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*There is none ever feared that the truth should be heard  
But him whom the truth would indict.*

—Robert Burns.

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# Persecution!

OR

## The Attempt to Suppress Freedom of Speech in Chicago

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A Lecture Delivered Before  
The Independent Religious  
Society, (Rationalist)  
Chicago

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By  
M. M. MANGASARIAN

Nobody fears for the safety of a mountain,  
but a hillock of sand may be washed away.  
Blow then, O ye priests, for the hillock is in  
danger.

—THOMAS PAINE.

# Persecution!

or

## The Attempt to Suppress Freedom of Speech in Chicago

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I intend to take for my text the resolution of the managers of the Orchestral Association to evict us from this hall, in which for the past five years our Society has held its Sunday morning meetings, to present to this audience a study of religious persecution in Chicago in the Twentieth Century. As I do not wish to build on hearsay or mere gossip, my first duty will be to "make good" my text, which I shall do by reciting briefly the *species facti*—the facts in the case. Is it really true that the directors of this public hall, built by general subscription, and built as a secular hall, for musical, dramatic and educational purposes—and not as a church or a synagogue—have actually passed a resolution denying its further use to this Society? We have in our possession an official communication from the Orchestral Association to that effect. It reads:

"The trustees of the Orchestral Association have decided to use Orchestra Hall for other purposes Sundays of next season and I shall be unable therefore to renew the lease of the Independent Religious Society."

In reply to this notice, which is signed by the manager of the Orchestral Association, the Independent Religious Society pleaded with the trustees to reconsider their resolution, which brought from them a second communication, as follows:

"The trustees have decided not to reconsider the question."

Thus, it will be seen that on the expiration of our lease on the last day of May of the present year, Orchestra Hall will no longer be available for the purposes of Rationalism.

That point being disposed of, the next question is: What prompted the board of directors of the Orchestral Association to take this action against the Independent Religious Society? A landlord may have many valid reasons for refusing to renew a lease with a former tenant. But if the question is one of more rent, the tenant who has paid his rent punctually, and has been an occupant of the premises for many years, is entitled, unless there are objections to him on other grounds, to, at least, an equal chance with any prospective tenant to bid for the lease of the property. I doubt whether there is a high class business man in any city who will close a deal with a new applicant for his property over the head of an old and tried tenant, without first proposing to the latter the terms he is willing to accept from the former. Unless, of course, as I intimated, there are ulterior reasons which make the old tenant undesirable at any price. It will also be admitted that there is not a merchant or a banker who, upon learning that the offices or the store for which he has been paying rent promptly for a number of years has been rented to some one else without any notice to him whatsoever, will not characterize such treatment as extraordinary and unbusiness-like. If then, it is the prevailing custom—a custom approved of by the best people in the business world—to respect the rights of an old tenant, what shall we think of the landlords of Orchestra Hall, who, after receiving rent from us for five years, refuse us even the courtesy to tell us definitely why this hall is no longer available for our purposes? They have not asked us for more rent. We have offered to pay as much as any other tenant is willing to pay. Under these circumstances, their refusal to accept our bid, and their resolution to hand the hall over to our competitors can only mean one thing: They are not disposed to be fair to us.

In the meantime, we were entitled to some consideration from the directors of this hall. When Orchestra Hall was first opened to the public, there was a great deal of adverse criticism its managers had to contend with. The acoustics were very defective; the ventilation was poor; the ascent to the balconies and galleries was so steep that people preferred to go away rather than accept the accommodations they offered.



There was also a report that the hall was not adapted for speaking purposes, having been built primarily for orchestral music. There was still another report, I do not know to what extent it can be corroborated by the facts—a report that Theodore Thomas was so disappointed in the hall which was built for his Orchestra, that he worried himself sick over it—a sickness from which, unfortunately, he did not recover. The Independent Religious Society took the hall by the year, when the hall had neither friends nor a reputation—when it was still in the experimental stage, needing many repairs and changes, and when its great organ was still incomplete. We were the first people to use the hall for speaking purposes, and it was three or four years later that the Sunday Evening Club, following our example, began holding services here.

The Independent Religious Society helped the Orchestral Association to overcome the popular prejudice against the hall, and gave the managers an opportunity to make improvements. I remember very well that the first Sunday I spoke in this hall, more than one half of my audience complained that they could not hear me. The acoustics were, indeed, so imperfect, that we ran the risk of losing our audience by remaining in Orchestra Hall. We suggested changes and made experiments by way of bettering the conditions at Orchestra Hall, and finally succeeded, with the co-operation of the management, in overcoming these difficulties. Being, as I said, the first to use the hall Sundays for public purposes, we were instrumental in bringing, if I may use a commercial term, a great deal of business to the association. Besides, we have advertised the hall extensively. Every Sunday, on the 3,000 programs we issue, and in all our publications of lectures and books, Orchestra Hall is announced. These considerations entitled us to a more reasonable treatment than we have received.

