



...the supremest combination of words that was ever put together since the world began” and added “Bob Ingersoll’s music will sing through my memory always as the divinest that ever enchanted my ears... Except for my daughters, I have not grieved for any death as I have grieved for his. His was a great and beautiful spirit, he was a man – all man, from his crown to his foot-soles. My reverence for him was deep and genuine.

– MARK TWAIN

[His] character was as nearly perfect as it is possible for the character of mortal man to be ...none sweeter or nobler had ever blessed the world... the example of his life was of more value to posterity than all the sermons that were ever written on the doctrine of original sin.

– GOV. CHARLES S. THOMAS of COLORADO

[His] name is in the pantheon of the world. More than any other man who ever lived he destroyed religious superstition...He was the Shakespeare of oratory—the greatest that the world has ever known...Twenty-one years later he wrote Ingersoll’s granddaughter: I was the friend of your immortal grandfather and I loved him truly... the name of Ingersoll is revered in our home, worshipped by us all, and the date of birth is holy in our calendar.

– EUGENE V. DEBS

[Debs ran for President five times on the Socialist ticket, last in 1920. He and Ingersoll were poles apart on economic policy.]

INFAMY OF INFAMIES

(Extracted from a longer piece titled MORALITY which can be found on the Index page of www.theingersolltimes.com.)

Robert G. Ingersoll (1833-1899)

The doctrine of eternal punishment is the infamy of infamies. And yet we are told that the author of hell is a being of infinite mercy.

No human being has imagination enough to conceive of this infinite horror. All that the human race has suffered in war and want, in pestilence and famine, in fire and flood – all the pangs and pains of every disease and every death – all of this is nothing compared with the agonies to be endured by one lost soul.

This is the consolation of the Christian religion. This is the justice of God – the mercy of Christ.

This frightful dogma, this infinite lie, made me the implacable enemy of Christianity. The truth is that this belief in eternal pain has been the real persecutor. It founded the Inquisition, forged the chains, and furnished the fagots. It has darkened the lives of many millions.

It made the cradle as terrible as the coffin. It enslaved nations and shed the blood of countless thousands. It sacrificed the wisest, the bravest and the best. It subverted the idea of justice, drove mercy from the heart, changed men to fiends and banished reason from the brain.

Like a venomous serpent it crawls and coils and hisses in every orthodox creed.

It makes man an eternal victim and God an eternal fiend. It is the one infinite horror. Every church in which it is taught is a public curse. Every preacher who teaches it is an enemy of mankind. Below this Christian dogma, savagery cannot go. It is the infinite of malice, hatred, and revenge.

While I have life, as long as I draw breath, I shall deny with all my strength, and hate with every drop of my blood, this infinite lie.

We are not accountable for the sins of “Adam.” Why should the suffering innocent atone for the crimes of the guilty?

Who can estimate the misery that has been caused by this most infamous doctrine of eternal punishment? Think of the lives it has blighted—of the tears it has caused—of the agony it has produced.

Think of the millions who have been driven to insanity by this most terrible of dogmas. This doctrine renders God the basest and most cruel being in the universe. Compared with him, the most frightful deities of the most barbarous and degraded tribes are miracles of goodness and mercy.

There is nothing more degrading than to worship such a god. Lower than this the soul can never sink. If the doctrine of eternal damnation is true, let me share the fate of the unconverted; let me have my portion in hell, rather than in heaven with a god infamous enough to inflict eternal misery upon any of the sons of men.

I find that people who believe in immortality – or at least those who say they do – are just as afraid of death as anybody else. I find that the most devout Christian weeps as bitterly above his dead, as the man who says that death ends all.

Does it not seem to you infinitely absurd to call orthodox Christianity “a consolation?”

Here in this world, where every human being is enshrouded in cloud and mist, — where all lives are filled with mistakes, — where no one claims to be perfect, is it “a consolation” to say that “the smallest sin deserves eternal pain?”

Is it possible for the ingenuity of man to extract from the doctrine of hell one drop, one ray, of “consolation?”

If that doctrine be true, is not your God an infinite criminal?

Why should he have created uncounted billions destined to suffer forever?

Why did he not leave them unconscious dust?

Compared with this crime, any crime that man can by any possibility commit, is a virtue.

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