

ADDRESSES FOR THE NAMING OF CHILDREN  
AND THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD.

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*Issued by the authority of the National Secular Society.*

(From the National Secular Society's Almanack.)

## THE NAMING OF CHILDREN.

FRIENDS; the parents of this child have brought him [her] to this our platform, that in the presence of our Secular Society he [she] may here publicly receive the name by which he [she] shall hereafter be known.

We do not, in thus naming the child, either mock at or imitate the office of Christian Baptism. But since every child must be known by some name in the society to which he [she] belongs, it is well and brotherly that the name shall be given in the presence of his [her] parents, friends, and of those who will surround his [her] expanding life.

We do not ask from the child any promise of renouneal of a world of whose value he [she] is as yet ignorant; nor of pledge to be faithful to a creed he [she] cannot as yet appreciate; nor of adherence to dogmas he [she] is as yet unable to either intelligently embrace or intelligently reject. We leave until manhood [womanhood] arrives, the responsibilities of manhood [womanhood], and among those responsibilities is the choice of a creed which shall color the life, of a philosophy on which conduct shall be based.

But while from the unconscious babe we ask for no promise, and while we reject as irrelevant impertinence any pledge pretended to be given in his [her] name, we do ask from the parents the promise that the child be kept free from the touch of the priest on his [her] entrance into life, shall also be guarded from priestly influence during the receptive years of childhood, and that no intrusion of priestly authority shall be permitted to mould the plastic thought, nor fashion the ductile intelligence.

And we bid the parents remember the sacredness of their duty to the young life they have given, and whose future lies so largely at their mercy. The body is to be tended, trained and developed; the mind to be nurtured, filled and cultured. The best education their means and their opportunities permit, it is their duty to give to this child. And when he [she] arrives at years of discretion, it is their duty to leave him [her] with faculties trained and powers sharpened, to choose his [her] own creed, to direct his [her] own life.

No anxiety is ours such as wrings the heart of the Christian parent; we fear no eternal hell, no misery beyond the grave. We know of no misery that man cannot heal, no hell the fires of which man cannot quench. We welcome the new life with gladness, and without dread.

And now, what shall we wish for the child we name to-day, the child [*here insert name*]. Let us wish that hereafter he [she] may have intelligence to see the truth, enthusiasm to embrace the truth, courage to proclaim the truth, loyalty to live the truth. In the children is the hope of our movement, in their future the motive for our struggle. Let us hope that our lives may make this child's life the brighter; that our treading down of evil things may make his [her] path the smoother; that our courage and devotion may lift his [her] career into a purer and healthier atmosphere. And let us hope, also, that when the loved flag of Freedom falls from our hands, palsied at the touch of Death, these hands may catch it and carry it on further, and that in his manhood [her womanhood] [*here insert name*] may come voluntarily to that Freethought platform whereto his [her] mother's arms have brought him [her] unconsciously to-night.

## THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD.

FRIENDS; we are met here to-day to render the last offices of respect, the last tribute of affection to a friend and fellow-worker, to lay in its last resting-place the body of [*insert name*]. We meet with heavy hearts, heavy with sympathy for those whose sorrow we here reverently share. Across this open grave we look into the very face of Death, and we look with eyes tear-blinded but without one thought of fear.

Sad is death at all times. Sad even when [*as now if the dead had reached old age*] Death comes in the evening of life, to lay on eyes dim with age the poppies of an endless sleep; when he renders rigid the muscles palsied with a long life's toil, and chills into silence the tongue grown stiff with age. [*Here insert one or both of the*

*following paragraphs, according as the dead was in mature life or in youth:* Sadder when Death breaks off manhood [womanhood] in its prime, bringing night while noon is high in the heavens, and sleep while vigor and energy for work remain. But saddest of all, perhaps, is Death when he strikes down, as now, the youth [the maid] in the flush of his [her] morning, with all the promise of the future unkept all the hope of the future unfulfilled. It were heartless to deny the sadness and the gloom-shadow cast by Death, and the tears that drop into the open grave are tears that sully no courage, nor have to manhood aught of shame. Yet since Death must come to all to whom life has come, while it were cruelty not to sorrow, it were cowardice to break into despairing and useless repining. While we give tears to the dead, let us from the grave turn back to life, life which has still its duties, if for a while it have lost its glory and its joy.

The message which comes from this open grave is one of Love and of Work. Of Love, in that our dead reminds us that when the grave opens love's work is closed, and bids us be gentle to the living that we may need to drop no tears of remorse over the dead. Love should be the draught offered to the lips of the living, not only the libation poured out on the corpse in the tomb. Of Work, in that he [she] recalls to us that life is uncertain and brief at its longest; that all we can do to help and to improve our generation must be done now, while this priceless treasure of life is ours, and that when death's night overshadows us our work is done for ever, for either good or ill.

We leave our dead to his [her] rest. We give him [her] back to that great mother who bears and destroys, evolves and recalls, builds up and pulls down, to Nature the One and the All, the Eternal Life and Death, with whom Death is but the first stage of new life. For us, we turn back to our work, while conscious life remains to us, to do our best until our turn to sleep shall come. Hope and work belong to the living; sleep and rest to the dead. We leave him [her] to eternal rest, and bid him [her] tenderly our last Farewell.

## THOMAS PAINE.

An old slander on Thomas Paine, which has been revived recently, is thus met by Thomas Curtis, a well-known old Philadelphia Freethinker, who writes as follows to the 'Boston Investigator':—"In the year 1858, the Rev. John Chambers, pastor of the Broad Street Independent Church, of Philadelphia, announced in a sermon on Paine, that one member of his congregation knew him, and would testify to his great wickedness, etc. The gentleman referred to proved to be a Mr. Bruen, a retired wholesale merchant of New York, but at that time resided in Walnut Street, near 16th, Philadelphia. In company with Mr. Thomas Ilman, engraver, and Mr. James West, shoe dealer, I visited Mr Bruen at his residence, the day after the announcement was made by Mr Chambers. Mr. Bruen stated that he had lived nearly opposite the house where Mr. Paine lived and died, and that he had often seen him. The following questions were then put to Mr. Bruen in writing:—

1. Did you ever see Thomas Paine drunk or intoxicated? Answer—No.
2. Did you ever hear of Thomas Paine being a drunkard? Answer—No.
3. Do you suppose if Thomas Paine had been a drunkard, or given to intoxication, you would have heard of it? Answer—Most certainly, because the man was so prominent that anything about himself and life was matter of public comment.
4. What do you know of the condition of Paine previous to his death? Answer—I was told, at the time, by a neighbor, who visited him in his last hours, that Thomas Paine died as he lived, an apostate to Christianity.

The facts as here stated were published the following day as an advertisement in the 'Philadelphia Ledger,' and no attempt at contradiction was ever made by Rev. John Chambers, or by Mr. Bruen, to both of whom copies of the paper were sent. Although this emphatic denial was thus publicly made, yet the following year the clerical gentlemen still continued their slanders, as they do at the present day."