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The evolution of religions

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# The Evolution of Religions

By ✓  
Everard Bierer

" Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good."

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1906

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## PREFACE

**D**URING a long life occupied mostly in the practice of law, I have spent much of my leisure time, and especially since largely quitting practice in the last few years, in the study of the systems of religion of the world and of religious literature, both ancient and modern. The Bible I have studied most thoroughly, and am well versed in the Buddhist Scriptures, the Zend Avesta of Zoroaster, the Analects of Confucius and Mencius, and the Koran, and have read the Book of Mormon, Brahmanic literature, and history generally, ancient and modern.

In this volume I have frankly embodied my religious convictions, not for the purpose of making converts to my views or to seek notoriety, but simply to teach the truth according to these convictions. I presume I shall offend many who may read it, and be denounced bitterly by all those whose religious opinions differ from mine and are mainly the result of environment and habits rather than convictions, but I have no apologies to make. Truth will win its way sooner or later. If my conclusions are erroneous, they deserve obscurity; if correct, they must be good and will stand the test of fuller and more

critical investigations. For defects of style and dullness of expression, I ask the charity of those who may peruse this book, and courteously ask their pardon for having unduly indulged, if I have done so, in any harsh or unkind criticism in reference to any denominations, ministers, or religious writers.

HIAWATHA, KANSAS.

*September, 1906.*

E. B.

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# Evolution of Religions





# Evolution of Religions

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## CHAPTER I

### A GENERAL REVIEW OF RELIGIONS

THE questions fundamental to Judaism and Christianity which are now engrossing the attention of the Christian world more than ever before, are the following:

1. The plenary inspiration of the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.
2. The origin of evil in the story of the fall of Adam and Eve.
3. The doctrine of everlasting future punishment and, as corollary to that, the existence of an evil deity called Satan.
4. The doctrine of the Trinity of God and, as corollary to that, the tenet of the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the atonement by Him.
5. The question of miracles or supernatural occurrences.

The author of this book proposes to consider these questions candidly as a believer in the

inspiration of the moral teachings of the Bible, and totally unbiased by any sectarian feeling or influences — simply as a seeker after and a lover of truth. He assumes in the outset, without any discussion of them, the great truths of the existence and eternity of one God who is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, all holy, loving, wise, and good, the creator and governor of the universe. He infers and believes from these attributes of God and the nature, character, and environments of man, the immortality of the soul. Without a belief in God and human immortality, which are assumed as axiomatic truths and have always been held so by the large majority of the human race in some form, those other fundamental questions concerning the Bible and its teachings become of no importance; but to believers in God and immortality they are of importance paramount to all other considerations which affect the relations of men to God and to one another. Intimately connected with those questions and their origin, growth, development, and solution, is the evolutionary, intellectual, and spiritual progress of the race. In the natural world, the theory of evolution, or the gradual organization, growth, and development of the whole material universe: of its suns, systems, and worlds, up through and from all gradations and departments of unorganized and organized matter, including all vegetable and animal life, is now the

commonly accepted belief of all scholars and scientists. There was, of course, undoubtedly, a beginning of creation somewhere and at some period in the cycles of eternity, when the Almighty started the protoplasmic forces and germ cells, from the combinations and developments of which all things in the universe have been evolved. The processes of such creation, evolution, and development are, so far, unknown to human ken and may ever be so unknown, but the fact of such creation, in the illimitable beginning, and of the evolution of all things therefrom, has been established, and is now nearly universally believed by scientists. According to this theory, only the original elements, molecules, or germs of matter were created, and infinite wisdom and infinite power brought into action the mysterious forces which combined and organized these atoms ultimately through millions of centuries and vast geologic ages, evolving therefrom the universe as it is. This process is apparently in every way as grand and stupendous, and certainly more rational than the olden theory that God created all things as they are — simultaneously and practically instantaneously — by His mere fiat.

Not only has such been the gradual process of creation and development in all the realms of the material universe, but it has doubtless been analogous in the domain of mind, in the intellectual and spiritual training and progress of the

human race. The intellectual evolution has been slow and spasmodic; often retarded and almost obscured by periods of reaction and retrogression, as the material progress of the race also has been. In the spiritual world, the vacillations and changes have been greater. If man in the beginning of his earthly career had any religious knowledge specially communicated to him by the Deity, it must have been almost forgotten in the night of intellectual and moral darkness and superstition which we know existed universally in the earliest periods of historic time. If the antediluvian history of Genesis is credible, out of a vast population of the world before the Deluge only one family of eight persons had any knowledge of, or any faith in one God, or perhaps in any gods, but the rest were utterly steeped in ignorance, licentiousness, and crime. And by the same record, outside of the Hebrew Patriarchs and their households, we are taught this same condition was true largely of the world for centuries after the Deluge and indeed down to the advent of Christianity. We know, however, from other secular histories that there were exceptions to this condition in Persia, Northern India, and China. Two thousand or two thousand five hundred years before Christ and six hundred years or more before Moses, the pure monotheistic faith of the great Iranian prophet, Zoroaster, prevailed in Central Asia. Excepting

in the worship of the same God, his religion and the Mosaic were very dissimilar, as hereinafter noted. In Northern India and China, five hundred years before Christ, the splendid teachings of the great sages Buddha and Confucius were respectively the dominant religions and have been ever since. As we review the entire history of the human race, if we divest ourselves of narrow bigotry, we can easily discover the gradual evolution of religions and the progress of mankind toward higher religious ideals and grander truths; sometimes, indeed, absorbing and requiring the sweep of centuries and the contest of intellectual and moral forces operating in long abeyance and often under almost total eclipse, to record any substantial progress.

The proclamation of divine truth by the great Galilean prophet introduced the most wonderful era in moral and religious progress in the history of the world; and the evolution from the garnered teachings of Judaism, and all the other old religions then inaugurated, but afterwards greatly retarded and almost extinguished by the superstition and bigotry of the twelve centuries of the Dark Ages, has in the past two centuries gathered such momentum, that most probably during this new century now in its dawn, the banners of the Cross will wave triumphantly over all countries of the earth, proclaiming the pure faith of Christianity, divested of all superstitions and absurd dogmas,

as the final evolution of true religion. Perfection, surely, is to be the ultimate attainment of man in the divine economy. The olden dream of the golden age of earth has never yet been realized. But evolution, development, progress, in the intellectual and moral world as well as in the physical, have always been under the control of infinite wisdom and power, and doubtless ever will be, working towards a wondrous consummation of amazing glory and love, in which redeemed men and a celestial earth, rejuvenated from the old one, may in the future of the coming centuries be the glorified participants and the blissful home.

The almost universal, and, therefore, we may assume, natural and intuitive belief in the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, which we have adopted as axioms of religious faith, has virtually been the world's faith since the beginning of time. True, the people of most nations have also believed in many additional gods, but the plural deities were generally supposed manifestations or incarnations in various forms of the supreme God or of His attributes. While the ignorant masses of most ancient peoples undoubtedly believed in and worshiped those plural gods or manifestations of the supreme Deity, yet we know from the records of history that the wise and learned in all nations, even some such in grossly barbarous ones, believed in a

supreme, omnipotent God who was the creator of all things and the ruler of all inferior deities, and that they worshiped the inferior divinities — if at all — in a merely perfunctory way. Perhaps in benighted Africa, Australia, and some islands of the oceans, the aborigines were all so obtuse, ignorant, and degraded that none could grasp the conception of the existence of one supreme, overruling power. But those aborigines were so bestial and imbecile as to be hardly human, and hence could not comprehend objects of worship above their miserable fetiches. But to the glory of the Aryan race, especially, it must be said that the greatest of the wise and learned, in all its nations, always believed in and revered one supreme Creator, though perhaps ostensibly participating in the mummeries of idolatries. Even the aboriginal inhabitants of North and South America believed in the existence of one "Great Spirit," although some of them, as, for example, the people of Mexico, Central America, and the ancient kingdom of Peru, were nominally idol worshipers. Hence we assert from the teachings of history that the belief in one supreme being has ever been the normal religion of the human race, notwithstanding the fact that in ancient times the uneducated masses of most nations deified also the sun, moon, and stars and the elements and forces of nature. These, as already said, were usually worshiped only as

incarnations or manifestations of the supreme Deity in various forms, and not as in themselves possessing divine power independently.

We cannot believe that the great philosophers of ancient times, such as Herodotus, Xenophon, Manetho, Berosus, Demosthenes, Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, Julius Cæsar, Seneca, Virgil, Pliny, Antonius Pius, and thousands of other eminent historic persons, worshiped statues of silver, brass, or marble, as of themselves, gods and goddesses. Such belief shows ignorance of ancient history and literature. We know, on the contrary, from writings of those great men which still remain, that they and their intimate associates did not actually worship such images, but at most only revered the deities represented by them. And many ancient peoples, such as the vast following of the teachings of Zoroaster, Buddha, and Confucius, did not worship any idols, nor did the Israelites, excepting only during periods of their apostasy from the Mosaic Torah and the traditions of their fathers.

Religion is an innate sense of the human soul and is coeval with man's existence. Man's knowledge of God and his duty to Him and to his fellow-men is derived from the light of nature, from science, from innate consciousness and from such revelations of the Deity as may have been given to man in ages past by mental inspirations or supernatural phenomena. The methods



of such revelations (if any have ever been made) are known to God alone, and we can only judge of the facts of such revelations by their nature and importance, their agreement with the recognized attributes of God, the character of the men to whom they were given, and the circumstances, supernatural or otherwise, attendant upon such alleged communications from God. We know there have been many such purported revelations which were spurious, even though alleged to have been substantiated by miracles, and hence the miraculous attestations to any religions, to be worthy of belief, must, in the very nature of things, have authentication much greater than would be required to substantiate any merely natural occurrences or ordinary historical facts.

The founders, or rather perhaps their early followers, of all the religions which have ever existed, excepting the Confucian of China, claimed that their missions, as prophets of God, were attested by miraculous manifestations. Now of many systems of religions which flourished in ancient times and have passed away, such as the mythologies of Egypt, Assyria, Greece, Rome, and Scandinavia, and the still existing, but effete, Brahmanism of India, we do not propose to more than make mention. They, or their histories, are not within the scope or purpose of this work. All of those old mythological religions, excepting Brahmanism, which yet has a feeble

existence, have become utterly extinct, and only their memories and traditions of wonderful gods, and many of their miraculous stories, are yet preserved in history. They were simply some of the creations of man's craving for knowledge of God and the mysteries of the future life, in the early ages of the world, and have been submerged by grander systems of religion and brighter light, or swept off the theater of time in the cycles of evolutionary progress, and supplanted by the survival of the best and fittest faiths, each of which will in turn doubtless disappear and be merged in the one ultimate and universal religion, better understood as the years roll by, and always expanding in the light and powers of the divine Galilean prophet, the central being of the world's history.

Zoroaster, or Zarathustra, of Persia, who lived about 2000 or 2500 B.C., Moses of Egypt, about 1500 B.C., Confucius of China, 600 B.C., Buddha of India, 500 B.C., Jesus Christ, 4 B.C., 33 A.D., and Mohammed, 600 A.D., were each the founders of the religions which bear their names, and which were and are the best which have ever existed, each differing in many respects, but all monotheisms, centering in one and the same God, and all substantially, historically true, and ethically pure and good. They each exist still through all the mutations of time and empires, as great religious systems and mighty moral forces. The

other religions of the past, in addition to those above named, had also many things in their precepts that were good, but so much in their worships was evil, barbarous, and frivolous, that they merit no commendations. Probably they answered some good purposes in God's great economy. But the six great systems of religion, above named, and which are as well of the present as of the past, all taught great truths of God and His attributes. The ethics inculcated in each are mainly good and true. They are each great factors in the world's life and development now, as in the past. Their histories compose much of ancient and modern history. We believe their respective founders were divinely sent to teach and guide the people in their day and generation, and while some of them had higher measures of inspiration, intellectual gifts, and moral virtues above others, Jesus Christ preëminently so, yet history and their work show that all of them were great and good men, and in their times, and the conditions surrounding and creating them, they were benefactors of the race. Zoroaster, who was probably contemporary with Abraham the "Father of the Faithful," and consequently of the mysterious Melchizedek, "Priest of the Most High and King of Salem"<sup>1</sup> was the first prophet of God of whom we know anything, and the

<sup>1</sup> Genesis xvi, 18; Hebrews vii, 1-3.

religion which he founded and which still exists, mainly in India, is the oldest of the world's present faiths. It is now generally known as the Parsee or Gueber religion. In the simplicity, purity, and grandeur of his teachings, Zoroaster is superior to Moses, and second only to Jesus Christ. There were in his system of worship no barbaric sacrifices, as fancied atonements for sins, but he required adoration of one God only, and taught immortality, resurrection of the dead, and a future life of rewards and punishments.

Following Zoroaster, after a lapse of five or six hundred years, came Moses, also a monotheist, but his religion was silent, so far as the books of the Pentateuch teach, as to immortality and the future of man. Some nine hundred years after Moses, the advent of Confucius and Buddha occurred. They lived nearly at the same time, were both monotheists, and teachers of the immortality of the soul, though Confucius' lessons were mainly precepts for the present life. After an interval of six hundred years came the Great Founder of Christianity. Lastly, after an interval of nearly six hundred years more, came the Arabian prophet Mohammed, whose religion was an amalgam of Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity, intermingled with the weird superstitions of the deserts of his native land, and whose heaven, for believers, was largely a voluptuous

paradise. The basis of all these religions is belief in only one supreme being, excepting that Zoroaster, or, if not Zoroaster himself, his priestly successors, incorporated into his religion an evil deity, whom they entitled Ahriman, Angro Mainyus, or Satan, and who was, at least in this world if not throughout the universe, in their system, endowed with nearly equal powers to Ahura Mazda, or Ormuzd, the supremely good deity.

As the subject of this volume is, as outlined in the commencement, to be mainly a consideration of prominent doctrines and theories taught, or supposed by many to be taught, in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, we do not propose to go into any lengthy commentary or discussion of those scriptures generally, or of the history or tenets of those other contemporaneous Bibles and religions of the world, further than a general comparison of the merits of the respective systems and of their relative claims to inspiration. So far as they teach the truth of Deity, and their moral codes are in accord with a pure standard of ethics and of each other, they have the same claims to be considered inspired. Whatsoever, if anything, in each of those sacred books is not in harmony with said standard, nor with God's attributes, did not come from God, but is human and, therefore, imperfect. The inspired teachings of Jesus Christ and His Apostles are the

grandest and best of all religions. The ethics of Zoroaster, Buddha, and Confucius are very similar to those of Moses and the prophets. There are some things to criticise in all sacred books, even in our own, and probably some changes have been made in the original texts of all, in translations and copyings. Our criticisms will be confined mainly to our Scriptures.

