



A THANKSGIVING SERMON

In 1897, Robert Green Ingersoll, "The Great Agnostic," gave a Thanksgiving Sermon. You can find the full text online. But, in essence, what he said was this: that human progress, a recurrent theme with Ingersoll,

"is a long road from the savage to the scientist. ... Countless obstructions have been overcome -- numberless enemies have been conquered -- thousands and thousands of victories have been won for the right, and millions have lived, labored and died for their fellow-men. For the blessings we enjoy -- for the happiness that is ours, we ought to be grateful. Our hearts should blossom with thankfulness. Whom, what, should we thank?"

Ingersoll denied that gratitude is owed to the church, to its clergy or saints or even to its deities.

"[The church] pretended to have a revelation from God. It knew the road to eternal joy, the way to death. It preached salvation by faith, and declared that only orthodox believers could become angels, and all doubters would be damned. It knew this, and so knowing it became the enemy of discussion, of investigation, of thought. Why investigate, why discuss, why think when you know? It sought to enslave the world. It appealed to force. It unsheathed the sword, lighted the fagot, forged the chain, built the dungeon, erected the scaffold, invented and used the instruments of torture. It branded, maimed and mutilated -- it imprisoned and tortured -- it blinded and burned, hanged and crucified, and utterly destroyed millions and millions of human beings. ... For centuries it kept the earth flat, for centuries it made all the hosts of heaven travel around this world -- for centuries it clung to 'sacred' knowledge, and fought facts with the ferocity of a fiend. For centuries it hated the useful. It was the deadly enemy of medicine. Disease was produced by devils and could be cured only by priests, decaying bones, and holy water. Doctors were the rivals of Priests. They diverted the revenues. The church opposed the study of anatomy -- was against the dissection of the dead. Man had no right to cure disease ... It was the enemy of commerce -- of business. It denounced the taking of interest for money. Without taking interest for money, progress is impossible. The steamships, the great factories, the railroads have all been built with borrowed money, money on which interest was promised and for the most part paid. ... It was the enemy of art and literature. It destroyed the marbles of Greece and Rome. Beauty was Pagan. It destroyed so far as it could the best literature of the world. ... It founded schools where facts were denied, where science was denounced and philosophy despised. Schools, where priests were made -- where they were taught to hate reason and to look upon doubts as the suggestions of the Devil. Schools where the heart was hardened and the brain shriveled. Schools in which lies were sacred and truths profane."

As for thanking Nature, Ingersoll said:

"Does Nature care for us more than for leaves, or grass, or flies? Does Nature know that we exist? We do not know. But we do know that Nature is going to murder us all. ... Why should we thank Nature? If we thank God or Nature for the sunshine and rain, for health and happiness, whom shall we curse for famine and pestilence, for earthquake and cyclone -- for disease and death?"

Ingersoll then considered the achievements of "the worldly," recognizing the contributions of the ancient Greek and Roman pagans and of the "godless followers of Mohammed" before they "became the enemies of science and hated facts as intensely and honestly as Christians." Ingersoll called attention to accomplishments of Magellan, Copernicus, and "Bruno, one of the greatest men this world has produced," who in 1600 was "burned in Rome by men filled with the Holy Ghost, burned on the spot where now his monument rises."

Ingersoll recognized the discoveries of "Lippersheim, a Hollander, ... [who] invented the telescope" and Galileo and Kepler, to whom we owe the fact that "Astronomy became a science and Christianity a superstition," and the way was shown for Newton, Herschel, Laplace and Lyell. "The worldly," said Ingersoll:

"investigated the religions of the world -- have read the sacred books, the prophecies, the commandments, the rules of conduct. They have studied the symbols, the ceremonies, the prayers and sacrifices. And they have shown

that all religions are substantially the same – produced by the same causes – that all rest on a misconception of the facts in nature – that all are founded on ignorance and fear, on mistake and mystery.”

Others of “the worldly,” said Ingersoll:

“have investigated the phenomena of nature. They have invented ways to use the forces of the world, the weight of falling water – of moving air. They have changed water to steam, invented engines ... made lightning a messenger and slave. ... taught us the art of printing and made it possible to save and transmit the intellectual wealth of the world. They connected continents with cables, cities and towns with the telegraph – brought the world into one family – made intelligence independent of distance. They taught us how to build homes, to obtain food, to weave cloth. They covered the seas with iron ships and the land with roads and steeds of steel. ... found the cause of and the cure for many maladies ... given us the instruments of music and the great composers and performers have changed the common air to tones and harmonies ... given us the liberty to think and the courage to express our thoughts. ... enlarged the horizon of the known, changed the glittering specks that shine above us to wheeling worlds, and filled all space with countless suns. ... They have given us all we have of knowledge, of literature and art. They have made life worth living. They have filled the world with conveniences, comforts and luxuries.”

Ingersoll praised Voltaire, Burns, Shelley, Keats, Byron, Paine, Jefferson, Lincoln, Haeckel, Humboldt, Darwin, Huxley and Spencer. We should thank them, he said:

“the industrious men, the loving mothers, the useful women. They are the benefactors of our race. To these ... we are indebted for all we are, for all we know, for all we have. ... With all my heart, I thank them all!”

“He is a wise man who does not grieve for the things which he has not, but rejoices for those which he has.”
- Epictetus

COMING NEXT MONTH:

“MYTHMAS 2011!”

December 4th, 2011

**SHERATON GRAND DFW AIRPORT
SE CORNER OF 114 AND ESTERS**

REMEMBER TO CHECK JANUARY 2012 SERVICE TIME/PLACE !!! PLANNED DATE WILL BE THE SECOND SUNDAY, JANUARY 8TH, BECAUSE OF THE NEW YEARS HOLIDAY

All NTCOF events can be found through our website calendar (yes, website update is in process thanks to Sarah and Rusty Nejd!) , or through our meetup page, from which you can RSVP, at: - www.meetup.com/church-of-freethought -
JOIN THE NTCOF MEETUP GROUP !!!

Social Luncheon: Today, immediately after our Service, join us for lunch and discussion at the Golden Corral Buffet and Grill in Grapevine, located just across from the Grapevine Mills Mall, at 2605 E. Grapevine Mills Circle, phone (972) 874-7900. To reach Golden Corral from the Sheraton, cross over the freeway and make a left onto John W. Carpenter Freeway (114) going west. Then take the first exit RIGHT onto International Parkway (121), then Grapevine Mills Parkway exit. Turn LEFT on Stars and Stripes Way, continuing on to E. Grapevine Mills Circle.

Freethought Salon: Get together to discuss today’s service topic or other conundrums of interest to Freethinkers. Second Sunday monthly, over breakfast, at the Hilton Vineyard in Grapevine this month; see the meetup site!

Game Night: The regular game night crew meets nearly every Friday night at the IHOP on 2310 Stemmons Trail (I-35), near Northwest Highway (Loop 12). Plan to arrive at about 7:30 PM, and stay late playing Risk, Rummikub, and other fun games!

Secular Singles: Freethinkers have met their life-partners with whom they have begun families through the Secular Singles group. Check the meetup site for the next date, time and location!

**YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS
TO THE NTCOF ARE NEEDED,
APPRECIATED,
AND TAX-DEDUCTIBLE!!**



DFWCOR

Dallas-Fort Worth Coalition of Reason

The North Texas Church of Freethought
The Fellowship of Unbelievers

MANY THANKS to NTCOF members and supporters/attendees, contributors, presenters, and others, including our frequent band, faithlesscompanions.com and Web Redesigners Rusty and Sarah Nejd !!!

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