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THE

INDEPENDENT PULPIT

VOLUME 1.

JAMES D. SHAW, - EDITOR AND PUBLIHSER,
WACO, TEXAS.

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J. D. SHAW,

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THE INDEPENDENT PULPIT.

VOL. 1.

WACO, TEXAS, MARCH, 1883.

No. 1.

ANNOUNCEMENT.

I will here and now state my objects for engaging in this enterprise:

1st. I desire to make an honest living and educate my children, and in order to do either I must have employment. Had it not been for the partiality of a few personal friends I should have been left without any visible means of a support. By their generosity I have ministerial employment and the promise of a competent salary this year, and I undertake this publication hoping that by next year it will afford me congenial employment for the remainder of my life. As a business undertaking I expect to devote to it my best energies and diligently strive to merit success at the hands of those who may honor me with their patronage.

2d. I hope to satisfy the growing demand in this state for a publication that will voice the views of our most liberal and independent thinkers on the moral, intellectual and social questions of the day. The "PULPIT" will not be the organ of any religious sect, nor the authorized exponent of any creed. It will be independently devoted to religion, philosophy, science and literature. It will seek by rational processes to inculcate a religion of love, duty and progress. In philosophy it will seek to emphasize the true, the beautiful, and the good. In determining the truth it will be guided by reason, observation and experience. It will cultivate the tree of knowledge and seek the fruit thereof, not daring to venture within the realms of faith any further than it may have the guarantee of reason. It will advocate absolute religious freedom for every man, woman and child, denying the right of any one class of men to do all the thinking for the rest. It will be conducted in a spirit of candor and fairness, free from bigotry and intolerance of every kind. There is no subject too sacred or divine for discussion here except the private characters of men and women. To the many thousands of honest free thinking people of this state these columns are tendered as a medium for the discussion and interchange of advanced ideas, with the plain understanding that everything will be edited without any regard to the personal friendship and esteem that I may have for the writer. Correspondents will be required to refrain from unkind personalities and all spiteful invectives. Let principles, not men, be the subjects for discussion.

The subscription price of the PULPIT is in reach of the poorest citizen, and I confidently undertake to give to every one who will patronize me value received.
J. D. SHAW.

ONCE FOR ALL.

I ask the readers of the PULPIT to do me the honor to peruse the following brief, but correct history of the circumstances of my late separation from the ministry, and membership of

the Methodist Episcopal church South:

BEFORE THE CONFERENCE.

On the 17th of September, 1882, being pastor of the Fifth street Methodist church of Waco, Texas, I preached in the morning from the text: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity." (1 Cor. 13 chap., 13 v.) In a very brief way, and without departing from generally received opinions, I defined these three permanent graces which I said "compose a religious experience," and then proceeded to stress at some length the latter clause of the text, "the greatest of these is charity." I took the ground that "faith being the foundation of a christian character, charity is the superstructure," quoting St. Peter's advice to "add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity," (2 Peter, 1 chap., 5, 7 v.) charity being the climax. I also quoted from 1 Cor., 13 chap., 2 v., "and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains and have not charity, I am nothing." Said I, "it seems to me that the theologians and preachers have for a long time stressed faith at the expense of works. I fear there has been a loss of virtue to the church, and we are regarded by many as holding out the idea that a man may just do what he pleases so he has faith." I said, "that was exalting dogma above virtue and moral goodness." In the course of these remarks I quoted St. James 2 chap., 17 v., "even so faith if it hath not works is dead, being alone," and the 19th verse, "the devils also believe and tremble." "Now," said I, "faith works not by opinion, not by dogma, not by creed, not by denominational prejudices, but by love—charity." I said "that faith without charity was dogmatic and overbearing, but charity is tolerant," quoting 1 Cor. 13 chap., 4 v.: "Charity suffereth long and is kind, charity envieth not, charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." I said that "faith without charity was liable to be exclusive and creedal, but charity is unselfish. It is able to climb over our sectarian walls, and in imitation of Christ and in obedience to his teachings love the world. I referred to the belief of some that all who do not subscribe to what is commonly called orthodox doctrines, will be damned. "Now," said I, "did you ever think of the result of such a belief as that? I will show you the extent of it by the following figures, which I take from recent statements: There are 816,915,200 heathens in the world, and they must all burn. There are 105,688,000 Mahomedans, and they too must go. There are 6,216,700 Jews, and you damn them! And now of the 334,772,960 Christians, (so called.) It will not be allowed that more than 33,477,296 of these are really professed orthodox Christians, which leaves the total unsaved 1,230,-

115,531; in other words, only about one-half of one per cent of the population of the world can be saved. Now, my brethren," said I, "are you prepared to believe that all these, save the little remnant that are evangelical, will be eternally damned? For myself I would not say it for my right hand." I then referred to the Jews. "The Christians have been persecuting the Jews more or less for eighteen centuries, and I do not know for what. Christ never commanded it, and his doctrines would condemn it, and yet we have deprived them of a nationality and they are thereby citizens of almost every country, while they can call no country their home. I once asked a preacher what he thought would become of the Jews, and he said they would every one be damned. What! said I, every one? Yes. Now, my brethren, are you prepared to endorse the answer to a similar question? I confess I am not. I have lived among the Jews and I find many of them are pious and worshipful. They are good neighbors, they visit the sick; they give alms to the needy. They take care of their orphan children, their poor never beg in your streets. They pay their taxes and are patriotic; and now tell me why do you want to damn, indiscriminately, a people who upon the whole are about as good as we Methodists are? Now, why may not the good and the virtuous in all these people—Jews, Mahomedans and heathens be saved? For, with St. Peter, "of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him." They have the natural law, and St. Paul says: "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law, for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified; for when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law are a law unto themselves which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience, also bearing witness, and their thoughts meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." Rom. 2: 12-15. Besides these expressions, I do not recall any others that would be likely to give any offense to the most ardent lover of our orthodox creeds.

At night I preached on the human character of Christ. In my introduction I said: "There are two phases to his character, called the divine and the human, but I am going to preach on the human character only." As an example of practical piety and useful living, we are to imitate the man, Christ, and I was careful enough to ask the congregation not to misunderstand me. My text was Math. ix:9: "Follow me." I set Christ before the people as an example worthy to be followed:

1st. In having an opinion of his own, which he sustained regardless of the orthodoxy of his day.

2d. "In the purity of his doctrines, which he gave to the world without any creed."

3d. "In his spirit and disposition towards others—those who disagreed with him. He was charitable and tolerant."

4th. In his active life, instead of building creeds and discussing absurdities, he went about doing good."

I then said that I was willing to just leave off his divinity and say nothing about his miracles and then put him in contrast with every other moral or religious teacher the world has produced, and I proceeded to contrast him with Abraham, Moses, Socrates, Saint Augustine, Luther and Calvin.

Closing with the remark "that if the world could only see Christ in the majesty and beauty of his own life they would follow him," but I said that, "instead of preaching Christ, and openly living Christ as we ought, we often shut him up in our little theological houses, and did not even allow a decent window through which he might be seen. That there were a few port holes through which one might now and then get a glimpse, provided the polemic guns happened to be turned to one side."

Now, I have repeated about all of either sermon that even a heresy hunter might scent the least taint of heterodoxy.

Tuesday morning following I was surprised to find a sensational report of my sermons in the Waco Daily Examiner, headed as follows: "The New Departure of an Eminent Waco Minister.—His Farewell to Orthodoxy," in which it was said that I had "rejected the inspiration of the Scriptures, the atonement, the saving power of faith," etc. On the day following, an explanation by the editor, who had not heard the sermons, appeared, and also a lengthy interview between him and myself, containing the above synopsis of the sermons and the following statement from myself:

"I have been a member of the Northwest Texas Conference twelve years, and this is the first time that I have ever been considered heretical; and in this case I said not a word that is in violation of our twenty-five articles or my obligation to the church. A long and very critical study of the claims of christianity has forced me to reconstruct my religious beliefs to some extent, and how far this may go I am not able to say; but there is one thing sure, that when I find it necessary to antagonize the doctrines of my church, I will not use her appointment and her pulpit to do it. I will not do it with credentials from her in my possession. But these I will return, and ask to be relieved of my present relation to her membership and ministry."

Notwithstanding the prompt correction made, the matter obtained a widespread notoriety and I was severely berated, abused and prayed at by brethren who had hitherto treated me with great courtesy and consideration. The secular press advertised the matter extensively but manifested a spirit of fairness and candor, with only an unimportant exception or two.

Previous to this I had made up my

mind to communicate to the next session of the conference my change of views with regard to certain doctrines and dogmas, and had made known my intention to my Presiding Elder, expressing at the same time my willingness to surrender the pastorate before Conference convened, should he decide that I ought. He advised me to continue and I decided to do so, and during the interval that existed between that, and the meeting of the Conference, I prepared a statement which will be reproduced in its proper place.

AT THE CONFERENCE.

By reference to pages 48-49 of the Book of Discipline, the reader will find the following provision for the examination of ministerial character in an annual Conference:

"Let the name of every preacher be called, and let his Presiding Elder, or some other member of the Conference, state whether or not there be any complaint against him. If there be none, he may retire, and the Conference may make further inquiry concerning him and pass his character without vote.

"If there be a complaint, and the preacher have been advised of it, let it be stated to the Conference, and let the accused have the privilege of replying. He shall then retire, and the Conference shall determine by vote whether or not his character shall pass.

"If a trial be necessary, it shall be conducted according to the provisions of Chapter VII., Sec. II."

