

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

# GOD AND MAN

SECOND LETTER TO

The Rev. Henry M. Field, D.D.

BY

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*My Dear Mr. Field,*—With great pleasure I have read your second letter, in which you seem to admit that men may differ even about religion without being responsible for that difference; that every man has the right to read the Bible for himself, state freely the conclusion at which he arrives, and that it is not only his privilege, but his duty, to speak the truth; that Christians can hardly be happy in heaven while those they loved on earth are suffering with the lost; that it is not a crime to investigate, to think, to reason, to observe, and to be governed by evidence; that credulity is not a virtue, and that the open mouth of ignorant wonder is not the only entrance to paradise; that belief is not necessary to salvation, and that no man can justly be made to suffer eternal pain for having expressed an intellectual conviction.

You seem to admit that no man can justly be held responsible for his thoughts; that the brain thinks without asking our consent, and that we believe or disbelieve without an effort of the will.

I congratulate you upon the advance that you have made. You not only admit that we have the right to think, but that we have the right to express our honest thoughts. You admit that the Christian world no longer believes in the fagot, the dungeon, and the thumb-screw. Has the Christian world outgrown its God? Has man become more merciful than his maker? If man will not torture his fellow-man on account of a difference of opinion, will a God of infinite love torture one of his children for what is called the sin of unbelief? Has man outgrown the Inquisition, and will God forever be the warden of a penitentiary? The walls of the old dungeons have fallen, and light now visits the cell where brave men perished in darkness. Is Jehovah to keep the cells of perdition in repair forever, and are his children to be the eternal prisoners?

It seems hard for you to appreciate the mental condition of one who regards all gods as substantially the same; that is to say, who thinks of them all as myths and phantoms born of the imagination,

characters in the religious fictions of the race. To you it probably seems strange that a man should think far more of Jupiter than Jehovah. Regarding them both as creations of the mind, I choose between them, and I prefer the God of the Greeks, on the same principle that I prefer Portia to Iago; and yet I regard them, one and all, as children of the imagination, as phantoms born of human fears and human hopes.

Surely nothing was further from my mind than to hurt the feelings of any one by speaking of the Presbyterian God. I simply intended to speak of the God of the Presbyterians. Certainly the God of the Presbyterian is not the God of the Catholic, nor is he the God of the Mohammedan or Hindoo. He is a special creation suited only to certain minds. These minds have naturally come together, and they form what we call the Presbyterian Church. As a matter of fact, no two Churches can by any possibility have precisely the same God; neither can any two human beings conceive of precisely the same Deity. In every man's God there is, to say the least, a part of that man. The lower the man, the lower his conception of God. The higher the man, the grander his Deity must be. The savage who adorns his body with a belt from which hang the scalps of enemies slain in battle, has no conception of a loving, of a forgiving God; his God, of necessity, must be as revengeful, as heartless, as infamous as the God of John Calvin.

You do not exactly appreciate my feeling. I do not hate Presbyterians; I hate Presbyterianism. I hate with all my heart the creed of that Church, and I most heartily despise the God described in the Confession of Faith. But some of the best friends I have in the world are afflicted with the mental malady known as Presbyterianism. They are victims of the consolation growing out of the belief that a vast majority of their fellow-men are doomed to suffer eternal torment, to the end that their Creator may be eternally glorified. I have said many times, and I say again, that I do not despise a man because he has the rheumatism; I despise the rheumatism because it has a man.

But I do insist that the Presbyterians have assumed to appropriate to themselves their Supreme Being, and that they have claimed, and that they do claim, to be the "special objects of his favor." They do claim to be the very elect, and they do insist that God looks upon them as the objects of his special care. They do claim that the light of Nature, without the torch of the Presbyterian creed, is insufficient to guide any soul to the gate of heaven. They do insist that even those who never heard of Christ, or never heard of the God of the Presbyterians, will be eternally lost; and



they not only claim this, but that their fate will illustrate not only the justice but the mercy of God. Not only so, but they insist that the morality of an unbeliever is displeasing to God, and that the love of an unconverted mother for her helpless child is nothing less than sin.

