such a man as Moses to guide and govern his people, does it not seem natural that he would have given more thought to the moral worth and practices of his representative on earth, than to the particular age at which to kill a calf? If he were going to take the trouble to say anything, would it not seem more natural that he should say something important?

In his numerous chats with Solomon, don't you think he could have added somewhat to that gentleman's phenomenal wisdom by just hinting to him that he had a few more wives than were absolutely necessary? He had a thousand we are told, which leaves Brigham Young away behind. Yet there are Christians to-day who teach their children that Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived, and that Brigham Young was very close to the biggest fool. It is not strange that some of these children infer that the trouble with Brigham was that he had not wives enough, and that if he had only married the whole state of Massachusetts he and Solomon would now occupy adjoining seats on the other shore, and use the same jew's-harp?

Do you believe for one moment that a God ever talked with any man and told him to murder a whole nation of men, to steal their property, to butcher in cold blood the mothers, and to give the young girls to a camp of brutal soldiers —*and that he helped to do it?* Do you believe any God ever told a man to give so many of those girls to one tribe, so many to another, and to burn so many as an offering to himself? Do you believe it? I don't. Would you worship him if he had? I would not.

And yet it is true that he did help in such work, or else the word of Moses is not worth a nickel. God did this, or else our religion is founded upon a fraud. He did it, or orthodoxy is a mistake. He did it, or the Bible is an imposition. If it is true, no woman should submit to such a fiend for an hour; if it is false, let her unclasp the clutches of the superstition which is built upon her dishonor and nourished by her hand.

They say it is a shame for a woman to attack the Bible. I say she is the one who should do it. It is she who has everything to gain by its overthrow. It is she who has everything to lose by its support. They tell me it is the word and will of God. I do not, I cannot, believe it! And it does seem to me that nothing but lack of moral perception or mental capacity could enable any human being who was honest (and not scared) to either respect or believe in such a God.

As a collection of ingenious stories, as a record of folly and wickedness, as a curious and valuable old literary work, keep the Bible in the library. But put it on the top shelf – or just behind it, and don't let the children see it until they are old enough to read it with discrimination. As a mythological work it is no worse than several others. As a divine revelation it is simply monstrous.

Among your other tales you might tell the children some from it. You might tell them that at one time a man got mad at another man, and caught three hundred foxes, and set fire to their tails (they standing still the while), and then turned them loose into the other man's corn, and burned it all up. If they don't know much about foxes, and have never experimented in burning live hair, they may think it is a pretty good story. But I would not tell them that the man who got up that torch-light

procession was a good man. I would not tell them that he was one of God's most intimate friends; because even if they think he had a right to burn his enemy's crops, I don't believe that any right-minded child would think it was fair to the foxes.

## THE FRUIT OF THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

Some time ago I went to hear a noted minister, who preached a sermon about the "fruit of the tree of knowledge" to a congregation composed, as most congregations are, chiefly of women. Yet his sermon was a monument of insult, bigotry, and dogmatic intolerance that would have done honor to a witch-hunter several centuries ago. That women will subject themselves to such insults week after week, and that there are still men who will condescend to offer them, is a sad commentary upon their self-respect as well as upon the degrading influence of their religion.

Why will they listen to such nonsense? Perhaps woman was made of a rib and so should be held as flesh and blood only, devoid of intellect. But I don't know that she was; I was not there to see, and, in fact, none of my family were; and since they tell us that the only gentleman present upon that interesting occasion was asleep, I don't know who could have told the story in the first place.

It is always a surprise to me that women will sit, year after year, and be told that, because of a story as silly and childish as it is unjust, she is responsible for all the ills of life; that because, forsooth, some thousands of years ago a woman was so horribly wicked as to eat an apple, she must and should occupy a humble and penitent position, and remain forever subject to the dictates of ecclesiastical pretenders. It is so silly, so childish, that for people of sense to accept it seems almost incredible.

According to the story, she was deceived. According to the story, she believed that she was doing a thing which would give greater knowledge and a broader life, and she had the courage to try for it. According to the story, she first evinced the desire to be more and wiser than a mere brute, and incidentally gave her husband an opportunity to invent the first human lie (a privilege still dear to the heart), a field which up to that time had been exclusively worked by the reptiles. But they never got a chance at it again. From the time that Adam entered the lists, competition was too lively for any of the lower animals to stand a ghost of a chance at it, and that may account for the fact that, from that time to this, nobody has ever heard a snake tell a lie or volunteer information to a woman. The Church has had a monopoly of these profitable perquisites ever since. The serpent never tried it again. He turned woman over to the clergy, and from that time to this they have been the instructors who have told her which apple to bite, and how big a bite to take. She has never had a chance since to change her diet. From that day to this she has had apple pie, stewed apple, dried apple, baked apple, apple-jack, and cider; and this clergyman that I heard, started out fresh on apple-sauce. He seemed to think – "anything for a change." You would have thought, to hear him, that the very worst thing that ever happened to this world was the birth of the desire for knowledge, and that such desire in woman had been the curse of all mankind.