When, on the 2d day of November, 1882, my name was called in the examination of character, my Presiding Elder stated that my life was "blameless," my official administration was "irreproachable," and that my reports were all "satisfactory," but that there were rumors that possibly I might not be "sound in doctrine and belief," that I was then present and "willing to state the facts to the Conference."

Whereupon a motion was made and seconded that a committee of three be appointed to investigate the case. Pending that motion I arose and offered to make a statement according to the above quotation from the Discipline, and was by the Bishop ruled out of order. The ruling was questioned by several members, but it was adhered to in an arbitrary and rather hasty manner, when the motion for the committee being put was carried by a large majority. Therefore seeing no other alternative I went before the committee that afternoon and read the following statement *verbatim*. It was published in a special to the Galveston News of the 3d and the Waco Examiner of the 4th. A brief synopsis also appeared in several other papers throughout the State. This is the first edition of it that has appeared in large plain type:

STATEMENT AT THE CLEBURNE CONFERENCE.

To the Bishop and Members of the Northwest Texas Conference of the M. E. Church South, in session at Cleburne, Texas, November 2d, 1882:

Dear Fathers and Brethren:

At Waxahachie, Texas, November 17, 1870, after standing an approved examination on the course of study prescribed by the Bishops, I was received into this Conference on trial. At the session held in Belton, 1872, I was examined in the class of the second year, received into full connection

and ordained a deacon. At the following session I was examined in the third and fourth years, and ordained an elder. In 1874 I was placed in the Conference faculty, where I served four years in the committee of the second year, and since 1878 I have been chairman of the committee of the first year. The first three years of my connection with the Conference I was appointed to teach in Marvin college, then under your control, and of which I was the principal of the preparatory department. In the fall of 1873 I received my first pastoral charge, now known as Mexia circuit. After serving that work four years I was, in 1877, sent to Lancaster and Bell chapel, serving there one year. I was, in 1878, sent to Waco station, where I have just completed my fourth year. In 1876 I was appointed by Bishop Doggett a curator of the Southwestern university. In 1879 I was by you elected a member of the board of publication, and in 1878 I was elected an associate editor of the *Texas Christian Advocate*, and our late general Conference elected me a member of the general board of missions. All these positions I have still the honor to hold. In 1877 you elected me one of your delegates to the general Conference held at Atlanta, Georgia, in May, 1878. In 1881 you elected me one of your delegates to the late session of the General Conference held at Nashville, Tennessee, in May of this year. This session of our Conference completes my twelfth year in the traveling connection, during which I have devoted my time wholly to the work assigned me. I have not once been absent from any church, quarterly, district, annual or general conference it was my duty to attend. I have never knowingly neglected any interest of religion or the church, nor have I ever failed to do the work required of me. In every relation I have served the church with fidelity, and year after year I have cheerfully rendered to this conference an account of my stewardship. Year after year I have stood the scrutiny of your examination without any complaint of inefficiency or charge of crime or immorality. In all conscience I have lived a Christian after the strictest sect of our religion, a Methodist, a Methodist preacher, unimpeached of evil in deed or design. For my services during these years I have received in salaries eleven thousand, five hundred and seventy dollars. To this has been added from time to time, in presents of clothing, food, books and money, and also in marriage fees, together with concessions in fare for travel and other deductions from current expenses, an amount that cannot be stated with any real accuracy. From this I have annually given to objects of charity and for the support of religion one-tenth of my salary, and by an economical use of the balance I have supported a large family and provided myself with books necessary to prosecute my studies. And now that I am by you required to answer at the bar of my conference, I thank God it is not for neglect of official duty. It is for no crime or immorality, but for opinion's sake alone. I therefore cheerfully comply with your request and render to you the following statement, whereupon should it appear to you that my opinions do disqualify me for further ser-

vice in our connection, I will, on receiving such a decision from you, promptly, though it give me great pain, return to you my credentials and ask to be relieved from all further connection with our ministry and church, at the same time testifying my unfeigned love for you and the church, and my sincere gratitude to you for all the honors you have conferred upon me by your confidence, which I have in no instance forfeited by any willful abuse of official position or act of immorality.

I now ask you to hear with patience the following statement touching my religious belief: From 1870 to the summer of 1877 I devoted all the time that could be spared from other duties to the study of the course prescribed by our bishops. Though I had graduated in that course in 1873, as before shown, I did not, however, cease to study it, comprehending, besides the course, all those books designated as "books of reference." The few exceptions I might stop to make were substituted by books of the same kind by other authors. The five years previous to my reception into the conference I had occupied in acquiring an education. The grave and serious difficulties that beset me on every hand in that work—for I was twenty-five years of age, and had but one dollar in the world—necessitated the training of my mind to a very strict and systematic method of study, comprehending diligent application, unremitting attention, order in detail, and the constant cultivation and exercise of memory. My motto was to know all I could, and thoroughly understand what I knew. By this method and with this motto I entered upon and pursued that course of study for six years. Of course I did not ignore the current thought and periodical literature of our times. I observed from these and my association with intelligent men that there were many difficult questions for the pulpit to answer that had not been anticipated by the course of study. I discovered that my religious information, which had been gathered in one line of thought, was not competent to the demands made upon me. Therefore I felt it my duty as a minister in holy things, as a teacher set to expound the gospel and defend the faith of the church, to acquaint myself with all the difficulties involved in the scripture evidences. I acquainted my wife, who was then living, with my intention to subject the claims of Christianity to a more critical examination, and if possible prepare myself to meet the objections that many honest men seemed forced to urge against it. This I believed to be my solemn duty to those for whom I preached, and those to whom I preached, as well as to myself; for though I had great faith in the integrity of our systems, I was not free from doubts with regard to some of our interpretations. I believed that the investigation proposed to my mind would result in the establishment of my faith in all that I conceived to be expressed in our articles of religion. I think it was in June, 1877, that I entered upon this course of study, adopting the same method as in my former studies. The process has been slow and painfully rigid, my poverty necessitating the first and my candor the second. Every dollar that I could spare from the support of my family

has been spent for books necessary to the accomplishment of my purpose, and for more than five years I have steadily pursued my inquiries through an extensive field of ancient and modern thought, history, philosophy, metaphysics, science and theology. I have devoted much time to the study of the various religious systems, ancient and modern, tracing in the light of history and in the progress of civilization the evolution and development of religious ideas, sentiments and organisms. I suppose I had pursued my studies full three years before I became aware of any serious effects upon my beliefs, or began to suspect the incompetency of any of the orthodox opinions, and when I did I still felt sure that I would ultimately be delivered from any order of scepticism that might put me out of harmony with our system. At length I found myself fighting on the defensive, and in some instances forced to yield a little ground, in others to resort to expediences that I could justify only on the ground of my hopes that victory would eventually come. Until very recently I have all along entertained a hope that my convictions would be changed by some new light, and therefore kept the struggle almost exclusively to myself. I have carefully examined the various questions involved in this mental controversy, and I have with equal care weighed and considered the motives and impulses of my heart to detect, if possible, any secret vein of conceit therein. At length I ventured to speak to a few friends in a confidential way, and if possible obtain their counsel and advice, among others my presiding elder. I did not intend that the public should know anything of it until I could confer with you; but, contrary to my desire or expectation, it became known that I was in a state of doubt, and a burst of undesirable notoriety followed that has given me great pain and mortification. This may seem sudden and impulsive to you, but it is, on the contrary, the end of a long and hardly contested struggle. And now, should it occur to any of you that I have protracted the struggle too long, I beg that you will not suppose that in doing so I have had any mercenary motive whatever. The propriety involved has not been unobserved by me, but I have not been without a hope that I might continue under a liberal interpretation of our articles of religion, and that I greatly desire to do. The step was too grave and important to be taken hastily. I entered this ministry under deep convictions, and from the first I have had the courage of my convictions. These changes of conviction have been slow and gradual. I fully realize the gravity of my situation, and though I greatly desire to protract the struggle, yet to go further without consulting you I have thought would be wrong, and had so informed my presiding elder previous to any of the publications that came out. I have experienced no change of belief that can be considered a departure from religion and virtue. I am led to make no kind of compromise with vice and immorality. I have suffered no infidelity to our church. My long and ardent attachment for her sacred communion, her discipline and polity, is unremoved. In the course of my investigations I have been forced to modify my views concerning certain

dogmas that have long been held in great reverence by the Church. These are:

1. The Inspiration of the Scriptures.
2. The Divinity of Jesus Christ.
3. Vicarious Atonement.
4. The Punishment of the Wicked.

The modifications of belief I have experienced are not to the extent that I reject in every sense all or any of these dogmas. In regard to some of them, and certain phases of all of them I am in a state of doubt and hesitation, and cannot say that I believe them nor that I disbelieve them. I will now state without argument, and as clearly as I can, the position I am forced to occupy at this time with regard to each of the above named subjects:

1st. With regard to the inspiration of the scriptures. I refer to both the Old and New Testaments. I believe the Old Testament to be a continuous history, civil and ecclesiastical, of the Jewish nation, from a considerable antiquity down to within about four hundred and twenty years of the Christian era. The New Testament is a four-fold history of Jesus Christ, a history of the apostles, and various pastoral letters by St. Paul and contemporary writers containing their views of Christ and his precepts. Whatever is contained in these scriptures of a pure morality, as loving God and loving one another, "feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and visiting the sick," forgiving our enemies and doing unto others as we would have them do unto us carries upon its very face the force of inspiration. Whatever is contained therein of an immoral or vicious character may be a true or a false statement of fact, but should not in my opinion be regarded as having been inspired of God. Statements of a historical, chronological or scientific nature should be interpreted by the developments of historical, chronological and scientific truth. Statements of a marvelous or supernatural nature, and therefore incomprehensible to a finite mind, should, it seems to me, be left for every one to interpret to the satisfaction of his own faith and reason. No one form of unchangeable words should be made the standard of belief for all men in regard to that which none can understand. Just to what extent those who wrote the scriptures were inspired or illuminated by the Divine mind, we are not able to say; then, just how much of them men should believe to have been inspired, we ought not to say. You will observe from this statement that I only doubt the idea of plenary inspiration, and believe that we ought to interpret the scriptures by rational processes of thought.