When I meet a man who really believes the Presbyterian creed, I think of the Laocoon. I feel as though looking upon a human being helpless in the coils of an immense and poisonous serpent. But I congratulate you with all my heart that you have repudiated this infamous, this savage creed; that you now admit that reason was given us to be exercised; that God will not torture any man for entertaining an honest doubt, and that in the world to come "every man will be judged according to the deeds done in the body."

Let me quote your exact language: "I believe that in the future world every man will be judged according to the deeds done in the body." Do you not see that you have bidden farewell to the Presbyterian Church? In that sentence, you have thrown away the atonement, you have denied the efficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ, and you have denied the necessity of belief. If we are to be judged by the deeds done in the body, that is the end of the Presbyterian scheme of salvation. I sincerely congratulate you for having repudiated the savagery of Calvinism.

It also gave me a great pleasure to find that you have thrown away, with a kind of glad shudder, that infamy of infamies, the dogma of eternal pain. I have denounced that inhuman belief; I have denounced every creed that had coiled within it that viper; I have denounced every man who preached it, the book that contains it, and with all my heart the God who threatens it; and at last I have the happiness of seeing the editor of the New York *Evangelist* admit that devout Christians do not believe that lie, and quote with approbation the words of a minister of the Church of England to the effect that all men will be finally recovered and made happy.

Do you find this doctrine of hope in the Presbyterian creed? Is this star, that sheds light on every grave, found in your Bible? Did Christ have in his mind the shining truth that all the children of men will at last be filled with joy, when he uttered these comforting words, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels"? Do you find in this flame the bud of hope, or the flower of promise?

You suggest that it is possible that "the incurably bad will be annihilated," and you say that such a fate can have no terrors for me, as I look upon annihilation as the common lot of all. Let us



examine this position. Why should a God of infinite wisdom create men and women whom he knew would be "incurably bad"? What would you say of a mechanic who was found to destroy his own productions on the ground that they were "incurably bad?" Would you say that he was an infinitely wise mechanic? Does infinite justice annihilate the work of infinite wisdom? Does God, like an ignorant doctor, bury his mistakes?

Besides, what right have you to say that "I look upon annihilation as the common lot of all"? Was there any such thought in my Reply? Did you find it in any published words of mine? Do you find anything in what I have written tending to show that I believe in annihilation? Is it not true that I say now, and that I have always said, that I do not know? Does a lack of knowledge as to the fate of the human soul imply a belief in annihilation? Does it not equally imply a belief in immortality?

You have been—at least until recently—a believer in the inspiration of the Bible and in the truth of its every word. What do you say to the following: "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast." You will see that the inspired writer is not satisfied with admitting that he does not know. "As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away; so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more." Was it not cruel for an inspired man to attack a sacred belief?

You seem surprised that I should speak of the doctrine of eternal pain as "the black thunder-cloud that darkens all the horizon, casting its mighty shadows over the life that now is and that which is to come." If that doctrine be true, what else is there worthy of engaging the attention of the human mind? It is the blackness that extinguishes every star. It is the abyss in which every hope must perish. It leaves a universe without justice and without mercy—a future without one ray of light, and a present with nothing but fear. It makes heaven an impossibility, God an infinite monster, and man an eternal victim. Nothing can redeem a religion in which this dogma is found. Clustered about it are all the snakes of the Furies.

But you have abandoned this infamy, and you have admitted that we are to be judged according to the deeds done in the body. Nothing can be nearer self-evident than the fact that a finite being cannot commit an infinite sin; neither can a finite being do an infinitely good deed. That is to say, no one can deserve for any act eternal pain, and no one for any deed can deserve eternal joy.

If we are to be judged by the deeds done in the body, the old orthodox hell and heaven both become impossible.

So, too, you have recognised the great and splendid truth that sin cannot be predicated of an intellectual conviction. This is the first great step toward the liberty of soul. You admit that there is no morality and no immorality in belief—that is to say, in the simple operation of the mind in weighing evidence, in observing facts, and in drawing conclusions. You admit that all these things are without sin and without guilt. Had all men so believed there never could have been religious persecution—the Inquisition could not have been built, and the idea of eternal pain never could have polluted the human heart.

