



For the Torch of Reason.

Heaven is Here.

By Grace E. Gruber.

Where rushes are growing, and green leaves are blowing,
Where willows are waving to breeze so serene;
And the golden rod flowers bedeck the small bowers,
And bright English daisy is rightly the queen:
With the bright sun beguiling, all nature is smiling,
And my soul is entranced by the beauties of morn;
Here nature's bestowing, with sweet zephyrs blowing,
All the splendor of nature, this scene to adorn.
Then upward while gazing, to expanse amazing,
I'm held by a power which I cannot conceal;
While intensely I ponder, I naturally wonder,
Spellbound by those beauties which nature reveal.
To each of us mortals, thro' Earth's wondrous portals,
A bright light is beaming to darkness erase;
Yet, can it be better, when unbound from earth's fetter,
If we find not these beauties, which in life we embrace?
We know earth has bowers, clear streams, and bright flowers,
Yet we've all felt the thorns which belong to the rose;
Yet who would not bear them, and gladly compare them
With the streamlets of myth, of which nobody knows?
Remember the dear ones, the loved ones, the near ones,
That in life we would clasp to our heart's warm embrace;
Should we enter a sphere and not find our loves there,
O, who could, or who would, find joy in that place?
Just give me the earth, with its sorrows, its mirth,
The loved ones I cherish and fondly would hold.
Life's day is a stream, whether rough or serene,
Gliding onward! yet keeping the secret untold:
O, yet if we would, ah, how truly we could
Shed a heavenly light on our own earthly sphere;
Help the wayward, the blind—love our brother mankind,
Then sigh not for heaven, for heaven is here.

The Plan of Salvation.

By Edgar C. Beall

First, if this "saving faith" is a "gift of God," and he purposely withholds it from certain men, could any thing more unjust be conceived than that he should then damn those men? If it is God's plan to inspire faith in the minds of all who are to be saved, is he not then responsible for the skepticism and consequent punishment of all disbelievers? Some Christians hold that faith may be obtained by prayer. To ask a confirmed atheist to pray for faith is about as rational as to advise a drowning man to swim to the shore for a boat. There are thousands of noble men and women who have not faith enough even to begin to pray, and if orthodoxy is true, they must suffer eternally, or else it is not ortho-

dox doctrine that belief in Christianity is essential to salvation.

There is no possibility here of evading a dilemma. If belief is an absolute requisite to salvation, then the millions of sincere disbelievers must suffer the most heinous injustice conceivable. Or, if no such condition is absolutely necessary, then the story of atonement becomes a fable, and the plan of salvation a farce. What was the need that Christ should die to save the believing sinners if the disbelievers can be entitled to the same salvation? And if honest Infidels can not be saved the same as believers, then God is measurelessly unjust and cruel.

It is sometimes admitted that if a man should live a pure life, that is, exhibit the sinlessness of a Christian, without faith, there might be some hope of his salvation. But if it is conceded that simple morality, or honest devotion to the Religion of Humanity, can entitle a man to salvation, is not this a positive contradiction of every fundamental teaching of the Christian religion as distinguished from Atheistic or Humanitarian philosophy? If the skeptic can fare as well as the believer, of what value are Christ's words to Nicodemus: "Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God?" Why should a man be converted, or "born again," if he can be endowed with the elements of holiness at his natural birth? And that this is possible can no longer be denied. It is vain to say that lofty-minded Infidels are indebted to careful training in childhood, or Christian parentage, for their moral excellence. It is now conceded by the most eminent theologians, that all the moral principals of Christianity were taught and practiced by heathen philosophers who never heard of Christ or the Christian Bible. Hence, there can be no reason why men today can not attain the same development independently of Christian dogmas. But, granting, for the sake of argument, that the word belief as used in the Bible, does not necessarily mean belief at all, and that to avoid any reflection upon the justice of God, it may be interpreted to mean "good works," or purity of character; the question still remains, would there be any justice in consigning even a wicked man to everlasting pain, when the very cause of his depravity was an organization and an environment which emanated solely from God himself? If a man is inherently vile, and disposed only to evil, is he not an ob-

ject of pity, rather than revenge? There are idiots in morality as well as idiots in intellect; and although society is justified in forcible restraining such unfortunate persons, in self-defence, why should an omnipotent God, whom they can not harm, after creating them, inflict upon them a kind of punishment, which, in cutting off the possibility of reformation, could serve only to gratify the malignity of a demon?

