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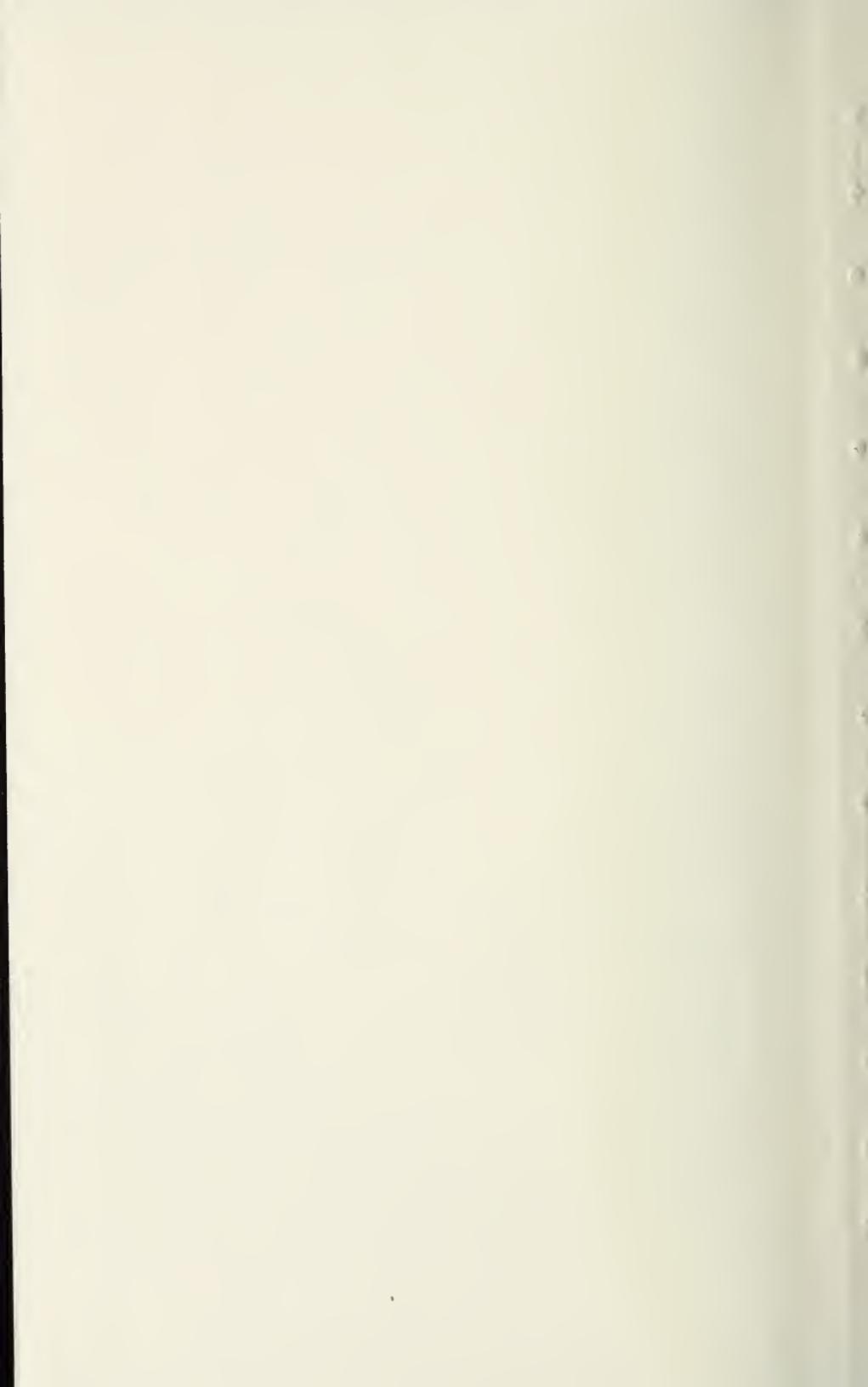






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WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?

A LECTURE

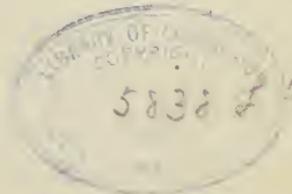
BY

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

Interpolations are the foundation stones of every Orthodox Church.

THOROUGHLY REVISED AND CORRECTED BY THE AUTHOR.

WASHINGTON, D. C.
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PREFACE.

IF WHAT is known as the Christian Religion is true, nothing can be more wonderful than the fact that Matthew, Mark and Luke say nothing about "salvation by faith;" that they do not even hint at the doctrine of the atonement, and are as silent as empty tombs as to the necessity of believing anything to secure happiness in this world or another.

For a good many years it has been claimed that the writers of these gospels knew something about the teachings of Christ, and had, at least, a general knowledge of the conditions of salvation. It now seems to be substantiated that the early christians did not place implicit confidence in the gospels, and did not hesitate to make such changes and additions as they thought proper. Such changes and additions are about the only passages in the New Testament that the Evangelical Churches now consider

sacred. That portion of the last chapter of Mark, in which unbelievers are so cheerfully and promptly damned, has been shown to be an interpolation, and it is asserted that in the revised edition of the New Testament, soon to be issued, the infamous passages will not appear. With these expunged, there is not one word in Matthew, Mark, or Luke, even tending to show that belief in Christ has, or can have, any effect upon the destiny of the soul.

The four gospels are the four corner stones upon which rests the fabric of orthodox Christianity. Three of these stones have crumbled, and the fourth is not likely to outlast this generation. The gospel of JOHN cannot alone uphold the infinite absurdity of vicarious virtue and vice, and it cannot, without the aid of "interpolation," sustain the illogical and immoral dogma of salvation by faith. These frightful doctrines must be abandoned; the miraculous must be given up, the wonderful stories must be expunged, and from the creed of noble deeds the forgeries of superstition must be blotted out. From the temple of Morality and Truth — from the great windows towards the sun the parasitic and poisonous vines of faith and fable must be torn.

The church will be compelled at last to rest its

case, not upon the wonders Christ is said to have performed, but upon the system of morality he taught. All the miracles, including the resurrection and ascension, are, when compared with portions of the "Sermon on the Mount," but dust and darkness.

The careful reader of the New Testament will find three Christs described:—One who wished to preserve Judaism — one who wished to reform it, and one who built a system of his own. The apostles and their disciples, utterly unable to comprehend a religion that did away with sacrifices, churches, priests, and creeds, constructed a Christianity for themselves, so that the orthodox churches of to-day rest — *first*, upon what Christ endeavored to destroy — *second*, upon what he never said, and, *third*, upon a misunderstanding of what he did say.

If a certain belief is necessary to insure the salvation of the soul, the church ought to explain, and without any unnecessary delay, why such an infinitely important fact was utterly ignored by Matthew, Mark and Luke. There are only two explanations possible. Either belief is unnecessary, or the writers of these three gospels did not under-

stand the Christian system. The “sacredness” of the subject cannot longer hide the absurdity of the “scheme of salvation,” nor the failure of Matthew, Mark and Luke to mention, what is now claimed to have been, the entire mission of Christ. The church must take from the New Testament the supernatural; the idea that an intellectual conviction can subject an honest man to eternal pain—the awful doctrine that the innocent can justly suffer for the guilty, and allow the remainder to be discussed, denied or be lieved without punishment and without reward. No one will object to the preaching of kindness, honesty and justice. To preach less is a crime, and to practice more is impossible.

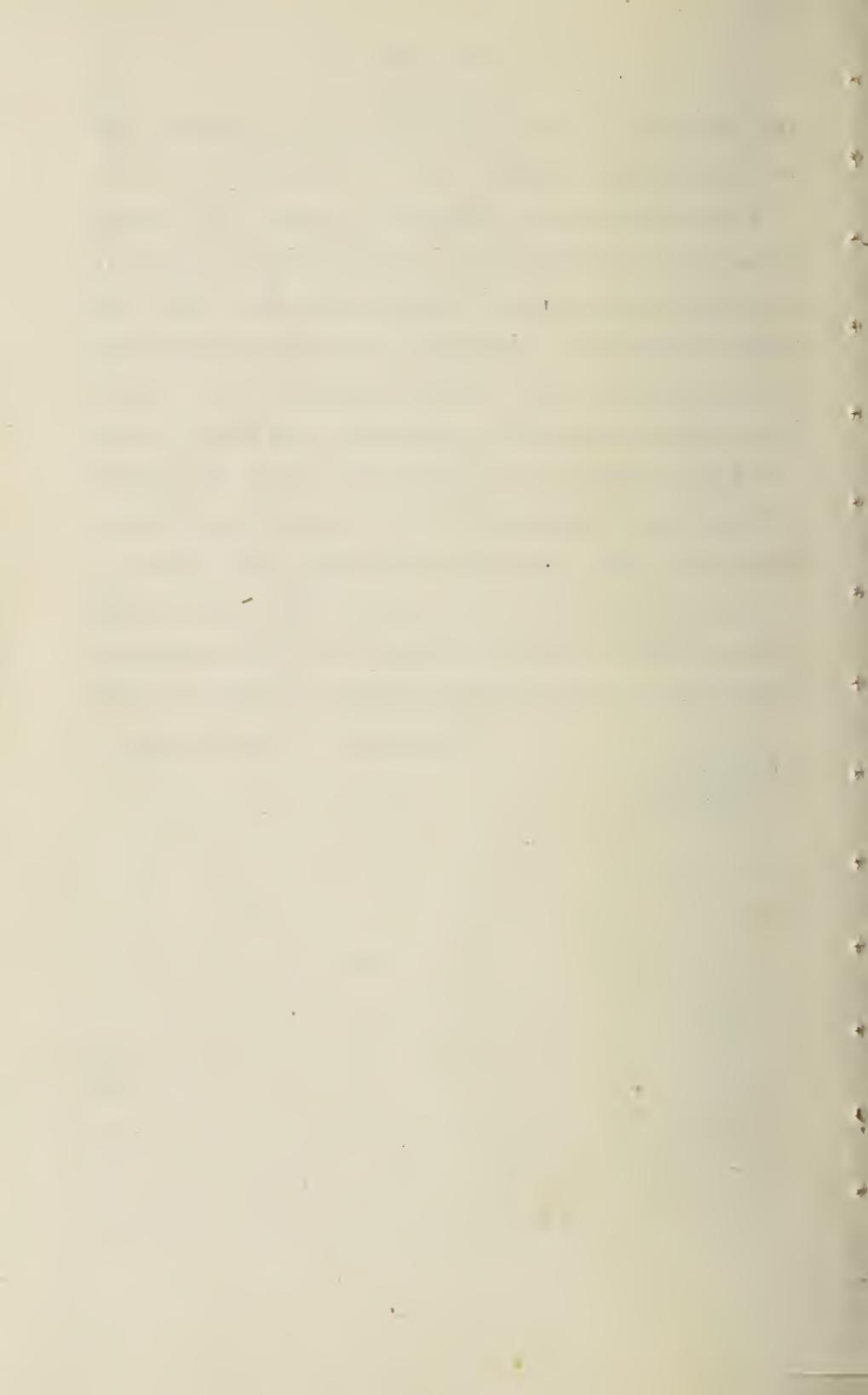
There is one thing that ought to be again impressed upon the average theologian, and that is the utter futility of trying to answer arguments with personal abuse. It should be understood once for all that these questions are in no sense personal. If it should turn out that all the professed christians in the world are sinless saints, the question of how Matthew, Mark, and Luke, came to say nothing about the atonement and the scheme of salvation by faith, would still be asked. And if it should then be shown that all the doubters, deists, and atheists,