You have been driven to the passions for the purpose of finding what you are pleased to call “sin” and “responsibility”; and you say, speaking of a human being, “but if he is warped by passion so that he cannot see things truly, then is he responsible.” One would suppose that the use of the word “cannot” is inconsistent with the idea of responsibility. What is passion? There are certain desires, swift, thrilling, that quicken the action of the heart—desires that fill the brain with blood, with fire and flame—desires that bear the same relation to judgment that storms and waves bear to the compass on a ship. Is passion necessarily produced? Is there an adequate cause for every effect? Can you by any possibility think of an effect without a cause, and can you by any possibility think of an effect that is not a cause, or can you think of a cause that is not an effect? Is not the history of real civilisation the slow and gradual emancipation of the intellect, of the judgment, from the mastery of passion? Is not that man civilised whose reason sits the crowned monarch of his brain—whose passions are his servants?

Who knows the strength of the temptation to another? Who knows how little has been resisted by those who stand, how much has been resisted by those who fall? Who knows whether the victor or the victim made the bravest and the most gallant fight? In judging of our fellow-men we must take into consideration the circumstances of ancestry, of race, of nationality, of employment, of opportunity, of education, and of the thousand influences that tend to mould or mar the character of man. Such a view is the mother of charity and makes the God of the Presbyterians impossible.

At last you have seen the impossibility of forgiveness. That is to say, you perceive that after forgiveness the crime remains, and its children, called consequences, still live. You recognise the lack of philosophy in that doctrine. You still believe in what you

call "the forgiveness of sins," but you admit that forgiveness cannot reverse the course of nature, and cannot prevent the operation of natural law. You also admit that if a man lives after death, he preserves his personal identity, his memory, and that the consequences of his actions will follow him through all the eternal years. You admit that consequences are immortal. After making this admission, of what use is the old idea of the forgiveness of sins? How can the criminal be washed clean and pure in the blood of another? In spite of this forgiveness, in spite of this blood, you have taken the ground that consequences, like the dogs of Actæon, follow even a Presbyterian, even one of the elect, within the heavenly gates. If you wish to be logical, you must also admit that the consequences of good deeds, like winged angels, follow even the Atheist within the gates of hell.

You have had the courage of your convictions, and you have said that we are to be judged according to the deeds done in the body. By that judgment I am willing to abide. But, whether willing or not, I must abide, because there is no power, no God, that can step between me and the consequences of my acts. I wish no heaven that I have not earned, no happiness to which I am not entitled. I do not wish to become an immortal pauper; neither am I willing to extend unworthy hands for alms.

My dear Mr. Field, you have outgrown your creed—as every Presbyterian must who grows at all. You are far better than the spirit of the Old Testament: far better, in my judgment, even than the spirit of the New. The creed that you have left behind, that you have repudiated, teaches that a man may be guilty of every crime—that he may have driven his wife to insanity, that his example may have led his children to the penitentiary, or to the gallows, and that yet, at the eleventh hour, he may, by what is called "repentance," be washed absolutely pure by the blood of another, and receive and wear upon his brow the laurels of eternal peace. Not only so, but that creed has taught that this wretch in heaven could look back on the poor earth and see the wife, whom he swore to love and cherish, in the mad-house, surrounded by imaginary serpents, struggling in the darkness of night, made insane by his heartlessness—that creed has taught and teaches that he could look back and see his children in prison cells, or on the scaffold with the noose about their necks, and that these visions would not bring a shade of sadness to his redeemed and happy face. It is this doctrine, it is this dogma—so bestial, so savage, as to beggar all the languages of men—that I have denounced. All the words of hatred, loathing, and contempt, found in all the dialects



and tongues of men, are not sufficient to express my hatred, my contempt, and my loathing of this creed.

You say that it is impossible for you not to believe in the existence of God. With this statement I find no fault. Your mind is so that a belief in the existence of a Supreme Being gives satisfaction and content. Of course, you are entitled to no credit for this belief, as you ought not to be rewarded for believing that which you cannot help believing; neither should I be punished for failing to believe that which I cannot believe.