In our theory of evolution and the ultimate survival of the fittest and best, those other religions, we believe, will all pass away, and all that in them is good and indestructible will be merged in the broader, more liberal, and everlasting faith of Christianity, as it will be in time, when expounded and taught as Jesus taught it, and when the superstitions and interpolations which crept into the gospels during the centuries of ignorance and semi-pagan darkness, which succeeded the death of the Apostles, will be revealed merely as the parasitic growth of those credulous and bigoted ages, and from which the apostolic epistles even suffered. But during all the centuries of ignorance, fanaticism, and bigotry, which culminated in the Dark Ages, the golden truth, though much obscured and perverted at times, was preserved, and, we believe, the illumination of religious life and light during the coming century will be very great. Many changes in the Bible text were made in the late revised version. Other revisions will doubtless be made

hereafter as greater light is thrown upon its history, not, perhaps, eliminating much from it, but in changing the text and relegating some of the books of the present canon, such as Ecclesiastes, Solomon's Love Song, Esther, Job, Jonah, Daniel, and Revelations of the Apocalypse, to the present Apocryphal collection, and in noting as popular myths and legends, or poetic extravagances in statements of natural occurrences, many of the miraculous stories in the Scriptures.

## CHAPTER II

### COMPARISONS OF RELIGIONS

OF the existing systems of religions the followers of Buddha, the prophet of India, are said to be most numerous, comprising nearly one-third of the human race. Eastern and Southern Asia is the home of this religion. Christianity in its various divisions, as Roman Catholic, Greek, and Protestant churches, has the next greatest number of adherents. Confucianism and Mohammedanism each have about equal numbers. Judaism has a few million followers; Zoroastrianism a million or more, and Mormonism a million. Of these religions, the Hebrew, Christian, Mohammedan, and Mormon are cognate or related, because of having not only many similar points of belief, but because all are more or less founded upon and derived from the Mosaic system. Each of the existing religions had its own founder. But of all the other ancient systems of religion, now all extinct, excepting Brahmanism of Southern Hindustan, history gives us no information of any special promulgators. Probably there were none, and those old systems of worship, all polytheistic, were the growths of time and national environ-



ments and conditions, the evolutions of many religious ideas, fantasies, and superstitions. According, merely, to the popular limited knowledge and capacities of the people and priestly classes, their conceptions of the gods and demons they worshiped and feared were formed. And these ancient religions were all based upon fear, and not, as Christianity, on love. Even the Mosaic, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, and Mohammedan systems appealed largely to the fears of believers. The gods and goddesses of those ancient, now extinct religions, were mainly, as we know from history and classical literature, gross, sensual, subject to human passions, and not greatly elevated in morals and intelligence above their worshipers. Some were conceived of as about humanly wise and good; some were guilty of atrocious crimes; and all possessed powers, according to the ideas of their ignorant worshipers, varying from merely superhuman to a limited, not absolute omnipotence. They were not worthy of the highest love and reverence of their worshipers. A mysterious destiny or fate controlled all. Some were more or less under earthly influences and limitations. There appeared also, in all those old mythologies, a class of lesser and inferior divinities, men and women, who had been greatly distinguished in their lifetimes as founders of empires, as great warriors, sculptors, poets, and painters, great patrons of education,

agriculture, and commerce, who were translated from life to the realms of the higher deities, or were deified after death.

Other religions, as the Hebrew and the Buddhist, had their mythical counter parts in the translation from earth to heaven of great prophets, like Enoch and Elijah, of the Bible. The higher or lower conceptions of the gods, demons, and other supernatural beings of the various ages and countries, and the evolutions of religious sentiment and worship, indicated the moral and intellectual status of the peoples, and their culture and conditions of society accorded with those ideals. Qualities of good and evil were apparent in all human beings, and instead of apprehending that such opposite qualities and corresponding conduct resulted from the proper or improper use of the faculties and desires, mental, moral, and physical, with which men and women were endowed naturally, as evil was universally prevalent, it was taught in nearly all religions, as their basic principle, that the world was under the control of great and antagonistic powers of evil as well as good; the evil spirits ever actively and powerfully beguiling men into sin and resulting misery, ever doing more active and efficient work than the good spirits who sought to influence men and women to be good.

In most ancient religions, it was assumed that the progenitors of the human family were originally

created morally perfect and sinless. And it was deemed necessary to account for a beginning or primary origin of evil, disease, and death, supernaturally, as the work of an evil spirit, instead of reasonably assuming the liability to err, as the normal condition of the race; and sin and disease to occur naturally from the abuses and excesses of passions and appetites, in themselves and their proper enjoyment normally good. In accordance with such beliefs and, possibly, largely that they might have greater spiritual influence over the minds of men, myths were fashioned by ancient prophets and priests, such as the Garden of Eden, the Serpent, and the fall of Adam and Eve in the Book of Genesis, and similar legends in the religions of Egypt, Persia, India, and other nations in which an evil deity was represented to have led the first parents of our race astray into disobedience and rebellion against God, and as a consequence of so doing, through them, brought sin and misery and, ultimately, death into the world. As sin was hateful to God, it was deemed necessary in the early religions of most peoples (not, however, in the Zoroastrian, Buddhist, Confucian, or Mohammedan faiths, which ignored such an idea) to frame a system of sacrificial atonement for sin, which atonement was outside of, external to, and disconnected, except figuratively, from the repentance, reparation, and moral responsibility of the

sinner himself. This atonement was supposed to be made by the sacrifice of animals, and sometimes of human beings, other than the sinner himself, offered to deity; as well as by various other offerings, which sacrifices and offerings were believed in some way, never clearly explained by priestcraft, to be highly agreeable and propitiatory to the heavenly powers, and that through such offering and propitiation sins would be pardoned.

In all religions a priesthood was established and set apart to conduct and regulate worship and instruct the people in its mysteries. The priestly orders were supposed to be of superior sanctity, were of the learned class, and anciently the only learning of a country was in them, and much of it was kept, as secret mysteries, from the laity. The priests claimed to be ministers of the gods ordained by them to expound and proclaim their will, assuming usually to authenticate their sacred missions by supernatural powers, and authorized to inflict condign punishment upon disbelievers.

Of all the ancient religions, those of Zoroaster, Moses, Confucius, Buddha, Jesus Christ, and Mohammed, are, as already said, the only ones which survive the wonderful evolutions and stern scrutinies of time. Brahmanism need not be taken into consideration. It is crumbling into ruins. Its days as a factor in the world's progress

are numbered. Mormonism is but a modern parasitic outgrowth of polygamic Judaism and orthodox Christianity. The books of its Bible, crude, dull, fictitious, all are in conception, style, and tenets but weak imitations of scriptural history and ethics. Much of good is in it, in its way,—all religions have many good teachings and morals,—but it is merely a clumsy religious romance without beauty and without one particle of historic truth. While it has a million or more of votaries, it can never become a great religion. The day for the wide prevalence of such delusions has gone by. Knowing its utter negation of any evidence upon which to build up such a structure of faith, Mormonism requires, and, amazing as it is, has found incredible superstition, enthusiasm, and belief in the supernatural and credulity to propagate it. Its history illustrates the truth that in some, nay, very many human beings, even in the educated and intelligent, their religious beliefs or infatuations may under certain circumstances eclipse the wildest vagaries of the imagination.

The founders of the great existing religions of the world were doubtless each ordained and qualified by Providence for their respective missions, greatly differing certainly in the measure of light and inspiration, but substantially agreeing in their delineations of the attributes of deity and in the moral precepts they taught. Their

systems of faith and teachings were all so infinitely superior, notwithstanding many differences among them and naturally some defects, to all the old mythological and idolatrous religions, that these facts constitute the best evidence that the teachers of each were in a greater or less degree inspired and ordained for their missions as co-laborers in God's training and education of the race. However, to Jesus Christ attaches unapproachable superiority. He was justly called the "Son of God." He was the peerless teacher of the truth. Next after Him in order of superiority, though not in time, for he was long before the Savior's time, is Zoroaster, the great Persian prophet; next Moses, the Egyptian Hebrew; then in order, Buddha, Confucius, and lastly Mohammed. Each should be judged as to comparative greatness by his opportunities, work, and character, by his influence in the world's history and progress, and not merely by the number of his followers, now, after the changes and evolutions of so many centuries. The religions of Zoroaster, Buddha, and Confucius are each *sui generis*, and grew up independently of each other; but the Hebrew Bible is the fountain-head of Judaism, Christianity, Mohammedanism, and Mormonism. Doubtless the sublime faith of Abraham, who was a native of Chaldea, which bordered on Persia, and certainly a contemporary of Zoroaster, was acquired from the latter's teach-

ing, because it was very similar, especially as to the great doctrine of the unity of God and His infinite power and presence. Zoroaster's is certainly the oldest surviving religion of the world. And his faith, though by that time much corrupted, learned from the Persian priests and Babylonian Magi, by the exiles of Judah and Benjamin, during their long residence in these countries, was undoubtedly incorporated largely into the post-exilian Jewish religion; especially the belief in Satan, in a resurrection of the dead, immortality, and a future life of rewards and punishments — tenets which Moses and the prophets had not previously known or taught, as can easily be verified by searching the Scriptures.<sup>1</sup>

Very clearly, then, post-exilic assimilation of the teachings of Moses and the prophets with the doctrines of Zoroastrianism was the religion in which Christ was trained while a youth. He certainly had not all his life up to the age of thirty years, when his ministry commenced actively, been working at the carpenter's bench with his father, Joseph, without becoming acquainted thoroughly with Hebrew literature, and through the sects of the Nazarenes, the Pharisees, and the ascetic Essenes, most probably with the doctrines of the Persian Zend Avesta. The gospel teachings clearly show that He had, and

<sup>1</sup> See "Zoroaster and the Bible" by Rev. I. H. Mills in the *Nineteenth Century Magazine* of 1894.

that He was as familiar with the Zoroastrian tenets of resurrection, immortality, and the existence of Satan, as with the Mosaic Torah and the prophets, which had only to do with earth and time. There was a lapse of eighteen years from the occasion when Jesus sat with the priests and rabbins of the Jews in the Temple, asking and answering their profound questions of laws and religion at twelve years of age, until He began His public ministry at the age of thirty, during which time nothing is known of Him excepting His interview with John and His baptism by him in the Jordan. The story of the temptation, subsequently, is evidently mythical. During all this interval of time, at least after He attained manhood, Jesus may have traveled into surrounding countries and learned something of the religions of Zoroaster and Buddha. Oriental traditions say that He wandered into Egypt, Persia, and India during those silent years, and studied the religions of those countries. His was not a nature to be idle. Certainly, whether at home or away during those years, He was seeking knowledge and equipping himself for His life's mission. His great store of religious truths, chaste and elegant language, splendid oratory, and wonderful insight into human nature, justify us in believing that He had seen much of the world, had traveled in other countries than Palestine, and was familiar with their religions. Thus He had



become splendidly equipped for His great ministry, and for laying the foundations of a religion which, like the stone seen by the prophet Daniel, cut out of the mountains without hands, was to roll on over all the earth, and in the centuries subdue and supersede all other faiths. All this work was not done by Jesus, as popularly supposed, in three years, for according to the common chronology He was baptized when thirty years of age, 26 A.D., and was crucified in 33 A.D., or when about thirty-seven years of age, so His public ministry extended over seven years.

Those six great prophets of Asia, Zoroaster, Moses, Confucius, Buddha, Jesus Christ, and Mohammed, were the only really great religious teachers of the world, as original promulgators of faiths. All doubtless in their several theaters of action, were inspired by Deity to teach their fellow-men higher and purer truths than were generally known and prevalent in the countries and days in which they lived and wrought. They taught not for their own times alone, but for all subsequent ages, for much of their teachings, the grand creed of Zoroaster, the Decalogue of Moses, the lessons of charity and brotherhood of Buddha, the charming social culture and filial piety of Confucius, and the incomparable parables and sermons of Jesus Christ, scintillating with love and light, these and many more of their great lessons will survive for all time and lead all

human progress. All of those prophets taught of and worshiped one and the same God, a fact which most Christians seem to forget. Their ethical teachings are nearly the same, their great tenets are much the same (of course differing in non-essentials and ritual), and if Christian orthodoxy be true, in the nature of deity, but only differing with orthodoxy. Jesus Christ wrote not a line of His teachings to leave with His followers, nor do we know certainly that Zoroaster and Buddha left any writings. Traditionally, some fragments of beautiful poems are ascribed to Zoroaster. Confucius and Mohammed wrote, or dictated to be written, their own Bibles, the Analects and the Koran. Moses is commonly supposed to have written the Pentateuch. He may have written the groundwork of the five books from compilations of older writings and traditions, but we know that they were revised and many additions and changes made in them by the post-exilian Jewish prophet, Ezra. In fact, Ezra was doubtless the redactor and compiler of all the Old Testament books, existing in his time, into their present forms. The sameness of style and phraseology indicate a compilation of all the books at one time and by the same person, and the evidences of compilations from various documents are unquestionable. The best Bible scholars admit it. The Talmud says all the books of the Old Testament previously exist-

ing were lost or destroyed at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and were reproduced by Ezra through divine inspiration. Changes and perversions have been made in time in most ancient religious writings. Oriental scholars say the modern Zend Avesta does not teach correctly in all things the ancient faith of Zoroaster, for though believing in Angro Mainyus, the evil one, He did not teach of him as a dual deity, but that he was an inferior and subject being to the good God. The belief in Satan as a dual deity probably crept into Zoroaster's religion in after-times, when it became amalgamated and corrupted with the Magiism of Media and Babylon.

And to the glory of that most ancient, and probably primeval faith, it must be said that there were no absurd and debasing sacrifices whatever, for atonement, in its rites, of sins or for other purposes.<sup>1</sup> But it may be said, Why should certain men in different regions of the world be inspired and commissioned to teach different systems of religion? Why should not one man be commissioned to teach the same faith for all? Whatever the reasons, in the first place, that has not been done. Moses' system was in many respects a very different religion from Jesus Christ's. Many prophets besides

<sup>1</sup> Rawlinson's "Ancient Religions," pp. 64, 65. "Zoroaster and the Bible" in the *Nineteenth Century Magazine*, July, 1894.

Moses assisted in evolving the Hebrew economy. The Apostles of the Savior, notably Paul, materially contributed to the development of His religion. One teacher for all nations in the past has not been God's way. In the second place, had no mission, excepting to Moses and Jesus Christ, been given to the other great teachers mentioned, the world in all probability, outside of the narrow boundaries of Palestine in which alone the Mosaic religion shed its light for centuries, and outside of the comparatively limited areas of Christian civilization for other long centuries, would have all else remained in the darkness, sensualism, and degradation of the ancient mythological idolatrous religions which once existed, almost up to the present time. The grand theism and splendid ethics of the other three great religions of Asia, in Persia, India, China, and Japan, would have been unknown and their elevating influences unfelt, as they otherwise were, through the long centuries of their sway.

Zoroastrianism, we have reason to believe, supplanted mythology and idolatry in Central Asia, Confucianism the same in China. Buddhism, in India, engaged in bitter contest with idolatrous Brahmanism, and though it never fully succeeded in supplanting it, yet it caused a wonderful reformation in the lives and customs of many millions of people, and has for centuries

been the religion of nearly one-third of the human race. Must it not have been sent and blessed of God? And when Mohammed proclaimed the Koran to Arabia, the then mongrel Christianity of that country and of Egypt and the regions in Northern Africa bordering on the Mediterranean, had become so corrupted and intermixed with heathen rites as to be fast relapsing into idolatry, which Mohammedanism utterly stamped out and set up the standard of the only one God. Christianity had made little progress in the Old World since the Roman Empire embraced it as the state religion, and with the exception of the countries of the New World, colonized from Europe, until really the beginning of the nineteenth century, had made small advance for fifteen hundred years. So that in the providence of God, those other ancient religions, when they came among men, were absolutely necessary for the welfare of the world. All but Mohammedanism, long antedated Christianity.

