

Call for the Congress of 1897.

TO THE SECULARISTS AND FREETHINKERS OF THE UNITED STATES:

You are hereby requested to meet in convention at Hardman Hall, in the city of New York, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, the 19th, 20th and 21st of November.

Friends, we shall meet in this Congress under favorable conditions. The times are auspicious. Heresy is becoming popular, even in ministerial circles. The spirit of Secularism is pervading our ecclesiastical institutions, our literature, our whole social life. Religion, giving way before continual bombardments and repeated assaults, has abandoned the strongholds of dogmatic theology, and is seeking refuge in the fields of humanitarianism. It may be that it is in this way that it is gradually to disappear—by becoming absorbed in broader phases of thought and action.

In the meantime we must continue the work before us. It is important that Freethinkers should combine. With so many examples around us illustrating the power of organization and of combined effort, it would be the height of folly in us not to have the benefits of such methods. There are important questions demanding our attention. The God-in-the-constitution amendment was again introduced in congress at the last session. Our National Association, with its allies, fought this amendment before the congressional committees, and for the time being defeated it. The amendment has been reinstated, backed up by a petition which is claimed to have attached to it the names of millions of signers. We must meet the conspirators again this coming winter. The people must be aroused to the impending danger and educated in the principles of liberty and justice. The Sabbath question and that of the bible in the public schools also require consideration. The efforts of bigotry and intolerance must be thwarted wherever possible.

In our discussions there should be the broadest latitude in the expression of opinion. There must be absolute freedom, subject only to such regulations as may be necessary in conducting the Congress in an orderly manner, and with due regard to the rights of all the members. Let us meet and consult in a spirit of friendship, of conciliation, and of cordial co-operation. If we do this we shall have a grand and glorious Congress, from which we shall retire refreshed in spirit, confirmed in our convictions, and stimulated to more effective action and to greater achievement during the year to come.

- C. B. WAITE, Acting President.
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Tried and Found Wanting.

Christian Atonement has been tried and found wanting. From Constantine to the fall of the Byzantine Empire, Christianity had supreme control, and its fruits were the Dark Ages, ignorance, superstition, and crime. It has opposed science and progress and human liberty at every step. It propagated its tenets with the aid of the dungeons and fagot, thumb-screw and torturing rack; inventing and using no less than thirty-five of the most cruel instruments of torture, for heretics, that the minds of Christian monsters could conceive. It has sacrificed more lives, shed more innocent blood, than any other system of error that has ever cursed the world. Judaism slayed its thousands. Christianity has slain, according to good authorities, thirty millions. Whatever may be said in defense of some of Christ's teachings, the best of which were uttered before his day, the bloody atonement dogma is vicious and degrading, a product of ignorance and barbarism. Every drop of blood that has been shed for so-called atonements, or to support religious dogmas, was a crime against humanity, justice and truth.

The expanding intelligence of humanity now demands something more rational and elevating than creeds of savagery, the voice of vengeance, or the barbarous echoes from Calvary's bloody brow. Man has atoned or suffered for his mistakes and ignorance in all the bloody past. Paid the debt himself; all the debt he owed. Man is a product of conditions, a creature of environments. All rational hope of happiness, all improvement and elevation of humanity, must come of necessity, not from blood atonements of bulls, and goats, and mythic Christs, but from more intelligence, better environments, improved conditions here and now. We don't need blood atonement for our souls. What the toiling and oppressed masses need and demand is bread-and-butter salvation for their bodies. Take good care of the body and the soul will take care of itself. If one-half the talent and wealth now wasted to perpetuate this barbarous and degrading superstition, were expended to emancipate the industrial slave, it would chase away the wolf of want, bring relief and joy to the lank and pleading horde of unrequited toilers, paint athwart the storm clouds of strikes, injunctions, and industrial unrest, that threaten the stability of our free institutions, the seven-bued bow of promised relief. It would reveal to our anxious and inquiring gaze into the mists of the future, the purpling domes of great possibilities.—George W. Turrell, in the Freethought Magazine.

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