2d. With regard to the divinity of Jesus Christ. That he was the son of God by adoption, and that he shared the divine nature by conjunction, and that he was sent to save men from sin, and by the will of God does save even to the uttermost all them that come unto the Father by him, I do steadfastly believe. Further than this I am in doubt, and know not how to believe unless God by his grace helps me.

3d. With regard to Vicarious Atonement. It would do me great injustice to require of me a fixed formula of my belief, because it would be premature. My candor forces me to men-

tion it because I have been led to doubt it. That Christ suffered for us, I do not doubt; but that he suffered in our stead, I do. Instead of being our substitute, was he not our friend? Instead of regarding him as a victim to appease an offended and implacable Deity, who would only be satisfied after receiving so much suffering for so much sin, I am disposed to regard him as the pledge of God's love, who, seeing our need of a Savior, sent one who was willing to come to us in our sins, and show us how to overcome them. He could not do for us what he did without suffering. Instead of saving us from any rash law or angry decree by receiving the penalty due to us, he saves us from our sinful ways by teaching us the way of righteousness, and giving to us the example of a pure life.

4th. With regard to the punishment of the wicked. That God punishes those who wilfully violate his laws, I have no hesitation in believing. I have only been led to doubt the eternity of future punishment upon the question of rendering to a finite creature upon the abuse of a brief probation, an infinite punishment. These statements will clearly indicate to you the doubts that have been forced upon my mind concerning these questions; and now to assure you that I am not a confirmed disciple of Pyrrho, but have left to me a firm basis of faith, I will mention some things that I believe without any doubts or hesitation:

I believe in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men, and that in God a father's love, sympathy and compassion abound to all his children, of whatsoever kindred, tribe or nation. Therefore, we ought to love him; and as the members of one family, children of one father, we ought to love one another, as we have power and opportunity, for, by so doing, we may fulfill the law of Christ. I believe that all who do love God and trust in him as their father, and follow Christ in deeds of honor, virtue and goodness, ought to be adjudged true and faithful Christians, and that to all such there will be awarded an immortality of peace and happiness in the world to come. I believe in humility, meekness, gentleness and peace. I believe in honor, candor, frankness and truth. I believe in charity, virtue, knowledge and temperance. I believe in love, sympathy, compassion and mercy. I believe in kindness, benevolence, equity and justice. I believe in "doing unto others whatsoever we would they should do unto us." I believe in "feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick." I believe in personal liberty of opinion on all subjects. I believe in the establishment and maintenance of a just and rightful authority for the execution of good laws and wholesome discipline in state and church. I believe in honest labor, good wages and the payment of debts. I believe in poor houses, orphan asylums, and asylums for the blind, deaf and insane. I believe in education, learning and research. I believe in science, art, literature, and a free inquiry into the history of man and the phenomena of nature. I believe in good books, good papers and good schools, good colleges and good universities; not to prescribe the bounds of intellect, nor stereotype our understanding, but to

train our faculties and give wings to thought. Finally, my brethren: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report;" these I think on, cherish in my heart, and try to exemplify in my life and ministry.

Now I have with frankness expressed to you my opinions and my doubts. I entertain them with diffidence and a clear sense of my weakness and frailty. I know that I am liable to be mistaken. I have been mistaken, and by my mistakes I am admonished to be guarded and cautious. I am a student. I desire to know the truth. I study, not to fortify prejudice, but to ascertain the truth. I know that when one undertakes to prove that his own way of thinking is the right one, he thereby undertakes to convict all others of wrong; and yet every one ought to think freely. There is no slavery half so galling as mental slavery. I claim no superiority of mind over those who differ with me in opinion. I only claim the right to have an opinion. Hitherto I have refrained from uttering these opinions in any public way, because I thought it might be regarded as an abuse of your confidence, I preferred to consult you first; and now, though I be in error as you may apprehend, I feel that this candid confession of my present perfect convictions is honorable both to me and the church in whose communion I have sometime studied the obligations of moral honesty. Some of these opinions I have entertained in my private thoughts for nearly two years; others have been forced upon my mind more recently. I have felt justified in some hesitation by the great importance of the consequences that might follow an impulsive declaration of them. I have been prayerfully devout in my studies, and have the approval of my conscience, which is void of offense towards God and man. My former opinions were preconceived in favor of the orthodox beliefs, and had I been controlled by mercenary motives and unscrupulous in my professions, I should certainly have continued to profess my former beliefs. They put me in positions of honor and clerical advantage that I cannot expect to retain in departing from them. I am profoundly conscious of the sacrifice I make, and I have no desire to conceal the struggle through which I have passed. I am not indifferent to the pleasures of public esteem and favor that I have had the honor to enjoy in a modest degree during my ministerial life. These, however, I have never accepted in any other light than as the reward of honorable devotion to the public good, and if they can be retained only by a sacrifice of principle and mental freedom, I will promptly resign them and continue to act with my former fidelity to those convictions of duty and honor that are forced upon me by the circumstances of my intelligence and experience. I devoutly pray that you may be guided by wisdom in your action, and that we may be delivered from any unkind or irreligious feelings towards each other, even though we should, as I apprehend we may, differ in our opinions. With this statement, I am, dear brethren, your fellow servant in the

communion of saints and in the love of Jesus Christ, our Savior,

J. D. SHAW.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE.

To the Bishop and Members of the Northwest Texas Conference:

Dear Brethren:

Your committee to whom was referred the complaints against the Rev. J. D. Shaw, beg leave to report the following facts:

[Then followed a brief extract from my statement referring to the four doctrinal points about which I had expressed my doubts, closing as follows:]

Your committee believing the above statements of theology to be heretical when considered in the light of our articles of religion, and that they are the old and oft refuted fallacies of past centuries, and feeling that Rev. J. D. Shaw could not exercise his ministry except to the detriment of the church, and that he does not fully understand his own opinions, we therefore recommend that he be allowed, as he proposes to do, to tender his certificates of ordination and that the Conference accept the same.

Respectfully submitted,

L. M. LEWIS, Chairman.

J. B. ALLISON,

S. S. SCOTT.

The above report was, on motion, unanimously adopted by the conference.

Whereupon I then returned to the conference my credentials, the following report of which is taken from the Waco Examiner special of 3d, and by an eye witness. It is as nearly the exact words as I could reproduce them myself:

"Mr. Shaw arose and was recognized by Bishop Parker, who said: 'Bro. Shaw, in my ruling yesterday, by which you were refused the privilege of replying before the conference to accusations against you, I may have appeared arbitrary and discourteous towards you. I didn't intend either, but acted on what I conscientiously believed to be the law in the case.'

"To this Mr. Shaw replied: 'I accept the explanation, though I believed at the time and believe yet injustice was done me, and legal rights denied me, but I am not here to argue the merits of the case. That would ill become me now, but—advancing to the secretary's desk and presenting his credentials—I now return to the proper authority these credentials with which you have honored me, with the satisfaction of knowing that during the twelve years I have held them not a stain or blot has ever marred them, and in these years not a whisper or aught of slander has been breathed against my moral character. I return them pure and unsullied as when first committed to my keeping, and now ask that on to-morrow I shall be allowed to deliver to the members of this conference my farewell address.'

The request was granted by a unanimous vote of the conference. Accordingly I appeared before the conference on the morning of the 4th and read the following:

To the Bishop and Members of the Northwest Texas Conference, M. E. Church South:

Dear Fathers and Brethren:

By your action of yesterday I was constrained to return to you my credentials and retire from the church and ministry. Having been honored

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by your confidence with a place on the general board of missions, secretary of the conference board, and a member of the board of curators of the Southwestern University, a member of the board of publication, and associate editor of the *Texas Christian Advocate*, I desire through you to tender my resignation. And now, brethren, I have come to the end of my official relation to you and the church I love so dearly and have served so gladly. In this final communication let me assure you that I bear from you a heart full of gratitude for the honor of your fellowship, affection and confidence, and devoutly pray that the separation thus imposed upon us may be nothing more than a name, and that in heart we may be one with all who love God and are devoted to his service. The ordeal through which I have passed has been a painful one, and I have suffered much anxiety lest I should find in my heart some sore feeling of opposition or enmity to the church. But I thank God that during these twenty-four hours I have experienced no such feeling. My love and affection for you, as well as my high regard for your honor, virtue and integrity, still remain, and I hope they will ever abide in my heart. I hope to walk near you in the fellowship of all the good and pure of earth and meet you in heaven. With great respect I am your friend and fellow servant of God and our fellowmen. J. D. SHAW.

CLEBURNE, TEX., Nov. 4, 1882.

Immediately after I took my seat the following resolution was offered and adopted by the unanimous vote of the conference:

"WHEREAS, J. D. Shaw, late a member of this body, has felt constrained by a change of his doctrinal views to sever his connection with us; therefore,

"Resolved by the Northwest Texas Conference of the M. E. Church, South, That in view of the high moral tone and Christian integrity of Brother Shaw it is with deep regret we part with him, and pray his future may be so directed of God as to make him both happy and useful."

