

Scientific Wisdom.

[Helps toward the tract "Can Sins be Forgiven," from Mrs. R. A. Bell, Waskom, Texas.]

"The penalty of a misdeed treads on the heels of a transgressor." A sinful act can never be eliminated from the human mind by prayers.

The sincere Catholic believes that his sins can be forgiven in a few minutes, if he will but confess to the priest. He is then ready to commit other crimes whenever he may desire to do so. It is not so with the man of a reasoning, investigating turn of mind; he thinks he will surely be punished, mentally and physically, for misdemeanors and does not ask to be forgiven, as there is no personal God to whom he could reasonably go. The true God is that noble impulse in man, without which we would be no better than the wild beast that roams the forest. This spirit directs our footsteps in the path of virtue; it asks not forgiveness of sins, but bids us sin no more, if we would be happy here and now. This most potent factor, that has generated the spirit of truth and goodness in the mind of man, is true morality.

With some, belief is religion, and is far better than deeds. In conversation with a church member we may sum up all the good things that it would take to constitute true religion; it would not be accepted as worth anything if church, faith and bible were left out. But sum up the worth of those three attributes when morality is left out. They say religion has a restraining influence on immoral and disorderly conduct, but from close observation we are compelled to deny it. It is only the fear of getting into the clutches of the law that restrains them. I mean all who need restraint; some do not. Divine sanction has but little effect on the mind of any rational man. That there are many good people who call themselves Christians, we do not doubt, but their belief does not make them better. They are a class that would be good in or out of the church. But we all know that there is a miserable set who are constantly using the church for a cloak, who assume a sanctimonious air, and kneel in prayer, believing that their sins will be blotted out just for the asking. Until that belief is wholly obliterated from the human mind, we can never even hope to see the time when our pockets will not be weighted down with keys. They claim something superior to morality, when they have not even attained to the perfection of that. I have asked ministers not to hold out reward to people for doing right, nor punishment for doing wrong. It teaches us to do right for the reward we may expect, and to avoid doing wrong for the fear of being punished. That inculcates a selfish motive. We should be prompted by purer motives. Pay

an honest debt and fulfil all obligations as far as lies in our power, not because the law compels us, but because it is best for others and best for ourselves.

Not a great while ago I was in company with several ladies who were discussing the immoral conduct of a very devoted member of the Presbyterian church. He was one of Shreveport's (La.) prominent merchants, who failed and absconded with other peoples' money. The people had the utmost confidence in him. He often gave the church munificent sums. This he could afford, for he was giving away what did not belong to him. He deposited money in several banks in Canada, and went abroad with his family. One of the ladies above mentioned expressed the opinion that he had better be on his knees praying to God to forgive him for the great wrong he had done the men who had reposed confidence in him. When I remarked that he had better restore his ill-gotten gains to the rightful owners, and that would settle it with God without prayers, one of them gave me a very defiant look, as much as to say, "you are expressing infidel sentiments."

[Helps toward the tract "Character of God and Bible Immorality," from Joel M. Berry, Nat'l Soldiers' Home, Ohio.]

Luther said that a man might commit the grossest immorality, if he only believed enough in the Lord Jesus Christ. Beecher said that the God of the bible is a moral monstrosity. The murderer Holmes believed that he could kill all the innocent children he wanted to, and that all that he would have to do was to repent and go right to heaven. The bible tells us that Jesus came, not to bring peace, but a sword. "They who will not that I shall rule over them, bring hither and slay them before me," is the same spirit of murder which has manifested itself in all the Christian nations of Europe, and does even today, where standing armies are kept to clutch the throats of their brother Christians on the slightest provocation. This same spirit extends to the next world, for St. John, the divine, tells us they once had a desperate war in heaven.