Very little progress in the means of communication among men by travel and commerce had been made for many centuries until the advent of steam and electricity. Since then, and mainly during the past one hundred years, more has been done to spread Christianity over the world and for the general education of the people, than during the nearly seventeen centuries previous, since the days of Jesus Christ and His Apostles.

Hence, we repeat that in the providence of God and in the wonderful evolutions of His moral government, the religions of Zoroaster, Confucius, Buddha, and Mohammed were apparently great essential factors in the progress, the conservatism, and intellectual and moral development of the human race. They grew up where Christianity and Judaism, excepting in the case of Mohammedanism, were unknown. They filled voids of darkness and the degradations of utterly false religions which would otherwise have existed, where they supplanted them, so far as we can see, up to within half a century past. So these religions have really immensely blessed the countries in which they were dominant for thousands of years. Hence, in view of these facts, why should Christians denounce those other great religions as false systems, each claiming inspiration from God to their founders, and each proclaiming the same grand fundamental religious truths? Hardly one in a thousand of Christians even at this day knows anything about them. Until recent years they filled no place which Christianity would have occupied, and without their various sacred books teaching of one God only, and pure morals, the people of all those countries who worshiped under those religions would otherwise, literally, in the language of the old prophet of Israel, "have sat in darkness and the shadow of death," in utter mental and moral

darkness. Yes, we believe their founders were sent of God and gave to their followers the best religions suited to their capacities and the times. And though not gifted with the power and inspiration of Jesus, the Son of God, they were, we verily believe, co-laborers in the moral vineyard of earth, each teaching of the one God and pure morals, inspired in so far as they revealed God's will, but in their miracles, histories, forms of worship and civil laws, they were only human and wrote as men.

There are errors in all those sacred books, and some things perhaps that were best not in them, many things in some of them, men wrote, men compiled, and men translated them into other languages than the originals — erring, fallible men. It is not believed at this day by the best scholars that Moses wrote the Pentateuch as it is, or that Joshua wrote the book which goes by his name, or that the historical and most other books of the Old Testament were written by the persons to whom their authorships have usually been ascribed. And the authorships of the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament are, for the most part, uncertain. Rev. Charles Briggs, probably the ablest Bible scholar and linguist of our day, and many other profound biblical teachers, conclusively prove that the authorship of nearly all the books of the Old Testament, and of several of the Gospels and some of the Epistles of the

New, are either anonymous or pseudonymous, unknown or fictitious.<sup>1</sup> No more do we know at this day who were the authors or compilers of the Zend Avesta, the Tri Pitakas, or "Three Baskets" of the Buddhists, or the Brahman Vedas. Much of these ancient Bibles are resplendent with great truths, and all, excepting the Vedas, teach only of the One Almighty Being; but, nevertheless, all have many things in them that are of the "earth earthy," even if much in them is from God. So that truly, as we believe and as we expect to show clearly in these pages, even of our Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, only their revelations of God and of His laws bear the impress of inspiration. While we shall refer frequently in these pages to the sacred books of the other great religions of the world, and may discuss and compare their ethics and forms of worship with the Jewish and Christian religions, the questions of discussion will be mainly of those latter systems as composing one Bible and of the great doctrinal tenets supposed to be taught therein, as hereinbefore outlined. We may say here, that though based upon the teachings of Moses and the prophets, Jesus' religion was not the same as theirs. The Jews were mainly hostile to it in Christ's time, and have been so ever since. Their rabbinical books, the Talmuds, Mishnas,

<sup>1</sup> Note B, Appendix.



and others, bitterly denounce it. Many of the laws and institutions of the Mosaic economy, such as the sacrificial customs, polygamy, slavery, divorces at will of husbands, etc., were wrong and barbarous. We cannot believe they were ever ordained of God, although so declared in the Pentateuch, because they were institutions contrary to His attributes, and we know from history and experience, contrary to human welfare.<sup>1</sup> They were all contrary to Jesus' life and doctrines. He specially repudiated polygamy and divorces, and never indorsed those other institutions, never observed the sacrificial rites, and frequently denounced the Jewish priesthood of the Mosaic worship in the most bitter terms.

No more terrible excoriation of the ecclesiastical hierarchy of any religion can be found than in Jesus' denunciation of the priests, scribes, and Pharisees in the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew. These denunciations are the more remarkable, for they were of orthodox believers in the Mosaic economy; but of the atheistic and heretical Sadducees he had little to say, and seldom censured them. His portrayals of the character of His Father, God, were absolutely antagonistic to many of the ascriptions to Jehovah, of hatred and revenge, found in the Old Testament. Surely the God of Israel, of whom Moses and Joshua

<sup>1</sup> Briggs, "Bible, Church, and Reason." Appendix, p. 259.

taught as having ordered the slaughter of all the men, *women*, and *children* of the Amalekites and of certain of the cities of the Canaanites, without even the shadow of mercy, was not the God whom Jesus worshiped as His "Father in Heaven." So even Jesus did not recognize the teachings and laws of the Mosaic religion in many essentials as His own belief, but on the contrary taught otherwise.

We do not propose writing a commentary upon the Bible or specially upon any of its books, but only an examination of the most salient questions connected with it and outlined in the beginning of this work. In reviewing those questions and connected therewith, discussing on general lines some of its historical narratives, its legends and miracles, its ethical code, ceremonial and sacrificial institutions, and the Mosaic polity generally, we believe they should be considered in the light of the great fundamental truths, assumed as axiomatics in the outset of this work as the universal belief of all intelligent and reasonable people of all faiths at this day. That the one and only God, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, whose government is universal and whose laws are changeless, is the creator of all things and father of all rational beings, and desires the temporal and eternal welfare of each and all His children, and has endowed them with immortal spirit life that they may fulfill the purposes

of their being, is also universally believed. That such are His purposes, and that they will ultimately be carried out and accomplished in harmony with His universal plans, in universal salvation, all, we are sorry to say, do not also believe, but I and many others do unquestioningly believe and trust. And further believing and holding that enlightened human reason and conscience are also in harmony with God's laws in reference to all moral obligations, in so far as they are revealed in nature and the Bible, we shall also assume that whatever in our Bible or in the sacred books of any other religion does not square with such standard of ethics or is repugnant thereto, clearly and unquestionably, even to the reason and consciences of honest and ordinarily intelligent persons free from sectarian or other bias, though not specialists in religious literature, is not of or from God, nor in accordance with His will, although it may be said to be so in any books, and may be declared by the writers of such books to have been enunciated by God. In such cases we believe, if there are any such incongruities in the Bible, either that the original text has been changed or that the good men of old who wrote or compiled the various books thereof, sometimes put therein matters which were merely the products of their own minds, though assumed by them to have come from God. These matters, in our belief, were sometimes fictions and allego-

ries, usually poetic, and framed to enforce particular precepts and theories supposed to have been inspired. In other cases we believe such matters to have been merely legends, which were easily accepted for truths, in ages of ignorance and superstition, even by comparatively wise and learned men. That is, broadly and clearly to state our position more concisely: No matter how venerable with antiquity, no matter with what historical or ecclesiastical authority championed or enforced, whatever is not in accordance with the holy character of God and with the pure ethics and enlightened reason and consciences He has given us, or in the matter of historical or miraculous occurrences whatever has not reasonable evidences of authenticity, we shall reject and discard as not inspired or not literally true, or at least, as verdicts of Scotch juries sometimes say, as "not proven." So by such standards of conscience, evidence, and criticism, we propose to examine and judge historical statements, miracles, laws, religious rites, sacrificial institutions, and ordinances of the Bible, in so far as we consider them, and also creeds of faith supposed to be deduced therefrom, especially those taught by orthodox Christian denominations, only asking candid hearing and honest, dispassionate judgment by those who may read this book. Its general purposes have been already stated. And we also desire thereby, and by a general review of the Bible and special considera-

tion of some of its most important historical statements, ordinances, and ethics, that we may contribute something to the advancement of true religion, as we believe and understand it.

Ever since the dawn of time, or at least from the period "whereof the memory of man and the records of history run not to the contrary," the annals of the human race have been largely filled up with narratives of the many religions of the world, and of the wars and devastations resulting from the hatreds and antagonisms of the adherents of the different faiths. Each always claimed a divine origin, and the prophets and priests of each system furnished, as they claimed, ample proofs to the people of its divinity, and whenever their power was sufficiently great, demanded, under dire penalties, absolute submission to the decrees of heaven as promulgated by them. Whether there was ever an original primary revelation from God to man in the very beginning of time, we do not know. Even Genesis does not teach any. Some great scholars believe there was such ancient revelation; but if so, it was probably only traditional and soon lost or corrupted. Judging from the changes which scholars of oriental languages say have crept into the religions of Zoroaster and Moses, and even into the teachings of Christ and His Apostles, it seems unavoidable that religions should be corrupted in the evolutions of time, especially in

ages of great ignorance and superstition, when there were no printed books and few manuscripts, or through incompetency of translations, or work done in order to conform to the varying creeds of enthusiasts and bigots, or partially to amalgamate the power and policy of the period with existing religions. Zoroastrianism, the oldest religion of the world, certainly older than the religions of Egypt and India of three thousand years ago, was undoubtedly in its original form superior to the religion of Moses, or any other of the ancient religions, in that it taught of only one God and resurrection, immortality and eternal life, without the barbarism of animal or human sacrifices, or the delusion of an atoning mediator between the Merciful Father and His earthly children. It is really the primary religion so far as known.

The religion of the Hebrews hardly gave a hint of immortality. Its bloody and impure sacrificial rites had no higher authority than the similar worships of the heathen nations around them. The fact that the one religion was monotheistic and the others polytheistic never sanctified such degrading worship. Sacrificial offerings to God were simply the product of ignorant, benighted superstitions, and could not have had the sanction of the Almighty. It is doubtful if the Israelites did not believe that other nations had living gods of their own, and only believed

that Israel's God was the greatest. It may be somewhat shocking to the religious ideas and sensibilities of most Jews and Christians to associate the Mosaic worship in any sense with that of the ancient surrounding nations, but the sacrificial services were much alike and grew out of similar degrading conceptions of God, namely, that the savor of sacrifices was pleasant to Him, and would induce Him to grant expiation for sins. We know it is said that the sacrifices of the Hebrews were anti-types of Jesus, and were partly so instituted by God, but the Torah or the prophets give no authority for such teaching. Such doctrines were originated long after the crucifixion. They were not taught by Jesus. The sacrificial rites were denounced by nearly all the prophets.<sup>1</sup> Such ideas as the Almighty being gratified and appeased by the "sweet savor" arising from the smell of the burning victims on the altars certainly originated in the same ignorant and unhallowed conceptions of God as indeed the sacrificial worship of all other nations. To us it seems sacrilegious to suppose that God ever authorized it. The best proof that such worship was unhallowed and debasing is that the Israelites were much of the time, nay most of the time, even in the land of promise to which God had led them, and notwithstanding their Mosaic Torah and the teachings and warnings of many

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah i. and Micah vi.

prophets, gross idolaters, even frequently sacrificing human victims to Moloch, Baal, Rimmon, Ashtarte, and other gods. They were in no sense better than, at some periods if as good as, some of the surrounding nations.

For their general wickedness, vile sacrifices, and besotted idolatries, ten of the twelve tribes of Israel were finally conquered and exiled *en masse* from the Promised Land by Assyrian invaders, and became in time so thoroughly amalgamated and incorporated with their conquerors, or scattered over the world, that they not only lost their old religion and became aliens to all the ancient promises and types, but the strains of blood and ties of kindred with their Judean and Benjamitic brethren were also entirely lost and have never been gathered together again. Thus notwithstanding the wonderful events of their history, and the amazing miracles which, if true, they and their fathers had witnessed for centuries, and the common laws and religion which, it would seem, ought to have bound them together forever as one people, a great majority of the "Holy People" were disrupted from the rest and passed in a few years into oblivion. While about one hundred and thirty-three years afterwards their brethren of Judah and Benjamin, as wicked and almost as idolatrous, having at one time, for a generation or two, entirely lost their old faith,<sup>1</sup> were, like the

<sup>1</sup> II Chronicles xxxiv.



ten tribes, torn from their country and exiled to Babylon, never to be again a sovereign people, excepting for a few years at one time under the government of one of the Maccabees.

As we have seen, the best and only rational religions of the world have been and are the Zoroastrian, Confucian, Buddhist, Christian, Modern Jewish, and Mohammedan religions, purest in their original ideals and ethics, and always free, excepting the ancient Jewish, from the degrading sacrifices and rituals of heathen religions. The sanction of heaven seems to have attested to the inspiration in greater or less degree of each of those religions and to the necessity for them, in the divine economy, in the various ages and countries of their origins, in that they each still exist and have stood the tests of many centuries, and are even yet great evolutionary factors in the world of to-day. Hereafter when the mission of each, in the providence of God, is accomplished, they may, and doubtless will, all be merged and absorbed into the faith of the greatest of prophets, Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God, and all their temples become shrines of His universal worship. Such, we believe, will be the finale of the great political and religious evolutionary elements of the age in the century before us. "The History of the World," the Rev. Dr. Briggs says, "is God's training and education of the human race, and all the great religions of the

world were factors in that training." Zoroaster's was a grand religion, and, we think, second only to Christianity, which was ultimately evolved from it and the Mosaic economies. Three thousand years ago it was the great religion of the Orient. Its eternal fires, its nightly emblems of Deity, substituted for His temporarily obscured but grander emblem, the sun, blazed for many centuries on hill and mountain tops from the Euphrates to the Himalayas, and from the Persian Sea to the Caspian, and were only extinguished in Persian blood, when the Moslems, under the Caliph Omar, about the year 650 A.D., conquered Persia under the black banner of the Prophet, and gave the followers of Zoroaster the alternative of belief in the Koran, exile from their native land, or the sword. After Zoroaster, Moses, Confucius, and Buddha came in succession as messengers of God to men, and were the exponents of their own systems of faith, each grand, pure, and beautiful, all monotheists, only differing in some doctrines and forms of worship. The ancient priesthood of Moses ceased to exist with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Their gorgeous, half-barbaric sacrificial institutions and ceremonies are only known in Bible story. Jesus came, and His religion recognized no sacrificial services. His sermons were expositions of the highest and noblest teachings of Moses and the prophets, unfolding their lessons

of truth to all the world, Jew and Gentile alike, and combining with them the doctrines of the resurrection and immortality of the soul and eternal life, tenets not taught, or if so only dimly and indirectly, in the old Scriptures, but long before taught in the Zend Avesta. His religion was based on love; those of Zoroaster and Moses on fear. The truth as it came from the lips of Jesus and His Apostles (it was not written in books for a long time) spread rapidly over all the countries bordering on the Mediterranean Sea, and in less than three centuries overwhelmed the gorgeous but sensual sacrificial worship and magnificent temples of Egyptian, Grecian, and Roman gods and goddesses; their priesthods vanished, and their memories only survive now in classic lore and history.