[Signed,] O. M. ADDISON,
F. A. MOOD.

Thus ended our career as a Methodist preacher. A brief but busy one, during which we have the satisfaction to know, by testimony well known also to a large number of those who will read this statement, was entirely satisfactory to the church we learned to love and revere.

OUR FIRST NUMBER.

We send out this first number of the PULPIT hoping it will find favor with the people. It is in a plain and simple dress, the best, however, we can afford. We like it because it is paid for, and until we find patronage enough to give it a better one we will try to be content with this. We are anxious to succeed, but we wish to merit success. We make no appeal to superstition, prejudice nor sympathy. We appeal directly to the sense, reason and judgement of the people. If they feel that we are worthy they will sustain us, otherwise they will not. We will await their verdict, and whatever it may be, cheerfully abide by it.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

We undertake this department of the PULPIT with a secret fear that we may have to dispense with it in the future. You see, we happen to be on the wrong side of it. Every one knows how much easier it is to ask questions than to answer them, at least we have always found it that way. We are pretty well up to asking questions, but have not been a success in answering them. There is no moral quality in a query; there is no risk in asking a question; no matter whether it is a pertinent or an impertinent one. You are not bound to answer your own questions, and if they are never answered you are not to blame for it; it is not chargeable to your stupidity. The case is very different on the other hand. People who ask questions expect to have them answered, no matter whether they are wise or otherwise. If you hesitate your wit is suspicioned, and if you refuse to answer on any ground you are at once pronounced a dolt. You might as well not answer at all as to give any other answer than the one desired, for most people who ask questions want them answered in a certain way, and any other, whether true or false, reasonable or unreasonable, will be rejected with scorn. Now, what is one going to do when he does not know the kind of an answer that is wanted? Besides this, in answering questions one's conscience is involved, if he happen not to be without that moral function. An honest man will sometimes feel that he ought to say: "I don't understand that question and therefore can't answer it." Now, for an ordinary man, we mean a man in ordinary business, to say he don't understand and therefore can't answer a question, he might be allowed to go with but little censure; but for a preacher or an editor to hesitate, or refuse to answer a question, is to merit utter and extreme contempt. Then imagine, if you can, the trepidation of one who is both a preacher and an editor. Really, our only hope is in our recent tendency to heresy. It is possible that, not being exactly Orthodox as a preacher, and being a novice in the editorial line, we will be exempt from answering all the questions that may be asked us. When one undertakes to answer a question he ought to be honest and try to answer truthfully, and here he is often embarrassed, for just as apt as not, he sees beforehand that his answer is not going to give satisfaction, and then he is in peril again. Our readers will recollect that we have just paid the penalty of not being able to give the desired answer in a matter between us and the Northwest Texas Conference. We had long been in honor among those brethren and our work was perfectly acceptable; but we failed on some intricate and difficult questions, and we had to get up and go; not bearing from them their loving pity in remembrance of the good hard work we had done, but their unmeasured abuse and inexpressible contempt. For twelve years they had been endorsing us to the people as a man of virtue and intelligence, every way competent to expound the Scriptures and "defend the faith once delivered to the Saints;" but now that we had the candor to confess our confusion about some of those theological

questions, we are utterly cast out of the synagogue and counted as a publican and sinner. We are now advertised in the sacred pages of orthodox papers, and from orthodox pulpits, as being weak, ignorant, unlearned, and morally depraved. How different this might have been, could we have pronounced the orthodox *Shibboleth*. We wonder if it has ever occurred to the brethren that the people might ask them how it has happened that for twelve years they regularly endorsed us to the public, honored us with many important offices and in no instance did they ever show any distrust of our piety or ability. They never said a word about our barrenness of mind, poverty of thought and general intellectual demerit. Now, it seems to us that inasmuch as we have never claimed any superiority for ourself, and whatever character or reputation we happen to have was made in their service, we ought to be able to stand this orthodox summer-sault about as well as they can. That is to say, if they can afford to speak of us in a disparaging light now after these years of commendation, praise, and, in many instances, downright flattery, we ought to be able to bear it good humoredly. All we have to say is, that if the people have been imposed upon it was not our fault. We did not impose ourselves upon them—we were sent. We did not recommend ourselves—we were commended, and upon the endorsement of the conference we invariably found a reception. Again, it has happened that the people are unable to see wherein we ever failed to give satisfaction. They were always satisfied with our work, and we were never without a congregation.

They are at a loss to understand just why we should be ostracised and forbidden a place among the pious and devout ones of the earth. Will the Orthodox be kind enough to explain why it is that when an honest thinking man finds it necessary to change his opinion about a theological dogma he should at once be denounced as a moral outlaw and intellectual imbecile? But, now we have betrayed our natural tendency to ask questions instead of answering them. If we make a success of this department we must try to get used to the other side, and instead of asking questions try to answer them. Before we go any further in this business, however, we will say right here and now that we will not promise to answer every question. We will not say, as we sometimes see printed on the "dodgers" of obscure theological quacks: "All queries and objections answered." We will not guarantee satisfaction with the answers we may give, nor will we guarantee them against error. We will only answer such as we think we can; answer them in our own way, and as nearly correct as we may know how. If we err it will be for want of information or from a defect in judgment, and when we are informed of an error, and convinced, we will revise our answer. This, we think, is fair, and we hope it will be satisfactory to all concerned.

OUR OLD FRIENDS.

We are asked: "How do your old friends treat you now?" We suppose by "old friends," the members of the church and the clergy are meant.

Among the laymen, with only now and then an exception, we find much warm sympathy, and an uninterrupted continuance of their former confidence and friendship. They are, as a class tolerant and progressive; but little in sympathy with narrow credal notions. It is hard to find a thoughtful, reading layman that is not a little tinctured with heresy. They hold their views privately though, and say but little about theology; therefore they escape discipline. In this respect they have the advantage of preachers. Only a short while ago an intelligent layman said to us: "We laymen have the advantage of you preachers. We enjoy more liberty than you. If we can go to the church now and then and endure an Orthodox sermon and pay our quarterage regularly, we are all right, no matter what we believe." Another said: "Well, if they were to expel from the church all who are as heretical as you, there would not be enough left to pay the preachers' salaries." There are a few among the flocks who, following the example of their shepherds, (?) treat us as a heathen. Some pass us without even speaking; that, however, we do not resent. We often speak to the dummies that stand in the shop doors; of course they do not return the civility, but we never feel offended at a dummy.

THE LOCAL PREACHERS

generally treat us kindly. You see they are a little on the back-ground any way. It seems that of late they are more or less ostracised by the traveling class. Among the Methodist clergy the local preacher is practically considered an underling. The circuit rider is the "big bug," and arrogates to himself the first honors, except when the Presiding Elder or the Bishop comes along. There is brewing a little discontent among this class of preachers, with the treatment they are receiving.

THE REGULAR CLERGY

are very severe, and unsparing in their denunciation of our course. They do not refrain, we are sorry to say, from coarse and angry abuse—bitter expletives. They even invade the sanctity of our heart and impugn our motives. They accuse us of ignorance, vanity, ambition and impiety, not once reflecting that the history of the past is a competent refutation and condemnation of all they urge against us. Are we now to suppose that they were only acting a farce when they honored us with so many important offices and appointments? And are we now to be accused of ambition for laying down these which they have since divided out, as the soldiers divided the old clothes of the Savior, among themselves? We are made to think it is possible that a good layman was correct when he said to us, shortly after the Cleburne conference: "They are glad to have you out of the way." But in justice to a few we will say that these represent the ignorant majority among the clergy. A class that never read nor think in any other than the prescribed channel. They are, we suppose, thoroughly Orthodox, and in all this they think they are doing God's service.

EXCEPTIONS.

We come now to some honorable exceptions which we think we ought

to mention. These constitute the intelligent minority. From them we receive very different treatment. They are tolerant and charitable. They do not agree with us in our positions, at least in many of them they differ with us; but they recognize the difficulties with which we are contending and seem to appreciate our struggle after the truth. They bring no unmanly accusations against us. Many of them warmly commend us for our course. A few think we should have gone along and kept our opinions to ourselves, and others have expressed their regrets that we did not suffer ourselves put upon trial in the church, as they, it seems, think our views could have been sustained. To show that we are not utterly damned in the minds of at least a minority of preachers, we quote a few expressions from their letters. Writes one: "We regret the hasty action of the church in this matter, and we do sympathise with you most earnestly in your great trial. It is very hard that your years of labor, your hard study and eager research after truth should meet with such a reward as this. What are we to do? Must we think in the old grooves that were made a hundred years ago, until we become, not only dead, but fossilized? Must we give up thinking altogether? I feel somewhat stunned by this new development, and scarcely know which way to turn." Another writes: "To my certain knowledge there are men with graver doubts than you express who are preaching in our church most acceptably." A third writes: "I know what *our* scrupulous Orthodoxy, that sort that swears not by the articles of our religion, but the pulpit traditions, is inclined to do on very unnecessary occasions." Still another writes: "I can assure you that you have my sympathy in the present pressure, which I suppose you have to bear." Another writes: "As for myself, I love the Methodist creed. As I understand it, it formulates my belief as far as that belief can be chained down to forms at all. It is broad, liberal, Christlike. It does not force me to declare the damnation of the heathen, or my Christian brethren who differ with me in belief. I love it with all my soul; but I pray God the time may never come when it shall be wounded in the house of its friends and made the drudge of narrow minded bigots. When that time comes—a time when men will value the *form* more than the *inspiration* of our creed, and associate that creed with *penalty*,—then we want a man to rise up, not to *destroy* it, but to *liberate* it from the bondage of cruel hands. Such a man will suffer—he will be *crucified*—but he will rise again the third day and share the very throne of Christ. *What is Protestantism? The spirit of inquiry guided by the word of God.* On that rock I stand. As for Orthodoxy, that may mean much or little, according as men use it. But one thing I know: Orthodoxy is about to be *badly injured* by its friends. Orthodox people are too ready to take things for granted. They seem not to be able to get into their Orthodox skulls the idea that men may change their beliefs and keep their integrity. Oh! when in the Providence of the good God will it ever be written: 'Orthodoxy suffereth long and is kind; Orthodoxy *envieth* not; Orthodoxy

vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; is not easily provoked, thinketh evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.' That chapter cannot now, alas, be written. Whenever it can, we may go further, and say: 'Orthodoxy never faileth.' But now-a-days there are some who write: '*Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not Orthodoxy, it profiteth me nothing.*' God help such and save them 'as by fire.'"