Ingersoll says all that is necessary for a person to do in order to find out what the bible is, is to read it and believe it as it reads. That is just what they won't do. Nineteenths of those today claiming to be the greatest lovers and believers in the bible are as ignorant of what it really teaches as a horse is of the holy land. I prepared for the ministry and spent three years in the pulpit, but when I began to read the bible and to understand just what it says, my opinion of it changed very quickly. Most people read such parts only as they wish to believe, or know only such parts

as the preacher or priest reads to them. They don't know anything about those things recorded in the bible, said to be done by the express commands of God, that are shocking to humanity and to every idea we have of moral justice. We read that the Israelites put to the sword whole nations of people who had not given them the least offense, destroying all men, women and children, sparing neither age nor infancy. Wherein could the smiling infants offend? Can we believe in the moral justice of a God who commands their assassination? In Numbers, chapter XXXI, we read of Moses and the priests meeting the Jewish army returning from one of their murdering, plundering excursions. Moses was wroth because they had saved all the women alive, and ordered them back to kill every woman and child except the girls and young women, and these the officers were to keep alive and bring home for their own use, thus consigning to debauchery 32,000 young women and children. Among the detestable villains in any period of the world is it possible to find a greater than Moses?

The character of the God described in the old testament is entirely different from the God described in the new testament, and there are also two different devils. The bible says about 6,000 years ago God created a beautiful world out of nothing, with beautiful flowers, beasts, birds, fishes, and peopled it to suit himself; then gets vexed with his work and drowns out the whole business, except eight persons and two of each kind of animals. Did any devil ever commit a more foolish, atrocious crime? Then in the new testament Jesus is claimed to be God himself, and God's son. In the old testament the devil is represented as a gentleman of honor and truthfulness, whom God salutes, and they enter into a friendly conversation about his servant, Job. The devil told Adam and Eve to eat all the fruit they wanted, and they should not die, and he told the truth for they did not die. But in the new testament he is called the deceiver of mankind. He even tried to lead astray God himself. According to Genesis II, the Lord told the man and woman that on the very day they should eat of a certain fruit in the garden they should surely die. They did eat, but lived hundreds of years. Did God know when he put the man in the garden how things were going to terminate? If he was a God of infinite love and wisdom, as is claimed, he could not help but know it. But in order to save the credit of the bible they will tell you he was only experimenting a little. In the fourth chapter it tells us that the first man ever born into

the world was a murderer. How is that for a beginning with a God of love and wisdom? According to Exodus II, Moses commits murder. In chapter IV we are told that the anger of the Lord is kindled against Moses, and he tries to kill him, but don't quite succeed. According to Genesis VI, God repents of doing such a foolish thing as to make man on earth. In Genesis XIX, we have the account of Lot and his two daughters. If such reading should come into the house in any other book than the bible, it would be burned on sight. In Genesis XXVI, Isaac lies about his wife. In chapter XXXI, Rachel lies to her father. In Genesis XII, Abraham lies about his wife. Then God blessed him; but in chapter XX, he lies again. Nice reading to be placed in our schools, or to be read by our children for morning and evening lessons! Will this make them believe that God is the source and origin of truth, and that from him error and falsehood cannot emanate? Would an all-wise God do or say things and repent of them? The old testament tells of God's repenting thirty times. In Isaiah, 45th chapter, it says, "I am the Lord and there is none else; I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I, the Lord, do all these things." So if he does all these things there is no sense in charging them up to anyone else. If you want a nice chapter to read turn to Ezekiel XXIII. It is nice reading for morning and evening prayer in the family.

The quickest and surest way to make Liberals of moral people is to get them to read the bible, after they have learned to understand whatever they read, so as to judge for themselves whether it is all true and all fit for young people to read, believe and follow.

[I wish everyone who favors the Promotion of Scientific Wisdom in place of the bible, would send ten cents for five copies of this TORCH, mark these two articles, then write on the margin, "please read, and hand to your next neighbor, or return to———." Then loan them in different directions around you. All helpers are requested to try their hand on the second tract, during October: "False Claims of Christianity; Science Promotes Civilization."—ELIZA MOWRY BLIVEN.]

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