Second, if faith is not an especial gift of God, and if it is proper that we should be guided by reason in the selection of a creed, ought we then to be cast into a "lake of eternal fire" for choosing a belief or disbelief which is in strict accordance with our reason? If the Roman Catholic Church should indeed be the "Alleinseligmachende," and our reason tells us it is but a corruption of the true fold of Christ, and that Protestantism expresses the true will of God, ought we to be punished for being Protestant? But suppose our reason assures us that neither Romanism nor Protestantism, nor any other form of supernaturalism is worthy of credence, ought we then to be held guilty because we remain true to our convictions? Surely but one logical answer can be given to this question.

Third, if we do not receive our "saving faith" as an especial divine gift, and dare not trust the voice of reason, there can be but one other way left; viz., by accident. That any soul could merit endless torment for not being aware of certain conditions which only accident or chance could make known, is an idea which of course needs no discussion. We are thus compelled to admit that no Deity could justly require human beings to observe any conditions whatsoever as necessary to salvation, since the possibility of our observing the conditions would rest with him alone, and he would therefore himself be responsible for every case of non-acceptance.

With regard to these obvious defects in the Scheme of Redemption, orthodoxy has given and can give but one reply; viz., "There is no sincere Infidelity." And it is worthy of note that in the New Testament no special provision is ever mentioned for honest unbelief on the part of any who have heard the Gospel. However, nothing is easier demonstrated than the existence of millions who conscientiously reject the supernaturalism of the Bible in the face of every argument that can be presented in its defense. And linked with this fact the conviction must come to every candid and reflective mind, that the Plan of Salvation is consistent with neither the constitution of human nature, nor any logical conception of a just or merciful God.

The Brain.

By R. G. Ingersoll.

The dark continent of motive and desire has never been explored. In the brain, that wondrous world with one inhabitant, there are recesses dim and dark, treacherous sands and dangerous shores, where seeming sirens tempt and fade; streams that rise in unknown lands from hidden springs, strange seas with ebb and flow of tides, resistless billows urged by storms of flame, profound and awful depths hidden by mist of dreams, obscure and phantom realms where vague and fearful things are half revealed, jungles where passion's tigers crouch, and skies of cloud and blue where fancies fly with painted wings that dazzle and mislead; and the poor sovereign of this pictured world is led by old desires and ancient hates, and stained by crimes of many vanished years, and pushed by hands that long ago were dust, until he feels like some bewildered slave that Mockery has throned and crowned.

Priests, Kings and People.

Then the different nations, in a transport of fury, were going to tear in pieces the men who had thus deceived them; but the legislator, arresting this movement of violence, addressed the chiefs and doctors: "What!" said he, "instructors of nations, is it thus that you have deceived them?" And the terrified priests replied: "O legislator! we are men. The people are so superstitious! they have themselves encouraged these errors." And the kings said: "O legislator! the people are so servile and so ignorant! they prostrated themselves before the yoke, which we scarcely dared to show them." Then the legislator, turning to the people: "People!" said he, "remember what you have just heard; they are two indelible truths. Yes, you yourselves cause the evils of which you complain; yourselves encourage the tyrants, by a base adulation of their power, by an imprudent admiration of their false beneficence, by servility in obedience, by licentiousness in liberty, and by a credulous reception of every imposition. On whom shall you wreak vengeance for the faults committed by your own ignorance and cupidity?" And the people, struck with confusion, remained in mournful silence.—From Volney's Ruins of Empires.