## CHAPTER III

### ANCIENT CHRISTIANITY

UP to the time of the triumph of Christianity over Roman idolatry in the reign of the Emperor Constantine the Great, about the year 315 A.D., the simple doctrines of Jesus had been mainly purely taught. There were no creeds to confuse and fetter men's minds. The various churches were independent of any outside control, and their pastors taught only the plain tenets of Christ and His Apostles, in which love and charity to all men, faith in God, and following in the footsteps of Jesus, were the great themes. A triune Deity was unknown.

Edward E. Hale says: "Cardinal Newman put the truth forcibly, but not too forcibly, when he said of the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity, 'The creeds of that early day make no mention in their letter of the Catholic doctrine at all. They make mention indeed of a *three*.<sup>1</sup> But that there is any mystery in the doctrine, that the three are one, that they are co-equal, co-eternal, all omnipotent, all incomprehensible, is not stated and never could be gathered from them.'" He continues

<sup>1</sup> *North American Review*, vol. 148, p. 97.

later:<sup>1</sup> "Here is the absolute religion which Jesus Christ proclaimed to the world, faith, or a steady belief in God and in His absolute presence; hope, a steady sense of immortality working in a life which immortals lead; love, which is now called 'altruism' or a feeling on the part of every man that he does not live for himself alone, but that he lives for the whole race. These three constitute the way of life, as Jesus Christ understood it, and as He tried to make the world understand it."

The doctrines of the early Christians were the same as those preached by Arius, Pelagius, Celestius, and the bishops and pastors of the Eastern churches. Unitarianism in those early days was the faith of Christians generally. But orthodox interpretations and mysticisms, bigotry and fanaticism, under the influence of monastic and other recluse religious orders, had already taken root, and with other heresies and innovations in pure Christianity were rapidly developing in that superstitious age. Finally, at the Councils of Nicea, 325 A.D., and of Carthage, 411 A.D., the adherents of the Athanasian Creed, under the leadership of the Roman pontiff, and many other great Western bishops, triumphed over liberal Christianity. By such incomprehensible and mysterious tenets they vastly increased the power of the Church in that benighted age and

<sup>1</sup> *North American Review*, vol. 148, p. 101.

riveted their control over the souls and consciences of men. The orthodox creed was adopted only by a small majority at each council. The followers of Arius and his colleagues were put under the ban of the Roman Empire, which thus in its decadence, after persecuting for centuries the followers of Christ, espoused at last a mongrel and semi-pagan religion as the state worship under the primacy of the bishop of Rome. From those councils the dogmas of orthodoxy, the departure of the Christian world from the faith of the apostolic times, and the admixture of pagan ceremonies and festivals in the worship of the Church, date their prevalence, if not their origin. Interpolations and alterations into the text of the Scriptures were made to fit the new creed and the fanaticism and bigotry of the age. Ecclesiasticism was maturing its plans for supreme domination over the minds and consciences of men, and the Pope, with his consistory of Cardinals, became the absolute arbiter for centuries of future Christianity. The Apocryphal Books of the Old Testament universally previously rejected by the early churches as merely human productions without a shade of inspiration, and now rejected as such by all Protestant denominations throughout the world, were during the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. admitted by Rome into the sacred canon, as were also the Apocalyptic dreams of St. John

in the Book of Revelation, which had also previously been denied admission into the New Testament Canon. The amazing fables collected and published some years ago by the Rev. S. Baring-Gould in his book of "Legends of the Patriarchs and Prophets," and also those published by Rev. Bernard Pick in his "Apocryphal Life of Jesus," were, during all the dark ages of ignorance and superstition, of common belief in the Christian world. They were supplemented by tales of myriads of miracles of subsequent saints and saintesses performed during a thousand years in the ages succeeding the Apostles and fully believed for fifteen hundred years.<sup>1</sup>

After the Councils of Nice and Carthage, the true light of biblical inspiration became more and more perverted and obscured by incorrect renderings and interpolations of the original text, and has only been partially restored and corrected since the sixteenth century reformation in Europe. During the century just closed, and especially of late years, the liberal thought, independent criticism, and widely extended research and investigation of many great minds, notably Max Müller, Dr. Channing, Dr. Priestley, Theodore Parker, Julius Wellhausen, Straus, Dr. Ernest Renan, Rev. J. H. Mills, Dr. Savage, Eidersheim,

<sup>1</sup> Lecky's "History of Rationalism in Europe." Maury's "Legends of the Saints of the Middle Ages." Milman's "History of Latin Christianity."

Dr. Charles Briggs, McGiffert, Hollis, and others whose names are too numerous to mention here, have brought about a great awakening in and restoration of primitive Bible truth. The literary evolutions of this age in all fields of knowledge, natural sciences, historical research, social and political economies, and general religious inquiry, are culminating in grander conceptions of the Almighty, of the mission and teachings of Jesus, and also of the works of Zoroaster, Confucius, and Buddha, than have ever before been realized. Their religions were for the world. Moses' was only for Palestine — one people.

Indeed, the nineteenth century was in many respects the most wonderful in all the annals of time. It was an unparalleled epoch. The far-reaching discoveries in all the domains of science were more varied and of greater benefit to the human race than the mere rudimentary discoveries in all the preceding centuries. The same may be said of mechanical arts and machinery. More too was accomplished during the last century in the extension of civilization and Christianity than in all the previous years since the Savior lived on earth. Practically, excluding this Western continent, which had already been partially settled by migrations from Christian Europe, at the commencement of the nineteenth century the limits of Christian civilization were really more circumscribed in



the rest of the world than they were before the Moslem conquests in Asia and Africa in 630-800 A.D. All the Isles of the Pacific and Indian Oceans were a hundred years ago in absolute heathen darkness. Now in nearly all those islands, including the continent of Australia and much of "Darkest Africa," the people are civilized and Christianized, though the work has been accomplished, it should in justice be said, as much, or more, through the commercial intercourse and government and arms of Christian countries, notably of England, as through mission work.

The Christianity of this age while not yet, as preached and practiced by many sects, the same broad and beautiful faith as taught by Jesus and His Apostles, yet is essentially different from and better than the illiberalism, intolerance, inhumanity, and bigotry of four hundred or even of one hundred years ago, when the dark theology and predestination of John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards largely voiced and led the religious sentiments of the Christian world. Creeds once believed universally, though still used formally by the orthodox denominations, are generally regarded as mere antiquated and hollow services now, and some of their supposed essentials of faith are really believed by few ministers or laymen in their orthodox terms to-day. Liberalism in religion, as in politics, is the trend of thought;

and bigotry and superstition, allied with worn-out and absurd confessions of faith, have little influence over ordinarily intelligent men as compared with a generation ago, and as factors in religion are becoming dormant. Christ and His Apostles and the early Christian Fathers for two or three centuries had no rigid creeds. Why should their successors have? The highest intellects of our day, discarding the mysterious and baseless doctrine of the trinity, as savoring of old Egyptian and Indian mythologies, of the Trinity of Osiris, Isis, and Horus, or of Varuna, Mithra, and Indra, and as unauthorized by the Bible and derogatory to man's highest conceptions of the Almighty, believe now with Moses and the prophets in their solemn and repeated declaration of the unity of God, that "The Lord our God is one God," and that Jesus Christ spoke literally when He said, "My Father is greater than I; I can of mine own self *do nothing*."<sup>1</sup> God is only and absolutely one. To this the one, first, grand, central tenet of his faith, the Jew now, as his fathers did, still clings with deathless tenacity, the same as through all the exiles and persecutions of eighteen centuries of bigoted Christian fanaticism and intolerance.

Jesus we love and venerate. We believe in Him as the Son of God, and the great teacher and guide of men; and whatever terms of glory and

<sup>1</sup> John v. 30, xiv. 28.

honor are given Him, we think He is entitled to them in the highest sense. But whatever the occasional ascriptions of His delegated power and quasi-divinity may mean in biblical verse and poetic story, they do not mean that Jesus is God. There is nothing of the trinity in the Bible. Jesus was undoubtedly divinely sent and commissioned to promulgate a new gospel of love and immortality to the world, and for all the world, Jew and Gentile, the great and the lowly, grander than Moses and the prophets ever taught. Such was Jesus' mission to the world. So he taught on Mount Olivet in His great sermon, and the only creed He ever enunciated or sanctioned was contained in the peerless prayer which He there formulated for His disciples as embodying everything essential to be believed and followed. Such a sublime prayer was never before uttered, or, if uttered, never recorded. So simple, grand, and all embracing, — "Love God, trust in Him, love all men, and forgive, as ye shall be forgiven, on sincere repentance." No more, no less. No vicarious sacrifice, no atonement taught or even hinted at. The great Chinese teacher Confucius had laid down the Golden Rule six hundred years before Jesus taught it, but he gave to his followers no form of prayer. The world needs no other creed than the Golden Rule and the Lord's Prayer, and the spirit of that prayer is sufficient for all human prayers. It is the seal of Jesus'

sonship to God, of His brotherhood to man. How all embracing and universal in application, how humble and confiding in its sense of power and assurance of acceptance, this wonderful petition to the Eternal Father! This brief but matchless creed of divinity in unity, of liberty, equality, fraternity! There is in it—and we note it again—no suggestion of the trinity, nor of total depravity, nor of the doctrine of vicarious atonement for sins as a prerequisite for the salvation of men from eternal punishment. These dogmas are all, as if purposely, ignored. Only the promise of pardon and eternal love remains, “Father, forgive our sins as we forgive all who sin against us.” This prayer alone and absolutely, negatives the creed of orthodoxy. In the suggestiveness of its all-embracing petitions and significant omissions, it is the creed of creeds and alone has the stamp of divinity.

## CHAPTER IV

### MODERN RELIGIONS

IT is estimated by statisticians that there are now about 1,400,000,000 people inhabiting the earth, and they are supposed generally to be believers in or adherents of the various systems of religion now existing in the following proportions of populations, viz:

Brahmans . . . . .	90,000,000
Buddhists . . . . .	450,000,000
Confucianists . . . . .	150,000,000
Christians . . . . .	400,000,000
Jews . . . . .	10,000,000
Mohammedans . . . . .	200,000,000
Mormons . . . . .	2,000,000
Pagans . . . . .	97,000,000
Zoroastrians . . . . .	1,000,000
Total . . . . .	<hr/> 1,400,000,000

Not many people in Christian countries, and few indeed of other countries, even of the educated classes, have any more than a general and superficial acquaintance with any other religions of the world than their own. They may know generally that the believers in those other systems than the

Christian number considerably over two thirds of all the inhabitants of the earth, but of the comparative numbers of the followers of other faiths, and of their doctrines and forms of worship, they know very little, and all, excepting their own, are regarded by the masses in Christian countries as pagan or false religions. It would, indeed, be a revelation to most people if the simple theology and the generally pure and beautiful ethics of the Zoroastrian, Buddhist, and Confucian sacred books, and even of the Al Koran, were made familiar to them, and they could know that many of the grandest precepts of Moses and the prophets and of the gospel of the Christ had been taught in other far distant regions from Palestine centuries before the Savior's time, and in the case of Zoroastrianism even centuries anterior to Moses and the Ten Commandments. Confucianism and Buddhism were the great religions of China and India five hundred years before the Savior preached in Palestine.

We have said considerable already about those three other ancient religions, and of course anything like an exposition of their systems would be foreign to the scope and purpose of this book, however interesting and instructive it might be. Hence, we only propose to make a brief comparison of some of the tenets of those religions with the Jewish and Christian.

Of Brahmanism some exposition of its sacred

books, the Rig-Vedas, would, of course, be interesting to many, but for purposes of illustration and comparison with the other modern religions, their ethics are so mixed up with pagan and polytheistic rites and teachings, and the books so full of fabulous history and miracles, that little benefit would result from a general synopsis of them. While it is one of the oldest religions of the world and still has many devotees, and its moral teachings are generally good, yet it is a system of many gods, some of them wicked and impure, and all its worships so entirely out of harmony with the age that the world were best without it. Its decadence is rapidly progressing. Excepting to the historian and student of Sanskrit literature, its system of worship, its priests, castes, and sacred books do not merit much consideration or present any great attractions.

As to Moslemism, it may be said of the Al Koran that its moral teachings are mainly good; its monotheism and absolute prohibition of all forms and symbols of trinity, or of any manifestations or representation of God, or any adoration of the same, are grand and sublime. Morally, however, it is on a lower plane than Christianity. It allows polygamy and slavery, as does the Hebrew Bible, degrades woman by taking scarcely any note of her as a participant in the religion and hope of the faithful followers of the Prophet in this life, and scarcely recognizes her prospects

of heaven, and then only as menials for the brave warriors who fought under his banners, and for the beautiful houris who are companions of their pleasures there. Its historical sketches and allusions to the old patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, are merely plagiarisms from our Bible, without its beauty of style. Hence in these, and in many other respects, this religion is inferior to our Scriptures. A comparison and parallel with them would be unattractive and useless. It is a great literary production, and doubtless if translated so as to bring out all the prophets' ideas in the beauties and natural meter of its Arabic poetry would be a very interesting and attractive book. Islamism is on the wane; its palmiest days are passed. It served the world well in the providence of God in rescuing Arabia, Northern Africa, and Western Asia from the semi-idolatrous, half-pagan image worship of the Savior and Mary his mother, a degenerate Christianity into which those countries were lapsing after Rome, the Empire, and the Church had crushed out Unitarianism or Arianism by intolerance and persecution. It has preserved in those lands the worship of Allah, the only one God, and it conserved for centuries, literature and the sciences from the destructive barbarism and godless superstitions of the Dark Ages of Europe. In fact, the Moslem universities in Spain, during the six centuries of its supremacy there, were the only oases in the



European literary desert of that period. During the same time Arabia produced many great scholars and scientists. The renowned Sultan Saladin was a liberal patron of learning.

In the evolutions of time and the progress of education and civilization, those conditions have changed, and Islamism instead of being, as once, a conserver, has become an obstacle in the paths of progress and civilization, and the diffusion of a purer Christianity than it once supplanted. There are really many beautiful things in the Koran, although Dr. Sale's translation of it is said to give but an indifferent version of it. We append here for comparison literal poetic translations of half a dozen Suras by a brilliant oriental scholar, Daniel J. Rankin.

### Sura I.

In the name of the merciful God, the pitiful,  
Praise be to God, to the Lord of the World,  
The merciful, pitiful one,  
King of the day on which all men are judged.  
We worship Thee, asking for aid.  
Lead us in the path of those guided aright,  
The path of those pleasing to Thee;  
Not in the path of those causing Thee wrath,  
Nor of those wandering astray.

### Sura CX.

In the name of the merciful God, the pitiful,  
When the help of God shall come

And the victory be won,  
 And mankind in troops ye see  
 Unto God's religion flee,  
 Then extol thy Lord in praise,  
 His forgiveness ask always.  
 He His pardon never stays.

### Sura CXI.

Shall perish his hands, yea, perish himself,  
 Abu Laheb, called Father of Flames.  
 Nor profit his wealth, nor profit his pelf.  
 He shall be burned in a furnace of flames.  
 His wife shall carry the wood on her arms,  
 Bound round her neck with a rope from the palms.