You believe because you see in the world around you such an adaptation of means to ends that you are satisfied there is design. I admit that when Robinson Crusoe saw in the sand the print of a human foot, like and yet unlike his own, he was justified in drawing the conclusion that a human being had been there. The inference was drawn from his own experience, and was within the scope of his own mind. But I do not agree with you that he "knew" a human being had been there; he had only sufficient evidence upon which to found a belief. He did not know the footsteps of all animals; he could not have known that no animal except man could have made that footprint. In order to have known that it was the foot of a man, he must have known that no other animal was capable of making it, and he must have known that no other being had produced in the sand the likeness of this human foot.

You see what you call evidences of intelligence in the universe, and you draw the conclusion that there must be an infinite intelligence. Your conclusion is far wider than your premiss. Let us suppose, as Mr. Hume supposed, that there is a pair of scales, one end of which is in darkness, and you find that a pound weight, or a ten-pound weight, placed upon that end of the scale in the light is raised; have you the right to say that there is an infinite weight on the end in darkness, or are you compelled to say only that there is weight enough on the end in darkness to raise the weight on the end in light?

It is illogical to say, because of the existence of this earth and of what you can see in and about it, that there must be an infinite intelligence. You do not know that even the creation of this world, and of all planets discovered, required an infinite power, or infinite wisdom. I admit that it is impossible for me to look at a watch and draw the inference that there was no design in its construction, or that it only happened. I could not regard it as a product of some freak of nature, neither could I imagine that its various parts were brought together and set in motion by chance. I am not a believer in chance. But there is a vast difference

between what man has made and the materials of which he has constructed the things he has made. You find a watch, and you say that it exhibits or shows design. You insist that it is so wonderful it must have had a designer—in other words, that it is too wonderful not to have been constructed. You then find the watchmaker, and you say with regard to him that he too must have had a designer, for he is more wonderful than the watch. In imagination you go from the watchmaker to the being you call God, and you say he designed the watchmaker, but he himself was not designed, because he is too wonderful to have been designed. And yet in the case of the watch and of the watchmaker, it was the wonder that suggested design, while in the case of the maker of the watchmaker the wonder denied a designer. Do you not see that this argument devours itself? If wonder suggests a designer, can it go on increasing until it denies that which it suggested?

You must remember, too, that the argument of design is applicable to all. You are not at liberty to stop at sunrise and sunset and all that adds to the happiness of man; you must go further. You must admit that an infinitely wise and merciful God designed the fangs of serpents, the machinery by which the poison is distilled, the ducts by which it is carried to the fang, and that the same intelligence impressed this serpent with a desire to deposit this deadly virus in the flesh of man. You must believe that an infinitely wise God so constructed this world that, in the process of cooling, earthquakes would be caused—earthquakes that devour and overwhelm cities and states. Do you see any design in the volcano that sends its rivers of lava over the fields and the homes of men? Do you really think that a perfectly good being designed the invisible parasites that infest the air, that inhabit the water, and that finally attack and destroy the health and life of man? Do you see the same design in cancers that you do in wheat and corn? Did God invent tumors for the brain? Was it his ingenuity that so designed the human race that millions of people should be born deaf and dumb—that millions should be idiotic? Did he knowingly plant in the blood or brain the seeds of insanity? Did he cultivate those seeds? Do you see any design in this?

Man calls that good which increases his happiness, and that evil which gives him pain. In the olden time, back of the good he placed a God; back of the evil a devil; but now the orthodox world is driven to admit that the God is the author of all.

For my part, I see no goodness in the pestilence—no mercy in the bolt that leaps from the cloud and leaves the mark of death on the breast of a loving mother. I see no generosity in famine

no goodness in disease, no mercy in want and agony. And yet you say that the being who created parasites that live only by inflicting pain—the being responsible for all the sufferings of mankind—you say that he has “a tenderness compared to which all human love is faint and cold.” Yet according to the doctrine of the orthodox world, this being of infinite love and tenderness so created nature that its light misleads, and left a vast majority of the human race to blindly grope their way to endless pain.

You insist that a knowledge of God—a belief in God—is the foundation of social order; and yet this God of infinite tenderness has left for thousands and thousands of years nearly all of his children without a revelation. Why should infinite goodness leave the existence of God in doubt? Why should he see millions in savagery destroying the lives of each other, eating the flesh of each other, and keep his existence a secret from man? Why did he allow the savages to depend on sunrise and sunset and clouds? Why did he leave this great truth to a few half-crazed prophets, or to a cruel, heartless, and ignorant Church? The sentence, “There is a God,” could have been imprinted on every blade of grass, on every leaf, on every star. An infinite God has no excuse for leaving his children in doubt and darkness.