As it is not for more rent that we are being put out of the hall, the trustees should admit frankly that it is for our religious views? Why do they not? They are afraid. To strike openly at one of the fundamental institutions of this country, namely, the liberty of teaching, requires a boldness which they lack. They realize that the spirit of the age is

squarely against such discrimination or class legislation. They feel also that they are dishonoring a great country, America,—born of the brain and fed from the breast of a Washington, a Jefferson, a Benjamin Franklin, a Thomas Paine—and its more recent representative, Abraham Lincoln—not one of whom was a communicant or a member of any church, and not one of whom but would frown upon anything that smacks of persecution. The directors of the Orchestral Association have preferred to be the hireling of the priest—Catholic or Protestant—the priest of a cult imported from Asia, rather than to be Americans, worthy of their great ancestors, whose names I have just mentioned. The real objection to us then, is not that we do not pay enough rent, but that we do not profess the same faith. Religion, not money, is the reason for our eviction from this hall, but they are afraid and ashamed to own it.

The two or three trustees who, according to report, moved, seconded and carried the motion to put us out of these premises have admitted that our “religious views are not satisfactory to the established churches.” The inference being, that the established churches had made up their minds to punish us for not agreeing with them theologically. These same directors, later, changed their explanation, and declared that it was for “business reasons” that a new tenant was desired. Yet the case is quite clear. It needs no interpretation. I am not going to base my remarks upon rumors; the inner story is made manifest by the facts: We have had this hall for five years; we are in possession of it now for Sunday morning lectures; we are willing to pay as much rent for it as our competitors; what are the business reasons which make our eviction from this hall imperative? It appears that when Orchestra Hall was being built, some of the contributors demanded and secured a promise from the managers, not to allow the Theodore Thomas Orchestra to give public recitals on Sundays. These pious contributors, while they were interested in music, were more interested in the Sabbath. According to this understanding, no orchestral music is permitted in the hall on Sundays. We learn that the Association’s recent appeal for funds with which to wipe out its in-

debtedness, gave the pious contributors an opportunity to impose a second embargo upon the management of this hall, by demanding that in addition to the prohibition against orchestral music on Sundays, the trustees shall adopt measures to suppress also the Independent Religious Society. If this is done, and Orchestra Hall is redeemed from the stigma of our blasphemies, the amount needed to cancel the mortgage on the building will be forthcoming. The trustees of this building, having bowed down to these contributors once, bowed down to them a second time, and this time much lower. They sold their consciences and also the hall, to the friends of the Asiatic Sabbath and the enemies of America—for if America means anything it means liberty.

Has this Society any grounds for legal proceedings against the three or four directors who are the authors of this objectionable piece of business? There is a difference of opinion about that. But after much deliberation in my own mind, I have concluded, speaking for myself alone, of course, that I would rather appeal to the American people—the court of public opinion—than go to law about it. In the cause of Rationalism, the pen is a more effective weapon than either the law or the sword. I am a jealous man and I do not wish legal or physical measures to share with reason the credit for the progress of our cause. Let not our movement be under any obligations to the courts, to custom—to the throne, or to violence of any description. Of course, I do not believe in turning also the other cheek. I am not a convert to the doctrine of non-resistance. I am a soldier, and I carry a sword. But my sword is the pen. Blood flows from the sword; light from the pen. When a few months ago, the elevated railway authorities in Chicago covered our advertisements to please their Catholic patrons, perhaps we should have gone to law about it; and perhaps again in the present instance, when three or four men, to please the fanatics, who are alarmed about their creeds, close a public hall against a large organization like ours, we should invoke the arm of the law. But a victory gained in the courts cannot help our cause, which is the cause of enlightenment, as a victory gained at the bar of public opinion. The latter victory requires more time, but when it arrives, it is final.

To prevent Theodore Parker from speaking in Boston, some seventy-five years ago, even the Unitarians closed their churches against him. The preachers asked God in public to put a hook in Parker's tongue that he might not utter blasphemies. Parker did not go to law about it. A few business men in Boston who believed in fair play, and who were the very opposite in courage and character to the trustees of this hall, met in a hotel and passed the following resolution. I want you to compare it with the resolution of the Orchestral Association. The resolution of the Boston business men reads:

"Resolved, that Theodore Parker shall have a chance to be heard in Boston."