are vile and vicious wretches, the question still would wait for a reply.

The origin of all religions, creeds, and sacred books, is substantially the same, and the history of one, is, in the main, the history of all. Thus far these religions have been the mistaken explanations of our surroundings. The appearances of nature have imposed upon the ignorance and fear of man. But back of all honest creeds was, and is, the desire to know, to understand, and to explain, and that desire will, as I most fervently hope and earnestly believe, be gratified at last by the discovery of the truth. Until then, let us bear with the theories, hopes, dreams, mistakes, and honest thoughts of all.

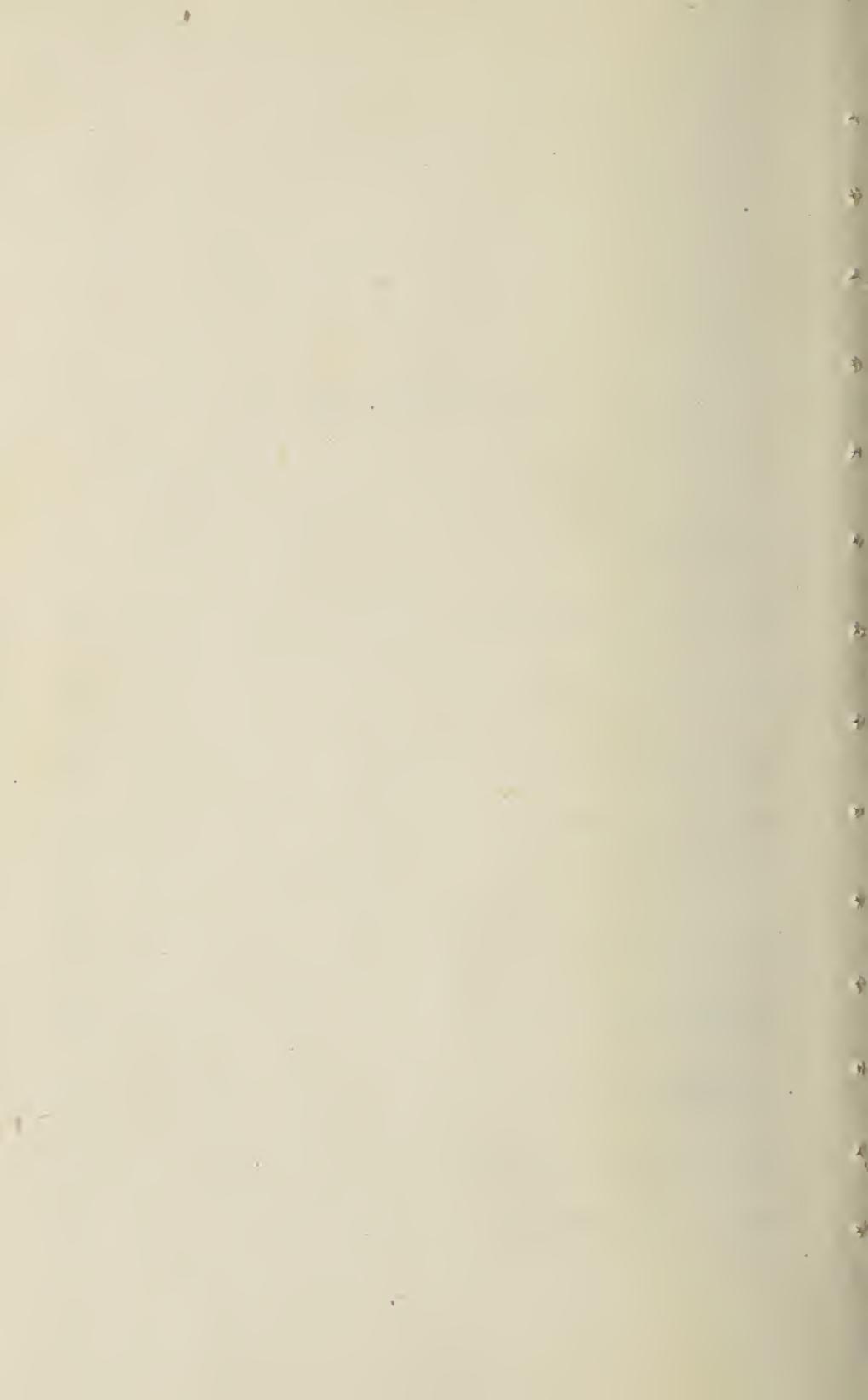
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WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?

"THE NUEREMBERG MAN WAS OPERATED BY A COMBINATION OF PIPES AND LEVERS, AND THOUGH HE COULD BREATHE AND DIGEST PERFECTLY, AND EVEN REASON AS WELL AS MOST THEOLOGIANS, WAS MADE OF NOTHING BUT WOOD AND LEATHER."

I.

THE whole world has been filled with fear. Ignorance has been the refuge of the soul. For thousands of years the intellectual ocean was ravaged by the buccaneers of reason. Pious souls clung to the shore and looked at the lighthouse. The seas were filled with monsters and the islands with sirens. The people were driven in the middle of a narrow road while priests went before, beating the hedges on either side to frighten the robbers from their lairs. The poor followers seeing no robbers, thanked their brave leaders with all their hearts.

Huddled in folds they listened with wide eyes while the shepherds told of ravening wolves. With great gladness they exchanged their fleeces for security. Shorn and shivering, they had the happiness of seeing their protectors comfortable and warm.

Through all the years, those who plowed divided with those who prayed. Wicked industry supported pious idleness, the hut gave to the cathedral, and frightened poverty gave even its rags to buy a robe for hypocrisy.

Fear is the dungeon of the mind, and superstition is a dagger with which hypocrisy assassinates the soul. Courage is liberty. I am in favor of absolute freedom of thought. In the realm of mind every one is monarch; every one is robed, sceptered, and crowned, and every one wears the purple of authority. I belong to the republic of intellectual liberty, and only those are good citizens of that republic who depend upon reason and upon persuasion, and only those are traitors who resort to brute force.

Now, I beg of you all to forget just for a few moments that you are Methodists or Baptists or Catholics or Presbyterians, and let us for an hour

or two remember only that we are men and women. And allow me to say "man" and "woman" are the highest titles that can be bestowed upon humanity.

Let us, if possible, banish all fear from the mind. Do not imagine that there is some being in the infinite expanse who is not willing that every man and woman should think for himself and herself. Do not imagine that there is any being who would give to his children the holy torch of reason, and then damn them for following that sacred light. Let us have courage.

Priests have invented a crime called "blasphemy," and behind that crime hypocrisy has crouched for thousands of years. There is but one blasphemy, and that is injustice. There is but one worship, and that is justice!

You need not fear the anger of a god that you cannot injure. Rather fear to injure your fellow-men. Do not be afraid of a crime you can not commit. Rather be afraid of the one that you may commit. The reason that you cannot injure God is that the Infinite is conditionless. You cannot increase or diminish the happiness of any being without changing that being's condition. If God is conditionless you can neither injure nor benefit him.

There was a Jewish gentleman went into a restaurant to get his dinner, and the devil of temptation whispered in his ear: "Eat some bacon." He knew if there was anything in the universe calculated to excite the wrath of an infinite being, who made every shining star, it was to see a gentleman eating bacon. He knew it, and he knew the infinite being was looking, that he was the eternal eavesdropper of the universe. But his appetite got the better of his conscience, as it often has with us all, and he ate that bacon. He knew it was wrong, and his conscience felt the blood of shame in its cheek. When he went into that restaurant the weather was delightful, the sky was as blue as June, and when he came out the sky was covered with angry clouds, the lightning leaping from one to the other, and the earth shaking beneath the voice of the thunder. He went back into that restaurant with a face as white as milk, and he said to one of the keepers:

"My God, did you ever hear such a fuss about a little piece of bacon?"

As long as we harbor such opinions of infinity; as long as we imagine the heavens to be filled with such tyranny, just so long the sons of men will be

cringing, intellectual cowards. Let us think, and let us honestly express our thought.

Do not imagine for a moment that I think people who disagree with me are bad people. I admit, and I cheerfully admit, that a very large proportion of mankind, and a very large majority, a vast number are reasonably honest. I believe that most Christians believe what they teach; that most ministers are endeavoring to make this world better. I do not pretend to be better than they are. It is an intellectual question. It is a question, first, of intellectual liberty, and after that, a question to be settled at the bar of human reason. I do not pretend to be better than they are. Probably I am a good deal worse than many of them, but that is not the question. The question is: "Bad as I am, have I the right to think?" And I think I have for two reasons:

First, I cannot help it. And secondly, I like it.