There is still another point. You know that for thousands of ages men worshipped wild beasts as God. You know that for countless generations they knelt by coiled serpents, believing those serpents to be Gods. Why did the real God secrete himself and allow his poor, ignorant, savage children to imagine that he was a beast, a serpent? Why did this God allow mothers to sacrifice their babes? Why did he not emerge from the darkness? Why did he not say to the poor mother, “Do not sacrifice your babe; keep it in your arms; press it to your bosom; let it be the solace of your declining years. I take no delight in the death of children; I am not what you suppose me to be; I am not a beast; I am not a serpent; I am full of love, and kindness, and mercy, and I want my children to be happy in this world?” Did the God who allowed a mother to sacrifice her babe through the mistaken idea that he, the God, demanded the sacrifice, feel a tenderness toward that mother “compared to which all human love is faint and cold”? Would a good father allow some of his children to kill others of his children to please him?

There is still another question. Why should God, a being of infinite tenderness, leave the question of immortality in doubt? How is it that there is nothing in the Old Testament on this subject? Why is it that he who made all the constellations did not



put in his heaven the star of hope? How do you account for the fact that you do not find in the Old Testament, from the first mistake in Genesis to the last curse in Malachi, a funeral service? Is it not strange that some one in the Old Testament did not stand by an open grave of father or mother and say, "We shall meet again"? Was it because the divinely-inspired men did not know?

You taunt me by saying that I know no more of the immortality of the soul than Cicero knew. I admit it. I know no more than the lowest savage, no more than a doctor of divinity—that is to say, nothing.

Is it not, however, a curious fact that there is less belief in the immortality of the soul in Christian countries than in heathen lands—that the belief in immortality in an orthodox Church is faint, and cold, and speculative, compared with that belief in India, in China, or in the Pacific Isles? Compare the belief in immortality in America, of Christians, with that of the followers of Mohammed. Do not Christians weep above their dead? Does a belief in immortality keep back their tears? After all the promises are so far away, and the dead are so near—the echoes of words said to have been spoken more than eighteen centuries ago are lost in the sounds of the clods that fall on the coffin. And yet, compared with the orthodox hell, compared with the prison-house of God, how ecstatic is the grave—the grave without a sigh, without a tear, without a dream, without a fear! Compared with the immortality promised by the Presbyterian creed, how beautiful annihilation seems! To be nothing—how much better than to be a convict for ever? To be unconscious dust—how much better than to be a heartless angel!

There is not, there never has been, there never will be, any consolation in orthodox Christianity. It offers no consolation to any good and loving man. I prefer the consolation of Nature, the consolation of hope, the consolation springing from human affection. I prefer the simple desire to live and love forever.

Of course, it would be a consolation to know that we have an "Almighty Friend" in heaven; but an Almighty Friend who cares nothing for us, who allows us to be stricken by his lightning, frozen by his winter, starved by his famine, and at last imprisoned in his hell, is a friend I do not care to have.

I remember "the poor slave mother who sat alone in her cabin, having been robbed of her children"; and, my dear Mr. Field, I also remember that the people who robbed her justified the robbery by reading passages from the sacred scriptures. I remember that while the mother wept, the robbers, some of whom were Christians, read this "Buy of the heathen round about, and they shall be

your bondmen and bondwomen for ever." I remember, too, that the robbers read : " Servants be obedient unto your masters " ; and they said this passage is the only message from the heart of God to the scarred back of the slave. I remember this, and I remember, also, that the poor slave mother upon her knees in wild and wailing accents called on the " Almighty Friend," and I remember that her prayer was never heard, and that her sobs died in the negligent air.

You ask me whether I would " rob this poor woman of such a friend " ? My answer is this : I would give her liberty ; I would break her chains. But let me ask you, did an " Almighty Friend " see the woman he loved " with a tenderness compared to which all human love is faint and cold," and the woman who loved him, robbed of her children ? What was the " Almighty Friend " worth to her ? She preferred her babe.

