

him aid and comfort." According to Mr. Black, we should all have liberty of conscience except when directly governed by God. In that country where God is king, liberty cannot exist. In this position, I admit that he is upheld and fortified by the "sacred" text. Within the Old Testament there is no such thing as religious toleration. Within that volume can be found no mercy for an unbeliever. For all who think for themselves, there are threatenings, curses, and anathemas. Think of an infinite being who is so cruel, so unjust, that he will not allow one of his own children the liberty of thought! Think of an infinite God acting as the direct governor of a people, and yet not able to command their love! Think of the author of all mercy imbruing his hands in the blood of helpless men, women, and children, simply because he did not furnish them with intelligence enough to understand his law! An earthly father who cannot govern by affection is not fit to be a father; what, then, shall we say of an infinite being who resorts to violence, to pestilence, to disease, and famine, in the vain effort to obtain even the respect of a savage? Behold this passage, read from the heart of cruelty:

"If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods which thou hast not known, thou nor thy fathers, . . . thou shalt not consent unto him; nor hearken unto him, neither shalt thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him, but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people; and thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die."

This is the religious liberty of the Bible. If you had lived in Palestine, and if the wife of your bosom, dearer to you than your own soul, had said: "I like the religion of India better than that of Palestine," it would have been your duty to kill her. "Your eye must not pity her, your hand must be first upon her, and afterwards the hand of all the people." If she had said: "Let us worship the sun—the sun that clothes the earth in garments of green—the sun, the great fire-side of the world—the sun that covers the hills and valleys with flowers—that gave me your face, and made it possible for me to look into the eyes of my babe—let us worship the sun," it was your duty to kill her. "You must throw the first stone, and then against her bosom—a heart that with love for you—you had

thrown the jagged and cruel rock, and had seen the red stream of her life cooling from the dumb lips of death, you could then look up and receive the congratulations of the God whose commandment you had obeyed. Is it possible that a being of infinite mercy ordered a husband to kill his wife for the crime of having expressed an opinion on the subject of religion? Has there been found upon the records of the savage world anything more perfectly senseless than this commandment of Jehovah? This is justified on the ground that "blasphemy was a breach of political allegiance, and idolatry an act of overt treason." We can understand how a human king stands in need of the service of his people. We can understand how the desertion of any of his soldiers weakens his army; but were the king infinite in power, his strength would still remain the same, and under no conceivable circumstances could the enemy triumph.

I insist that, if there is an infinitely good and wise God, he beholds with pity the misfortunes of his children. I insist that such a God would know the mists, the clouds, the darkness enveloping the human mind. He would know how few stars are visible in the intellectual sky. His pity, not his wrath, would be excited by the efforts of his blind children, groping in the night to find the cause of things, and endeavoring, through their tears, to see some dawn of hope. Filled with awe by their surroundings, by fear of the unknown, he would know that when, kneeling, they poured out their gratitude to some unseen power, even to a visible idol, it was, in fact, intended for him. An infinitely good being, had he the power, would answer the reasonable prayer of an honest savage, even when addressed to wood and stone.

The atrocities of the Old Testament, the threatenings, maledictions, and curses of the "inspired book," are defended on the ground that the Jews had a right to treat their enemies as their enemies treated them; and in this connection is this remarkable statement: "In your treatment of hostile barbarians you not only may lawfully, you must necessarily, adopt their mode of warfare. If they come to conquer you, they may be conquered by you; if they give no quarter, they are entitled to none; if the death of your whole population be their purpose, you may defeat it by exterminating theirs."

For a man who is a "Christian policeman," and has taken upon himself to defend the Christian religion; for one who follows the Master who said that when smitten on one cheek you must turn the other, and who again and again enforced the idea that you must overcome evil with good, it is hardly consistent to declare