

REPLY TO DR. BUSHONG.

A Correspondent Has Something to Say On the Subject of Infidelity.

The following article will be read with interest by Christians and "unbelievers" alike:

Astoria, Ore., April 2, 1894.

To the Editor of The Astorian: Seeing Dr. Bushong's announcement that he was going to answer my challenge of two weeks ago in his Sunday evening sermon, I went to church, anticipating that after two weeks of hard study and faithful research into the arsenals of theological works, he had been able to gather evidence to prove his assertion that the modern infidels are intellectual pigmies, and that the best heart and brain of the age are possessed by the believers in Christ. But I must say I was highly disappointed, for the learned gentleman utterly failed to prove this. Nothing was said about pigmies, not a single Christian giant was held up for public inspection—not one. Thus the field of argument is as desolate as ever from the standpoint of the challenge. The reverend gentleman, however, made a few other serious charges against infidelity, which I think were not altogether fair, and which I wish to comment upon, although I am aware that I will be considered a very wicked man for taking up the cause of free-thought, but as I am not going to run for office, I will take my chances on this. I always was a sceptic, but still it occurs to me that this question of faith and unbelief is such a profound and vital question that it should not be swept off by such shallow and flimsy remarks as some of those made by Dr. Bushong. His principal charge against infidels is that they are not sincere. Now, I always was of the opinion that there never was a sincerer lot of people than some of the free-thinkers. Luther, Calvin, Zwingley and all the other reformers, also the Huguenots, were undoubtedly considered free-thinkers at that time, but they were very sincere. I think Voltaire was very sincere, in spite of his alleged recantation, which, even if true, don't prove anything to the contrary. I think it took a high degree of sincerity and courage in that priest-ridden time to champion the cause of moral and intellectual freedom. If Voltaire was not sincere, his teachings would not have bore the fruits that they did. I think Thomas Paine was sincere when, in the face of death, he wrote his "Age of Reason," in which he expresses his ideas on religion. I think his conceptions of God, as expressed there, are something of the grandest and noblest I have ever read in the subject. I think he was very sincere when, through all adversities, in spite of the contempt of his countrymen on that account, he stuck to his views to the last. He was sincere to such a degree as to rob him of one of the first places in the heart of the American people. For who will deny that if Thomas Paine had not been so sincere as he was, and left religion alone, he would have stood alongside of George Washington in the hearts of his countrymen. But such will be the fruit of free-thought, that posterity will grant him that place. The doctor dwelled at length on the French revolution, holding that up as the fruit of infidelity. Here, he says, infidelity appeared at its best. I deny that. Infidelity did not appear at its best then, any more than Christianity did during the Inquisition. Compare the Inquisition with the reign of terror, and I think it is about a stand-off, only that the former lasted for centuries, the latter only a few years. Imagine a people who for centuries had been groaning under the tyrannies of priesthood and a corrupt dynasty! Imagine this people suddenly breaking their shackles, making a desperate leap for freedom! Who can wonder that their tide of passion stopped for no obstacles? Who can wonder that with the memory of centuries of oppression fresh in their minds, they just gloated in the blood of their oppressors. This was only characteristic of the uprising of a mob, whether brought about by the writings and teachings of a brilliant free-thinker or by any other genius who exercised an intense influence over his contemporaries. But by their fruits ye shall know them. What has been the fruit of the French revolution? Today we see that the French nation, in spite of the blood-tappings of wars and revolutions, has blossomed out to be the freest, the most prosperous and most cultured nation on earth. This was mainly brought about by the teachings of Voltaire and others; therefore, I consider Voltaire one of the milestones of human progress. God, who during the reign of terror had been de-throned, had to be reinstated, says Dr. Bushong, who said in this connection: "How flattered God Almighty must have felt at this mark of attention." Now, really, Dr. Bushong, don't you think this uprising of the people for justice and freedom was brought about by the divine rulings of God Almighty Himself, and do you think it is fair to judge a whole class of people by the abuses done by that class, when their passion was at fever-heat?