The whole question is right at a point. If I have not a right to express my thoughts, who has?

"Oh," they say, "we will allow you to think, we will not burn you."

"All right; why won't you burn me?"

"Because we think a decent man will allow others to think and to express his thought."

"Then the reason you do not persecute me for my thought is that you believe it would be infamous in you?"

"Yes."

"And yet you worship a God who will, as you declare, punish me forever?"

Surely an infinite God ought to be as just as man. Surely no God can have the right to punish his children for being honest. He should not reward hypocrisy with heaven, and punish candor with eternal pain.

The next question then is: Can I commit a sin against God by thinking? If God did not intend I should think, why did he give me a thinker? For one, I am convinced, not only that I have the right to think, but that it is my duty to express my honest thoughts. Whatever the gods may say we must be true to ourselves.

We have got what they call the Christian system of religion, and thousands of people wonder how I can be wicked enough to attack that system.

There are many good things about it, and I shall never attack anything that I believe to be good! I shall never fear to attack anything I honestly

believe to be wrong! We have what they call the Christian religion, and I find, just in proportion that nations have been religious, just in the proportion they have clung to the religion of their founders, they have gone back to barbarism. I find that Spain, Portugal, Italy, are the three worst nations in Europe. I find that the nation nearest infidel is the most prosperous—France.

And so I say there can be no danger in the exercise of absolute intellectual freedom. I find among ourselves the men who think are at least as good as those who do not.

We have, I say a Christian system, and that system is founded upon what they are pleased to call the "New Testament." Who wrote the New Testament? I do not know. Who does know? Nobody. We have found many manuscripts containing portions of the New Testament. Some of these manuscripts leave out five or six books—many of them. Others more; others less. No two of these manuscripts agree. Nobody knows who wrote these manuscripts. They are all written in Greek. The disciples of Christ, so far as we know, knew only Hebrew. Nobody ever saw, so far as we know, one of the original Hebrew manuscripts.

Nobody ever saw anybody who had seen anybody who had heard of anybody that had ever seen anybody that had ever seen one of the original Hebrew manuscripts. No doubt the clergy of your city have told you these facts thousands of times, and they will be obliged to me for having repeated them once more. These manuscripts are written in what are called capital Greek letters. They are called Uncial manuscripts, and the New Testament was not divided into chapters and verses, even, until the year of grace 1551. In the original the manuscripts and gospels are signed by nobody. The epistles are addressed to nobody ; and they are signed by the same person. All the addresses, all the pretended ear-marks showing to whom they were written, and by whom they were written, are simply interpolations, and everybody who has studied the subject knows it.

It is further admitted that even these manuscripts have not been properly translated, and they have a syndicate now making a new translation ; and I suppose that I can not tell whether I really believe the New Testament or not until I see that new translation..

You must remember, also, one other thing. Christ never wrote a solitary word of the New Testament—not one word. There is an account that he once stooped and wrote something in the sand, but that has not been preserved. He never told anybody to write a word. He never said: "Matthew, remember this. Mark, do not forget to put that down. Luke, be sure that in your gospel you have this. John, do not forget it." Not one word. And it has always seemed to me that a being coming from another world, with a message of infinite importance to mankind, should at least have verified that message by his own signature. Is it not wonderful that not one word was written by Christ? Is it not strange that he gave no orders to have his words preserved—words upon which hung the salvation of a world?

Why was nothing written? I will tell you. In my judgment they expected the end of the world in a few days. That generation was not to pass away until the heavens should be rolled up as a scroll, and until the earth should melt with fervent heat. That was their belief. They believed that the world was to be destroyed, and that there was to be another coming, and that the saints were then to

govern the earth. And they even went so far among the apostles, as we frequently do now before election, as to divide out the offices in advance. This Testament, as it now is, was not written for hundreds of years after the apostles were dust. Many of the pretended facts lived in the open mouth of credulity. They were in the waste-baskets of forgetfulness. They depended upon the inaccuracy of legend, and for centuries these doctrines and stories were blown about by the inconstant winds. And when reduced to writing, some gentleman would write by the side of the passage his idea of it, and the next copyist would put that in as a part of the text. And, when it was mostly written, and the church got into trouble, and wanted a passage to help it out, one was interpolated to order. So that now it is among the easiest things in the world to pick out at least one hundred interpolations in the Testament. And I will pick some of them out before I get through.

And let me say here, once for all, that for the man Christ I have infinite respect. Let me say, once for all, that the place where man has died for man is holy ground. And let me say, once for all, that to that great and serene man I gladly pay, I

gladly pay, the tribute of my admiration and my tears. He was a reformer in his day. He was an infidel in his time. He was regarded as a blasphemer, and his life was destroyed by hypocrites, who have, in all ages, done what they could to trample freedom and manhood out of the human mind. Had I lived at that time I would have been his friend, and should he come again he will not find a better friend than I will be.

That is for the man. For the theological creation I have a different feeling. If he was, in fact, God, he knew there was no such thing as death. He knew that what we called death was but the eternal opening of the golden gates of everlasting joy ; and it took no heroism to face a death that was eternal life.

But when a man, when a poor boy sixteen years of age, goes upon the field of battle to keep his flag in heaven, not knowing but that death ends all ; not knowing but that when the shadows creep over him, the darkness will be eternal, there is heroism. For the man who, in the darkness, said : " My God, why hast thou forsaken me ? " — for that man I have nothing but respect, admiration, and love. Back of the theological shreds, rags, and

patches, hiding the real Christ, I see a genuine man.

A while ago I made up my mind to find out what was necessary for me to do in order to be saved. If I have got a soul, I want it saved. I do not wish to lose anything that is of value.

For thousands of years the world has been asking that question :

“What must we do to be saved?”

Saved from poverty? No. Saved from crime? No. Tyranny? No. But “What must we do to be saved from the eternal wrath of the God who made us all?”

If God made us, he will not destroy us. Infinite wisdom never made a poor investment. Upon all the works of an infinite God, a dividend must finally be declared. Why should God make failures? Why should he waste material? Why should he not correct his mistakes, instead of damning them? The pulpit has cast a shadow over even the cradle. The doctrine of endless punishment has covered the cheeks of this world with tears. I despise it, and I defy it.

I made up my mind, I say, to see what I had to do in order to save my soul according to the

Testament, and thereupon I read it. I read the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and found that the church had been deceiving me. I found that the clergy did not understand their own book. I found that they had been building upon passages that had been interpolated. I found that they had been building upon passages that were entirely untrue. And I will tell you why I think so.

II.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

ACCORDING to the church the first gospel was written by Matthew. As a matter of fact he never wrote a word of it—never saw it, never heard of it and probably never will. But for the purposes of this lecture I admit that he wrote it. I will admit that he was with Christ for three years; that he was his constant companion; that he shared his sorrows and his triumphs; that he heard his words by the lonely lakes, the barren hills, in synagogue and street, and that he knew his heart and became acquainted with his thoughts and aims.

Now let us see what Matthew says we must do in order to be saved. And I take it that, if this is true, Matthew is as good authority as any minister in the world.

The first thing I find upon the subject of salvation is in the fifth chapter of Matthew, and is embraced in what is commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount. It is as follows:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Good!

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” Good! Whether they belonged to any church or not; whether they believed the bible or not?

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” Good!

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake,” (that's me, a little!) “for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.” Good!

In the same sermon he says: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” And then he makes use of this remarkable language, almost as applicable to-day as it was then: “For I say unto you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and

Pharisees ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." Good!

In the sixth chapter I find the following, and it comes directly after the prayer known as the Lord's prayer :

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you ; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses."

I accept the condition. There is an offer ; I accept it. If you will forgive men that trespass against you, God will forgive your trespasses against him. I accept the terms, and I never will ask any God to treat me better than I treat my fellow-men. There is a square promise. There is a contract. If you will forgive others God will forgive you. And it does not say you must believe in the Old Testament, or be baptized, or join the church, or keep Sunday ; that you must count beads, or pray, or become a nun, or a priest ; that you must preach sermons or hear them, build churches or fill them. Not one word is said about eating or fasting, denying or believing. It simply says, if you forgive others God will forgive you ; and it must of necessity be true. No god could

afford to damn a forgiving man. Suppose God should damn to everlasting fire a man so great and good, that he, looking from the abyss of hell, would forgive God,— how would a god feel then ?

Now let me make myself plain upon one subject, perfectly plain. For instance, I hate Presbyterianism, but I know hundreds of splendid Presbyterians. Understand me. I hate Methodism, and yet I know hundreds of splendid Methodists. I hate Catholicism, and like Catholics. I hate insanity but not the insane.

I do not war against men. I do not war against persons. I war against certain doctrines that I believe to be wrong. But I give to every other human being every right that I claim for myself.

The next thing that I find is in the seventh chapter and the second verse : “ For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged ; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” Good ! That suits me !

And in the twelfth chapter of Matthew : “ For whosoever shall do the will of my Father that is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother. For the son of man shall come in the glory of his father with his angels, and then he

shall reward every man according —.” To the church he belongs to? No. To the manner in which he was baptized? No. According to his creed? No. “Then he shall reward every man according to his works.” Good! I subscribe to that doctrine.

And in the sixteenth chapter: “And Jesus called a little child to him and stood him in the midst; and said, ‘Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.’” I do not wonder that in his day, surrounded by scribes and Pharisees, he turned lovingly to little children.

And yet, see what children the little children of God have been. What an interesting dimpled darling John Calvin was. Think of that prattling babe, Jonathan Edwards! Think of the infants that founded the inquisition, that invented instruments of torture to tear human flesh. They were the ones who had become as little children. They were the children of faith.

So I find in the nineteenth chapter: “And behold, one came and said unto him: ‘Good master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?’” and he said unto him, ‘why call’st

thou me good? There is none good but one, and that is God, but if thou will enter into eternal life, keep the commandments,' and he said unto him which?"