How could the " Almighty Friend " see his poor children pursued by hounds—his children whose only crime was the love of liberty—how could he see that, and take sides with the hounds ? Do you believe that the " Almighty Friend " then governed the world ? Do you really think that he

Bade the slave-ship speed from coast to coast,  
Fanned by the wings of the Holy Ghost ?

Do you believe that the " Almighty Friend " saw all of the tragedies that were enacted in the jungles of Africa—that he watched the wretched slave-ships, saw the miseries of the middle passage, heard the blows of all the whips, saw all the streams of blood, all the agonised faces of women, all the tears that were shed ? Do you believe that he saw and knew all these things, and that he, the " Almighty Friend," looked coldly down and stretched no hand to save ?

You persist, however, in endeavoring to account for the miseries of the world by taking the ground that happiness is not the end of life. You say that " the real end of life is character, and that no discipline can be too severe which leads us to suffer and be strong." Upon this subject you use the following language : " If you could have your way you would make everybody happy ; there would be no more poverty, and no more sickness or pain." And this, you say, is " a child's picture, hardly worthy of a stalwart man." Let me read you another " child's picture," which you will find in the twenty-first chapter of Revelation, supposed to have been written by St. John the Divine : " And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God ; and God shall wipe

away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."

If you visited some woman living in a tenement, supporting by her poor labor a little family—a poor woman on the edge of famine, sewing, it may be, her eyes blinded by tears—would you tell her that "the world is not a playground in which men are to be petted and indulged like children"? Would you tell her that to think of a world without poverty, without tears, without pain, is a "child's picture"? If she asked you for a little assistance, would you refuse it on the ground that by being helped she might lose character? Would you tell her; "God does not wish to have you happy; happiness is a very foolish end; character is what you want, and God has put you here with these helpless, starving babes, and he has put this burden on your young life simply that you may suffer and be strong. I would help you gladly, but I do not wish to defeat the plans of your Almighty Friend"? You can reason one way, but you would act the other.

I agree with you that work is good, that struggle is essential; that men are made manly by contending with each other and with the forces of nature; but there is a point beyond which struggle does not make character; there is a point at which struggle becomes failure.

Can you conceive of an "Almighty Friend" deforming his children because he loves them? Did he allow the innocent to languish in dungeons because he was their friend? Did he allow the noble to perish upon the scaffold, the great and the self-denying to be burnt at the stake, because he had the power to save? Was he restrained by love? Did this "Almighty Friend" allow millions of his children to be enslaved to the end that "the splendor of virtue might have a dark background?" You insist that "suffering patiently borne is a means of the greatest elevation of character and in the end of the highest enjoyment." Do you not then see that your "Almighty Friend" has been unjust to the happy—that he is cruel to those whom we call the fortunate—that he is indifferent to the men who do not suffer—that he leaves all the happy and prosperous and joyous without character, and that in the end, according to your doctrine, they are all losers?

But, after all, there is no need of arguing this question further. There is one fact that destroys forever your theory—and that is the fact that millions upon millions die in infancy. Where do they get "elevation of character"? What opportunity is given to them to "suffer and be strong"? Let us admit that we do not know. Let us say that the mysteries of life, of good and evil, of joy and



pain, have never been explained. Is character of no importance in heaven? How is it possible for angels, living in "a child's picture," to "suffer and be strong"? Do you not see that, according to your philosophy, only the damned can grow great—only the lost can become sublime?

You do not seem to understand what I say with regard to what I call the higher philosophy. When that philosophy is accepted of course there will be good in the world, there will be evil, there will still be right and wrong. What is good? That which tends to the happiness of sentient beings. What is evil? That which tends to the misery, or tends to lessen the happiness of sentient beings. What is right? The best thing to be done under the circumstances—that is to say, the thing that will increase or preserve the happiness of man. What is wrong? That which tends to the misery of man.

What you call liberty, choice, morality, responsibility, have nothing whatever to do with this. There is no difference between necessity and liberty. He who is free acts from choice. What is the foundation of his choice? What we really mean by liberty is freedom from personal dictation—we do not wish to be controlled by the will of others. To us the nature of things does not seem to be a master—Nature has no will.