### Sura CXII.

In the name of the merciful God, the pitiful,  
 Say God, He is one, God is eternal.  
 He neither begets, nor was begotten,  
 Nor is there with Him any to liken.

### Sura CXIII.

In the name of the merciful God, the pitiful,  
 Say to the Lord of Dawning, for refuge do I flee,  
 From evil that hath been created and may follow me,  
 And from the harm of darkening night when I o'er-  
 shadowed be,  
 And from the ill of women, blowing on the magic knot,  
 And from the hand of envier, when envying my lot.

## Sura CXIV.

In the name of the merciful God, the pitiful,  
Say to the Lord of all mankind, for refuge do I fly,  
The King of men, the God of men,  
From the withdrawing whisperer,  
Who in men's hearts doth lie.  
From "sin and men, deliver me."

Of the Latter Day Saints, or Mormons, little need be said additional. Their Bible, like ours, divided into a number of books of fabled histories and prophecies, is but an insipid imitation of scriptural style. It is needless to say that it is all fiction, without a scintilla of evidence to support any of its stories. It is said to have been originally written about 1815 by Rev. Sol. Spaulding, of Washington, Pennsylvania, as a fiction, printed in Pittsburg by one Sydney Rigdon, and by him put into Joseph Smith's hands. Perhaps together they framed the story of its discovery in Western New York. It speaks of God and Jesus Christ much in the style of our Scriptures, teaches good morals, and is thoroughly orthodox on the doctrines of the trinity, vicarious atonement for sins, eternal punishment, etc. It has its many miracles. The custom of polygamy is not allowed in the Mormon Bible, and is especially prohibited in the Book of Jacob, chapter ii. After the Mormon migration to Utah in 1845-46, subsequent revelations, it is

claimed, were given to Smith's successor, Brigham Young, authorizing plural marriages for the purpose of more rapidly increasing their numbers and building up Zion (as they called their desert home) against their enemies, and we know they were not slow in obeying the divine will in this matter. Singularly enough, and contrary to the general opinion of non-Mormons, so far as the author has learned by contact with the Mormons in Utah and elsewhere years ago, and from personal conversation with many Mormon women, the women were generally more enthusiastic in favor of plural marriages than the men. They were, of course, in favor of building up Zion rapidly, but the principal reason they gave for wishing to have female partners in marital rights and duties was that, as their husbands were mostly agriculturists, gardeners, dairymen, and stock raisers, the labor of opening up homes in the Utah valleys and the cares of housekeeping would be divided and made easier and business made more profitable by several wives working together, and their social opportunities would be better. This was doubtless true in their isolated homes.

Confucianism, the religion of two hundred millions of the Chinese, embracing nearly all the educated people of that ancient empire, taught in the Analects of its great founder, and his co-laborer, Mencius, is a system of rules and ethics

for social life and citizenship which has no superior. Confucius taught the existence and almighty power of God, but these being subjects beyond his exact knowledge or comprehension, he devoted his life and great talents mainly to teaching his fellow-men their duties in this world. Says Professor J. Thomas:<sup>1</sup> "The Chinese sage has enjoyed a renown more widely extended than that of any other person of the human race, excepting Jesus Christ, and none other than the latter has, perhaps, excelled his teachings in simplicity, practical sincerity, and lofty morality." Their moral plane is always high throughout the Analects, and they are in reference to religion, totally unmarred by any repulsive laws, barbarous rites, absurd sacrifices, or impure social rules. "What you do not want done unto yourself, do not do unto others" is the Golden Rule as given in their Bible with more terseness than in our Scriptures.<sup>2</sup> Confucius' precepts of justice, forbearance under injuries, benevolence, politeness, and charity, or love, are complements of the best taught in any religion. The virtues of conjugal fidelity, chastity in all, purity of life, devotion to parents, love of children, and kindness and veneration for the aged, indeed all the virtues which men and women should practice are most strongly enjoined. He was a pure, devoted, great

<sup>1</sup> Johnson's Encyclopedia, p. iii.

<sup>2</sup> The Analects, Book v, ch. 2, and Book xv, ch. 23.

teacher of men, and who can say not an inspired teacher? And if from God "cometh every good and perfect gift," why not, and worthy to be the associate of Jesus Christ? Bigots claim that only Bible characters were inspired, but why not great characters of other nations, equally as good, and equally earnest workers for good?

We next examine the Zend Avesta of the disciples of Zoroaster, and the tri-Pitakas of the Buddhists, as the sacred books of those religions are called, each claimed by believers in them to be revelations from God, and in them we find declarations of the attributes and character of God and of His moral laws as grand, beautiful, and pure as any found in our Bible. Zoroaster was a prophet of the world's youth, according to history about 2000 B.C., or only three hundred and fifty years after the Deluge, according to Bible chronology. Ancient Persian history gives his date, however, as about 2500 B.C. He was probably a contemporary of Abraham, the "Father of the Faithful." Shem, the son of Noah, lived, according to same chronology, until about 1846 B.C., and, therefore, Zoroaster was a contemporary of his also, and, doubtless, as did Abraham, imbibed his religion from Shem. The religion of Zoroaster and Abraham was doubtless the same, and so coming down from Noah, the father of Shem, was the oldest and purest faith of the world, antedating the Mosaic system by

six hundred years. Buddha lived about 600 B.C., and was probably a contemporary of the great Chinese sage Confucius. Zoroaster, Buddha, and Confucius were worthy confrères of Moses and the Christ in their divine missions of religion. These ancient religions of Zoroaster, Buddha, and Confucius once each influenced mankind as much, and jointly now have and always had far more adherents who believed and died in those faiths than Judaism and Christianity, now or ever, combined. Zoroastrianism, for many centuries when Judaism was hardly known outside of the narrow borders of Canaan, was the universal religion of all Central Asia, and although in the evolutions of time its followers now only number a million or two, there was a time, says Max Müller,<sup>1</sup> "when the worship of Zoroaster's God, Ormuzd or Ahura Mazda, threatened to rise triumphant on the ruins of the temples of all other Gods. If the battles of Marathon and Salamis had been lost and Greece had succumbed to Persia, the state religion of the empire of Cyrus the Great, which was the worship of Ormuzd, the only God, might have become the religion of the whole civilized world. Persia, under Cyrus, had absorbed the Assyrian and Babylonian empires; the Jews were either under Persian captivity or under Persian sway in Palestine. The sacred monuments of Egypt had been mutilated by the

<sup>1</sup> "A German Workshop," p. 159.

hands of Persian soldiers who worshiped the only one God and who abhorred the idolatrous emblems on temples, sepulchers, and shrines. The edicts of the great King, "the King of Kings," were sent to India, to Greece, to Scythia, and to Egypt, and if by the grace of Ahura Mazda, Darius, the successor of Cyrus, had crushed the liberties of Greece at Marathon, the pure faith of Zoroaster might easily have superseded the Olympic fables. This was the Cyrus the Great who ordered the building of the second temple at Jerusalem and whose edict for that purpose, issued in the first year of his reign in Babylon, 536 B.C.,<sup>1</sup> proclaimed Zoroaster's God, in whose faith he had been raised and crowned, to be the "Lord God of Heaven," who had given him all the kingdoms of the earth, and He was none other than Ahura Mazda, the same as the God of Israel.

The power of Persia was broken by the Macedonian conqueror, Alexander the Great, several centuries afterward, and she never again recovered her pristine grandeur, though long afterwards she was a powerful enemy of Rome. Finally, in 634 A.D., the old empire was overthrown and her people subjugated by the Saracens under the Caliph Omar. In fact, it is due to these ruthless Mohammedan invaders that the religion of ancient Persia, once the glory of the world, is

<sup>1</sup> Book of Ezra, ch. i. verses 1, 2, 3, 4.



now, and has been for the last thousand years, a mere curiosity to the historian, though still believed in by some two millions of brave and devoted worshipers in India. The Moslem conquerors swept Persia with the besom of destruction under the black banners of the Caliph, compelling the people to abandon their grand old faith, and accept the religion of the Koran, or perish by the sword. A few brave and noble men who would not apostatize, escaped into India and were protected by the Buddhist monarchs, and are now generally known by outsiders as "Parsees, Guebers, or Fire-Worshippers." These names, though not recognized by the Zoroastrians, were given to them by their enemies on account of their being Parsis, Parsees (from Persia) and "Fire-Worshippers," on account of their custom of maintaining in their temples and other places of worship a perpetual fire as an emblem of Deity, and also from their habit of bowing daily in prayer to God at sunrise and sunset before the sun as the great symbol of the Almighty, bestowing, like its Creator, light, heat, and happiness on all the world. These people have been immortalized by Tom Moore in his beautiful poem of "The Fire-Worshippers," one of the Lalla Rookh romances.

Such have been the mutations of this religion, the oldest of time, and from which other religions, certainly the Jewish, Christian, and Mohammedan,

in turn, derived much of their traditions and grandest doctrines. Undoubtedly the Bible story of creation, the Garden of Eden, the fall of man, and the belief in Satan, were derived from Zoroastrian legends, and, through the Persian and Magian priests, communicated to Ezra and other Scripture compilers during the Captivity. Many thousands of Jews settled in Persia, as we learn from the story of Queen Esther, and from Josephus, numerous descendants of whom have ever since remained there. The Zoroastrian was a great religion, sublime in its conceptions of deity, grandest in its early days before the incorporation of Satan as a coördinate god, and other corruptions of Chaldean Magian worship crept into its beautiful theological and moral code. In after-times, after those innovations, the Zoroastrians undoubtedly believed in dual deities, one supremely good, the other supremely evil, both possessing nearly equal powers, at least on earth, if not elsewhere. But such was not the original teaching of Zoroaster, but incorporated into his religion by the Magian priests after the union of Persia and Media and the conquest of Babylon. He was a great leader of men, and we believe his mission was from God. Undoubtedly during the Jewish exile, as we can gather from the writings of those times, and the Apocryphal Books of the Bible subsequently written, the belief in Satan was then first adopted by the Jews, and with

conception of his powers as a subject, if not a servant of God, modified from the Magian belief in Satan as a deity, was incorporated into their post-exilian religion and brought back to Palestine on the return of the exiles. This we think is clearly shown by the Apocryphal Books of the Bible, and all other subsequent Jewish literature, including books of Daniel, Job, Esther, and Ecclesiastes, and by the entire absence of the name of Satan from the ante-exilian books of the Bible. Kings, Chronicles, Psalms, Proverbs, and Jonah were also, undoubtedly, post-exilian books, composed or compiled from previous manuscripts by Ezra and Nehemiah. Hence several references in Chronicles and Psalms to Satan.

Now, in the later Zoroastrian system the contest between Ormuzd, the infinitely good being, and Ahriman, the infinitely evil one, each equal to and independent of the other, was, granting the premises to be true, philosophically logical. But in the Jewish and Christian economies, our God being an all holy and omnipotent Being, and Satan the creature, and dependent for his existence and power upon God's will, the endless contest for the souls of men and for the supremacy of good over evil, which we are taught in the orthodox creed is ever going on between God and Satan, must be a chimera, a gross absurdity, according to the premises, and entirely illogical in the forum of reason. Assuming the orthodox

premises to be correct, there can be no antagonism between God and Satan, no evil done, or power for evil on the part of Satan, excepting such as God permits, and if He permits, He wills. If Satan exists and is subject to God's power and will, his work, evil as it is, must be permissive of God. There needs no argument to prove this proposition; there can be no other conclusion from the premises. No amount of orthodox casuistry or sophistry can evade or overthrow the conclusion. And hence not being able to evade the conclusion, I am necessarily compelled, as a believer in God's infinite goodness, to reject the premises, *i.e.*, the existence and work of Satan as untrue. As supposed facts, they are absolutely contrary to every one of God's universally admitted attributes. Hence, it logically follows that no such being as Satan, portrayed as he is in orthodoxy and the Book of Revelation, exists, or can exist, in God's creation. He is solely a myth. The doctrine, if it were true, either dethrones God or makes Him a particeps in evil. Neither proposition is true, both are false. Hereafter this subject will be more fully discussed in considering Eden and Jesus' temptation.

In Buddha's religion, there was no evil deity possessing quasi almighty powers, but in many other respects, excepting the Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation, or the transmigration of souls,

which disfigures that religion, it was similar to Zoroaster's. In many respects those teachers were alike. Both were princes of royal blood. Buddha was heir to a throne. Zoroaster is said to have been a king. Both became prophets of God and apostles of humanity. Both devoted their lives to the service of God and the welfare of their fellow-men as nobly and unselfishly as any of the Hebrew or Christian prophets and apostles, ay, as ever Jesus did, and doubtless all three were inspired by the same God and grandly did the work assigned to them in the divine education of the human race. In partial illustration of the teachings of Zoroaster we will quote here the Zarthosi, or Parsee Creed, which has been transmitted down from Zoroaster's day, as the Parsees claim, and is doubtless the oldest religious creed existing. We quote here from Max Müller.<sup>1</sup> Müller died in October, 1900. His death was a sad loss to the world. He was a great and good man, broad-minded, liberal, and the grandest philosopher and scholar of the century, universally known, loved, and honored. Here is Zoroaster's creed:

*First.* We believe in only one God, and do not believe in any other God but Him.

*Second.* He is the God who created the heavens and the earth, the stars and the moon, the sun, the

<sup>1</sup> "Chips from a German Workshop," by Max Müller. Edition of 1877, pp. 169-174 inclusive.

angels, the fire, the water, and all things of the two worlds, and all the four elements. That God we believe in. Him we worship. Him we invoke. Him only we adore.

*Third.* Whoever believes in any other God than this is an infidel and shall suffer the punishment of hell.

*Fourth.* Our God has neither face nor form, color nor shape nor fixed abode. There is none other like Him. He is himself singly such a glory that we cannot properly praise or describe Him, nor our minds comprehend Him.

*Fifth.* Our religion is the worship of God. We received it from God's true Prophet. The true Prophet, Zoroaster, brought the religion to us from God.

*Sixth.* God has sent these commands through His Prophet the exalted Zorthorst, viz.: To know God only as one, to know the Prophet, the exalted Zorthorst, as the true Prophet, to believe the religion and the Avesta, *i.e.*, "living words" brought by him, as true beyond all manner of doubt, to believe in the goodness of God, not to disobey any of the commands of the Maz-di-ashma religion, to avoid all evil deeds, to exert ourselves constantly in doing good, to pray five times a day to God, to hope for Heaven, and to fear hell, to consider certain the day of general destruction and resurrection, to believe in the reckonings and judgment on the fourth day after death, to remember always that God has done what He wills, and shall always do what He wills, and to always face the sun or some luminous object while worshiping God as an emblem of His light and wisdom.