Now, there is a fair issue. Here is a child of God asking God what is necessary for him to do in order to inherit eternal life. And God said to him: Keep the commandments. And the child said to the Almighty: "Which?" Now, if there ever has been an opportunity given to the Almighty to furnish a man of an inquiring mind with the necessary information upon that subject, here was the opportunity. "He said unto him, which? And Jesus said: Thou shalt do no murder; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness; honor thy father and mother; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

He did not say to him: "You must believe in me—that I am the only begotten son of the living God." He did not say: "You must be born again." He did not say: "You must believe the bible." He did not say: "You must remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." He simply said: "Thou shalt do no murder. Thou shalt not com-

mit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness. Honor thy father and thy mother; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." And thereupon the young man, who I think was mistaken, said unto him: "All these things have I kept from my youth up."

What right has the church to add conditions of salvation? Why should we suppose that Christ failed to tell the young man all that was necessary for him to do? Is it possible that he left out some important thing simply to mislead? Will some minister tell us why he thinks that Christ kept back the "scheme"?

Now comes an interpolation.

In the old times when the church got a little scarce of money, they always put in a passage praising poverty. So they had this young man ask: "What lack I yet? And Jesus said unto him: If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasures in heaven."

The church has always been willing to swap off treasures in heaven for cash down. And when the next verse was written the church must have been nearly bankrupt. "And again I say unto you, it is

easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Did you ever know a wealthy disciple to unload on account of that verse?

And then comes another verse, which I believe is an interpolation: "And everyone that has forsaken houses, or brethren or sisters, or father or mother, or wife or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

Christ never said it. Never. "Whosoever shall forsake father and mother."

Why he said to this man that asked him: "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" among other things, he said: "Honor thy father and thy mother." And we turn over the page and he says again: "If you will desert your father and mother you shall have everlasting life." It will not do. If you will desert your wife and your little children, or your lands—the idea of putting a house and lot on equality with wife and children! Think of that! I do not accept the terms. I will never desert the one I love for the promise of any god.

It is far more important to love your wife than to love God, and I will tell you why. You cannot

help him, but you can help her. You can fill her life with the perfume of perpetual joy. It is far more important that you love your children than that you love Jesus Christ. And why? If he is God you cannot help him, but you can plant a little flower of happiness in every footstep of the child, from the cradle until you die in that child's arms. Let me tell you to-day it is far more important to build a home than to erect a church. The holiest temple beneath the stars is a home that love has built. And the holiest altar in all the wide world is the fireside around which gather father and mother and the sweet babes.

There was a time when people believed the infamy commanded in this frightful passage. There was a time when they did desert fathers and mothers and wives and children. St. Augustine says to the devotee: Fly to the desert, and though your wife put her arms around your neck, tear her hands away; she is a temptation of the devil. Though your father and mother throw their bodies athwart your threshold, step over them; and though your children pursue, and with weeping eyes beseech you to return, listen not. It is the temptation of the evil one. Fly to the desert and

save your soul. Think of such a soul being worth saving. While I live I propose to stand by the ones I love.

There is another condition of salvation. I find it in the twenty-fifth chapter: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; I was naked and ye clothed me; and I was sick and ye visited me; and I was in prison and ye came unto me." Good!

I tell you to-night that God will not punish with eternal thirst the man who has put the cup of cold water to the lips of his neighbor. God will not leave in the eternal nakedness of pain the man who has clothed his fellow-men.

For instance, here is a shipwreck, and here is some brave sailor who stands aside and allows a woman whom he never saw before to take his place in the boat, and he stands there, grand and serene as the wide sea, and he goes down. Do you tell me that there is any God who will push the life-boat from the shore of eternal life, when that man

wishes to step in? Do you tell me that God can be unpitying to the pitiful, that he can be unforgiving to the forgiving? I deny it; and from the aspersions of the pulpit I seek to rescue the reputation of the Deity.

Now I have read you substantially everything in Matthew on the subject of salvation. That is all there is. Not one word about believing anything. It is the gospel of deed, the gospel of charity, the gospel of self-denial; and if only that gospel had been preached, persecution never would have shed one drop of blood. Not one.

According to the testimony Matthew was well acquainted with Christ. According to the testimony, he had been with him, and his companion for years, and if it was necessary to believe anything in order to get to heaven, Matthew should have told us. But he forgot it, or he did not believe it, or he never heard of it. You can take your choice.

In Matthew, we find that heaven is promised, first, to the poor in spirit. Second, to the merciful. Third, to the pure in heart. Fourth, to the peacemakers. Fifth, to those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Sixth, to

those who keep and teach the commandments. Seventh, to those who forgive men that trespass against them. Eighth, that we will be judged as we judge others. Ninth, that they who receive prophets and righteous men shall receive a prophet's reward. Tenth, to those who do the will of God. Eleventh, that every man shall be rewarded according to his works. Twelfth, to those who become as little children. Thirteenth, to those who forgive the trespasses of others. Fourteenth, to the perfect: they who sell all that they have and give to the poor. Fifteenth, to them who forsake houses, and brethren, and sisters, and father, and mother, and wife, and children, and lands for the sake of Christ's name. Sixteenth, to those who feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, shelter to the stranger, clothes to the naked, comfort to the sick, and who visit the prisoner.

Nothing else is said with regard to salvation in the gospel according to St. Matthew. Not one word about believing the Old Testament to have been inspired; not one word about being baptized or joining a church; not one word about believing in any miracle; not even a hint

that it was necessary to believe that Christ was the son of God, or that he did any wonderful or miraculous things, or that he was born of a virgin, or that his coming had been foretold by the Jewish prophets. Not one word about believing in the trinity, or in foreordination or predestination. Matthew had not understood from Christ that any such things were necessary to ensure the salvation of the soul.

According to the testimony, Matthew had been in the company of Christ, some say three years and some say one, but at least he had been with him long enough to find out some of his ideas upon this great subject. And yet Matthew never got the impression that it was necessary to believe something in order to get to heaven. He supposed that if a man forgave others God would forgive him; he believed that God would show mercy to the merciful; that he would not allow those who fed the hungry to starve; that he would not put in the flames of hell those who had given cold water to the thirsty; that he would not cast into the eternal dungeon of his wrath those who had visited the imprisoned; and that he would not damn men who forgave others.

Matthew had it in his mind that God would treat us very much as we treated other people; and that in the next world he would treat with kindness those who had been loving and gentle in their lives. It may be the apostle was mistaken; but evidently that was his opinion.

III.

THE GOSPEL OF MARK.

LET us now see what Mark thought it necessary for a man to do to save his soul. In the fourth chapter, after Jesus had given to the multitude by the sea the parable of the sower, his disciples, when they were again alone, asked him the meaning of the parable. Jesus replied :

“ Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:

“ That seeing, they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.”

It is a little hard to understand why he should have preached to people that he did not intend should know his meaning. Neither is it quite clear

why he objected to their being converted. This, I suppose, is one of the mysteries that we should simply believe without endeavoring to comprehend.

With the above exception, and one other that I will mention hereafter, Mark substantially agrees with Matthew, that God will be merciful to the merciful, that he will be kind to the kind, that he will pity the pitying, and love the loving. Mark upholds the religion of Matthew until we come to the sixteenth verse of the sixteenth chapter, and then I strike an interpolation put in by hypocrisy, put in by priests who longed to grasp with bloody hands the sceptre of universal power. Let me read it to you. It is the most infamous passage in the bible. Christ never said it. No sensible man ever said it.

“And He said unto them” (that is, unto his disciples), “go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

That passage was written so that fear would give alms to hypocrisy. Now, I propose to prove to you that this is an interpolation. How will I do it? In the first place, not one word is said about

belief in Matthew. In the next place, not one word about belief in Mark until I come to that verse, and where is that said to have been spoken? According to Mark, it is a part of the last conversation of Jesus Christ,—just before, according to the account, he ascended bodily before their eyes. If there ever was any important thing happened in this world that was it. If there is any conversation that people would be apt to recollect, it would be the last conversation with a god before he rose visibly through the air and seated himself upon the throne of the infinite. We have in this Testament five accounts of the last conversation happening between Jesus Christ and his apostles. Matthew gives it, and yet Matthew does not state that in that conversation Christ said: “Who so believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and whoso believeth not shall be damned.” And if he did say those words they were the most important that ever fell from lips. Matthew did not hear it, or did not believe it, or forgot it.

Then I turn to Luke, and he gives an account of this same last conversation, and not one word does he say upon that subject. Luke does not pretend that Christ said that whoso believeth not

shall be damned. Luke certainly did not hear it. May be he forgot it. Perhaps he did not think that it was worth recording. Now it is the most important thing, if Christ said it, that he ever said.

Then I turn to John, and he gives an account of the last conversation, but not one solitary word on the subject of belief or unbelief. Not one solitary word on the subject of damnation. Not one. John might not have been listening.

Then I turn to the first chapter of the Acts, and there I find an account of the last conversation ; and in that conversation there is not one word upon this subject. This is a demonstration that the passage in Mark is an interpolation. What other reason have I got? There is not one particle of sense in it. Why? No man can control his belief. You hear evidence for and against, and the integrity of the soul stands at the scales and tells which side rises and which side falls. You can not believe as you wish. You must believe as you must. And he might as well have said : " Go into the world and preach the gospel, and whosoever has red hair shall be saved, and whosoever hath not shall be damned."

I have another reason. I am much obliged to the gentleman who interpolated these passages. I am much obliged to him that he put in some more — two more. Now hear:

"And these signs shall follow them that believe." Good!

"In my name shall they cast out devils. They shall speak with new tongues, and they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them. They shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover."

Bring on your believer! Let him cast out a devil. I do not ask for a large one. Just a "little one for a cent." Let him take up serpents. "And if he drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt him." Let me mix up a dose for the believer, and if it does not hurt him I will join a church. "Oh! but," they say, "those things only lasted through the Apostolic age." Let us see. "Go into all the world and preach the gospel, and whosoever believes and is baptized shall be saved, and these signs shall follow them that believe."