Now, we cannot close this without giving in this connection the following, written by O. P. Fitzgerald, D. D., and published in the *Christian Advocate*, of which he is the editor. We give this with pleasure the more because it will serve to redeem the Orthodox press from the charge of being utterly void of any liberality, or even good manners. The Doctor says:

"The Rev. J. D. Shaw, at the recent session of the Northwest Texas Conference, surrendered his credentials and left the ministry and membership of the M. E. Church, South. This action was taken because of the modification of his opinions with regard to the inspiration of the Scriptures, the divinity of Jesus Christ, vicarious atonement, and the punishment of the wicked. This was the manly course: when a man ceases to be a Methodist in doctrine he should leave the Methodist pulpit. We wish our Brother Shaw all personal prosperity, and hope he may yet find his way back to his former beliefs and associations."

A short time previous to this there appeared in that paper a very cowardly thrust at us, but Dr. F. has assured us in a manly letter that he was sick at the time and knew nothing about it until he read it himself.

These men are, all of them, Orthodox; that is, they are in the regular ministry of the church, but they belong to the minority who have dared to pluck fruit from the tree of knowledge. They are able to see some honest merit in the lives of those who are forced to differ with them in belief and opinion. We prize the friendship of such men, though we differ widely. We appreciate their generous words. They are sweet messengers of love—fragrant flowers—the sweetness of which is far more to be cherished than their hue and tint. Our heart receives them as the chilled outcast receives the gentle touches of the sunbeam. There is a germ of life in them. It has been suggested that we give some extracts from the letters we have received from the other class. We have too much regard for religion to do that. We have them on file, and, like the devils that came out of the lunatic, they are legion, and in many of them there is a resemblance of spirit, but we spare our readers the mortification they would experience by reading them in the PULPIT.

THE CHURCH.

"How do you feel towards the church?"

To this we reply: We would be ashamed of ourself if we did not feel kindly towards the church. We love the church as part of the great brotherhood of men. We are not blind to the good that the church has done and is doing. This is not denying that the

church is greatly imposed upon by priestcraft, and hindered in her work by the obstinate prejudices of her leaders.

The church is pledged to benevolence and charity. She is well organized, and has power to do great good. But for the tyranny of her superstitious creeds she would do much more good than she is now doing. We do not seek to oppose the church; we on the contrary desire to help her in every good and perfect work. The Catholic church is indispensable in our large cities; and but for her charities hundreds and thousands of poor people would starve to death. The Protestant churches will emulate the Catholics, we suppose, when they get done wrangling about Orthodoxy. At any rate, they are doing much good, even now. There is room, we think, for great improvement among all the denominations. Whenever they get to that point in the progress of human thought when a man will be esteemed more for his character, spirit and fidelity to principle than for his credulity and superstition, then they will begin to convince thinking men of the real utility of their religion.

THE CLERGY.

"What do you think of the clergy?" The clergy constitute a part of the church and will come in for a share of all we have said in answer to the other question.

We love the clergy from long association with them. For many ages they have been the friends of learning and the patrons of letters. Many great thinkers and authors have been found among them. The clergy of the present century, however, are not in the front rank of thinkers. The world has so far outstripped Orthodoxy that the clergy feel embarrassed. They love learning yet, but fear the truth. They have retained more of ancient superstition among them than have any other class of men. They are waking up to the truth, and we predict they will yet throw off their credal chains and take another step upward and forward. The inferiority of the clergy to other professions is due to the fact that they dare not think except in lines prescribed by those in authority. They are sworn to standards; their learning is more or less stereotyped. When clergymen assert their right to think and study freely, when they make use of rational processes of thought, they will soon be reinstated in their former influence among men of reason. We do not mean to be unjust to the clergy. Their creeds, systems and dogmas are to blame for the narrowness of the clerical intellect. They dare not reason in but one way. They dogmatize rather than reason, and unless they can free themselves from the tyranny of their present systems, they will continue to dwarf until at length the people, in self-defense, will get up and leave them in the mud of mediæval theology. We think every candid man who is able to judge independently of his prejudices will agree that we are about correct in our estimation of the clergy.

THE ISSUE WITH THE CONFERENCE.

We are asked: "How do you feel about the issue between you and the conference?" To which we reply: In reaching our present attitude to Orthodoxy we have passed through an

ordeal, painful, embarrassing and dangerous. We accept the result as the best that could have been expected under the circumstances. We were made to suffer much mental agony in the reconstruction of our beliefs. We greatly preferred to remain Orthodox because of our associations, and then it was to our personal interest to do so. We were long embarrassed by the extreme delicacy of our position, and there were many temptations to override our convictions and continue in the old paths without giving utterance to the changes that were forced upon our mind. Indeed, we were often advised by Orthodox ministers to do this, and have been censured because we did not. We think, however, that we did right in dealing promptly and frankly with the conference. That course put an end to the matter; otherwise we might have been burthened with it yet. Now it is all over, and we are satisfied. Everybody understands our position now, and we understand ourselves. We shall always remember the struggle through which we passed as one would the peril of a great danger from which he had experienced a narrow escape. We thank God that though we made a great sacrifice of position and emolument, we have maintained our honor, virtue and integrity. We have learned that one can change his opinions without changing his heart. God knows that we have done the best we could, and we prefer to risk his judgement at the last.

OUR SEPARATION FROM THE MINISTRY.

We have been asked a great many questions about our late separation from the orthodox ministry. Many of these questions are asked in a spirit of honest inquiry, while others are asked in a spirit of manifest censure. The statement we made to the conference, published in another column of the PULPIT, answers a great number of these questions, and we refer our friends to it and request that they read it with impartial attention.

CREEDS AND DOCTRINES.

We are asked a great many questions touching creeds and doctrines. These will be answered in due course of time. We will begin with our next number of the PULPIT to elaborate the views indicated in our statement. We thought it well enough to give the statement in this number without any comments upon it.

BELIEVING, NOT KNOWING.

In the February number of the *Homiletic Monthly* there is a sermon by Dr. McCosh, the well known President of Princeton College, who is generally considered the most learned preacher in the United States. He is evidently entitled to a place among the very first. This Doctor is considered Orthodox, notwithstanding he is a Christian evolutionist. His text is: "*Whom therefore you ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.*" Acts. 17:23.

THE UNKNOWN GOD MADE KNOWN is the subject. We might modestly say, that if the Doctor had succeeded in making good this proposition, it would have been useless for us to call attention to his sermon. Every one would have been familiar with it by this time.

We pass by the introduction and

part number one to consider some things said in part number two. This he heads with "Him I declare unto you," and says: "God is declared in his works. The leading philosophic error of this day is not Unitarianism, which, in fact, is dead and laid out for decent burial." If reference is here made to Unitarianism as an ecclesiastical organization, it might be hard to contradict him; but we understand him to refer to Unitarian philosophy. The Unitarian church is not growing as such, but Unitarian ideas of God in contradistinction to the Athanasian Trinity are spreading all through the church. Like leaven, they are disseminating themselves through and through the religion of to-day.

Again, says this learned Doctor, "It is not Rationalism, for thinking men now see that human reason cannot construct a religion." Now, we dare to ask: If religion is not reasonable, how are we to accept it? To this he would, doubtless, answer, "by faith." Then we say, can a man have faith in an unreasonable thing? An unreasonable religion is simply no religion. To ask rational men to accept an unreasonable religion is to do an unreasonable thing, and thousands of honest people are unable to see it in any other light. After saying, "it is not exactly Atheism," he then proceeds to say: "The most influential error of the day, the one underlying every other, is what is called Agnosticism. According to this system," he says, "we do not know things, we simply know appearances; and we know not and cannot know whether there is any reality beyond, or if there be, what the reality is; its supporters virtually affirm that truth cannot be found." Now, we are not an Agnostic, and being short of space, will not undertake to defend that school against the unfair presentation of its system here and elsewhere in the sermon referred to. After this assertion we might expect the Doctor to prove beyond the possibility of a doubt two things:

1st. That there is a reality beyond.

2d. What that reality is.

Now, strange to say, he has not done either, though he admits the prevalence of this "style of thought" in the English press all over the world. "It is adopted," he says, "by a vast body of young writers in England, and is being followed without their being aware of it, by numbers in this country."

He says—very unjustly, we think—that "when thoroughly and conscientiously carried out, it means that we cannot know anything." Passing this instance of purely specious reasoning, we will consider the following: "More frequently it means that we cannot discover any truth beyond what the senses reveal; that we can have no certainty of spiritual truth, or, indeed, of moral truth, except as utility, or, the power of imparting pleasure."