*Seventh.* If any one commits sin under the belief that he shall be somebody else, or that somebody else will atone for him, both the deceiver and the deceived shall be damned to the day of Rata Khez. *There is no savior.* In the other world you shall receive the return according to your actions. Your savior is your deeds and God himself. He is alone the pardoner and the giver. If you repent of your sins and reform, and if the great Judge considers you worthy of pardon, or would be merciful, He alone can and will save you.<sup>1</sup>

So teach the Parsees or modern Zoroastrians of India, and they claim that this creed has come down grand and sublime, as most of it is, from their great prophet of forty centuries ago, almost in the world's morning, and which doubtless had the sanction of Noah, Shem, and Abraham. Is it not a beautiful faith, safe to live and die by, and a fitting companion to the Decalogue of Moses and the sermons of Jesus, though many centuries older than both? By substituting the name of Jesus for Zoroaster would not his ethics be nearly identical with the Savior's? Wherein do Moses and the prophets and the Nazarene excel Zoroaster, excepting in the Christ's messages, as properly understood, of universal love and universal salvation? Zoroaster's was a pure and simple faith. He worshiped the same God, and for many centuries his religion had a wider

<sup>1</sup> Appendix, Note E, pp. 216, 217, 218.

sway than either of the others. Each was a messenger to men of the same God. There was this difference between the followers of Zoroaster and of Moses, and it was greatly to the glory of the former. The Zoroastrians were, as history and traditions inform us, always faithful to their religion and never worshiped any other god, nor any forms of deity or idols, while the Israelites, notwithstanding their alleged theocratic government and closer and miraculous communion with God, and the traditions of the wonderful miracles of which, we are told, they and their ancestors were the witnesses and beneficiaries, relapsed very often through utter forgetfulness of Jehovah and their sacrificial worship, and covenant obligations with Him, into long periods of brutal idolatry and debased paganism. Nor did the Zoroastrians ever observe or perform any degrading sacrificial rites. These be unpalatable truths probably to Jews and Christians and such as, we fear, many of them do not often consider, but nevertheless they are truths, confirmed by history, ancient and modern, and above all, as to the Hebrews, by their own sacred books. For the most part, the books of Judges, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, and of all the prophets, are records of the gross wickedness and idolatries of the "Chosen People," and of their forgetfulness of and rebellion against God.

We propose only to deal with and assert truths



in these pages, so far as we know them or can gather them up, utterly regardless of stereotyped beliefs and dogmas, the cavils of sectarianism and religious bigotry or partisan histories. Doubtless the fourth commandment of the Zoroastrian creed was especially framed to prohibit any visible representations of the Almighty or any form of manifestations or divisions of His qualities or attributes, even more forcibly than in the Mosaic Decalogue, so that there might not be any idolatrous worship nor any semblance of idolatry of any kind, no divisions of persons, nor other mystical or mythical conceptions of God. Judging from the Parsee creed, as well as from fragments of ancient Persian songs and other fragments of still more ancient gathas or hymns supposed to have been composed by Zoroaster himself,<sup>1</sup> it is extremely doubtful whether Zoroaster himself ever taught of Satan as a deity, or demi-god, or of his equal control of the physical and moral government of the world with God, as was held in some shape in after-times by the priests and Magii of Media and Babylon. Doubtless his teachings about Augro-Mainyos, the evil one, and his powers were greatly exaggerated in subsequent ages by the Magii, the more strongly to influence and control the people, amidst the wealth, luxury, and extravagances of the Persian and Babylonian empires, in order that they might

<sup>1</sup> Rawlinson's "Ancient Religions," pp. 75, 76, 77.

through the superstition and fears of believers, reap a golden harvest, and secular as well as religious domination. Certainly the same tactics were used, and with great success, by the ecclesiastics of Christendom during the Dark Ages of Europe, and as really they have always been exerted in greater or less degree by all religious hierarchies.

## CHAPTER V

### BUDDHISM. THE TRINITY, ETC.

NEXT we come to supplement the doctrines of Zoroastrianism with a summary of the teachings of Sakya-Manu — Gaut-ama, — or Buddha the Great Prophet of the Himalayas, six centuries before Christ, and compare them also briefly with Judaism and Christianity. Again we quote from Max Müller because he was unequaled in knowledge, candor, and fearlessness of expression as a historian, Oriental, scholar and Christian. He says: "Besides the five great commandments of Buddha, viz., not to kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to lie, not to get drunk, every shade of vice, hypocrisy, anger, pride, suspicion, greediness, covetousness, gossiping, and cruelty, even to animals, is guarded against by special precept. Among the virtues commanded by Buddha, we find not only reverence of parents, care for children, submission to authority, gratitude for kindness and favors, moderation in time of prosperity, submission in time of trial, equanimity at all times, but other virtues unknown to any heathen system of morality, such as the duty of forgiving insults and injuries, and

not rewarding evil with evil, but with good. All virtues, we are told, spring from Maitri, and this word "Maitri" can only be translated by the words "Charity and Love."<sup>1</sup> What more or better things in morals did Moses and Jesus teach? Did Jesus get any of His incomparable beatitudes and his wonderful lessons of mercy and forgiveness from Buddha's religion? Doubtless, for Buddha's laws and precepts of mercy are superior to many teachings of Moses and the prophets of Israel. And why should we say that Jesus was inspired and sent of God to teach the world, but that Buddha was not, when their lessons and work were the same? Divest ourselves of the sectarian influences under which we were brought up, and of narrow, intolerant bigotry, and we should feel that both were sent of God. They had the same Heavenly Father, and were animated by the same mission of love to mankind. There is not a grander record in human annals. They may be searched in vain, for such a sublime renunciation of earthly power, wealth, and fame, of pomp and pleasure, of self-sacrificing devotion and lifelong labor for the amelioration of human suffering and promotion of happiness on earth and in the hereafter, than is found in the life of Buddha. Such are the leading tenets of his religion. Son of the Emperor Suddhodana and heir to his Northern

<sup>1</sup> Müller's "Chips from a German Workshop," p. 219.

Hindoostanee throne, Buddha in his young manhood, for love of God and his fellow-men, renounced home, power, and fame, and all earthly pleasures through a long life, as did Jesus of Nazareth in a much shorter one, went about in humble garb teaching and doing good, curing diseases and alleviating misery, dependent upon the people, among whom he traveled and labored, for his daily bread. He lived a life of as utterly unselfish devotion and self-abnegation in his work as Christ did. Verily, he was the Hindoostanee Christ.

The narratives by his biographers, of the theophanic conception of his mother, the Empress Mayadeva, and of Buddha's miraculous birth, are very similar to those of Jesus' conception and birth in the Gospels, and doubtless both are myths, as are also the legends of Buddha's many miracles. Really differing only in the fact that Buddha's parents were great, wealthy, and powerful, and Jesus' obscure and poor, there is a wonderful resemblance in their lives and work. And that upon the mission of both the seal of divine approval has been set, is found in the wonderful success of their work of good, and the millions, yes, hundreds of millions, in many lands who have been devoted followers of each, and humble converts to their teachings in the centuries past. As the Christian faith did, and solely upon its merits, the religion of Buddha

rapidly spread over all India and Eastern Asia, Thibet, China, and Japan, amalgamating in China to a great extent with Confucianism, in which there were no ethical or theological antagonisms or differences, but generally an harmonious accord, and with all its vicissitudes nearly supplanting idolatrous Brahmanism in Southern India, and to-day probably numbers more followers than Judaism and Christianity combined.

Under other conditions than those then existing, Buddhism would doubtless have spread over Persia and Western Asia also, but meeting on the northern confines of India with the equally pure and grand religion of Zoroaster, though somewhat sterner in its worship and forms, there was no occasion, it would seem, in the providence of God, for its further progress westward, and consequently it did not extend in that direction beyond the boundaries of Media and Persia. Comparatively few Christians know anything about other religions, especially about Buddhism, and consider it merely as one of the pagan systems of old. Its holy books, the "Tri Pitakas," or Three Baskets of Knowledge and of Wisdom, like the Zend Avesta of the Zoroastrians and our Bible, have many impossible miracles and extravagant legends, but in their theology and ethics pale but little in the light of Moses and the prophets and are worthy coadjutors of Christianity. Read the bible of Buddha, fellow-Christians,

if you have the opportunity; reject its defects and superstitious legends, but, as St. Paul says, "Examine all things and hold fast to that which is good," and be manly, liberal, and catholic in your treatment of this religion, indeed of all religions. We know that much is said about the superior influences of Christianity, and frequent comparisons are made of the social and intellectual conditions of the people of countries in which other religions are dominant, and countries under Christian belief. It is, we admit, true now, and has been for two or three centuries the fact, that the Christian nations of Europe and America have been in the van of civilization and intellectual and social progress, and that the conditions of the masses of the people have been better than the average in Asiatic countries. Of course much of Africa has been in intense pagan darkness, and with that continent and the Mohammedan countries of Western and Central Asia, like Siberian Russia, under abject despotism of government, and the provinces of Hindustan under the curse of blighting and decaying Brahmanism, there can be no comparison with Christian countries.

I admit the vast superiority of Christianity, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and Confucianism, as taught by the ancient teachers of those religions, over Mohammedanism, and that broad, liberal, and expansive Christianity is superior to all

other faiths. But much is owing to racial traits and vigor. We must concede that much of the advanced position in this age of Christian nations and Christian civilization is due to the wonderful growth and increasing power in the last two centuries of the great Germanic and Anglo-Saxon races, developing liberty, culture, refinement, social and moral progress and advanced ideas of liberal governments beyond anything heretofore known. Such development is mostly due to learning, science, and the general diffusion of knowledge. The Church has been generally hostile to science and its discoveries, and only doggedly accepted its results when compelled to. Nearly all the wonderful progress and development of the world and ameliorations of human conditions during the past two centuries are due to the peoples of those races, vastly superior in natural and inherited abilities to the Semitic and other Asiatic and African races, as well as to other branches of the great Aryan race. But comparing European Christianity of the period of its mastery over the Roman Empire, 315 A.D., and the twelve hundred years of the Dark Age of Europe, until the Germanic Reformation, and indeed until about the year 1700 A.D., with the Buddhist and Confucianist countries of Northern India, China, and Japan, and the ancient Persian Empire under Zoroastrianism, and the balance sheets of superstition, clerical tyranny, and



corruption, oppressive governments, terrible wars, religious persecutions, and the general miserable conditions of the people of European countries with those of Asia under Buddhistic, Confucian, and even Moslem rule, would show very little, if any, balance to the credit side of so-called Christian governments for all that long period of time, — fourteen hundred years, — during which Christianity had complete control in all Europe. And we are not considering at all in this estimate the Zoroastrian religion, or its influence, for the number of its adherents, since the conquest of Persia in 634 A.D. by the Moslems, has been too inconsiderable to cut any important figure in the destinies of any Asiatic countries.

What more terrible wars ravaged Asia during those fourteen hundred years than the European wars, aside from the Mohammedan conquests? Where were the awful persecutions of the Savoyards, Albigenses, and Waldenses surpassed, the horrors of the Inquisition, the awful massacre by Christians of fellow-Christians on Saint Bartholomew's eve in 1572, and the atrocities of the Thirty Years' religious war in Europe? Even the barbarities of the Christian Crusaders were forgotten in the humanities of the great Saracen soldier, Saladin. With the same races of people and under the same conditions of education and general intelligence, it is at least problematical whether the influences of Zoroastrianism,

Buddhism, and Confucianism would not have been as humanizing and merciful as those of European Christianity during the Dark and Middle Ages, and certainly better than the example of the Israelites as taught in the Mosaic history.

Gradually, we believe, as seems to be the trend of social and religious evolutions, and consequently for the general welfare of mankind, with the progress of knowledge and civilization, those old faiths will pass away, and all that is good and ennobling in them be merged in a broader Christianity than known to the past, which will eventually absorb them into the harmony of one world-wide and universal religion. The great quintette of prophets, Zoroaster, Moses, Confucius, Buddha, and Jesus Christ, all, and the last named preëminently so, were each inspired of God, and the lives and teachings of all had the same objects in view, self-renunciation of men, service for God, and the redemption of mankind from sin and folly, to lives of goodness, virtue, and usefulness here, in the assured hope of happiness and immortality hereafter. If from Christianity is eliminated the doctrine of the Trinity, then there could be no reason why Christians and Jews, Zoroastrians, Confucianists, and Buddhists, yea, and Moslems, could not associate as brothers, and all worship in the same temples, notwithstanding minor differences of forms and rites. All these acknowledge the same fundamental truths, viz.,

the universal fatherhood and sovereignty of One God, and belief in immortality and eternal life. But for the dogma of the Trinity, Jews and Christians long ago would have fraternized. In the early centuries most of the Christians were of the Jewish race. But after that dogma became the creed of the dominant Catholic Church, and all unitarians and dissenters were persecuted and martyred, conversions from the Jews ceased. The Catholic Church tolerated Jews who followed Moses and the prophets and believed in only one God, but would not tolerate Christian disbelief in the Trinity. Hence the adamant wall of division existing between the Jews and Christians to this day, but we believe in time, like all error, it will tumble down of itself as did the fabled walls of Jericho.

The Trinity is not taught in the Bible anywhere. The texts in the New Testament that are tortured in that direction are mainly perversions or interpolations of the original. Most of the Jews now believe in the divine mission of Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine of the Trinity eliminated from Christianity there would be no serious differences with modern Judaism, and the teachings of Moses and the prophets, of Jesus and His Apostles, would compose one sacred book for Jew and Gentile, harmonizing with all other faiths, excepting in non-essentials, which will ultimately, we believe, and in the not very remote future,

be the divine evolution of all religions. Says Count Leo Tolstoi, the great Russian writer: "Yes! it is true, I deny an incomprehensible Trinity, and the fable regarding the fall of man, which is absurd in our day. It is true I deny the sacrilegious story of a God born of a virgin to redeem the human race. But God Spirit, God Love, God the sole principle of all things, in Him I believe, and in eternal life."

And believing in one God, the All Holy and Wise Creator and Ruler of the Universe, from whom all things are, and contrary to whose supreme will nothing can be or happen, we must, it follows, believe that all religions which ever have existed, fulfilled some purposes in His economy, and were adapted to the moral and intellectual conditions of the people and to the ages in which they flourished. While some were good and grand morally, and some very inferior, comparatively, in intellectual and moral standards, as we measure at this day, yet they all must have fulfilled the divine purposes in the education and training of the human race, in the infinite school, the lowest forms of religion being better than none at all, doing some good and teaching the peoples some truths which otherwise they had not learned, and restraining them from many vices. While even the highest and best religions, though very good, and proclaimed by inspired men, had in their systems human imperfections, the Almighty

teaching through the ministry of imperfect, fallible, finite men, only what their followers at the time could comprehend and assimilate into their lives and requiring only such measure of service as they were capable of giving according to the material, social, intellectual, and religious environments of the times.

