

which history teaches have been the prolific source of the most bitter and inhuman persecution—war and hate; and I think it is time that intelligent people ceased to insist on them as infallible truths, or to demand of men an unthinking acceptance of them as the chief factor in securing their salvation.

To me the great lesson of the past is, that Religion and Theology must part company. They are parting company, and the progress of the last half century is very encouraging. But the great obstacle to this is the universal nightmare of infallibility, as embodied in Holy Book, or Holy Church, or Holy Man; which blinds our eyes to the Inward Light, and stops our ears to the "still small voice within." The idea of infallibility is the conservatism of the ages, which has striven to stop the progress of radicalism at every step it would take in obedience to the Light within. Conservatism says, "You mustn't go too fast." Radicalism says, "If it's a good thing, the sooner we get it the better." But conservatism replies, "Oh, but you mustn't get it before we are ready for it." Now, that is all bosh. Why, we never get anything of the kind before we are ready for it. The world has always had to wait and suffer for generations before new ideas have been able to fight their way into recognition against conservatism. Conservatism says, "You mustn't go any further than the people are educated up"; at the same time it does nothing itself to promote that education, and opposes the efforts of others. A radical is a man who lives 100 years ahead of his time. He is called a fanatic by his contemporaries, but the next generation builds a monument to him as a reformer.

This idea of infallibility is almost synonymous with orthodoxy; and it is this fell spirit of orthodoxy which in all ages has forced other ideas up or down out of their legitimate places, and blinded the eye, and stopped the ear to the dictates of the inward guide. It was this fell spirit of orthodoxy that crucified Jesus, that conducted the In-

quisition, and the Auto da Fe; that persecuted the Quakers, and disowned Hopper and Maryatt,—and yet the sufferers in these cases were righteous men.

I believe that religion is an emotional influence or power which leads to the performance of a form of worship, or the acceptance of a confession of faith, or the following of a course of conduct through life, which is supposed to secure salvation. And I believe that religion will continue to be emotional in its nature, but it must be reasonable. We must not ask people to believe what we can't explain, nor they understand. But that is just what the church does; and here is an example: I once asked one of the ministers at Pleasantville to explain to me the idea of the Trinity,—and this after he had catechised me, and expressed a willingness to enlighten me. He finally admitted, however, that he didn't understand it himself; but that as he found in the Bible that which called for such a dogma, he was bound to teach it without thought or question. A sorry confession, indeed. Here let me say briefly that nearly all nations and religions have made use of this Tri-une thought in their efforts to explain the various natural phenomena around them. But that is not religion; it is scientific speculation. I would like to say a word here about the conflict between religion and science. There need be no conflict at all; but if you incorporate some half-baked scientific idea into a religious creed, and assert that it is infallible, and eternally true, because a so-called infallible and Holy Bible teaches it, you have immediately inaugurated a righteous war between science and religion, but with religion on the side of unrighteousness.

These contests are now, happily, almost over; but the creeds still hold on to their theology, and the church still asks intelligent people to believe childish and unreasonable superstitions. Even our discipline has its creed, wherein particular stress is laid on the "miraculous birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," as the corner-