Society has the right to protect itself by imprisoning those who prey upon its interests; but it has no right to punish. It may have the right to destroy the life of one dangerous to the community; but what has freedom to do with this? Do you kill the poisonous serpent because he knew better than to bite? Do you chain a wild beast because he is morally responsible? Do you not think that the criminal deserves the pity of the virtuous?

I was looking forward to the time when the individual might feel justified—when the convict who had worn the garment of disgrace might know and feel that he had acted as he must.

There is an old Hindoo prayer to which I call your attention: "Have mercy, God, upon the vicious; thou hast already had mercy upon the just by making them just."

Is it not possible that we may find that everything has been necessarily produced? This, of course, would end in the justification of men. Is not that a desirable thing? Is it not possible that intelligence may at last raise the human race to that sublime and philosophic height?

You insist, however, that this is Calvinism. I take it for granted that you understand Calvinism—but let me tell you what it is. Calvinism asserts that man does as he must, and that, notwith-

standing this fact, he is responsible for what he does—that is to say, for what he is compelled to do—that is to say, for what God does with him ; and that, for doing that which he must, an infinite God, who compelled him to do it, is justified in punishing the man in eternal fire ; this, not because the man ought to be damned, but simply for the glory of God.

Starting from the same declaration, that man does as he must, I reach the conclusion that we shall finally perceive in this fact justification for every individual. And yet you see no difference between my doctrine and Calvinism. You insist that damnation and justification are substantially the same ; and yet the difference is as great as human language can express. You call the justification of all the world “the gospel of despair,” and the damnation of nearly all the human race the “consolation of religion.”

After all, my dear friend, do you not see that when you come to speak of that which is really good, you are compelled to describe your ideal human being ? It is the human in Christ, and only the human, that you, by any possibility, can understand. You speak of one who was born among the poor, who went about doing good, who sympathised with those who suffered. You have described, not only one, but many millions of the human race. Millions of others have carried light to those sitting in darkness ; millions and millions have taken children in their arms ; millions have wept that those they loved might smile. No language can express the goodness, the heroism, the patience and self-denial of the many millions, dead and living, who have preserved in the family of man the jewels of the heart. You have clad one being in all the virtues of the race, in all the attributes of gentleness, patience, goodness, and love, and yet that being, according to the New Testament, had to his character another side. True he said, “Come unto me and I will give you rest ;” but what did he say to those who failed to come ? You pour out your whole heart in thankfulness to this one man who suffered for the right, while I thank not only this one, but all the rest. My heart goes out to all the great, the self-denying and the good—to the founders of nations, singers of songs, builders of homes ; to the inventors, to the artists who have filled the world with beauty, to the composers of music, to the soldiers of the right, to the makers of mirth, to honest men, and to all the loving mothers of the race.

Compare, for one moment, all that the Savior did, all the pain and suffering that he relieved ; compare all this with the discovery of anæsthetics. Compare your prophets with the inventors, your apostles with the Keplers, the Humboldts, and the Darwins.

I belong to the great church that holds the world within its starlit aisles ; that claims the great and good of every race and clime ; that finds with joy the grain of gold in every creed, and floods with light and love the germs of good in every soul.

Most men are provincial, narrow, one-sided, only partially developed. In a new country we often see a little patch of land, a clearing in which the pioneer has built his cabin. This little clearing is just large enough to support a family, and the remainder of the farm is still forest, in which snakes crawl and wild beasts occasionally crouch. It is thus with the brain of the average man. There is a little clearing, a little patch, just large enough to practice medicine with, or sell goods, or practice law, or preach with, or to do some kind of business, sufficient to obtain bread and food and shelter for a family, while all the rest of the brain is covered with primeval forest, in which lie coiled the serpents of superstition and from which spring the wild beasts of orthodox religion.

Neither in the interest of truth, nor for the benefit of man, is it necessary to assert what we do not know. No cause is great enough to demand a sacrifice of candor. The mysteries of life and death, of good and evil, have never yet been solved.

I combat those only who, knowing nothing of the future, prophecy an eternity of pain—those only who sow the seeds of fear in the hearts of men—those only who poison all the springs of life, and seat a skeleton at every feast.

Let us banish the shrivelled hags of superstition ; let us welcome the beautiful daughters of Truth and Joy.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.