How long? I think at least until they had gone into all the world. Certainly those signs should follow until all the world had been visited. And

yet if that declaration was in the mouth of Christ, he then knew that one-half of the world was unknown, and that he would be dead fourteen hundred and fifty-nine years before his disciples would know that there was another continent. And yet he said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel," and he knew then that it would be fourteen hundred and fifty-nine years before anybody could go. Well, if it was worth while to have signs follow believers in the Old World, surely it was worth while to have signs follow believers in the New. And the very reason that signs should follow would be to convince the unbeliever, and there are as many unbelievers now as ever, and the signs are as necessary to-day as they ever were. I would like a few myself.

This frightful declaration, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned," has filled the world with agony and crime. Every letter of this passage has been sword and fagot; every word has been dungeon and chain. That passage made the sword of persecution drip with innocent blood through centuries of agony and crime. That passage made the horizon of a thousand years lurid with the fagot's

flames. That passage contradicts the sermon on the mount ; travesties the Lord's prayer ; turns the splendid religion of deed and duty into the superstition of creed and cruelty. I deny it. It is infamous ! Christ never said it !

IV.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE.

IT is sufficient to say that Luke agrees substantially with Matthew and Mark.

“Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father is also merciful.” Good!

“Judge not and ye shall not be judged. Condemn not and ye shall not be condemned; forgive and ye shall be forgiven.” Good!

“Give and it shall be given unto you good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over.” Good! I like it.

“For the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”

He agrees substantially with Mark; he agrees substantially with Matthew; and I come at last to the nineteenth chapter.

"And Zaccheus stood and said unto the Lord, 'Behold, Lord, the one-half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him four fold.' And Jesus said unto him, 'this day is salvation come to this house.'"

That is good doctrine. He did not ask Zaccheus what he believed. He did not ask him, "Do you believe in the bible? Do you believe in the five points? Have you ever been baptized—sprinkled? Oh! immersed? "Half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him four fold." "And Christ said, this day is salvation come to this house." Good!

I read also in Luke that Christ when upon the cross forgave his murderers, and that is considered the shining gem in the crown of his mercy. He forgave his murderers. He forgave the men who drove the nails in his hands, in his feet, that plunged a spear in his side; the soldier that in the hour of death offered him in mockery the bitterness to drink. He forgave them all freely, and yet, although he would forgive them, he will in the nineteenth century, as we are told by the orthodox

church, damn to eternal fire a noble man for the expression of his honest thoughts. That will not do. I find, too, in Luke, an account of two thieves that were crucified at the same time. The other gospels speak of them. One says they both railed upon him. Another says nothing about it. In Luke we are told that one railed upon him, but one of the thieves looked and pitied Christ, and Christ said to that thief:

“To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

Why did he say that? Because the thief pitied him. God can not afford to trample beneath the feet of his infinite wrath the smallest blossom of pity that ever shed its perfume in the human heart!

Who was this thief? To what church did he belong? I do not know. The fact that he was a thief throws no light on that question. Who was he? What did he believe? I do not know. Did he believe in the Old Testament? In the miracles? I do not know. Did he believe that Christ was God? I do not know. Why then was the promise made to him that he should meet Christ in paradise? Simply because he pitied suffering innocence upon the cross.

God can not afford to damn any man that is capable of pitying anybody.

V.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

AND now we come to John, and that is where the trouble commences.

The other gospels teach that God will be merciful to the merciful, forgiving to the forgiving, kind to the kind, loving to the loving, just to the just, merciful to the good.

Now we come to John, and here is another doctrine. And allow me to say that John was not written until long after the others. John was mostly written by the church.

"And Jesus answered and said unto him : "Furthermore I say unto thee that except a man be born again he can not see the kingdom of God."

Why did he not tell Matthew that? Why did he not tell Luke that? Why did he not tell Mark that? They never heard of it, or forgot it, or they did not believe it.

" Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he can not enter into the kingdom of God." Why?

" That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ' ye must be born again.' That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit," and he might have added, that which is born of water is water.

" Marvel not that I said unto thee, ' ye must be born again.' " And then the reason is given, and I admit I did not understand it myself until I read the reason, and when you hear the reason, you will understand it as well as I do ; and here it is : " The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, and canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth." So, I find in the book of John the idea of the Real Presence.

" And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.

" That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

" For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

“He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live,

“And shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

“And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

"No man can come to me, except my Father, which hath sent me, draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

"I am that bread of life.

"Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

"This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

"Then Jesus said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

"Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

"For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

"He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

"As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

"This is that bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead; he that eateth of this bread shall live forever.

"And he said, therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father."

"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die."

"He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal."

So I find in the book of John, that in order to be saved we must not only believe in Jesus Christ, but we must eat of the flesh and we must drink of the blood of Jesus Christ. If that gospel is true, the Catholic church is right. But it is not true. I can not believe it, and yet for all that, it may be true. But I do not believe it. Neither do I believe there

is any god in the universe who will damn a man simply for expressing his belief.

"Why," they say to me, "suppose all this should turn out to be true, and you should come to the day of judgment and find all these things to be true. What would you do then?" I would walk up like a man, and say, "I was mistaken."

"And suppose God was about to pass judgment upon you, what would you say?" I would say to him, "Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you." Why not?

I am told that I must render good for evil. I am told that if smitten on one cheek I must turn the other. I am told that I must overcome evil with good. I am told that I must love my enemies; and will it do for this God who tells me to love my enemies to damn his? No, it will not do. It will not do.

In the book of John all these doctrines of regeneration—that it is necessary to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; that salvation depends upon belief—in this book of John all these doctrines find their warrant; nowhere else.

Read Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and then read John, and you will agree with me that the three

first gospels teach that if we are kind and forgiving to our fellows, God will be kind and forgiving to us. In John we are told that another man can be good for us, or bad for us, and that the only way to get to heaven is to believe something that we know is not so.

All these passages about believing in Christ, drinking his blood and eating his flesh, are after-thoughts. They were written by the theologians, and in a few years they will be discovered as unworthy of the lips of Christ.

VI.

THE CATHOLICS.

NOW upon these gospels that I have read the churches rest; and out of these things, mistakes and interpolations, they have made their creeds. And the first church to make a creed, so far as I know, was the Catholic. It was the first church that had any power. That is the church that has preserved all these miracles for us. That is the church that preserved the manuscripts for us. That is the church whose word we have to take. That church is the first witness that Protestantism brought to the bar of history to prove miracles that took place eighteen hundred years ago; and while the witness is there Protestantism takes pains to say: "You cannot believe one word that witness says, now."

That church is the only one that keeps up a constant communication with heaven through the instrumentality of a large number of decayed saints. That church has an agent of God on earth, has a person who stands in the place of deity; and that church is infallible. That church has persecuted to the exact extent of her power — and always will. In Spain that church stands erect, and is arrogant. In the United States that church crawls: but the object in both countries is the same — and that is the destruction of intellectual liberty. That church teaches us that we can make God happy by being miserable ourselves; that a nun is holier in the sight of God than a loving mother with her child in her thrilled and thrilling arms; that a priest is better than a father; that celibacy is better than that passion of love that has made everything of beauty in this world. That church tells the girl of sixteen or eighteen years of age, with eyes like dew and light; that girl with the red of health in the white of her beautiful cheeks — tells that girl, “Put on the veil, woven of death and night, kneel upon stones, and you will please God.”

I tell you that, by law, no girl should be allowed to take the veil and renounce the joys and beauties of this life.

I am opposed to allowing these spider-like priests to weave webs to catch the loving maidens of the world. There ought to be a law appointing commissioners to visit such places twice a year and release every person who expresses a desire to be released. I do not believe in keeping the penitentiaries of God. No doubt they are honest about it. That is not the question. These ignorant superstitions fill millions of lives with weariness and pain, with agony and tears.

This church, after a few centuries of thought, made a creed, and that creed is the foundation of the orthodox religion. Let me read it to you:

"Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith; which faith except every one do keep entire and inviolate, without doubt, he shall everlastinglly perish." Now the faith is this: "That we worship one God in trinity and trinity in unity."

Of course you understand how that is done, and there is no need of my explaining it. "Neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance." You see what a predicament that would leave the deity in if you divided the substance.

“For one is the person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost; but the Godhead of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one”—you know what I mean by Godhead. “In glory equal, and in majesty coëternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, such is the Holy Ghost. The Father is uncreated, the Son uncreated, the Holy Ghost uncreated. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.” And that is the reason we know so much about the thing. “The Father is eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Ghost eternal, and yet there are not three eternals, only one eternal, as also there are not three uncreated, nor three incomprehensibles, only one uncreated, one incomprehensible.”

“In like manner, the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, the Holy Ghost almighty. Yet there are not three almighty, only one Almighty. So the Father is God, the Son God, the Holy Ghost God, and yet not three Gods; and so, likewise, the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Ghost is Lord, yet there are not three Lords, for as we are compelled by the Christian

truth to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord, so we are all forbidden by the Catholic religion to say there are three Gods, or three Lords. The Father is made of no one; not created or begotten. The Son is from the Father alone, not made, not created, or begotten. The Holy Ghost is from the Father and the Son, not made nor begotten, but proceeding."

You know what proceeding is.

"So there is one Father, not three Fathers." Why should there be three fathers, and only one Son? "One Son, and not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts; and in this Trinity there is nothing before or afterward, nothing greater or less, but the whole three persons are coëternal with one another and coëqual, so that in all things the unity is to be worshiped in Trinity, and the Trinity is to be worshiped in unity. Those who will be saved must thus think of the Trinity. Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now the right of this thing is this: That we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is both God and man. He is God of the

substance of his Father begotten before the world was."

That was a good while before his mother lived.

"And he is man of the substance of his mother, born in this world, perfect God and perfect man, and the rational soul in human flesh, subsisting equal to the Father according to his Godhead, but less than the Father according to his manhood, who being both God and man is not two but one, one not by conversion of God into flesh, but by the taking of the manhood into God."