St. Paul says: "And the times of this ignorance, God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." <sup>1</sup> Upon these conditions certainly the character and purposes of the revelation depended, and not upon heavenly partiality and selection of a particular and favored people *per se* to be the recipients of the divine light, as the Hebrew writers taught. God never hated one nation and loved another because of race or ancestry. He is now, and ever was, the universal Father. We are all, says St. Paul, the "offspring of God," and Jew and Gentile are alike to Him, in every land, His children and the common objects of His love and care. Any contrary belief is illiberal and untrue, and comes simply from race and national prejudices, ignorance, and religious bigotry. In accordance with these ideas of God are the opinions of the brightest and broadest thinkers of the age. I cite Max Müller and Rev. Charles D. Briggs, who both fearlessly assert that inspiration from God was not limited to Hebrew prophets and Christian

<sup>1</sup> St. Paul, Acts xvii, 30.

apostles, but that the founders of the other great and pure monotheistic religions of the world, and even the great sages of Greek and Roman literature, were alike gifted in greater or less degree with inspiration from God.<sup>1</sup> No doubt Herodotus, Xenophon, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, and Antoninus Pius wrote much of their grand teachings under divine light. No doubt great and good men of every age and all countries have been inspired to teach the truth, as they were able to comprehend it, and not only in religion but in other departments of knowledge. Müller says, "It shows a want of faith in God and His inscrutable wisdom in the government of the world if we ought to condemn all ancient forms of faith, excepting the religion of the Jews." Even St. Augustine, bigoted and narrow-minded as he usually was, says, "There is no religion which among its many errors does not contain some real divine truths." This was written by him about the year 400 A.D. in the memory of the late abominations of Egyptian and Roman idolatries. Much in those ancient bibles of Zoroastrians, Brahmans, Buddhists, Confucianists, and Mohammedans, as well as of Jews and Christians, is catholic and true in history and ethics. In all of them excepting Brahmanism

<sup>1</sup> Müller's "Chips from a German Workshop," p. 54. Briggs, "The Study of the Bible," pp. 167-537. Briggs, "The Bible, the Church, the Reason," pp. 71, 72, 73.

the theology is virtually the same. Some of the teachings and stories in each, excepting the Confucian analects, which are not primarily religious writings, are allegorical or metaphorical, legendary, and mythical. Perfection does not seem to attach to, or can be predicated of, any of the works of men, even though they be, in their elements, inspired from heaven.

As to the supernatural stories in the sacred books of any religion, all of them have more or less such, excepting the Confucian, which is purely ethical. We desire only to say that God is the same infinite and all wise being now as ever, and though we cannot fathom all His ways, He enjoins us frequently in the Bible to consider and judge of all its teachings and precepts. He says to His people, "Come and let us reason together," and "Why judge ye not yourselves what is right?" There seems no human reason, and we doubt if any can be satisfactorily given, why, if ever God permitted men to perform miracles, He should not give them such power now. Humanly speaking, there seems to be very many reasons why now, in the present condition of the world, in the present confusion of creeds and dogmas, the conflicts and doubts of religious belief, in which so many of the greatest minds of our day are involved and blundering in darkness and doubt, and yet all the world seeking the ultimate truth perhaps more earnestly than ever before, and

considering the billion and a half of human beings now inhabiting the earth as compared with the vastly smaller population of ancient times, the Almighty would in this age be much more likely to reveal Himself through miracles and theophanies than ever before. Moreover, there seems to be no reason why one age or people should receive almost the entire attention and favor of the Almighty, as claimed for Israel, to the exclusion of all other ages or peoples. That He should, as claimed by the Hebrew chronicles, in what seems their extreme *amor patriæ* and selfish tribal clannishness, select four thousand years ago one family of semi-barbarians, afterwards divided into petty tribes, to whom through unnatural portents and wonderful miracles to exclusively reveal Himself and leave all the rest of mankind for many hundreds of years in entire ignorance of Himself, His will, and moral laws and of the truth of a future life, which latter truth is not even taught to His chosen people at that time, is in the form of reason simply preposterous.

It is certainly astonishing that while performing such prodigies as we are told He did for the exclusive benefit of the children of Israel, and communicating to them a great code of civil, criminal, and moral laws and knowledge of Himself, He should, even to those highly favored people, as above intimated, give no information about a future life, or even an explicit declaration



that there was such a life. This is an inexplicable mystery if all the other facts are literally true. In Zoroaster's religion a future life is fully and clearly revealed. Despite allegations of our Bible commentators to the contrary, there is nothing of future life taught in the Torah and other Hebrew historic books, and only vaguely, if at all, in the prophetic books. After contact with the Persian and Babylonian religions, which taught it, there are first found in the post-exilian books, such as Daniel, Job, Proverbs, Psalms, part of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and some of the later prophets, some ambiguous references to a future life. It was, however, only when first clearly proclaimed by Jesus Christ to the Jews, that God made such revelations of His will, as taught in the Christian bible. That He communicated such revelations to teachers of other religions we as firmly believe. Zoroaster was a more ancient and greater prophet than Moses, and he was greatly in advance of him in teaching the doctrine of immortality, if Moses wrote the Pentateuch. These be truths which cannot be gainsaid, though ignorance and bigotry may denounce them.

As to supernatural occurrences narrated in any bibles, ancient or modern, we are inclined to disbelieve them. None are proven according to any legal or recognized rules of evidence. Those who are determined to believe them notwithstanding, without any evidence, or with such

evidence only as to satisfy themselves, have the right so to believe, but certainly those who require proof sufficient to convince their reason and judgment have an equal right to disbelieve. If miracles in our Bible are not facts, but poetic myths, legends, and fables, then we may reasonably assume from what is known of other religions that stories of miracles in all sacred books are unreliable. Many of them doubtless, as extraordinary phenomena, may be explained or accounted for upon psychological, mesmeric, magnetic, philosophical, electric, or other natural principles, with the incidents wonderfully colored and exaggerated by the enchantments of time, human ingenuity, and credulity. The miracles of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Islamism are as firmly believed by the adherents of those religions as Jews and Christians believe in theirs, and many of them are as reasonable. But none of their sacred books, nor can ours, maintain and prove the claims for each, asserted by their devout and unquestioning believers, that they are in all things divinely inspired and inerrant. The holy books of all religions, excepting the Confucian, are full of extravagant legends and myths. So in ours there are some contradictory stories, even some ethical propositions differing on the same subjects, some historical statements entirely improbable, some miracles, *per se*, absurd.

Nearly all the books of the Hebrew Bible and

some of those of the New Testament are now clearly ascertained to have been written or finally compiled by anonymous or pseudonymous authors. Nor are the religions of the Old and New Testaments exactly *sui generis*. They do not always teach the same doctrines as claimed by Christians but denied by the Jews. By Christians generally both scriptures are considered virtually as one revelation, having the same credentials and teaching the same ideals of God. And really considered as merely a development of His wonderful economy in the education of mankind, Christianity is merely the evolution of Judaism, from a primarily earthly cult into a divine religion. The Jew does not believe in Christ, excepting as many of them now do believe in Him as a prophet. And while believing the historical and ethical teachings of his Bible, the Jew long ago abandoned the ceremonial and sacrificial worship of his fathers, as well as many of their ancient laws and usages, as obsolete relics of a semi-barbarous age, and even of doubtful divine sanction when originally promulgated. Christians generally, however, of the orthodox sects, believe in all of the Hebrew Scriptures as divinely given, as preparatory to, and really the prologue of, the dispensation ushered in by Christ. They make symbols, types, and prophecies of the future Savior and His mission and sacrifice of atonement, out of all the

miracles, songs, poetic ecstasies, and dreams of the prophets and bloody sacrifices of the Hebrew worship, which the Jews do not and never did do, properly deeming such use and investiture as unwarranted.

And Jewish and Christian conceptions of God are very dissimilar. If the orthodox theory, that the New Testament teaches the doctrine of the Trinity, is correct, then it differs most radically from the Old Testament. The God of the Hebrews is, as the God of the Zoroastrians, Confucians, Buddhists, and Moslems, absolute unity, one God only, in all His nature, attributes, and powers, and their scriptures cannot be even remotely perverted to teach of a trinity. So, if orthodoxy is correct, the religions of the two dispensations differ vitally. Hence taught and believing so, why should not the Jew cling with undying tenacity to his father's faith and his father's God? It is the only true creed of Deity. When the ecclesiastics of the fourth century A.D., under monastic and semi-pagan influences, adopted the Athanasian Creed, partly conforming in so doing to the ancient Egyptian mysteries of Osiris, Isis, and Horus, and the Hindoo trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shivah, many of the Arabic Christians refused to follow the Western Church into the adoption of such creed. Mohammed's teaching — mainly a recasting and mingling of old Hebraism with Christianity, a sort of

amalgam — was really a revolt against the idolatrous and heathenish tendencies of the late alliance of pagan Romanism with a corrupt Christian Church.

Mohammed maintained rigidly the monotheistic worship of Deity, and an abhorrence of semi-idolatrous emblems of the Savior, of the Virgin Mary, and of saints, which had been introduced into all the churches. To Mohammed and his Ishmaelite followers, the trinity of God, symbolized in the religion of their neighbors, the ancient Egyptians, by the Osirian legend, and of the Hindoos by the three mystic heads of the God Brahma on one body, was an idolatrous myth, a gross perversion of their early Christianity as well as a departure from the ancient faith of their great ancestor, Abraham. The jargon of the Christian ecclesiastics of that day as to the relations of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the distinctions and sophistries of Heterousian, Homoi-ousian, and Homo-ousian, the Moslem proselytes disdained to listen to, and followed the Prophet's banner.

The God of the Hebrews as of the Moslems was and is only one. Nowhere in the Old Testament we assert, even under the orthodox bias of the King James and other versions, with the rendering of texts and modern headings of chapters frequently distorted for this purpose, is the doctrine of the trinity of God either expressly

or impliedly taught. The assertion of George Rawlinson, "that the doctrine of the Trinity, as has been frequently shown, underlies the most ancient portions of the Pentateuch, and is most reasonably regarded as involved in that primitive revelation which God vouchsafed to our first parents in paradise,"<sup>1</sup> is a baseless assumption and as unreal and fragile as the Edenic fable which he sponsors, but baseless even if that story were a fact, for there is not the remote suggestion of the trinity in it. Indeed, many of the arguments, unfounded assumptions and conclusions of Rawlinson in another work, his "Historical Evidences of Christianity," show him to be an unreliable historian and a thoroughly unsound and sophistical reasoner. We will consider the "Primitive Revelation in Paradise" more fully hereafter.

The Bible, we repeat, does not teach a trinity. The God of orthodox Christianity is one none can comprehend, a mystic triune Being, a fantasy developed by priestly fanaticism and ingenuity, out of certain obscure translations of some passages, and interpolations of others, in the Gospels and Epistles. The dogma has in the past largely fettered the minds of devotees of the Church and made them easily subject to ecclesiastical control. The dogma literally is "three persons in one God, equal in essence and power, the three of the same numerical sub-

<sup>1</sup> Rawlinson's "Ancient Egypt," p. 152.

stance, but yet three equal hypostases or persons, distinct but not separate." <sup>1</sup> Such is the Athanasian definition. This creed, the deification of Jesus Christ, His atonement for the sins of all men, — though but few are saved according to orthodoxy, — by His death on the cross as a vicarious sacrifice, and the eternal punishment of all who die unbelieving in such creed, is a mere ecclesiastical dogma, unauthorized by any scripture old or new. The Jews do not believe it, nor, as they translate the Bible, does it give any support to such dogma. If the Christian Scriptures teach it, then they are totally at variance with the Hebrew Scriptures. But Jesus explicitly teaches the contrary. He said: "I can of mine own self do nothing. I came not to do mine own will, but the will of my Father, who hath sent me into the world." <sup>2</sup> "My Father is greater than I." <sup>3</sup> "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven, nor the son, but the Father only." <sup>4</sup> "Why callest thou me good? There is none good save one, that is God." <sup>5</sup>

These and many other similar sayings of Jesus scattered through the Gospels are so plain and comprehensive and teach so clearly that

<sup>1</sup> Archbishop Whately, "The Trinity."

<sup>2</sup> Book of John, v, 30.

<sup>3</sup> Book of John, xiv, 28.

<sup>4</sup> Book of Mark, xiii, 32.

<sup>5</sup> Book of Matthew, xix, 17, and Book of Luke, xviii, 19.

whatever the mysterious relation of sonship or His divine mission may have been, Jesus was not in any sense whatever God, the Elohim or Yahveh of the Bible, that it seems, as is said in scripture, "Even the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein." "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one God,"<sup>1</sup> says Moses. Those texts we have cited are such humble, clear, and explicit declarations of Jesus as to His relations to His Father, that they should be understood literally, and no supernatural, mystical, or sublimated interpretation of them is authorized. He never once in His ministry gave any countenance to the orthodox assumption that in those and other similar utterances, He was speaking as a man only and at other times as God. Nor did He ever support or countenance in any act or discourse the orthodox delusion that His death was to be a sacrifice through which expiation was to be made to God, or, if He was one of the persons of the trinity, to himself, for the sins of all the world; such atonement only to be applicable, however, according to the jugglery of the Westminster confession of faith, to the predestined elect.

On the contrary, Jesus absolutely negatived and repudiated such doctrine, if anywhere taught by allegorical or mysterious expressions of the evangelists, in His peerless prayer to His Father and His subsequent declaration enforcing forgiveness

<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy, vi, 4.



of sins, "For if ye forgive not men their sins, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive your sins," thus putting divine pardon on absolutely the same ground as human forgiveness of injuries. Thus effectually does Jesus dispose of the doctrine of the atonement, without any argument, and no amount of creeds or sophistry can vitalize the dogma. Absolutely, "Repent and ye shall be forgiven, as ye forgive others." No mediator or atonement is required, none intimated.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONSIDERATION OF MIRACLES

“IT is the distinction of the Bible to be the sacred volume of two great religions, the Jewish and the Christian. But while the whole, including the Apocrypha, is sacred to the Romanist, only the Old Testament and New are sacred to the Protestant, only the Old is sacred to the Jew. One could almost say that the Bible is the sacred volume of three great religions, so largely is the Koran based upon the Bible, or rather upon the Talmud in the first remove and on the Bible in the second.” “The Bible is a great book, and it has had a famous history. The science of comparative religion teaches nothing more decisively than that the Bible has an immense superiority over all the other sacred scriptures of the world. These may have isolated sentences of equal or greater spiritual significance, but they have no such average beauty and significance. Surely such a book, with such a history as it has, and such a fame and such intrinsic value, merits the carefulest consideration.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rev. John W. Chadwick, “The Bible of To-day,” pp. 1 and 2.

Such consideration should be given to everything in its pages, history, prophecies, ethics, and miracles. We have considered somewhat its history. Its ethics are true. Its prophetic books are grand. As to its miracles, does it necessarily follow that because God may have revealed Himself by inspiration to good men at various periods, as taught in this book, that the stories of angelic visions and supernatural manifestations interspersed through it are literally true and not merely legends? Many of the divine messages to the people of Israel were not accompanied by any such manifestations. The most of them indeed through the prophets were not.

Such manifestations could not affect the validity of the revelations or the truth of divine teachings. They could at most only tend to confirm the authority of the promulgators. The ethics prove themselves, and the historical facts must be proven by evidence. The truth of miracles is not a question of power in God. Omnipotence can do anything. It is a question of facts. Have we sufficient evidence of the truth of Jewish or Christian miracles or those of any other religion? For all systems of religion excepting the Confucian, have had their miraculous phenomena and abundance of them, either related in their bibles or external to them. Our Bible, *Ton Biblion*, the book, or rather *Ta Biblia*, the books, as composed of many writings, is undoubtedly

the exponent of the best religion of the world. It surely, if any are, is from God, hence if its miracles are true, then those of the other religions, or of some of them, may be true also. But if the miracles of our Bible are not sufficiently attested, then those of the other religions are not likely to be true, for they are generally of inferior character, and are also, like ours, devoid of outside or external historical confirmatory evidence. All the miracles of other religions are rejected by Christians and Jews, and only the miracles of the Hebrew Bible are believed in by Jews.