Now, we are to understand by this that we may know things that lie beyond the senses, and if so, we reverently ask what are they? And how may we know them? It is of no use for the learned Doctor to say of this: "It is bred in the damps of the earth; it rises up and is in the air; it covers the heavens from the view, and we breathe it as malaria." The term used here is *know*, not think, believe, nor suppose, but *know*. The Agnostic

may be unduly sceptical if he says he "does not believe there is anything beyond what the senses reveal." We think it is rational to believe; but believing is not knowing. We may believe a thing and not know it. And it is possible that the very strongest assurance we can have in matters of faith may be false. To know anything is more than to believe it. When we only know (?) a thing by faith, we simply do not know it at all. We only believe it, and what is the use for men to assume anything more? To do so is to abandon reason, observation, and experience altogether. The following statement is made in a spirit of triumph: "The strength of its defense is, that supposed truth is contradictory, and therefore not to be believed." That is something new under the sun. Now, if the Doctor knows what Agnostics believe, and he certainly does, he knows that they do not recognize "supposed truth" as truth. Will he or any one else undertake to say that "supposed truth" is to be regarded as known fact? What if the supposition is, after, all based upon a false hypothesis? A supposition may be true, or it may be false, and that is all that can be said about it. A man may suppose a hundred things, and then find out that every supposition is false. We believe in things beyond what the senses reveal, we believe in spiritual truths; but we do not know them. The following is a stereotyped Orthodox exhortation: "The only way to meet it is to stand firm, and to point to the truth which we know as being self-evident, and which we are constrained to believe." Now, we are curious to know what there is beyond the reach of the senses that is self-evident. A truth must be brought within the observations of sense to be "self-evident," or even evident. There can be no dispute about a self-evident truth. And the very fact that men dispute about a "supposed truth" is a logical contradiction of its self-evident nature. That we are "constrained to believe" something true does not make it self-evident, nor even true. We may find arguments that constrain us to believe things that after all are not so. The ancients were constrained to believe that the sun moved around the earth, and their experience was such as to make it appear self-evident; but we are now constrained to believe the contrary. In the next sentence he says: "What we have to do with those who favor the system is to set the truth before them and let it shine in its own light." Now, that is fair. Just what we think ought to be done. But does the Doctor do it? We will see. He says "we know that we exist." Well, that is good. "We know that others exist." That we will admit. "Proceeding on in the same way we find that God exists." Now, are we to believe this learned man actually admits that his own reasoning has any logical force? Do we know that God exists in the same way that "we know we exist?" Are we to believe that the earth revolves on its axis because things equal to the same thing are equal to each other or the whole of a thing is equal to all its parts?

We believe that God exists, and upon that belief we find hope; but we do not know it as we know that we exist.

All truth and religion ought to be ashamed of such arguments. They are not arguments, they are tricks of reasoning. It is sophistry. The world can never be brought to worship God by any such stuff. Coupled with the last quotation comes this one: "That we are capable of knowing the distinction between right and wrong; that we may admit, but it is wholly rational; and that we are responsible to God for the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good or whether they have been evil." We believe that we are responsible to God, but we do not know it with exact certainty. We do not see the force of this reasoning. The Doctor is making good his proposal to "point," but what is he pointing at? We do not see the truth. He proposed to "set it before us and let it shine," but where is it? He even says: "We have as strong evidence of the higher and spiritual truths as we have of the lower." Now, that declaration is contradicted by every man's experience. We say it without fear of refutation. It deserves no further notice. We pass over the Doctor's effort to be sarcastic and quote the following: "Their Agnosticism practically, and in fact, consists simply in their affirming, and trying to persuade others, especially young men, that we can know nothing of the higher truths, of moral and spiritual truth, of God, of immortality, and a judgement day. This is the deadly influence of the system." Now, it is possible that these men are only trying to give a reason for their doubts, and not endeavoring to make converts to their system. Agnosticism is not aggressive, it is rather passive; but let that be as it may. We will ask this Doctor, and all who imitate his reasoning, pray what do you know of "spiritual truth, of God, of immortality and a judgment day?" It is possible for men to believe these things, we believe all of them, except the last mentioned, and of course Dr. McCosh believes them; but what does he or any one else *know* about them? We will pass over his lament that the "air is being filled with doubts, difficulties, uncertainties and perplexities," and that there is in consequence a falling off of young men who would be "candidates for the ministry," and close with the following: "It can be shown that we have good and valid proofs of these higher truths of morality and religion, even as we have of the lower ones of sense and sight." Now, we had hoped to reach something more than an assumption, a mere assertion, when the learned Doctor was proposing to "point to the truth," when he promised to "set it before us and let it shine in its own light." Alas, for all human expectations, we are brought down to a mere assertion that "it can be shown." How much better it would be to show it. The Doctor has followed the example of Saint Paul at Athens, and asserted the fact but left off the proof. We conclude that to believe in supersensuous truth is not unreasonable; but to say we know it as we know objects of sight and feeling is not only illogical but perfectly supercilious. It will take Orthodox divines a long time to convince independent thinking people that they can absolutely know anything by faith. Saint Paul was more modest than the Orthodox clergy of to-day. He says:

"Faith is the substance—a basis—of things hoped for, the evidence—a conviction—of things not seen." Heb. 11:1. We may have a basis for hope, and at the last find it unsound. We may have a conviction of the unseen and yet never see it. Faith, however assuring and comforting, is not knowing. We can see no good or advantage for religion by contending for such untenable ground.

OUR NEW CONGREGATION.

In another department of the PULPIT will be found a history of this congregation; also the charter, constitution and a statement of beliefs. But few will find fault with what is stated there; indeed it is fast becoming the creed of all men.

Some of our friends may think we did not state enough. We discussed the propriety of formulating some statement touching the Scriptures and the Atonement; but after reflection we thought it well enough to "leave those irritating questions out. We could hardly formulate an idea about either of these that any two persons would agree upon. The introduction to what we have stated secures us against any imposition from "heresy hunters." Every one has the right of private interpretation. It has been a question in our mind whether we ought to formulate anything or not. Personally we were contented to go along without any formal statement. We are shut up to what we believe, and cannot believe otherwise without reason. If we find a sufficient reason we may be forced to change. Why should we not? We do not expect to believe anything that is not to our minds reasonable. How can we? Some people talk of beliefs as if they were always at our disposal. They seem to think that a man can believe what he pleases. It is possible that a great many people mistake prejudice or preference for belief. If one looks through green glasses everything will appear green; likewise if he look through blue glasses everything will appear blue. Suppose he looks through uncolored glasses; then he will see things in their own true colors. We prefer to lay aside all colored denominational glasses and look through the clear light of reason and see things as they are. The congregation is prospering and we hope to do well. We are peaceful and happy in the enjoyment of our liberty. We occupy the District Court room for the present, and hold services every Sunday morning and evening. Seats are free, and we are glad to have our friends call in and worship with us from time to time.

THE PRESS.

We have been a silent though interested observer of what the press has had to say of our late "departure," and our observations have revealed two very unexpected things, namely: the irreligiousness of the religious press, and the religiousness of the irreligious press. From the first we have received narrow, spiteful invective, and from the second, generous, manly sympathy. What a strange contrast. How different from what one would expect after such loud professions of holiness and sanctification—*perfect love!*

VIA SOLITARIA.

AN UNPUBLISHED POEM BY HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

[We take from a number of the "Banner of Light" the following poem, with the statement that H. M. Goodwin sent it to the "Independent" from Olivet College, Michigan, with a note saying that it was not written for the public eye, but simply to give utterance to his heart-crushing sorrow after the death of his wife. "It was sent to me by a friend in Boston some years ago," writes Mr. Goodwin, "after my own great affliction, and has, therefore, a double sacredness to all who have passed through a similar sorrow. It will be read by many with tearful eyes, when they remember how long and patiently, with what brave and uncomplaining heart he has waited at the 'station,' till now, at last, 'the parted' are made 'one.'"]

Alone I walk the peopled city,
Where each seems happy with his own;
Oh! friends, I ask not for your pity—
I walk alone.

No more for me yon lake rejoices,
Though moved by loving airs of June;
Oh! birds, your sweet and piping voices
Are out of tune.

In vain for me the elm tree arches
Its plumes in many a feathery spray,
In vain the evening's starry marches
And sunlit day.

In vain your beauty, summer flowers;
Ye cannot greet these cordial eyes;
They gaze on other fields than ours—
On other skies.

The gold is rifled from the coffer,
The blade is stolen from the sheath;
Life has but one more boon to offer,
And that is—Death.

Yet well I know the voice of Duty,
And, therefore, life and health must crave,
Though she who gave the world its beauty
Is in her grave.

I live, oh lost one! for the living
Who drew their earliest life from thee,
And wait, until with glad thanksgiving
I shall be free.

For life to me is a station
Wherein apart a traveler stands—
One absent long from home and nation,
In other lands.

And I, as he who stands and listens,
Amid the twilight's chill and gloom,
To hear, approaching in the distance,
The train for home.

For death shall bring another mating,
Beyond the shadows of the tomb,
On yonder shore a bride is waiting
Until I come.

In yonder field are children playing,
And there—oh! vision of delight!—
I see the child and mother straying
In robes of white.

Thou, then, the longing heart that breaketh,
Stealing the treasures one by one,
I'll call Thee blessed when thou makest
The parted—one!

September 18th, 1863.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROGRESSIVE THINKERS.

