

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO INGERSOLL.

The Two Ways.

THERE are two ways. One is to live for God. That has been tried, and the result has always been the same. It was tried in Palestine many years ago, and the people who tried it were not protected by their god. They were conquered, overwhelmed and exiled. They lost their country and were scattered over the earth. For many centuries they expected assistance from their god. They believed that they would be gathered together again, that their cities and temples and altars would be rebuilt, that they would again be the favorites of Jehovah, that with his help they would overcome their enemies and rule the world. Century by century the hope has grown weaker and weaker, until now it is regarded by the intelligent as a foolish dream.

Living for God was tried in Switzerland, and it ended in slavery and torture. Every avenue that led to improvement, to progress, was closed. Only those in authority were allowed to express their thoughts. No one tried to increase the happiness of people in this world. Innocent pleasure was regarded as sin, laughter was suppressed, all natural joy despised, and love itself denounced as sin. They amused themselves with fasting and prayer, hearing sermons, talking about endless pain, committing to memory the genealogies in the Old Testament, and now and then burning one of their fellow-men.

Living for God was tried in Scotland. The people became the serfs and slaves of the blessed Kirk. The ministers became petty tyrants. They poisoned the very springs of life. They interfered with every family, invaded the privacy of every home, sowed the seeds of superstition and fear, and filled the darkness with devils. They claimed to be divinely inspired, that they delivered the messages of God, that to deny their authority was blasphemy, and that all who refused to do their bidding would suffer eternal pain. Under their government, Scotland was a land of sighing and sorrow, of grief and pain. The people were slaves.

Living for God was tried in New England. A Government was formed in accordance with the Old Testament. The laws, for the most part, were petty and absurd, the penalties cruel and bloody to the last degree. Religious liberty was regarded as a crime, as an insult to God. Persons who differed in belief from those in power were persecuted, whipped, maimed and exiled. People supposed to be in league with the Devil were imprisoned or killed. A theological government was established, ministers were the agents of God, and they dictated the laws and fixed the penalties. Everything was under the supervision of the clergy. They had no pity, no mercy. With all their hearts they hated the