You hint some very serious accusations against infidels. You say they are base corrupters of mankind, rootless robbers, their fruit is anarchy, socialism, communism, etc. Now, you know you are not treating them in a fair and impartial manner when you say this. You seem to labor under the delusion that infidels are a lot of reprobates, libertines in short, utterly depraved to all morality and decency. Do you doubt you can point out some infidels who are guilty of these vices, but I can also point out to you a whole lot of preachers who have been guilty of the very same vices. Please read "Crimes of Preachers in the United States and Canada."

kindest, most honest and most industrious men I have ever met with are infidels. I have heard dozens of people testify to the same, that some of the best citizens, best neighbors, kindest fathers and husbands have been infidels. There is nothing in infidelity to make a man bad—absolutely nothing. Undoubtedly there are a good many free-thinkers who make a flourish of their infidelity, who ridicule all that is dearest and most holy to a great class of people, put themselves up and boldly declare there is no God, no hell, no hereafter, who are infidels just to make themselves notorious, as Dr. Bushong said. Such people are indeed fools, and I have no more use for them than for narrow-minded Christians. I must say, though, that I have not met the man yet who denied the existence of a God. I heard Dr. Bushong say once, speaking about hypocrites: "There can be no counterfeit without the genuine." Same with infidels. What is infidelity, anyhow? Let us see how Webster defines this word. Infidelity, he says, is disbelief in the inspiration of scriptures, or the Divine origin of Christianity; unbelief. There are a good many who are put down as infidels who don't go as far as this. Nearly the whole civilized world believes in the existence of a God, the Creator of the universe. The point in which we differ is, mainly: Is the bible the revealed word of God to His children, and is it the guide that will lead us into eternal life? On this the whole Christian system is founded, and disbelief of the bible as the inspired word of God means disbelief in the Divine origin of Christianity. A good deal could be said on this subject, but space will not permit it.

Now, if a man, after hard study and honest search for the truth, comes to the conclusion that the bible cannot be the inspired word of God, that there can be no personal devil, no eternal hell, is it therefore fair to put that man down as a fool, a reprobate, a base destroyer of morality and decency? History and a candid view of life as it is at the present date will show us that this accusation is false. No matter what a man's belief is, human passions remain the same. People's minds and characters are largely a result of their surrounding influences.

Dr. Bushong defies infidels to show a system of principles. Had the ancient Greeks no system of principles? Did the Medians entirely lack a system of principles before Cortez and the Spaniards came there and conquered them? Prescott tells us that they had a far better system of principles than they have now, and better than any they had in Europe at that time—that is, if peace, prosperity and good morals are a result of a system of principles, and I think Dr. Bushong will admit that they are.

He also defies infidelity to show a hospital or a university built by them. If the churches have built most of the hospitals, I am sure it is not purely for love of mankind that they do so, but simply as a business enterprise. They have the power and wealth to do this, and they are exempt from taxation; it is therefore but natural that they should engage in such enterprises. I am also aware that a good many universities and educational institutions are built by churches. This is also very natural. It is a great protection to the church, the same as is the tariff to the American industries. Why is the Catholic church so anxious to get control of the public school system? Surely not for love to the American nation. I give nobody credit for protecting themselves. I have heard, though, that some of the great colleges in the east, and also in England, are becoming alarmingly liberal. Then Dr. Bushong says: "Why don't the infidels go and live by themselves; why not found a state and go there and practice their theories?" I for one would be very glad to see them leave, he says. No doubt you would, doctor; they are a great annoyance to you preachers, an insolent set of people who dare attack the strongholds of the church. I am aware that the church looks upon infidels as their most dangerous enemies. How the churches would rejoice and prosper if all the infidels packed up and left. But I will tell you why they don't. Simply because they don't have to. There was a time when it would have been very convenient for free-thinkers to have a resort where they could have gone and lived by themselves in peace and safety. But, happily, through the efforts of some brave and liberal-thinking men and women, it is now possible to live together quite amicably, regardless of creed or disbelief. If we take a view of history we see how, step by step, the church has been forced into more liberal channels. How dogmas about hell and devils more and more are disappearing from the pulpit. And instead of the beautiful teachings of Christ, the doctrines of love and brotherhood are impressed on the human heart. We see how the many different creeds, which have arisen from time to time, are for the most part but fruits of human thought and investigation upon the subject of religion; how the creeds form links in the evolution of Christianity. How this evolution constantly points towards that sublime teaching: "Do to others as you would that they should do unto you." This, and all human progress, I say, has been brought about by free-thinking, by reason, by honest search for the truth.

