

**THEOLOGY**

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Theology by John Miller

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**JOHN MILLER**

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BY  
REV. JOHN MILLER.



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## P R E F A C E .

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No one doubts that the Syrian bishops bred Mohammed. If Mohammed had confronted a purer Christianity, the world would have been spared Islam. No one doubts that Catholicism bred Voltaire. If Paris had been Switzerland, and Voltaire had witnessed a rural priesthood, he would have had no zeal to "crush the wretch," and would have shrunk abashed from the rôle of a blasphemer. No one doubts that Lambeth bred Jefferson. If London had not made a Botany Bay of the Chesapeake, and given the Colonists drunkards and dead-beats for clergy, Virginia, of all States, would have been devout; at least, she would have been respectful, and Monticello would have been busy on other tasks than a brutal skepticism.

The veriest child in reasoning, looking along the line of years, would say, The best way to prevent Islam would have been to reform Syria; and, kindling at the thought, would swell with a sort of impatience at the wish that Rome had not fed Voltaire, and that Lambeth had found out the work she was doing for her distant missions.

But alas! States repent, but the Church hardly ever. Britain yields and slowly listens to the truth,

and shapes her state constitution, but who ever heard of a Church doing this? The Church is a Rehoboam, and it is a sort of satire upon her history that she speaks of reform, and takes the name upon her books of the "Great Reformation," and when we come to fathom it, there never was a reform at all. The Church unbendingly kept on in her course, and what was called a reform was the expulsion from her side of her purest saints, and the rallying of these in a separate and disowned communion.

When did a church ever reform?

An opportunity for this very thing is what this book, with all the zeal that it can command, would like to offer. What is it that is bringing such assaults in our day? Who is creating Ingersoll? What is the Lambeth or the Syrian quag that poisons Science, and makes all but believing men despair of Christ, and half give up our inherited religion? Is there anything in the direction of the attacks, which, like the iron in the mountain, tells where the thunderbolt most loves to strike, and as watching Voltaire shows where religion suffered, and watching Islam shows where Syria was weak, is there anything in Spencer, or anything in Mill, or anything in Ingersoll, which shows where they like to thrust, and where there are some hidden spots that belong not to the gospel?

If there be, then, in our day, two courses are possible, either the universal course, which returns with the certainty of light, and which gives up Christianity to its corruptions, or else the ideal course, never

yet adopted by the good, of finding these corruptions out, and actually avoiding scoffs by clearing off the sottishnesses which have mixed with our religion.

And now, to take specimens of these things:—

1. The doctrine of *Atonement* looks like an angry boil upon the body of the Redeemer. All men are embittered. Christians have never rested in one theory of the transfer. Protestants have tried to make one, but they have been as variant as their schools, and infidels could go leisurely through the Church and pick out, in the hostile camps, the invectives they required, in the speeches of one school of Christ denouncing and ridiculing another. Why was it not long ago that the Church, doting upon the Atonement, and believing, as a good man ought, that it is the very essence of salvation, enquired down to the very roots of the idea, and found that there had been a splinter—that there had been a foreign substance at the very bottom of the sore, and that the infidel was right, that the atonement, *with that in it*, was an atrocity as a gospel?

Instead of that the Governmental and the Moral and the Exemplary and the Penal, all have taken their places as Atonements. They have given up each other. Combined, they have given up Christ. And Ingersoll comes in, and denounces the whole gospel, and brands as a bloodthirsty God the Being that could have revealed such essential parts of it.

Now why, at this late day, cannot the Church



come in, and ferret out its angry difficulty? All these theories are right. The Governmental and the Moral and the Exemplary and the Penal, all are elements of truth, and are only brutal when they decry each other. The splinter lies deeper. We are not to cut out the Atonement as a tumor, and that, practically, all these combatants do, but to treat it for its life, and to find out that the whole festering is around its root, and that Vindictory Justice, that elemental point in Ethics, is at the basis of the whole disorder.

What is Vindictory Justice?

This book will show that our treatment of it may be altogether human.

Protestants have been told for centuries that it is a native trait, that it stands on its own bottom. No help has been given to it but that it be the blood-thirstiness seen by Ingersoll. It is a native revenge, seated as lawfully as pity. And all through these sad years men have been up in the branches debating consequential facts, when the whole difficulty in the case lay in the meaning of Vengeance.

Give God *revenge*, and not simply (1) benevolence, and (2) a love of holiness, and make this trait primordial (though it be forbidden to men), and you have a Monster, and you have this Monster crushing you for years, and patterning to Mill and Hume the whole nature of your believing. So much for one point. Teach a vengeance which is derivative, and not primordial, and which flows from a love of holiness, and not a thirst to smite, and which is made

necessary by a need to punish, as a constitutional necessity of a King, and you rob Ingersoll at once; you enthrone a God of pity, and, instead of cutting out the vitals in order to get rid of the disease, you have found out the splinter, and you simply remove it, and keep unhurt the very essence of our system.

II. And so of *Hell*. The world seems moving against it. The Congregationalists made President in Britain a man who denies Gehenna.\* No faith is rising faster than "Conditional Immortality."

Whose fault is it?

If there be an eternal pit, it is cruel to hide the news of it.

And yet, as in the case of Ransom, the Church has provoked the defection.

It will be seen in this book how Sovereignty has been lifted up.

We will not anticipate.

Place God out of the sphere of our humanity; (1) let Him do as He please; (2) let Him act for display; (3) let Him live for Himself; (4) let Him damn as He lists, and not out of the necessities of His reign; and (5) let Him take that damnation (hard enough to be believed) and represent it as for His own glory; and no wonder the Church shrinks. Examine where the catapult strikes, and we will find that it is at these spots every time. Make God a loving Father; show His own horror for wrath; tell His own story of sacrifice; show His own eagerness to redeem; deny sovereignty except as it is holy, and deny Hell except as it is a hard need, as unwelcome to God as to

man; and the whole strain is taken off. Ingersoll would not be able to triumph so against the Pit, and we could return to its eternal vengeance, if we gave God human traits, and gave Hell human qualities, of unconquerable and dauntless sinning.

We grime our God, and then, of course, feel the pressure, almost unbearable, of these terrible revelations.

III. Giving God an excuse for Hell in so light a thing as display, we give a man an excuse for Heaven in so light a thing as *faith*. The rows of felons that are saved, and come out radiant under the noose, create a recoil that ministers know little of. It is a standing burlesque upon Redemption. In this whole region of salvation by faith is the Church's greatest danger. Put together certain modern reformations, first, Conditional Immortality, second, Perseverance of the Saints, and third, this salvation which comes punctually to nearly all that are hanged, and you have a system against which a heretic may be the friend of God. This book assails (1) the Trinity; (2) ghost life; (3) un-Adamic relations of Christ; (4) un-moral and merely believing Faith; (5) Protestant Justification; (6) Certain Perseverance, and (7) Sovereignty, hung like the stars of heaven upon sovereignty itself. Had it been printed centuries ago, and had it opposed in the same strain (1) Monkery; (2) Martyrdom; (3) the Wafer; (4) the Right of Kings; (5) Forgiveness by the Priest; (6) Intercession by the Dead, and (7) Regeneration by the Rite of Baptism, it would have