The *North American Review* is doing good service in the field of liberal thought. We are glad to see that its circulation in the South is rapidly increasing. A news dealer told us only a short time ago that the demand for it was increasing every month. This is a good sign. Our people are beginning to think more freely than was the custom a few years ago.

In the January number of the *Review* there is a well written article by H. W. Thomas, D. D., of Chicago, on the above named subject. We make the following quotations from it and request our readers to purchase and read the entire work. Says the writer:

"The world of thinkers may be divided into two classes; the progressive and the non-progressive. The latter class may include all those who either cannot or dare not pass beyond certain narrow and well defined limits. Were these limitations," says he, "the boundary lines of thought and fact the position of such thinkers would call for

no criticism, for all thought, as thought, is necessarily conditioned within the laws of thought, and hedged about by the world of fact. To these natural and necessary limitations," he says, "all rational minds cheerfully submit. Becoming partisans," he continues, "men almost necessarily become something less and something more than seekers and defenders of the true; for it will hardly be claimed by any party that it holds all truth and carries along nothing that is false.

"Looking at the field in this light we find thinkers generally committed to the defense of some system, and in so far as that is the case they have lost their liberty. They may think, but they must think in one way, and along one line, and with the depressing feeling all the time hanging over them, that, after all their thinking, the party, or the creed, has settled the matter in advance as to what they must at last believe."

Further on he says: "One may have been raised as a Protestant or a Romanist, or among the differentiating sects, as a Calvinist or an Arminian, and to believe in total depravity and endless punishment, and for a time supposed that his sect held all truth, and that all beyond was largely false; but with reflection and a wider reading he comes first to question and then to doubt some of the things he once accepted, and looking into other fields of thought, he discovers forms of truth where he once supposed all was error; and to some of these truths he is attracted, and, yielding to their influence, is won over into a larger life, and for the time, forgetting the lines that were long ago drawn about him so closely, he rejoices in the wealth of this larger world.

"In touching this larger land he has come upon shores that are beset with trials and temptations. He is as yet true; that is, he has at heart the love of truth and right; and in this richer experience he would gladly rest and work. He has tasted the love of truth as truth and the love of man as man; but in this larger life and love he soon begins to feel the hard restraints of his sect, and in the fullness of his heart he transcends his narrow limitations, and finds himself speaking in the language and feeling the thrill and breathing the air of the universal love, and the broad brotherhood of the race. But now comes a new experience—a sad one; he hears the whispers of suspicion, and feels for the first time the cold sense of desertion, of being shunned by his old-time friends as one who is somehow not true, and the faith that had lifted him up like the great tides of the sea is denounced as false and dangerous.

"What shall he do? He feels that he is not a deserter from truth and right; that he loves God and man—loves as never before; and longs to see all mankind lifted up and borne out into this great ocean of life. But the keen heresy hunters are on his track; their bloody yelp draws nearer, and the battle cry of party is raised. Were it the battle of truth he would rejoice, for this he loves, and would see it vindicated at any cost to himself. But the issue is not truth, but what the party or sect says is truth—something that was long ago settled, not by God or his word, but by the opinion of man; and being settled and accept-

ed it became the basis of an opinion, and he finds that the question is not truth. But what does he say? Much of this creed he has learned and to all that he deems essential to the truth in substance, he can assent. But the form, the coldness, and not the warm life, is pressed upon him, and the ultimatum presented is, 'Say this or consent to a silence, or go hence—consent to be banished from early associations, those you love, and begin anew in a wide world; if you think there is any over in those other fields, go where you like, but don't attempt to bring any kind of truth and think it can be committed to grow in our soil.'

"Here the temptation may arise to compromise—to play double the one thing and believe another, to conceal the old meaning under the phraseology. Or the temptation may assume a more subtle form, and half unconscious tampering with a deeper sense of honesty and right may persuade himself that, as a matter of fact, one cannot afford to be honest; that a measure of dishonesty or jugglery is justifiable, and after all may be for the best; and he may follow the case along by placing his thoughts as these on the side of the pleadings of rest and ease, and of the nation and family, and party appeal, and thus the scale may be turned against manhood and honor. How many thus fall; how many consent to become special pleaders and apologists for something less or more than truth, and to remain all their lives in bondage, who otherwise might be free and fill the high place of advocates."

Again, "The evil," he says, "will not stop with the pulpit; it permeates nearly all the denominational literature of the day. Authors and editors write from a lower standpoint than that of simple truth; and hence a large part of our books and papers are not free from the vice and spirit of pleading, and one expects to find devoted to the defense of the peculiar tenets of their particular sect; and it is only too common to find church members carrying two heads: one is the official head, and with that they write for the church; the other is their own, and with that they do their own private thinking.

"To avoid injustice, some qualifications or explanations of this apparent double-dealing should be made. These may serve as a partial extension of what would otherwise be nothing less than downright hypocrisy.

"It may be said of many preachers that they are simply learners and imitators; they do not essay the task of independent thinkers, much less original investigators, but content themselves with trying to master the common text-books of theology, which they accept as final, and hence honestly believe what they say. Let it be confessed, also, that there are possibly not a few, able men really believe in the old ideas of a literal, endless punishment and total depravity, and of a strictly penal atonement. When this is the case we should certainly respect the courage and fidelity that persist in preaching these trines so at war with the common thoughts and feelings of the age. And then, of those who have committed these doctrines in a more

fied and less repulsive form, many may honestly think that the time has not come for such teachings; that the result would be to unsettle many minds, and to cast distrust over other doctrines that they really do believe, and that it may be best to let the church grow, or quietly slip away from the old views until, like neglected statutes, they will remain as a dead letter; that after a while the new truths will gain acceptance by a general consent, and that this will be better than to preach them at a time when such preaching would excite controversy and opposition. And still another fact that may be pleaded in extenuation of their course is, that all these men have long since come to draw a broad line between their professional and denominational theology and religion; and it is the theology and not the religion that they doubt. A wide and intimate acquaintance of more than a quarter of a century with the clergy of all denominations leaves not a doubt in my mind that almost without exception they honestly and devoutly believe in religion; not in morality alone, but in piety and the spiritual doctrines that relate to the soul and to experience. It is true that in their systems and their preaching their special theology and religion have gone along hand in hand, and the one has seemed to be essential to the other; and it is true, also, that they have not been careful to disabuse the public mind of this impression, but have, by a studied silence, if not by implication or positive statement, sought to strengthen rather than weaken this impression.

"But whilst these cautious and hesitating preachers may quiet their consciences with the thought that they believe in religion, and in a theology, but not in the theology that they are required to uphold, have they sufficiently considered the fact that it is just this theology, or its special form and emphasis, that is standing in the way of thousands of sincere minds who would gladly be religious and enter the church and enjoy its means of grace, but are held back by these mental difficulties that to them are insuperable? Should not the way of faith be made easier and not harder? Is it just or noble for these isoteric thinkers to place burdens upon others that they themselves are no longer willing to bear? Whilst the church should be careful of the weak ones within its own fold, does it not owe a duty to those without? If all or one-half of the progressive thinkers in the Orthodox churches of the land would come to the front and openly say what they honestly believe, the battle would be ended in a very short time; and the result would be seen in a more rational and not less scriptural theology; the pulpit, ceasing to be so poorly apologetic, would become open and honest and manly and strong; the burdens would be largely lifted from faith, and thousands of souls taken from the confusion and turmoil of trying to believe, and feeling that somehow they ought to believe, what, at the same time, in their deeper natures they feel is not true.

The truly progressive thinker can have but one end in view, and that is truth. He cannot serve two masters. Rising above all prejudice and time-serving and policy and cunning and

cost; and if he really have truth and the love of truth in 'the inner parts,' he will hardly pause to ask what the cost may be. This was preeminently the spirit of Jesus Christ. With a dignity that was divine and a calmness that was serene, he moved along in an age of bigotry and narrowness and hypocrisy, rebuking the false, criticising the old, casting aside traditions, and passing beneath the bitter and the cold forms in which truth had been well-nigh buried, he revealed its spirit, and hence his words were instinct with life and power. 'He spake as one having authority;' the authority of truth; for truth will always compel a hearing; if not just at the time, or in the near future, yet after a while, for 'the eternal years' are hers. And he is saying to those who would be his followers to-day, 'Can ye be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized?'

"The responsibilities resting upon the progressive thinkers of to-day are not easily measured. We are living in a period of general unsettling: a kind of transition from the old to the new. The amazing progress of the physical sciences has opened the way to larger conceptions of the material universe and of the wide-extended reign of law. In the presence of stars so distant that the light reaching us now started on its long way before history began, our age is asked to formulate the thought of God. In the presence of universal law we are asked to define the supernatural. Before the full realizations of awakened thought the mighty questions of the future are being re-opened. Science and archæology are challenging the chronology of the Bible; and the doctrine of evolution is asking us to adopt new theories of the creation.

"Now, in the midst of all this, what should the thinkers—thinkers who are not bound by assumed or imposed obligations to defend any mere system, do? Simply this: be true; true to facts and to the laws of thought; and with a confidence in truth that can know no doubt, follow where truth leads; and if the way be dark and uncertain for a time, wait for the morning. In the baptism of truth that is yet to fall upon the minds of men they will cease to debate for the sake of debate, or to defend theories simply because they once supposed them true; they will lose the desire to tear down what others have builded unless it be found false; they will be as willing to follow the old as the new, or the new as the old. In the larger love of truth the thinkers will consent to take great questions out of the heat and passion of pride of debate, and to view them in the light of reason and as matters of common interest. The time should hasten when men will delight in agreements rather than disagreements. The love of truth is yet to be an enthusiasm—an 'inner God,' that will dominate all other feelings.