You may search in the Old South Church in Boston, to-day, or in its magnificent library, but you will not find any where a prouder document. It is one of the assets of our American civilization. And to-day while the churches which slammed their doors in Parker's face, and the landlords who refused their halls to him, and the "holy" men of God, who cursed him in their pulpits, are ashamed of themselves and their religion, all the world is proud of that group of business men who defended freedom of speech against the cohorts of fear and fanaticism. That is the kind of victory that tells.

In making a diagnosis of the disease known as persecution, we find that the persecutor never admits that he is persecuting. Even when, as in former times, he is frying or roasting his neighbor in the fire, he protests that he is only loving him. That is one of the symptoms of the disease. While the persecutor is engaged in the act of stretching his victim on the rack, he is addressing him in the gentlest, kindest, and softest language conceivable. He is torturing his neighbor for the love of God, and not for any "business reasons." The persecutor never looks more like a saint than when he is playing the devil's part. In religion this is called piety; in the secular world, it goes by the name of diplomacy. When a king is most active in preparation for war, he is sure to be loudest in his praise of peace. Monopolists pose as public

benefactors when they are most aggressive in the violation of the laws. In the same way, religions are never so eloquent in their professions of tolerance as when they are most unrelenting against the alien in faith. To illustrate this, let us consider for a moment the attitude of the Catholic Church toward our democratic institutions. To hear the American priests speak, one would infer that they regarded democratic institutions as almost divine. But the truth is that Rome has damned democracy again and again, and if it had the power to-day, it would gird with the sword another Napoleon III in France, and install an American Napoleon, if one could be found, in Washington. I am willing to accept the challenge of any man to prove that to Roman Catholicism which claims to be the mother and protectress of free institutions, *liberty* is the forbidden fruit. But the Protestants are not behind the Catholics in affecting devotion to free institutions, which, I am sorry to say, is equally counterfeit. The Protestant directors of Orchestra Hall no more believe in free institutions than do the priests of the Catholic Church. They only profess to believe in liberty. Neither Protestants nor Catholics really believe in liberty.

They do not believe in liberty because they do not *need* it. Give a Catholic religious liberty, and what will he do with it? Give a Protestant liberty and what can *he* do with it? What can a man who holds in his hand the infallible word of God do with liberty? How is he going to use it? Is he going to use his liberty to improve, or correct, or change, or suppress, or add to, or differ from, or protest against, the infallible word of his Maker? Is he going to use his liberty to produce a Bible of his own? Is he going to use his liberty to investigate the Deity? Neither Protestants nor Catholics need liberty; and not needing it for themselves, they are the last persons in the world to go to any trouble to secure it for you.

It is equally true that people who do not need liberty, do not want the truth. Indeed, people who have no liberty *cannot* have the truth. And it is as evident as a mathematical demonstration that people who do not want the truth for themselves have no respect for, or sympathy with, those to whom the pursuit of truth is a great happiness. To illustrate my thought:

Suppose we wished to know how many seats there were in this hall. The only way to find out would be to count them. But if we are not allowed to count the seats, the inevitable inference would be that the truth about the capacity of this hall is not wanted. It is impossible to wiggle out of that conclusion. If the churches desired the truth about the Bible, why do they not let us discuss it freely and without fear of heresy trials and excommunications? They do not want us to know the truth about the Bible. A moment's reflection, as you see, tears the mask from the faces of these professors of freedom of thought and speech! Reason, the great unmasker, is after them, and they are alarmed. Both Catholics and Protestants take the holy name of liberty in vain.

But if it is neither liberty nor truth that the supporters of the creeds need or desire, what is all this commotion about? Why are they so active, and why so agitated? Again I am going to use an illustration: Suppose a report were in circulation that this hall seated ten thousand people. The only way to prevent people from doubting that report, and to derive every possible advantage from it, would be to make it a punishable act for anyone to try to ascertain the actual seating capacity of the hall. In the same way, to prevent people from questioning the divine origin of a certain collection of anonymous writings, *free* thought must be denounced as treason against society. It is a certain opinion about the Bible, and not the truth about the Bible, that the churches are interested in upholding. Their fight is not for the truth, but for the creed. It might be replied that they believe the creed to be the truth. Why, then, do they fear free speech? Can free speech hurt the truth? It might the creed. It has. But show us one instance where a simple truth has been killed by liberty of thought and expression. The churches do not enjoy our prosperity here—not because they think we are hurting the truths of history, science and life—but because we are hurting the dogmas of the churches, dogmas which fear ventilation. The Protestant preacher is sworn to defend—the creed; the Catholic is sworn to defend the church; the Rationalist is bound by the everlasting law of honor to sacrifice both creed and church to the truth.

