

THEORETICAL vs. PRACTICAL CREEDS.

Who has not been struck with the difference between the practice and theory of those who adhere to the creeds of the various sects. They preach positively and repeatedly that crimes and sins will be surely punished in everlasting torture from which there is no chance of escape, and no hope of mercy or pity ever helping them. They preach that "Straight is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it," – and that therefore, the great mass of mankind are on the broad road, which they say, leads to the irrevocable doom of eternal torture.

And yet those who profess this, contradict it by their acts. Parents whose children are walking any but the narrow way, are careless and seemingly indifferent. Ministers who preach thus, eat, drink and are merry, and feel content to preach on "The beauties of nature" – "Anti Mormonism," or "Longfellow our great poet" – all of which seems very inconsistent with their professed belief. But they all have a way of solacing their minds by saying: God will do right; he will have mercy on my sons and my daughters, and all my relatives and my friends. The great centre of hope seems to be that sometime, perhaps just the moment of death, they will say or think – may God forgive my life of sin.

A forcible example of this was recently furnished in the case of "Jesse James," the notorious outlaw, robber and murderer, who, for a number of years, at the head of a band of his kind, has been the terror of Missouri. He was very recently shot, and it is said never after spoke and was conscious but a short time. He was buried from a Presbyterian Church, three ministers officiating. They detailed some of his honorable and manly (?) traits of character, and hoped that God would have mercy upon him – for possibly in his conscious moments

after being shot, he might perchance have said, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Now we object, not to the benevolence which could desire for Jesse a place more tolerable than that the church has drawn and painted for the sinner, but we do ask in the name of common sense – Where is the consistency of such conduct?

We see their difficulty to be an endeavor to make peace and harmony, between the traditions of men framed into church creeds in the dark ages, and enlightened common sense and reason of to-day. But how sadly they fail to reach any reasonable conclusion. If they could but leave human creeds and take God's Word, allowing it to interpret itself, how it would all become clear and plain, and grandly harmonious and consistent.