You see that is a great deal easier than the other way would be.

"One altogether, not by a confusion of substance but by unity of person, for as the rational soul and the flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ, who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead, ascended into heaven, and he sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty, and He shall come to judge the living and the dead."

In order to be saved it is necessary to believe this. What a blessing that we do not have to understand it. And in order to compel the human intellect to get upon its knees before that infinite absurdity, thousands and millions have suffered

agonies; thousands and thousands have perished in dungeons and in fire; and if all the bones of all the victims of the Catholic church could be gathered together, a monument higher than all the pyramids would rise, in the presence of which the eyes even of priests would be wet with tears.

That church covered Europe with cathedrals and dungeons, and robbed men of the jewel of the soul. That church had ignorance upon its knees. That church went in partnership with the tyrants of the throne, and between those two vultures, the altar and the throne, the heart of man was devoured.

Of course I have met, and cheerfully admit that there are thousands of good Catholics; but Catholicism is contrary to human liberty. Catholicism bases salvation upon belief. Catholicism teaches man to trample his reason under foot. And for that reason it is wrong.

Thousands of volumes could not contain the crimes of the Catholic church. They could not contain even the names of her victims. With sword and fire, with rack and chain, with dungeon and whip she endeavored to convert the world. In weakness a beggar—in power a highwayman,—alms dish or dagger—tramp or tyrant.

VII.

THE EPISCOPALIANS.

THE next church I wish to speak of is the Episcopalian. That was founded by Henry VIII, now in heaven. He cast off Queen Catherine and Catholicism together, and he accepted Episcopalianism and Annie Boleyn at the same time. That church, if it had a few more ceremonies, would be Catholic. If it had a few less, nothing. We have an Episcopalian church in this country, and it has all the imperfections of a poor relation. It is always boasting of its rich relative. In England the creed is made by law, the same as we pass statutes here. And when a gentleman dies in England, in order to determine whether he shall be saved or not, it is necessary for the power of heaven to read the acts of parliament. It becomes

a question of law, and sometimes a man is damned on a very nice point. Lost on demurrer.

A few years ago, a gentleman by the name of Seabury, Samuel Seabury, was sent over to England to get some apostolic succession. We had not a drop in the house. It was necessary for the bishops of the English church to put their hands upon his head. They refused. There was no act of parliament justifying it. He had then to go to the Scotch bishops; and, had the Scotch bishops refused, we never would have had any apostolic succession in the New World, and God would have been driven out of half the earth, and the true church never could have been founded upon this continent. But the Scotch bishops put their hands on his head, and now we have an unbroken succession of heads and hands from St. Paul to the last bishop.

In this country the Episcopalians have done some good, and I want to thank that church. Having on an average less religion than the others —on an average you have done more good to mankind. You preserved some of the humanities. You did not hate music; you did not absolutely despise painting, and you did not altogether abhor

architecture, and you finally admitted that it was no worse to keep time with your feet than with your hands. And some went so far as to say that people could play cards, and that God would overlook it, or would look the other way. For all these things accept my thanks.

When I was a boy, the other churches looked upon dancing as probably the mysterious sin against the Holy Ghost; and they used to teach that when four boys got in a hay-mow, playing seven-up, that the eternal God stood whetting the sword of his eternal wrath waiting to strike them down to the lowest hell. That church has done some good.

The Episcopal creed is substantially like the Catholic, containing a few additional absurdities. The Episcopalian teach that it is easier to get forgiveness for sin after you have been baptized. They seem to think that the moment you are baptized you become a member of the firm, and as such are entitled to wickedness at cost. This church is utterly unsuited to a free people. Its government is tyrannical, supercilious and absurd. Bishops talk as though they were responsible for the souls in their charge. They wear vests that

button on one side. Nothing is so essential to the clergy of this denomination as a good voice. The Episcopalians have persecuted just to the extent of their power. Their treatment of the Irish has been a crime—a crime lasting for three hundred years. That church persecuted the Puritans of England and the Presbyterians of Scotland. In England the altar is the mistress of the throne, and this mistress has always looked at honest wives with scorn.

VIII.

THE METHODISTS.

ABOUT a hundred and fifty years ago, two men, John Wesley and George Whitfield, said, If everybody is going to hell, somebody ought to mention it. The Episcopal clergy said: Keep still; do not tear your gown. Wesley and Whitfield said: This frightful truth ought to be proclaimed from the housetop of every opportunity, from the highway of every occasion. They were good, honest men. They believed their doctrine. And they said: If there is a hell, and a Niagara of souls pouring over an eternal precipice of ignorance, somebody ought to say something. They were right; somebody ought, if such a thing is true. Wesley was a believer in the bible. He believed in the actual presence of the Almighty.

God used to do miracles for him; used to put off a rain several days to give his meeting a chance; used to cure his horse of lameness; used to cure Mr. Wesley's headaches.

And Mr. Wesley also believed in the actual existence of the devil. He believed that devils had possession of people. He talked to the devil when he was in folks, and the devil told him that he was going to leave; and that he was going into another person. That he would be there at a certain time; and Wesley went to that other person, and there the devil was, prompt to the minute. He regarded every conversion as warfare between God and this devil for the possession of that human soul, and that in the warfare God had gained the victory. Honest, no doubt. Mr. Wesley did not believe in human liberty. Honest, no doubt. Was opposed to the liberty of the Colonies. Honestly so. Mr. Wesley preached a sermon entitled: "The Cause and Cure of Earthquakes," in which he took the ground that earthquakes were caused by sin; and the only way to stop them was to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. No doubt an honest man.

Wesley and Whitfield fell out on the question of predestination. Wesley insisted that God invited everybody to the feast. Whitfield said he did not invite those he knew would not come. Wesley said he did. Whitfield said: Well, he did not put plates for them, anyway. Wesley said he did. So that, when they were in hell he could show them that there was a seat left for them. The church that they founded is still active. And probably no church in the world has done so much preaching for as little money as the Methodists. Whitfield believed in slavery, and advocated the slave trade. And it was of Whitfield that Whittier made the two lines:

He bade the slave ships speed from coast to coast,
Fanned by the wings of the Holy Ghost.

We have lately had a meeting of the Methodists, and I find, by their statistics that they believe that they have converted 130,000 folks in a year. That, in order to do this, they have 26,000 preachers, 226,000 Sunday-school scholars, and about \$100,000,000 invested in church property. I find, in looking over the history of the world, that there are 40,000,000 or 50,000,000 of peop

born a year, and if they are saved at the rate of 130,000 a year, about how long will it take that doctrine to save this world? Good, honest people; but they are mistaken.

In old times they were very simple. Churches used to be like barns. They used to have them divided—men on that side, and women on this. A little barbarous. We have advanced since then, and we now find as a fact, demonstrated by experience, that a man sitting by the woman he loves can thank God as heartily as though sitting between two men that he has never been introduced to.

There is another thing the Methodists should remember, and that is that the Episcopalians were the greatest enemies they ever had. And they should remember that the Free-Thinkers have always treated them kindly and well.

There is one thing about the Methodist church in the North that I like. But I find that it is not Methodism that does that. I find that the Methodist church in the South is as much opposed to liberty as the Methodist church North is in favor of liberty. So it is not Methodism that is in favor of liberty or slavery. They differ a little in

their creed from the rest. They do not believe that God does everything. They believe that he does his part, and that you must do the rest, and that getting to heaven is a partnership business. The Methodist church is adapted to new countries—its ministers are generally uncultured, and with them zeal takes the place of knowledge. They convert people with noise. In the silence that follows most of the converts backslide.

In a little while a struggle will commence between the few who are growing and the orthodox many. The few will be driven out, and the church will be governed by those who believe without understanding.

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IX.

THE PRESBYTERIANS.

THE next church is the Presbyterian, and in my judgment the worst of all, as far as creed is concerned. This church was founded by John Calvin, a murderer!

John Calvin, having power in Geneva, inaugurated human torture. Voltaire abolished torture in France. The man who abolished torture, if the Christian religion be true, God is now torturing in hell, and the man who inaugurated torture, is now a glorified angel in heaven. It will not do.

John Knox started this doctrine in Scotland, and there is this peculiarity about Presbyterianism—it grows best where the soil is poorest. I read the other day an account of a meeting between John Knox and John Calvin. Imagine a dialogue

between a pestilence and a famine! Imagine a conversation between a block and an ax! As I read their conversation it seemed to me as though John Knox and John Calvin were made for each other; that they fitted each other like the upper and lower jaws of a wild beast. They believed happiness was a crime; they looked upon laughter as blasphemy; and they did all they could to destroy every human feeling, and to fill the mind with the infinite gloom of predestination and eternal death. They taught the doctrine that God had a right to damn us because he made us. That is just the reason that he has not a right to damn us. There is some dust. Unconscious dust! What right has God to change that unconscious dust into a human being, when he knows that human being will sin; when he knows that human being will suffer eternal agony? Why not leave him in the unconscious dust? What right has an infinite God to add to the sum of human agony? Suppose I knew that I could change that piece of furniture into a living, sentient human being, and I knew that that being would suffer untold agony forever. If I did it, I would be a fiend. I would leave that being in the unconscious dust.

And yet we are told that we must believe such a doctrine or we are to be eternally damned! It will not do.

In 1839 there was a division in this church, and they had a lawsuit to see which was the church of God. And they tried it by a judge and jury, and the jury decided that the new school was the church of God, and then they got a new trial, and the next jury decided that the old school was the church of God, and that settled it. That church teaches that infinite innocence was sacrificed for me! I do not want it! I do not wish to go to heaven unless I can settle by the books, and go there because I ought to go there. I have said, and I say again, I do not wish to be a charity angel. I have no ambition to become a winged pauper of the skies.