But let us continue: The severity of the persecution is always in proportion to the tenability of the creed. If the creed is very difficult to believe in, the persecution has to be very severe; if the creed is more or less rational, little or no violence would be necessary to enforce it. This is very interesting. You do not have to whip a man, for instance, to make him believe that a day in June can be rare, or that a loving kiss makes the heart leap forth; but you have to get after him with a crowbar—with halter and thumbscrew—fagot and fire—to make him believe that three Gods make one God, and one God makes three Gods. The severity of the persecution is determined by the degree of credibility of the belief. Judaism and Christianity have shed more blood than either Confucianism or Buddhism, for the reason that the dogmas of the former were more incredible. Tallyrand, the French statesman, says, that "Spain is a country where two and two make five." And the Spanish Inquisition claims the credit for that! It takes an instrument like the Holy Inquisition, with its torture chambers, and its daily burnings of men and women, to work such a miracle. I have always maintained that not a drop of blood would ever have been shed in the name of religion had its teachings been reasonable. There would have been no need for a Catholic Inquisition in Spain; a Protestant Inquisition in Scotland; the massacre of Huguenots in France; and Puritan outrages against helpless women in America, had the creeds complied with common sense. Persecution is the only argument that can keep an absurd opinion alive. There is the story of persecution in a nutshell. It takes reasoning to convince mankind of the rotundity of the earth, or of the law of gravitation. But it takes violence—force, fire, hell and devils, to convince the world that the mother of Jesus was a virgin, and that those who do not so believe it will be burned in sulphur and fire forever.

But there is no such persecution in America today, you will hear people say. Of course not. Let us suppose that a man who has been stealing a thousand dollars a week from his employer when business was prosperous, is now stealing only ten or twenty, because business is poor. Would that prove that he is now a *reformed* thief? When he stole a

thousand dollars, he only stole as much as the business allowed, and when he steals only ten dollars, he steals as much as the business allows. In the same way, religions always persecute as much as public sentiment will allow. They persecute to the extent of their ability and opportunity. Show me when Protestantism had the opportunity to persecute, and did not do so. Religions today cannot take our lives, but they can close a public hall against us. And the fact that they have done this proves that they are still persecuting to the extent of their ability. Indeed, the peasants of Southern Europe, who, during the middle ages, steeped in ignorance and superstition, tore the shingles off their cottages with which to burn a John Huss, or a Giordano Bruno, at the stake, were not greater persecutors than the Chicago clergy and business men who, in the Twentieth Century—after Darwin, after Voltaire, after the discovery of America, after the Declaration of Independence—in America, the world's asylum for the oppressed—will let the Sunday Evening Club have this hall for Christian preaching, but refuse it to us because we do not pronounce their shibboleth! The church could burn people in the fourteenth century. She burned them. She cannot burn people in the Twentieth Century, but she can evict them from a public hall, and she does so. What is the difference? She has the will; she lacks only the opportunity.

But is refusing this hall to us persecution? Let us see. Instead of being the Independent Religious Society, let us suppose that we are an independent oil company, and that we have been holding our own against the larger and consolidated oil company, with its enormous capitalization. One morning we learn that the bigger concern has opened a branch in the same building with us, and a short time later we are ordered by the landlords to seek quarters elsewhere, as the consolidated concern needs the entire building for its own uses. Suppose also that the management refused to accept a bid from us for the renewal of our lease, although we offered to pay as much as our competitor. What would that be? The United States government is on the alert to stop the encroachments of corporations which operate in restraint of trade. Is there not a United States of public opinion that will



say to the religious trust, with more millions behind it than the Standard Oil commands: "You have a thousand churches and halls to sell your goods in; you have a thousand preachers and agents to market your product; you have all the presses of the country to print and circulate your literature; you command the metropolitan newspapers; you have the bankers and dry-goods merchants enlisted in your service—why do you envy this independent concern its one opportunity to conduct its business and to live; why do you wish to drive it out of business? And why do you covet your neighbor's property, which you do by seizing its location and offices?" Is there not, I say, an American court of public opinion that shall say to the religious monopoly: "Play fair." The government can fight the American Tobacco and Standard Oil trusts; let us fight the greater monopoly—the monopoly that operates in restraint of the commerce of ideas, by pinching the brain and gagging the mouth of every American. Why does not the nation rise against this more dangerous monopoly? Because, unlike other monopolies, this is a "holy" monopoly. Holy Monopoly! "Beware of things called 'holy.'" The Holy Inquisition! The Holy Roman Empire! The Holy Alliance! Holy Russia! Holy Bible! I add to this list now another—Holy Monopoly!