"The great debates of our world are narrowing down to a few central and vital issues. Not many care any longer to argue about the meaning of *baptizo*, or the personality of Job. The weighty questions that press upon thinkers now are those that relate to God and the future life, and to righteousness.

"Fortunately for the rising genera-

tion, the unsettling of our time is not so much over religion as theology. Men never believed more in religion than now, and never so little in theology; that is, in theology as commonly taught; and yet beneath all the misgivings and doubts as to the forms of theology there is an abiding faith in the substance of those doctrines in which the roots of religion must ever find their life. Mankind believe possibly more than ever before in an established order, an order or a power that 'makes for righteousness;' and believing in the possibility and the fact of the right and the good and the true, though they may call it nature, or law, they are in substance believing in God. If not above nature or outside of nature and law, to them, God is in nature; and perceiving the soul's world of truth and love and right to be eternal, they will be slow to confess themselves as less than immortal. Much of the old theology may change in form and the substance remain. Many of the old theories may be dropped entirely, and religion remain and be the stronger because less encumbered. And some of the old theories must give place to the new, not because they are old, but for the deeper reason that, whilst urged as essential parts of faith, they are in their very nature destructive of faith. Thus, it is useless to any longer ask most thoughtful men to believe in a God who is the best, and at the same time ask them to believe in a theory of his government that makes evil stronger than good, and punishes forever the souls he has brought into being. When we ask men to believe in God, we should show them the works worthy of a God. Evil may indeed, and does appear in the process, or in the evolution of morals toward the perfect; but that is a very different thing from evil appearing as permanent and ineradicable in the last result. It is more, and not less faith in God that is forcing open the long-closed doors to this brighter hope of the final triumph of the good."

THE CO-ORDINATION OF FAITH AND SCEPTICISM.

"Philip findeth Nathaniel, and saith to him, we have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth the son of Joseph. And Nathaniel said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to him and saith of him, behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile." (John 1, 45-47.)

This little scrap of sacred history brings to our observation two very interesting characters in the persons of Philip and Nathaniel. Philip was a convert to the Messiahship of Jesus, and with all the enthusiasm and assurance of a sincere faith in him, he says to Nathaniel, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathaniel was an Israelite who had not met with the Savior, and the mystery involved in the announcement made by Philip gave rise to a vein of honest scepticism, as is clearly shown by his reply: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Faith, as represented by Philip, and scepticism as represen-

ted by Nathaniel, are hereby made to confront each other in close contiguity. There is, however, no conflict between them; but on the contrary, a perfect co-ordination of the two, resulting, as we will see, in a point of harmonious agreement between two equally honest men. These two principles, like the molecular forces in matter, are often found occupying similar attitudes in the same individual mind. We venture to say that every true thinker is well aware of the opposite qualities, but co-ordinate action of the two, in the evolution and development of human thought.

Credulity and belief culminating in faith, and incredulity and doubt culminating in scepticism, are the positive and negative forces that vitalize and electrify our studies. As the common elasticity of all natural bodies is due to the co-ordination of the opposite forces, attraction and repulsion, so is the spring and vivacity of the human mind indebted to the co-ordination of the two opposite principles, faith and scepticism.

Before we proceed any further in the discussion of this subject, we will define the terms faith and scepticism. We mean by faith, the assent of the mind to the truth of a proposition based on testimony, and by scepticism we mean that hesitation of the mind to readily assent to a proposed truth, based on the incompetency of the testimony.

Philip, by what he had heard and seen of Christ, believed him to be the Messiah. Nathaniel felt that the unsupported statement of Philip was insufficient to justify his assent. There is a faith that is unsupported by reason or testimony. That we call fanaticism. There is a scepticism that ignores investigation. That we call prejudice. A blind and unreflecting faith is liable to become dogmatic, illiberal and oppressive. That sort of faith will in the nature of things persecute for opinion's sake. It may do this from no mean motive. This is the faith that induced Saul of Tarsus to persecute the saints, and he declares that he thought he was "doing God's service." A prejudiced and unreasoning scepticism will not be oppressive, at least it never has been; but may degenerate into a degree of scorn and contempt that would obscure the truth. There is danger in extremes, and they should be carefully avoided. Of these two extremes we do not know which is to be the most dreaded. Men who think and investigate will generally be oppressed by one and despised by the other. To choose between these two great evils is very much like choosing to die by fire or cold; for one kindles the fires of persecution, while the other freezes you with cold contempt.

There is this much to be said of fanaticism. Though it has persecuted the world and in many instances obstructed learning, it always did it from pious motives—it was intended for the glory of God. On the other hand, there is this to be said of extreme scepticism: While it has turned with contempt from the truth, and in many instances ignored reason, it never did persecute people for opinion's sake. Now, we will dismiss these two extremes and return to what we conceive to be a rational faith and a rational scepticism. We find one of these, faith, in Philip, who, upon the testi-

mony which he had, believed. The other, scepticism, we find in Nathaniel, who required more testimony in order to believe. The peculiarities of these two principles are found in the interview.

Faith is always impulsive, enthusiastic and confident. Hence Philip speaks with assurance: "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Less assurance might have said: "We have found one answering to the character of Jesus," or, "we think we have found him." That amount of hesitation, however, might have exposed him to the opposition of the orthodox. Scepticism is thoughtful and inquiring; hence Nathaniel answers with an inquiry: "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" A stronger form of scepticism—infidelity—would have said, "No good thing can come out of Nazareth," while cold Atheism would have turned away with a smile. But the true sceptic is an inquirer after the truth. Credulity might have believed the bare statement of Philip; but the honest doubter asked for further testimony.

The faith of Philip was not of that blind, fanatical sort, or he would have showed his contempt for the stupidity or obstinacy of the presumptuous sceptic by leaving him to his doubts. At least he would have called him a heretic. But Philip had more than faith. He had based upon his faith that charity that "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up," that "doth not behave itself unseemly, is not easily provoked," charity "that never faileth." He had a reason for his faith that he was willing should be thoroughly investigated. Hence he replied with great candor and courtesy, "Come and see." Really, our sceptic is "hail fellow well met." If he desires to know the truth, our believer is as ready to give a reason for the "hope that he hath." That is the faith we want. That is conquering faith, and it is destined to take the world, because it is tolerant and progressive. It keeps its eyes open and looks out for the truth. It reads, it studies, it investigates. It may be sometimes mistaken, but it only wants to be convinced, and it will change its theories.

Blind credulity and fanaticism believe by impulse and without reason, and then say it is sacrilegious to investigate. It might have been better for the world if Christianity had followed the example of Philip with more unanimity. It would be better for us all even now if we had more Philips in the church. We are accustomed to calling this an age of tolerance and progress, and compared with mediæval times it is; but even now a preacher is warned not to think upon any new line. He might almost as well be found trying to pass counterfeit money as giving utterance to new and progressive thoughts. We must receive our thoughts as we do our dollars, from the orthodox mint; duly stamped by the Sanhedrim. If one dares to sink a shaft and seek for new gold he is outlawed.

Is our Christianity afraid of its record? Is Christian doctrine so weak and transparent that it cannot bear investigation? If so, I think we had better quit preaching. But we are

not all afraid to "come and see" we may "try the spirits" we do not try the doctrines as well, whether they be of God or not. We will go back to our sceptic. He was anxious for the truth, he investigated, and he went. A vain boaster would have refused the sincere sceptic, the honest doubter is ready to investigate the most every important proposition, not a sceptic from choice; he doubts but because he is unable to believe. It is for want of competent testimony. A man can't shake off his doubts, he can shake the dust from his eyes. You cannot put the darkness out of the room but by introducing the light. Then come along with the light, we may see. It is light that we want.

They went, one with his faith, the other with his scepticism, and the result was the development of Nathaniel yielded to the belief of Philip. So much for a little investigation. It is not within the province of our present plan to investigate the merit of the question there involved, the Messiahship of Jesus. Our aim is to show that a rational faith is not in opposition to a rational scepticism worked in accordance to the harmonious balance of these two men, and it is our hope they will always do so under similar circumstances. They will ever co-ordinate in the development of truth among sincere thinkers. Our Savior did not rebuke scepticism of Nathaniel, but said of him, "Behold an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile." The honest doubter, without duplicity or mercenary intentions. When Jesus said, "How can these things be?" Christ gave him a rational answer. He answered John the Baptist likewise, and even accommodated the incredulity of Thomas, who had said he "would not believe." But Martin Luther sought for a rational reason for the infallibility of the church, and the wholesale and retail of her excommunications, he was answered by a better communication. And stranger than fiction, when Zwingli doubted the dogma of transubstantiation, Luther denounced him as a heretic.

Now, we believe in faith; we have faith; "without faith it is impossible to please God." But we believe in reason and common sense as well. Faith must work; it must investigate. It may "remove mountains," but it can never stop the current of truth. It cannot make truth out of falsehood. We know, and so do you, that for the church tried to do that, but it failed. When scepticism proposed the rotary motion of the planets, Galileo was sceptical enough to use a telescope and ask faith to support it, she put him in a dangerous position. Faith opposed astronomy, geology, art of printing, and nearly every scientific truth, and but for the honest doubters we have had, we propose we would to-day be under mediæval law. But that sort of faith is not the basis of a pure and unadorned religion. A true faith and an honest scepticism work in co-ordination for the glory of God and the development of the truth. Then, my brethren, let us take our faith and our doubts to God and ask him to guide us in the way of truth and righteousness.

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