But it seems to me that if in this day of intelligence a minister preaches or acts upon such dogmas, women should scorn him both as a teacher and as a man. If a creed or Church upholds such doctrines they should shun it as they would a pest-house. If any system or any book of religion teaches such principles they should exert every effort to utterly destroy its influence. I want to do what I can to show women that the mercury of self-respect must fall several degrees at the church door, and that the light of reason must go out.

In this sermon that I speak of, we were warned "not to be wise above that which is written." As if a man should bind his thoughts and knowledge down to what was known, believed, or written in ages past! As though a man should fear and tremble, should hesitate to reach out after, to labor to know, all that his intellect and energy can compass. As though to be good he must accept situations, sentiments, ideas ready-made, and dwarf his intellect and bind his mental ability by the capacity of somebody else.

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

"He that hath eyes to see, let him see."

And he that hath a brain to think, let him think. What is his intellect for? Why is his mind one vast interrogation point? Why should not Eve have grasped with eagerness the fruit of the tree of knowledge?

A taste of the fruit of the tree of knowledge does drive man from the paradise of ignorance, does send him forth a laborer in the vast fields of speculation and thought, where there is no rest, and no possibility of the cessation of labor so long as his energies and his love of truth remain to impel him to the conquest of the infinite domain that lies unexplored beyond.

But would any man sell what is gained in liberty, in strength, in breadth, in conscious superiority, for the delights which every brute has left him in his stagnant paradise of ignorance and rest? What man in this nineteenth century can unblushingly say he would not choose the labor with all its pain, the effort with all its failure, the struggle with all its exhaustion? Why try to bind the human mind by the silly theory that a God requires man to crush out or subject the intellect he has given him? Whatever religion may have gained by such a course, think what morality and progress have lost by it!

What has not woman lost by that silly fable which made her responsible for transgression? Honor her for it! Honor her the more if it was she who first dared the struggle rather than lose her freedom or crush her reason. *If* she learned first that the price of ignorance and slavery was too great to pay for the luxury of idleness – honor her for it. The acceptance of such contemptible stories, as told by the clergy *in all ages and in all religions* as the "word of God," has done more to enslave and injure women's intellects, and to brutalize men, than has been done by any other influence; and our boasted superior civilization is not the result of the Christian religion, but has been won step by step in despite of it.<sup>9</sup> For the Church has fought progress with a vindictive bitterness and power found in no other antagonist – from the time, long ago, when it crushed Galileo for daring to know more than its "inspired" leaders could ever learn, down to yesterday, when it raised a wild howl against Prof. Tyndall for making a simple statement, in itself absolutely incontrovertible.

It had to yield to Galileo as the people grew beyond its power to blind them to his truth. It is yielding every hour to-day to Tyndall from the same dire necessity; while its nimble devotees vie with each other in proclaiming that they thought that way all the time; had neglected to say so (through an oversight); but that it was one of their very strongest holds from the beginning. They have recently told us that modern scientific doctrines (evolution included) are "plainly indicated in the Bible," and that Science has at last worked up towards the comprehension of scriptural truths.

It used to be the fashion to burn the man who got up a new theory or discovered a new law of nature that interfered with the "revelation" theory; but the style now is to go into the mental gymnastic business and "reconcile" the old dogma with the new truth. The only kind of reconciling the Church ever thought of in the days of her power, was to become reconciled to the death of the scientist or thinker. To-day she can take evolution and revelation, shake them up in a theological bag, and then bring them forth so marvellously alike in appearance that their own father would not know them apart. And the rest of us can't recognize them at all.

To-morrow, when she has to yield her whole field to science, she will hasten to assure us that it was only a few mistaken souls who ever objected to Col. Ingersoll's style of theology; and that if we would only interpret the Bible aright (and understood Hebrew) we should at once discover that Col. Ingersoll was the "biggest card" they had had yet.

You may not live until that to-morrow; I may not live until that to-morrow; but it is as sure to come as it is certain that the old tenets have yielded one by one before the irresistible march of an age of intelligence and freedom, in which a priest or a Church can no longer be judge, jury, and counsel.

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<sup>9</sup> See Lecture 3, "Theological Fictions."

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