But the churches cannot afford to "fight fair." It has required twenty centuries of war and persecution to keep their creeds alive. I am not exaggerating when I say that these creeds are literally drunk with the blood they have shed. The shame and the pity of it! In fifty years of time, Charles Darwin revolutionized the thought of the whole world without the shedding of a drop of blood. There is a record to envy! Let the churches cover their faces with their hands. Science needs only the pen. Religion sneaks behind the army, the throne, the Inquisition—for protection. To bolster up orthodoxy, Rationalism must be gagged, and the Independent Religious Society evicted from its hall. What sensible and honorable man who has ever thought of the matter, and in whose veins flows the blood of the world's saviors, would not prefer to be persecuted rather than to belong to a church that has made history crimson.

Another symptom of the disease we are studying is that, it never breaks out in a man except when he is in the majority, or in power. Persecution is always directed against the weak. This, in itself, is enough to give it a black eye. It is the *metier*, or trade of a poltroon. No really fine man can take any pleasure in it. *Noblesse oblige!* The University of Oxford expelled a young man whose name was Shelley, at the age of nineteen, on a charge of heresy. A great university against a mere lad! *Noblesse oblige.* The Pope of Rome, about three hundred years ago, dragged a poor prisoner, emaciated by long confinement in the dungeons of the church, to the *Campo di Fiori* and burned him alive. An infallible pope against an unfortunate student! *Noblesse oblige.* The powerful John Calvin, master of Switzerland and pope of Geneva, pounced upon a stranger in one of the pews of his cathedral church, and made kindling wood out of him for his parishioners to warm their hands against. *Noblesse oblige!* Ah, if the gods had only inspired their children with that sentiment! If the Orchestra Hall directors wish to persecute anybody, there is the Sunday Evening Club of churches—powerful, influential, rich, and able to strike back. Or let them persecute the Roman Catholics. Deny the use of the hall to them! When the Catholics were weak they were persecuted in all the Protestant countries, but today, who would dare to discriminate against them? If I were an archbishop I would be let alone.

But even against the weak, the church never fights fair! If the Christian people of Chicago, for instance, wished to arrest the progress of Rationalism, their challenge to it must be open and above board. They must not try to strike it from under cover, or from behind screens. They must down its arguments with arguments, and not with money or prestige or strategy. And they must not seek to tie its hands before they condescend to measure their strength against it. Suppose I were to be challenged to a duel in which I had to accept such terms and conditions as my antagonist offered without giving me any voice in the matter at all. That would not be a duel; that would be murder. Fight fair! Unfortunately, however, the church has never, *never* fought fair. Did the churches

believe that they could win by fighting fair, they would never have resorted to persecution.

It might be asked that if the churches, which are in control of the situation, do not believe in liberty of thought, how did we come to have any liberty at all? In a sense, it is true that we owe what liberty we have to the churches. If the churches agreed among themselves and pulled together, Rationalism would not have the ghost of a chance for free expression. Today the Protestants call the Catholics *idolators*, for worshipping the host; and the Catholics call the Protestants blasphemers for not worshipping the host. In the Episcopal litany one of the prayers asked for protection against the Turk and the *pope*. From a selfish point of view, I am glad these two powerful religious corporations are "at daggers' point." It is our only safety. Goodness! If they were to cease fighting with one another and turned their guns upon us, what would happen to us? What would happen to the twentieth century? We are indebted for what religious liberty there is in America today to the sectarian divisions among Protestants and the incurable breach between Rome and Protestantism. If I prayed at all, my morning and evening petition would be: "Good Lord, do not let the churches unite." The Sunday Evening Club is powerful today because, in a sense, it represents that very union which I dread. They could not take the hall from us as Presbyterians, nor as Baptists, nor as Episcopalians, nor as Methodists; but they are able to do *together* what they were afraid to do separately. Some people predict that eventually, in self-preservation, the various Protestant denominations, and, perhaps, even the formidable Catholic church, will all be united in one body. I hope when that day comes, the state will be too strong and too independent to hand over the reins of government to the church.

What helps the cause of the churches today more than anything else, more even than persecution, is the inability of the average churchman to think straight. He has a mind, but he has not been trained to use it properly. If the people could only think logically, the fabric of Catholicism, as well as of Protestantism, would come down like a house of cards. Let me illustrate what I mean by *straight* thinking.

