

On the whole, the Rev. Timothy Dwight Bobbins did not have a very redoubtable appearance. It appeared doubtful if he could wrestle very successfully with the infidel. Perhaps, however, he had some pebbles tucked about him somewhere, with which eventually to crush the towering Goliath. At any rate there was every appearance of sincerity about him, and without doubt he expected to pluck a brand from the burning.

The heavy artillery brought up in the rear of him; namely, the almost, though not quite, Rev. William Theophilus Pippins. He was a student, and had not yet been ordained. He was the exact model of a "theologue." His hair was long, his cheeks thin, his eyes watery and guarded by green spectacles. His suit was the sober livery of black. He wore a dingy dress-coat buttoned tightly around his spare form. His pants were rather too short, and his gaiters rather too big. I suppose they were a present to him from some benevolent church society, the cast-off clothing of some rich deacon. He wore a silk hat that had probably seen about ten summers and eleven winters. It was somewhat weather-beaten and a little out of style. His arms were loaded with books, all learned commentaries on the Bible, explanations of difficult passages, and harmonies of the Gospels. He had a Bible in the Hebrew and a Testament in the Greek. All these were carefully laid upon the table, and the student went back and brought another pile. He then stood ready to open and read any passage that might be indicated by his solemn leader.

"I am a humble candle of the Lord. I hope to be able to give you some light," said Bobbins.

"Proceed," said Robert. "I, too, am an anxious seeker after light."

"I want to go back to the creation of the world," said Bobbins. "We must begin with the foundation."

"That's right," said Ingersoll. "I'm quite curious about that. I want to know, for instance, how it happened that there were days and nights before the sun itself was made."

"Oh, I can easily explain that!" said Bobbins. "You know this was a kind of picture or panorama that passed before Moses."

"I didn't know that," said Ingersoll. "The Bible don't say so."

"I know that, but the commentaries do. They are got up by the best scholars of the church, and they show just what the bible means. We couldn't understand it, of course, without."

"Are the commentaries inspired?" asked Bob.

"Oh, no, they are not inspired; but they explain things very naturally. The bible doesn't seem near so wonderful after you've read them. It's much easier to believe it."

"The Bible you say, is inspired by Almighty God?" said Bob.

"Oh, yes, every word of it is inspired."

"And yet the book that God wrote, who is all-wise and all-powerful, can't be understood until we have read a set of commentaries by men as fallible as ourselves. Now, if God can't reveal himself, who has every instrumentality at command, I don't give much for man's help."

"Oh, that is his way of working. He means that we shall seek after the truth."

"And, if we don't find it by reading the commentaries of ignorant men, we must go to hell. I think that's a queer kind of a God."

"But the really essential parts of the Bible can be understood," said Bobbins. "It's only the scientific and historic parts that need explaining. For instance, love thy neighbor as thyself. Isn't that plain enough?"

"Certainly," said Bob. "That's true. We know it by our reason. It don't need inspiration any more than mathematics. Why don't you say geometry is inspired?"

"Well," said Bobbins. "I don't know as I can explain that. Things that we can comprehend we don't need inspiration for. We need inspiration for what we can't comprehend."

"Well, let us stick a pin there," said Bob. "We don't need inspiration for what we can comprehend by our natural reason, but for things that we can't comprehend. Now, for things that we can't comprehend, how is inspiration going to help us?"

"Why, by showing to our reason"—

"Hold on, man," said Bob. "You have already said that what is plain to reason doesn't need inspiration. If what is called inspiration appeals to our reason, and convinces it, then by that very fact it is not inspiration it is simply nature."

Bobbins was bothered, no mistake. He requested Theophilus to hand him a big book. He pored over it for a while, wiped the perspiration from his brow, and then proceeded.

"I have it now. Inspiration proves itself by a miracle."

"A miracle!" said Bob. "What is a miracle?"

"Something that is above and beyond nature, like the sun and moon standing still."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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