The other day a young gentleman, a Presbyterian who had just been converted, came to me and he gave me a tract, and he told me he was perfectly happy. Said I, "Do you think a great many people are going to hell?" "Oh, yes." "And you are perfectly happy?" "Well, he did not know as he was, quite." "Would not you be happier if they were all going to heaven?" "Oh,

yes." "Well, then, you are not perfectly happy?" "No, he did not think he was." "When you get to heaven, then you will be perfectly happy?" "Oh, yes." "Now, when we are only going to hell, you are not quite happy; but when we are in hell, and you in heaven, then you will be perfectly happy? You will not be as decent when you get to be an angel as you are now, will you?" "Well," he said, "that was not exactly it." Said I, "Suppose your mother were in hell, would you be happy in heaven then?" "Well," he says, "I suppose God would know the best place for mother." And I thought to myself, then, if I was a woman, I would like to have five or six boys like that.

It will not do. Heaven is where those are we love, and those who love us. And I wish to go to no world unless I can be accompanied by those who love me here. Talk about the consolations of this infamous doctrine. The consolations of a doctrine that makes a father say, "I can be happy with my daughter in hell;" that makes a mother say, "I can be happy with my generous, brave boy in hell;" that makes a boy say, "I can enjoy the glory of heaven with the woman who bore me, the woman *who would have died for me,*

in eternal agony." And they call that tidings of great joy.

No church has done more to fill the world with gloom than the Presbyterian. Its creed is frightful, hideous, and hellish. The Presbyterian god is the monster of monsters. He is an eternal executioner, jailer and turnkey. He will enjoy forever the shrieks of the lost,—the wails of the damned. Hell is the festival of the Presbyterian god.

X.

THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE.

I HAVE not time to speak of the Baptists,—that Jeremy Taylor said were as much to be rooted out as anything that is the greatest pest and nuisance on the earth. He hated the Baptists because they represented, in some little degree, the liberty of thought. Nor have I time to speak of the Quakers, the best of all, and abused by all. I cannot forget that John Fox, in the year of grace 1640, was put in the pillory and whipped from town to town, scarred, put in a dungeon, beaten, trampled upon, and what for? Simply because he preached the doctrine: “Thou shalt not resist evil with evil.” “Thou shalt love thy enemies.” Think of what the church must have been that day to scar the flesh of that loving man! Just

think of it? I say I have not time to speak of all these sects—the varieties of Presbyterians and Campbellites. There are hundreds and hundreds of these sects, all founded upon this creed that I read, differing simply in degree.

Ah! but they say to me: You are fighting something that is dead. Nobody believes this now. The preachers do not believe what they preach in the pulpit. The people in the pews do not believe what they hear preached. And they say to me: You are fighting something that is dead. This is all a form, we do not believe a solitary creed in the world. We sign them and swear that we believe them, but we do not. And none of us do. And all the ministers, they say in private, admit that they do not believe it, not quite. I do not know whether this is so or not. I take it that they believe what they preach. I take it that when they meet and solemnly agree to a creed, that they are honest and really believe in that creed. But let us see if I am waging a war against the ideas of the dead. Let us see if I am simply storming a cemetery.

The Evangelical Alliance, made up of all orthodox denominations of the world, met only a few

years ago, and here is their creed: They believe in the divine inspiration, authority and sufficiency of the holy scriptures; the right and duty of private judgment in the interpretation of the holy scriptures, but if you interpret wrong you are damned. They believe in the unity of the god-head and the trinity of the persons therein. They believe in the utter depravity of human nature. There can be no more infamous doctrine than that. They look upon a little child as a lump of depravity. I look upon it as a bud of humanity, that will, in the air and light of love and joy, blossom into rich and glorious life.

Total depravity of human nature! Here is a woman whose husband has been lost at sea; the news comes that he has been drowned by the ever-hungry waves, and she waits. There is something in her heart that tells her he is alive. And she waits. And years afterward as she looks down toward the little gate she sees him; he has been given back by the sea, and she rushes to his arms, and covers his face with kisses and with tears. And if that infamous doctrine is true every tear is a crime, and every kiss a blasphemy. It will not do. According to that doctrine, if a

man steals and repents, and takes back the property, the repentance and the taking back of the property are two other crimes. It is an infamy. What else do they believe? "The justification of a sinner by faith alone," without works—just faith. Believing something that you do not understand. Of course God can not afford to reward a man for believing anything that is reasonable. God rewards only for believing something that is unreasonable. If you believe something that is improbable and unreasonable, you are a Christian; but if you believe something that you know is not so, then,—you are a saint.

They believe in the eternal blessedness of the righteous, and in the eternal punishment of the wicked.

Tidings of great joy! They are so good that they will not associate with Universalists. They will not associate with Unitarians; they will not associate with scientists; they will only associate with those who believe that God so loved the world that he made up his mind to damn the most of us.

The Evangelical Alliance reiterates the absurdities of the Dark Ages—repeats the five points of

Calvin — replenishes the fires of hell — certifies to the mistakes and miracles of the bible — maligns the human race, and kneels to a god who accepted the agony of the innocent as an atonement for the guilty.

XI.

WHAT DO YOU PROPOSE?

THEN they say to me: "What do you propose? You have torn this down, what do you propose to give us in place of it?" I have not torn the good down. I have only endeavored to trample out the ignorant, cruel fires of hell. I do not tear away the passage: "God will be merciful to the merciful." I do not destroy the promise; "If you will forgive others, God will forgive you." I would not for anything blot out the faintest star that shines in the horizon of human despair, nor in the sky of human hope; but I will do what I can to get that infinite shadow out of the heart of man.

"What do you propose in place of this?"

Well, in the first place, I propose good fellowship—good friends all around. No matter what we

believe, shake hands and let it go. That is your opinion; this is mine: let us be friends. Science makes friends; religion, superstition, makes enemies. They say: Belief is important. I say: No, actions are important. Judge by deed, not by creed. Good fellowship—good friends—sincere men and women—mutual forbearance, born of mutual respect. We have had too many of these solemn people. Whenever I see an exceedingly solemn man, I know he is an exceedingly stupid man. No man of any humor ever founded a religion—never. Humor sees both sides. While reason is the holy light, humor carries the lantern, and the man with a keen sense of humor is preserved from the solemn stupidities of superstition. I like a man who has got good feeling for everybody; good fellowship. One man said to another:

“Will you take a glass of wine?”

“I do not drink.”

“Will you smoke a cigar?”

“I do not smoke.”

“Maybe you will chew something?”

“I do not chew.”

“Let us eat some hay.”

“I tell you I do not eat hay.”

"Well, then, good-by, for you are no company for man or beast."

I believe in the gospel of Cheerfulness, the gospel of Good Nature; the gospel of Good Health. Let us pay some attention to our bodies. Take care of our bodies, and our souls will take care of themselves. Good health! And I believe the time will come when the public thought will be so great and grand that it will be looked upon as infamous to perpetuate disease. I believe the time will come when man will not fill the future with consumption and insanity. I believe the time will come when we will study ourselves, and understand the laws of health and then we will say: We are under obligation to put the flags of health in the cheeks of our children. Even if I got to heaven, and had a harp, I would hate to look back upon my children and grandchildren, and see them diseased, deformed, crazed—all suffering the penalties of crimes I had committed.

I believe in the gospel of Good Living. You can not make any god happy by fasting. Let us have good food, and let us have it well cooked—and it is a thousand times better to know how to cook than it is to understand any theology in the world.

I believe in the gospel of good clothes; I believe in the gospel of good houses; in the gospel of water and soap. I believe in the gospel of intelligence; in the gospel of education. The school-house is my cathedral. The universe is my bible. I believe in that gospel of justice, that we must reap what we sow.

I do not believe in forgiveness as it is preached by the church. We do not need the forgiveness of God, but of each other and of ourselves. If I rob Mr. Smith and God forgives me, how does that help Smith? If I, by slander, cover some poor girl with the leprosy of some imputed crime, and she withers away like a blighted flower and afterward I get the forgiveness of God, how does that help her? If there is another world, we have got to settle with the people we have wronged in this. No bankrupt court there. Every cent must be paid.

The Christians say, that among the ancient Jews, if you committed a crime you had to kill a sheep, now they say "charge it." "Put it on the slate." It will not do. For every crime you commit you must answer to yourself and to the one you injure. And if you have ever clothed another

with woe, as with a garment of pain, you will never be quite as happy as though you had not done that thing. No forgiveness by the gods. Eternal, inexorable, everlasting justice, so far as Nature is concerned. You must reap the result of your acts. Even when forgiven by the one you have injured, it is not as though the injury had not been done. That is what I believe in. And if it goes hard with me, I will stand it, and I will cling to my logic, and I will bear it like a man.

And I believe, too, in the gospel of Liberty, in giving to others what we claim for ourselves. I believe there is room everywhere for thought, and the more liberty you give away, the more you will have. In liberty extravagance is economy. Let us be just. Let us be generous to each other.

I believe in the gospel of Intelligence. That is the only lever capable of raising mankind. Intelligence must be the savior of this world. Humanity is the grand religion, and no God can put a man in hell in another world, who has made a little heaven in this. God cannot make a man miserable if that man has made somebody else happy. God cannot hate anybody who is capable of loving anybody. Humanity — that word embraces all there is.

So I believe in this great gospel of Humanity.

"Ah! but," they say, "it will not do. You must believe." I say, No. My gospel of health will bring life. My gospel of intelligence, my gospel of good living, my gospel of good-fellowship will cover the world with happy homes. My doctrine will put carpets upon your floors, pictures upon your walls. My doctrine will put books upon your shelves, ideas in your minds. My doctrine will rid the world of the abnormal monsters born of ignorance and superstition. My doctrine will give us health, wealth and happiness. That is what I want. That is what I believe in. Give us intelligence. In a little while a man will find that he can not steal without robbing himself. He will find that he cannot murder without assassinating his own joy. He will find that every crime is a mistake. He will find that only that man carries the cross who does wrong, and that upon the man who does right the cross turns to wings that will bear him upward forever. He will find that even intelligent self-love embraces within its mighty arms all the human race.