A Men's League is being organized by The Sunday Evening Club, and I hold in my hand one of its circulars. It contains the following important announcement:

"This proposed organization is suggested as absolutely non-sectarian."

The word "absolutely" is in large, black capitals. Ah! Are the churches really growing more liberal? We rub our eyes and look at the circular again, and we find that the real object of the organization is:

"To increase the influence of *Christian* citizenship."

Now we understand what they mean by "absolutely non-sectarian." Liberty, big enough to transcend the limits of Christianity even, is beyond them. They are incapable of seeing that Christianity is a sect too, and that there are in Chicago hundreds of thousands of people who are not Christians in any sense of the word, but who are as much interested in good citizenship as anybody else. But the churches cannot see that point because they have not been taught to think *straight*. The arms of the church are not long enough to embrace the whole community. The big word with them is Christianity, not humanity; God, not man; in other words, it is not citizenship that the Sunday Evening Club is seeking to promote, but *Christian* citizenship—that is to say, sectarian citizenship—with its Puritan Sabbath, and bible in the Public Schools. And this they call liberty.

I quoted to you some months ago from the catalogue of an American college, which reads:

"The college believes in perfect freedom of conscience for all men."

We have scarcely finished applauding this magnificent declaration when we read in the next line that:

"In accordance with this principle, all students are required to attend morning prayers and the morning and evening religious services and the Bible classes."\*

The church education actually ruins a man's reason. It incapacitates him for clear thinking. There are thousands of men and women whom the Sunday School and the pulpits

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\*Robert College *Catalogue*, 1903, page 17.

have made intellectual cripples. But it is defective or crooked thinking that protects the church. The framers of the above catalogue are, no doubt, honest men. I have no fault to find with their hearts, but what about their heads? How do they propose to reconcile *perfect freedom of conscience*, with compulsory attendance at *bible classes*? They do not see any difficulty in that at all. They are satisfied to use a popular phrase—"perfect freedom of conscience"—if they can do so without jeopardizing the interests of their creeds. The promoters of "The Men's League of The Sunday Evening Club," no more than the framers of this college catalogue realize that to call an organization "absolutely non-sectarian," and then to limit its scope to making people Christians, or to offer "perfect freedom of conscience" to students and then to drive them into your churches and bible classes, is a contradiction in terms—an absurdity. I repeat that the worst curse of orthodoxy is that it destroys the soundness of our minds. It twists reason out of shape. To shout in the ear of the dead is not more unprofitable than to try to get a churchman to think straight. Most of the evil in the world is not done by wicked men, but by people who, though honest, are incapable of straight thinking.

Let me give you another illustration of crooked thinking which has been, alas, a greater evil than anything else that the world has suffered from. Thomas Aquinas, the great Catholic theologian and philosopher defended persecution by arguing that :

"False coiners are put to death; then why not men who tamper with immortal souls."\*

And that argument is quoted with approval by all believers in religious persecution: We would close a gambling den because it ruins men financially. How much more should we close a hall in which a man ruins souls eternally? If a man who kills the body is punished, why should we spare the blasphemer who kills the immortal part of man? That, I repeat, is the kind of reasoning upon which is based the argument for violence against freedom of conscience in matters of faith. But a moment's reflection will again

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\*C. S. P. Haynes.—*Religious Persecution*, page 34.

bring out the incapacity of even the ablest Christian who has at all passed through the mills of the church, to think right. A false coiner knows that he is robbing his neighbor. The heretic, on the other hand, believes honestly, although he may be mistaken, that he is helping his neighbor. The counterfeiter knows his money is false; the heretic believes his ideas are true. So you see there is a tremendous moral difference between a counterfeiter and a heretic. The latter may be honest; the former is always a cheat. You can punish the one, but you must enlighten the other. Before a man can be punished for his beliefs, it has to be shown that he is dishonest in his beliefs; that he is knowingly trying to damn the souls of his neighbors. And the churchman begs the question when he compares a counterfeiter to a Socrates or a Jesus Christ—both of whom were heretics in their day. Yet this one bit of crooked reasoning came very near making our earth a hell.

Let me now call your attention to a more recent example of clerical incapacity to think straight. A prominent minister of one of the established churches of Chicago, in a signed communication, defends the action of the directors of Orchestra Hall against the Independent Religious Society. Let me quote his exact words:

“I believe most thoroughly in the action of the trustees in not allowing a man to revile everything which is religious and moral in any hall which they control.”