A good deal more could be said on the subject of Dr. Bushong's sermon last Sunday night, but my article is already too long. I am glad that this subject came up for discussion, and I am extremely thankful to the editor for giving me a hearing through his valuable paper. Very respectfully,

ED. LUND.

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STRIKE OF WEAVERS.

Providence, R. I., April 3.—The biggest labor war Rhode Island has ever seen is the struggle against the two looms system. All the weavers are out today.

REPUBLICANS LEADING.

Kansas City, April 3.—A full municipal ticket was voted today. There were six tickets in the field, and a heavy vote was polled. Webster Davis, a republican, is in the lead.

ADMINISTRATOR'S NOTICE.

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned has been appointed, by the County Court of Clatsop County, Oregon, administrator of the estate of James Dalgity, deceased, late of Clatsop County, Oregon. All persons having claims against said estate must present the same, duly verified, to the undersigned, at his place of business, in the City of Astoria, Clatsop County, Oregon, within six months from this date. All parties indebted to the estate will settle also with the undersigned.

Dated at Astoria, Oregon, this 25th day of March, 1894.

WILLIAM EDGAR,  
Administrator.

ADMINISTRATOR'S SALE OF PERSONAL PROPERTY.

Notice is hereby given that, by virtue of an order of the honorable County Court of Clatsop County, State of Oregon, issued July 10th, 1893, and to me directed, I shall proceed to sell, at public auction, on the premises, at the Grimes House, Seaside, Oregon, on Tuesday, April 10th, 1894, at the hour of 10:30 o'clock A. M., all the personal partnership property of G. K. Grimes, deceased, and E. M. Grimes, consisting of furniture, stock, and other property. Seaside, Oregon, March 27th, 1894.

R. M. GRIMES,  
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FINAL SETTLEMENT.

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned has filed his final account in the estate of Henry Powell, deceased, and the court has set Monday, the 5th day of May, 1894, at the hour of 11 o'clock A. M., for the hearing of objections thereto, if there be any.

Astoria, March 20, 1894.

MARCTHA POWELL,  
Executrix.

BIDS FOR BONDS.

Notice is hereby given that pursuant to a resolution of the Common Council of the City of Astoria, adopted March 6th, 1894, bids will be received by the Auditor and Police Judge of the City of Astoria for \$10,000 of municipal bonds of the City of Astoria, to run ten years and bear interest at the rate of 5 per cent per annum. Said bonds being issued for the purpose of refunding certain indebtedness of the City of Astoria for street improvements. Ordinance authorizing the issuance of said bonds to be submitted to attorneys of any person or corporation for their approval. By order of the Common Council.

Attest: K. OSBURN,  
Auditor and Police Judge,  
Astoria, Oregon, March 5th, 1894.

THE ASTORIAN

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Telegraphic

Press Report

THE ASTORIAN is in possession of all the telegraphic news service franchises, and is the only paper on the Columbia river that publishes genuine dispatches. The circulation is much greater than that of all other Astoria papers combined. The Weekly edition contains a carefully selected resume of the most important telegraphic and local news.

SUBSCRIBERS to either the Daily or Weekly may secure a valuable book, the Life and Works of James G. Blaine, by adding one dollar to the regular subscription price of the paper. The book is well worth three dollars, and may be inspected at the business office of the Astorian. A full description of this attractive premium is given elsewhere in this paper.

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