"Oh," but they say to me, "you take away immortality." I do not. If we are immortal it is a fact in nature, and we are not indebted to priests for it, nor to bibles for it, and it cannot be destroyed by unbelief.

As long as we love we will hope to live, and when the one dies that we love we will say: "Oh, that we could meet again," and whether we do or not it will not be the work of theology. It will be a fact in nature. I would not for my life destroy one star of human hope, but I want it so that when a poor woman rocks the cradle and sings a lullaby to the dimpled darling, she will not be compelled to believe that ninety-nine chances in a hundred she is raising kindling wood for hell.

One world at a time is my doctrine.

It is said in this Testament, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof;" and I say: Sufficient unto each world is the evil thereof.

And suppose after all that death does end all. Next to eternal joy, next to being forever with those we love and those who have loved us, next to that, is to be wrapt in the dreamless drapery of eternal peace. Next to eternal life is eternal sleep. Upon the shadowy shore of death the sea of

trouble casts no wave. Eyes that have been curtained by the everlasting dark, will never know again the burning touch of tears. Lips touched by eternal silence will never speak again the broken words of grief. Hearts of dust do not break. The dead do not weep. Within the tomb no veiled and weeping sorrow sits, and in the rayless gloom is crouched no shuddering fear.

I had rather think of those I have loved, and lost, as having returned to earth, as having become a part of the elemental wealth of the world—I would rather think of them as unconscious dust, I would rather dream of them as gurgling in the stream, floating in the clouds, bursting in the foam of light upon the shores of worlds, I would rather think of them as the lost visions of a forgotten night, than to have even the faintest fear that their naked souls have been clutched by an orthodox god.

But for me, I will leave the dead where nature leaves them. Whatever flower of hope springs up in my heart I will cherish, I will give it breath of sighs and rain of tears. But I can not believe that there is any being in this universe who has created a human soul for eternal pain. I would rather that

every god would destroy himself; I would rather that we all should go to eternal chaos, to black and starless night, than that just one soul should suffer eternal agony.

I have made up my mind that if there is a God, he will be merciful to the merciful.

Upon that rock I stand.—

That he will not torture the forgiving.—

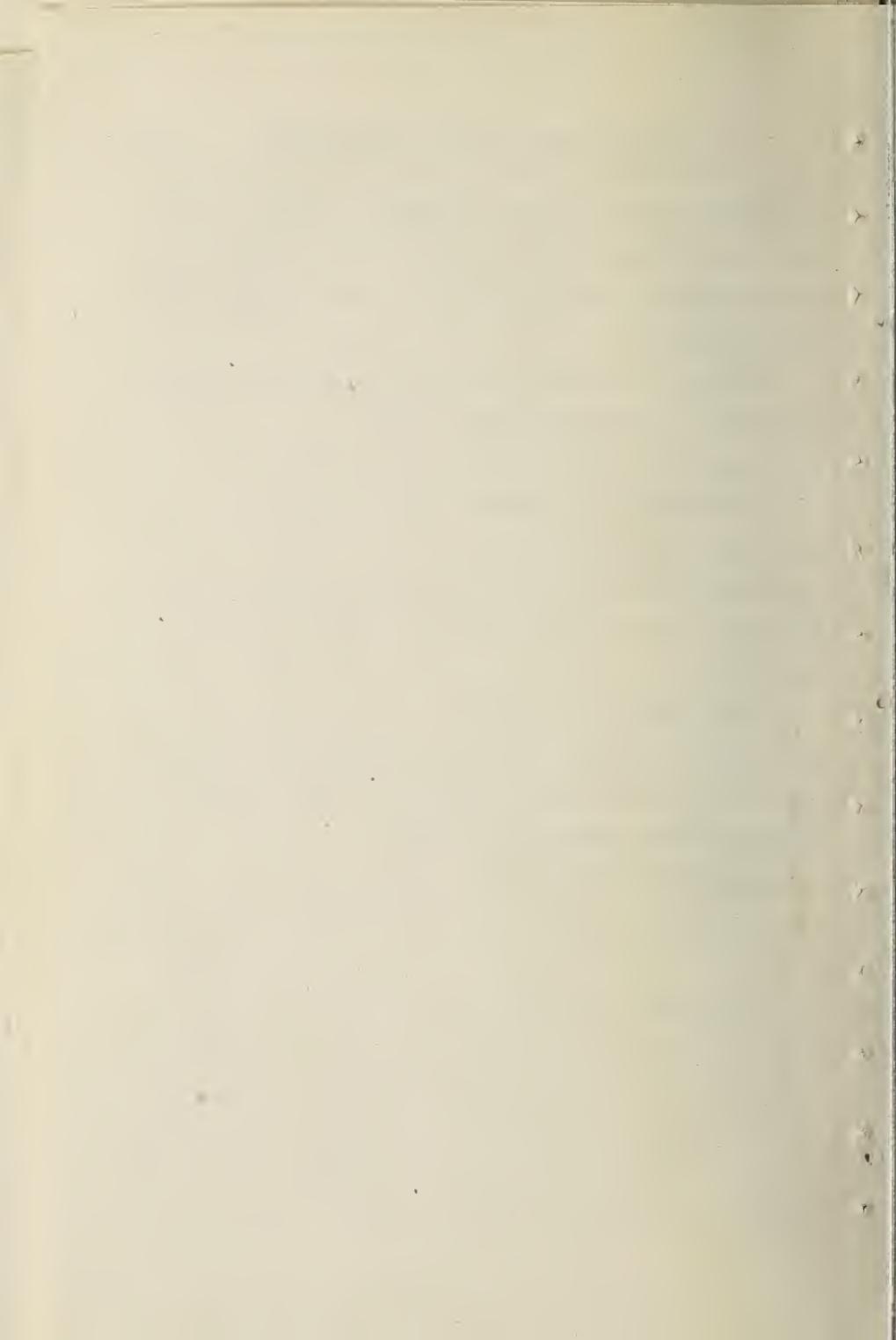
Upon that rock I stand.—

That every man should be true to himself, and that there is no world, no star, in which honesty is a crime.

Upon that rock I stand.

The honest man, the good, kind, sweet woman, the happy child, have nothing to fear, neither in this world nor the world to come.

Upon that rock I stand.



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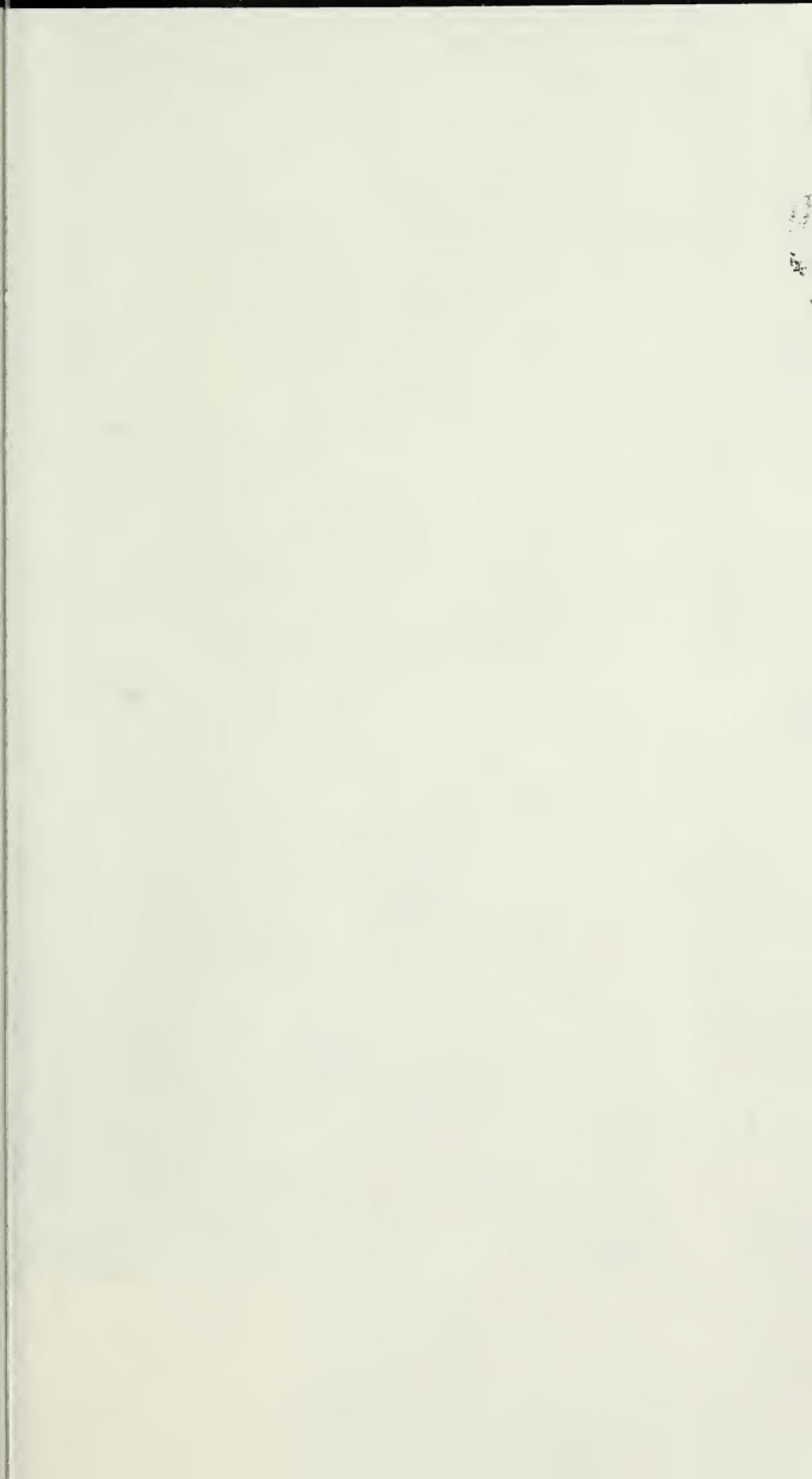
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