Another instance of perverse thinking! Not to agree with this Reverend in religious matters is equivalent, from his point of view, to blasphemy. He does not even stop to consider that in accusing me of “reviling everything which is religious and moral,” he is bearing false witness against his neighbor. He is making a statement he cannot square with the facts. But he is not interested in telling the truth. He is interested only in defending his creed. When he was ordained, he took an oath to defend—not the truth—but the creed. He is living up to his oath. I do not “revile” anything, much less religion or morality. I have investigated, examined, criticized, but I have “reviled” nothing. I have not criticized Christianity for saying “love one another”; I have criticized it for saying: “He that believeth not shall

be damned." I have not disagreed with the bible for recommending purity of heart. I have denounced the bible for saying: "He that *hateth* not his father—mother, wife, child—is not worthy of me." It is the bible as a fetish, and not as literature that we object to. But if the clergyman were to be good enough to make these fine and important distinctions, he would be thinking straight, for which he has neither the taste nor the ability.

Nor does this preacher stop to consider that, if my views offend him, his views might offend me. If I am under obligations to respect his feelings, shall he have no regard for mine? If my science is blasphemy to him, his superstition is blasphemy to me. If my freedom irritates him, his bondage to a book, provokes me. Am I not also a brother and a man? Are not my feelings worth considering, too? Suppose we demanded the eviction of all the preachers from churches that do not pay taxes but live on the charity of the public, for not thinking and believing as Rationalists do! How would the clergy like that? And why should they do to us what they do not wish us to do to them if we had the power? Where is the Golden Rule of Confucius and Christ?

When my *Human Prayer* appeared in print, one of the Christian clergymen—a Lutheran pastor—called it, "The Devil's Prayer." No one in the church ever thought of protesting against his language. But suppose I had called any clergyman's prayer "The Devil's Prayer," how awfully that would have shocked and wounded the feelings of the Christian world! A Christian can do anything he pleases with *my* feelings, but I am a blasphemer and should be deprived of my rights of free speech, if I should hurt *his* feelings. What better proof do we need of the incapacity of the theologically trained mind to see straight?

It has reached my ears from more than one source that my recent *Human Prayer*, printed side by side with the *Lord's Prayer*, and each signed by the name of its author, was one of the reasons which influenced the Orchestra Hall trustees to refuse us their hall for another year. Let me give the prayer as it appeared on our Sunday program:

## THE HUMAN PRAYER.

Our Humanity which art everywhere, Beloved be thy name.

Thy reign of Reason come, Thy gentle Will be done in this, and in all other lands.

We give unto thee this day our daily service.

We do not pray for forgiveness, but invoke thine impartial justice.

Lead us in the ways of honor, and deliver us from meanness.

The welfare of Humanity be our reward, and the consciousness of having deserved its gratitude, our glory, forever. Amen.

What is there in the above prayer to make it "the devil's prayer," or to provoke persecution against us? Mrs. Eddy, in one of her writings, quotes from the New Testament on one page, signed *J. C.*, meaning, I suppose, Jesus Christ; and on the opposite page she quotes from "Science and Health," and signs it *Mary Baker G. Eddy*. *J. C.* and *Mary Baker G. Eddy*! But Mrs. Eddy burns incense upon the church altars, and I do not, and that makes all the difference. But I tried to improve on the Lord's prayer—to make it broader, sweeter, and nearer the heart's desire, and that is an unpardonable crime. I tried to see further than Jesus, and I should be stricken with blindness for it. I tried to speak in a more *human* accent than Jesus, and the trustees of Orchestra Hall passed a resolution to gag me for it, so far as their jurisdiction would permit. Well, if the trustees of the Orchestral Association feel that they must protect the Lord's prayer against the prayer of a mere layman, they must think that it cannot stand without their support. The people who resort to force to maintain a religion never stop to think that thereby they are only advertising their unbelief in it. Instead of fearing competition, a divine religion ought to invite it. Nor do the persecutors realize that no God who has any independence at all would care to be worshiped by an unwilling person.

It has also come to me that our extensive advertising of the lecture *Is the Morality of Jesus Sound?* gave great offense to the Christian public of Chicago. The resolution of the trustees to stop our meetings in Orchestra



Hall followed almost immediately the appearance of this lecture. Evidently, the church people think Jesus is beyond criticism or comment, which, again proves our statement that the believer has no use for liberty. But our libraries are full of books in every language containing most radical statements about Jesus and his teaching. Why are not these books destroyed? If the churches had their way a big bonfire would be made out of all books not endorsed by the Protestant or Catholic bishop. The truth is that the church will never feel safe until it commands both pen and tongue.

But does persecution help the cause of truth? There is an impression that the best way to spread a truth is to persecute it. I doubt whether history will verify this statement altogether. The death of Socrates by poison, some have argued, destroyed the liberty of Greece. It compelled his great disciple, Plato, to conform, more or less, to the superstitions of the populace. It scared the lesser philosophers into silence.

Persecution certainly hurts the cause of progress. If evolution means anything, it is this: There is no progress where the environment is not favorable to variations from a given type. In other words, if we all believed alike, and were not at liberty to differ from one another mentally, there would be an end to progress. The object of the forces of nature is to promote variations from a given type. The object of the church is to prevent such variations. Heterogeniety is what nature seeks. Homogeniety, or sameness, is what the churches are fighting for. Death is uniform; life is diverse. The creed is death; truth is life.

But the persecution also hurts the persecutors. If the Protestants and Catholics should succeed in suppressing our movement altogether, they would be the greater losers. From a selfish point of view even, the Christians should be our best friends. We help to keep them awake. We keep them on the alert. We help to ventilate religion. We give it air, which it has never had, and without which it cannot live. We remove the walls and tear down the doors of the closet in which the churches have been penned up for long centuries. But for the opposition of science and

Rationalism, the grass would grow in the church aisles, and the creeds would become mildewed with neglect. Opposition provokes orthodoxy into action, and action is salvation. We sting the creeds into a livelier pace. It was to counteract our influence in this hall that the Sunday Evening Religious Club was organized. It is to fight Rationalism that revivalists are brought over from abroad, and new activities are launched. It is opposition that challenges our better natures. The churches need us to sharpen their wits upon and keep the blood tingling in their veins. Even as in politics insurgency helps to check corruption in the party in power, so in religion opposition by rubbing mind against mind evokes the spark of truth.

In conclusion, I have heard some of our hesitating friends remark that if I had been a little cautious we might have remained in Orchestra Hall indefinitely. But to be "a little cautious" is a vague phrase. How much caution would satisfy the clergy, for instance? And how much the business men who manage this public hall? Besides, I may just as well argue that if the clergy had been a little more cautious in their preaching, we might never have left the churches. But the preacher must be true to his convictions, and the lecturer to his. If any caution is necessary, it is the caution to tell the whole truth about religion. To keep some of it back would be the worst in-caution. In fact, it is our extreme caution to be consistent, to make no slips and never to be caught napping, that orthodoxy does not like. The Unitarians, the New Theologians and the insurgent professors in the universities are tolerated because these men, now and then, throw a pinch of incense on the altar of the supernatural. We do not even tip our hats to the gods.

After all, it is difficult to change nature. Christianity is Asiatic, and a residence of two thousand years in Europe and America has had little effect upon it. Renan writes that he searched in vain for any laws of religious persecution in the Roman Empire, prior to the introduction of Christianity into Europe. We have dressed up this Asiatic institution in Western attire; we have taught it one or two polite manners; we have smoothed its rugged fea-

tures, and covered its paws in soft gloves. But we have not changed its nature. Let a man inadvertently, even, step upon its toes, and all its barbarian proclivities will rush to the surface. Only the other day, in Spain, a man by the name of Ferrer poked it with a stick and he got his heart filled with lead for it. As long as we have an infallible religion there will be persecution.

The directors of this hall by trying to suppress the liberties of a portion of the community of this cosmopolitan city of the great West, have injured its good name. They have also dishonored the free institutions of America, the latest born of time, to whose pleasant and peaceful shores the oppressed of every land look with longing. They have forfeited the friendship and gratitude of all who look upon liberty as the jewel of their souls. We shall not change our religion, or join the churches, to escape eviction from this building. We give up the hall, and keep our liberty.

And to you, my friends, you who have maintained this platform for many years; you who have championed an unpopular cause—a cause which is now being driven from this great hall by the authority of laymen acting as the agents of the clergy—I say: As long as you shall continue to think and speak your best thoughts freely and without fear—as long as you live up to your highest ideals, and hold up your heads erect, bowing neither to priest, king, nor God—“bigotry shall have fingers to grasp with, *but no thumb.*” If I were on my death-bed, my last word to you would be: “Suffer not bigotry to grow a thumb.”

## NOTICE!

**The only hall available for the uses of the Independent Religious Society next year, is the Studebaker Theatre, Michigan Ave., seating capacity 1330. This is about one half the size of the hall we now occupy. By compelling us to go to a smaller hall, the churches deprive us of nearly one half our audience.**

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