Now, were the miracles of our Bible actual facts, or only allegories, fables, and myths? Mere arguments will not suffice for answer to this question, least of all to prove the affirmative. Inductions from assumed mysterious premises or conclusions from ancient beliefs will not do. We know too much of the ignorance, superstition, and credulity of the ancients to give much weight to their stories of or belief in supernatural phenomena, even if the evidence for them relatively to ordinary human affairs, was very strong, which in reality it never is. No argument is needed to sustain the proposition that vastly stronger evidence is required, if indeed any human testimony can be sufficient, to prove the fact of miraculous occurrences, than of ordinary or even of extraordinary natural incidents. Because miracles are wonders, —unnatural and

outside of all ordinary human experiences, — they do not repeat themselves and are not duplicated; whilst ordinary or even uncommon human transactions or natural events are in line of the universal experiences of mankind. That is, we know from experience, observation, and contemporary history that such occurrences or similar ones have happened or may happen in line with and through the operation of human events or moral and natural laws. We know, for instance, if three men are put into a furnace of fire and kept there a few moments, they will be cremated, because such has been all history and experience, and is in accordance with physical laws, and if a contrary result is alleged in any case, it can only be proved by irrefragable and incontestable testimony and by historical and public monuments of such event preserved through all the ages. The *purported* testimony of one man or one hundred men could not prove such a fact, even if we knew such testimony was honest, unless safeguarded by the most rigid rules of evidence, by universal acceptance of it in the region where it occurred, and by permanent memorials of the fact. Otherwise it might possibly be true, but there would be a much greater probability of its being untrue and unreliable through ignorance, deception, religious fanaticism, or superstition. We remember a story of a body of men of some country village in the state of Ohio belonging to a fanatical

religious sect, testifying that they had driven the devil in bodily shape out of one of their meetings and compelled him to seek refuge in a great caldron of boiling water, and then driven him out of that improvised refuge, and banishing him finally from their neighborhood by smashing the kettle to fragments with stones and other missiles.

How do we know that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were cast into the great furnace of Nebuchadnezzar and came out unscathed? Or that the Son of God walked with them in the fire? How did Nebuchadnezzar or any of those present with him know the Son of God or how He looked? Where is the evidence? Not a word of the wonderful story in the nearly contemporaneous Chaldean history of Berosus, who is regarded as a reliable historian. No monument of the event ever existing. Not a word from any one who saw the miracle excepting an unknown Daniel, and we know not that any such person wrote the book, and the book itself has been proven by the best biblical scholars of this century to be a religious fiction, written under a pseudonym by an unknown Jewish rabbi long after the exile, probably about the year 165 B.C. And the exclamation of King Nebuchadnezzar, "Lo, the form of the fourth man is like the Son of God," is evidently an interpolation put into the ancient version by some enthusiastic Christian;

for nothing was known or taught of the Son of God in that age. And similar criticisms as to evidence will apply to most of the biblical miracles. While most of the Jews, but not all, believe those narrated in the Old Testament, they do not, nor ever did, believe at all in any of the miracles of the New Testament, although they must have been performed, if at all, in the very midst of their ancestors, the learned scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees. They deny that those miracles were ever performed. If, as we are told, we should believe the Mosaic miracles, because performed as alleged before all the people, and transmitted down by traditions to all their descendants, then for the same reason we should disbelieve the evangelists' miracles, because not believed in by the Jews then living, excepting possibly a very few of them, nor transmitted in teachings down through their posterity.

Really, if miracles can be proven at all, only unassailable facts, sustained by contemporary history and other contemporaneous evidence, without any dissentient testimony, can establish to honest, intelligent, and independent thinkers their truth. The power of the Almighty is not questioned, that is not in issue, though believers in miracles try to make it so. God can do what He wills. Has He exhibited miracles or permitted men to perform them? is the only question in the issue, and that should be disposed of like

any other question of fact. And if He did four thousand, three thousand, or two thousand years ago, why not now? It is not presumptuous or irreverent to ask such questions in view of the myriads of Apocryphal miracles claimed in all religions to have been performed, in ancient and some even in modern times, and which all Jews and Christians now repudiate, excepting the Biblical miracles. God everywhere in the Bible appeals to our reason to seek the truth and judge for ourselves. We are never condemned therein otherwise than for not obeying our reasons and consciences.

Should mere statements in ancient manuscripts alone, some by pseudonymous and others mostly by anonymous writers, be depended upon as sufficient proofs of unnatural occurrences, miracles, theophanies, or visible manifestations of deity, appearances of angelic visitors, demons, etc., and these performed or exhibited always in ages of ignorance and superstition?<sup>1</sup> Why, one-half of the literature of the world up to five hundred years ago are stories in history or poetry, of gods and goddesses, angels, devils, and miracles. The laws of nature, which is only another name for the laws of God, we know, are universal, uniform, permanent, and—the presumption is almost amounting to an axiomatic truth—are changeless. There may be new discoveries

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Briggs, "The Bible, the Church, the Reason."



of natural laws, and new applications of those laws to varied purposes, but no changes or reversals of those laws have ever been known, unless such may have happened in those extraordinary and miraculous cases. Miracles, if human testimony can suffice to prove the violations, suspensions, or reversal of those laws as alleged, then the proofs of them should be absolutely overwhelming and of national notoriety, corroborated by monuments built at the time and by universal tradition and concurrent history, without any particles of conflicting or dissenting testimony. The miracle so attested, should be in every respect worthy of divine interposition and be of superhuman importance at the time, for its special object in accomplishing some great work which otherwise could not have been done, or in teaching and perpetuating some grand divine truth which otherwise would have been unimparted and unknown. Tested by this last rule, many Bible miracles must be regarded as myths or poetic fictions. No testimony of a generally ignorant, credulous, and superstitious people in regard to supernatural occurrences, should have any weight whatever. No mere tradition or old story coming down the years of time in ancient manuscripts can suffice to prove miracles. Omnipotent power and infinite wisdom, we are justified in assuming, would not be exerted to suspend natural laws for any excepting the most momentous purposes, nor

indeed for any object whatever which the ordinary laws of nature could provide for or accomplish, nor if done, without providing such overwhelming evidence of its truth for all time as could not be doubted.

As to stories of angels, demons, and other messengers, good or bad, from the spirit world, mankind anciently were so prone to believe in such visitors and in witches and ghosts, that there is absolutely no reliable testimony anywhere or in any religion concerning the appearance of such beings upon earth, and even more strongly than in the case of miracles, no one good reason can be given why, if seen in ages past, they should not visit the earth at the present day. Some believe that they do, and there are occasional stories of such visitors being seen and conversed with in this age, but none but the intensely ignorant and superstitious now believe such stories. A hundred years ago, aye even two-thirds of a century ago, in my memory, such stories were very generally believed, and almost every village neighborhood had its haunted houses, its ghosts, witches, and hobgoblins. Education, the general diffusion of knowledge, not religion or its ministers, has swept those chimeras away, as it will in time the belief also in all miraculous stories. Evidence sufficient to authenticate ordinary historical facts cannot, therefore, for the reasons already stated, be

sufficient to prove miracles or stories of celestial or infernal visitors.

Besides, as Müller says, "ordinary historical facts are mere questions of time and of this life, and are, therefore, of little relative importance, but supernatural matters concern a future life and eternal issues, and therefore the question of their truth is of the last importance." Hence we repeat that no miracle is reliable as a fact, no matter in what book it is found or by how many people believed, which does not carry the seal of its truth, according to evidence or similar conditions already indicated. Its truth should be unquestionable to every reasonable mind which cared to examine, and if not absolutely convincing both as to its internal and external fitness and proportions and concurrent testimony, there can be no obligation whatever on the seeker after truth to believe, much less to endeavor to force himself to believe, as some fanatical Christians think the doubter should do, but the very reverse. He should indignantly repel such imputation upon his manhood and intelligence. We should be false and recreant to our moral natures to believe or endeavor to force ourselves to believe anything through childish fear or religious or social ostracism, if we are inclined to believe otherwise or for other reasons, without mere calm conviction of the truth.

We know enough of God's ways to assume

that He does not go into controversies with men to prove His works, and that if in the accomplishment of His divine purposes, He should cause miracles to be performed, He would accompany them with such evidence of certainty as to be overwhelming, and exclude any other hypothesis than their absolute truth. We may assume He would not require belief in them upon the mere naked statement of one or two or three chronicles, and possibly pseudonymous or anonymous ones. He would in His own way demonstrate their truth as all the operations of nature are demonstrated. They would be so authenticated as that none who were willing to believe could disbelieve or doubt. Do any of our Bible miracles come up to such reasonable requirements as to authenticity? By no means. Many of those miracles are doubtless allegories or poetic fictions designed to teach and illustrate great truths. Such are the beautiful poems of Job and of Jonah, which are as grand as anything in the world. Doubtless many miracles were only natural occurrences, connected with some memorable events in Jewish history, and which were afterwards transfigured by tradition, legend, popular stories, and priestcraft into the supernatural. In religion as in natural perspective it is true "that distance lends enchantment to the view." For instance, it has been believed by some biblical scholars, — and the text of Exodus

justifies that belief, — that the migration of the shepherds or Israelites from Goshen in Egypt to Canaan passed over the north marshy arm of the Red Sea near Suez, when a sirocco was blowing its shallow waters southward into the deeper gulf, and thus permitted the people, without vehicles of any kind, to cross on comparatively firm ground, by so doing avoiding a long detour to the northward. National vanity, poetic license, and priestly legend, for the wonder and gratification of their descendants in after ages, changed the story into the miracle of marching in column across the bottom of the deep sea, with the waters banked up as walls on either hand.<sup>1</sup> After the Israelites crossed over the marshy ground the Egyptian army may have attempted to follow, and many of them have been engulfed with their horses and chariots by the returning waters. They would hardly have ventured to go down the precipitous sides into the oozy bottom of the deep sea, incumbered with their armor and weapons, with horses and chariots. “And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.”

The crossing of the river Jordan was no doubt done when its waters were, as they are often now in dry seasons, very shallow in broad places.

<sup>1</sup> Exodus xiv, 21.

So doubtless many other natural events in the history of Israel were transfigured by time, tradition, and oriental poetic license into the supernatural, as was the case in the ancient history of all nations. Many miraculous stories in the Bible were simply mythical ideas, transformed and clothed in fiction and poetic imagery. We agree with Rev. Charles A. Briggs where he says:<sup>1</sup> "There can be no doubt that recent criticisms have considerably weakened the evidence from miracles and predictive prophecy. To many minds it would be easier to believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures and the divinity of Jesus Christ, if there were no such things as miracles and predictions in the sacred Scriptures. The older apologetics made too much of the external marvels of miracle working, and sought to find in history the minute details of the fulfillment of predictions." Later Briggs continues: "If we insist upon the fulfillment of the details of the predictive prophecies of the Old Testament, we shall find many of those predictions have been reversed by history."<sup>2</sup>

One of the arguments which has always been a strong one and elaborately urged by Paley, Wilson, Locke, Butler, Leander, George Rawlinson, and many other writers both Jewish and Christian, to maintain the truth of biblical

<sup>1</sup> Briggs, "The Bible, the Church, the Reason," p. 279.

<sup>2</sup> "The Bible, the Church, the Reason," p. 286, Appendix.

miracles, is that many of those miracles, such as the ten plagues of Egypt, the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea and the river Jordan, the feeding of the people for forty years during their wanderings in the wilderness of Northern Arabia (by the way, an absurdly small territory, probably three hundred miles in length at the utmost, by two hundred and fifty in breadth, for a nation of possibly two million souls to roam around in for so many years doing nothing, fed by miraculous deposits of manna from the skies and flocks of quails, alternately coming from somewhere unknown each morning and evening), the sun and moon standing still for a whole day at the command of Joshua, the walls of the city of Jericho falling of their own accord before the beleaguering army of Israel; that all these and many other supernatural occurrences were witnessed by all the Hebrew people, and that the stories of them were transmitted as claimed in the Bible down the ages from fathers to children through successive generations, and thus kept in the memories of the people, as well as by their sacrificial worship, annual feasts, etc., and that unless such miracles had actually occurred and such traditional and priestly records in their sacred books been continued and preserved and read from generation to generation, such miracles would not have been believed in future ages, and consequently must be true as so attested. Now,

be it noted, we have only the statements in books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Judges, that such customs and family and priestly rehearsals of the history and occurrences of the past were observed as stated and so taught and transmitted to posterity without any lapse or hiatus. But we know from the same and other books of the Bible that those injunctions to so perpetuate the historic memories of the people were actually frequently disregarded by the Israelites and that long lapses did actually occur, many times in the traditional worships, and repetitions of historical and miraculous past events, during the many and long backslidings of the people into idolatrous worships of false gods, even down to the Babylonian exile, during which periods for many years at a time they renounced and forgot the teachings of Moses and rejected Israel's God. One of the sacred writers in the second book of Chronicles states that in the reign of Josiah, King of Judah (this was long after the other ten tribes of Israel had been carried into captivity in Assyria), but one manuscript copy of the Torah could be found in all Jerusalem and the kingdom, even its existence having been previously unknown, and that king, priests, and people were alike ignorant of its existence and astonished at its contents. This shows not only that there had been no reading of the law in the Temple, nor discussion of its contents in the homes of the people for generations



past, but that all the teachings of Moses and the early prophets had been forgotten.

The Jewish Talmud states that during the Babylonian exile the law and the prophets were entirely lost and their contents forgotten, and that the prophet Ezra recast and wrote them, *de novo*, through divine inspiration, so that really the argument for the truth of miracles in continuity of tradition, ancestral instructions, rural home teachings, consecutive worship, etc., historically fails. But be this as it may, in disproof of arguments of Paley and his confrères, before stated, merely casually calling attention to the astounding stories of innumerable miracles said to have been witnessed and believed in by Brahmans, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, and Mohammedans, as well as by believers in all other religions which have ever existed, as firmly as Jews and Christians believe in our Bible stories, we have now in this age a most wonderful object lesson in the Latter Day Saints or Mormon religion in disproof of the old stereotyped arguments referred to. The Mormons, a sect now numbering several millions of people, mostly Americans and English, and generally of average intelligence, yield unquestioning belief in the inspiration of all the fifteen books which compose the Mormon Bible. Now we know from the testimony of the Mormons themselves, as well as from contemporaneous history, that their Bible with its books of histories,

prophecies, and miracles, all total fictions, had no known existence prior to its being found, as alleged, in a hill called by them Cumorrah, in Western New York, about 1823.

It was found, as hereinbefore stated, by one Joseph Smith, afterwards the Mormon prophet and leader (in pursuance of angelic visions), engraved in an unknown language, subsequently by him said to have been Hebrew and Egyptian, on plates of gold. The plates fastened together by a ring had been hidden there for many centuries unknown to any human being. The engravings were translated by Smith into the English language by means of diamond spectacles found with the plates, and with the assistance of an angel, and the translation, as the Book of Mormon, was afterwards published. Smith was an unlearned and uncultured man, but familiar with our Bible. Now this Book of Mormon, composed something after the style of our Scriptures, had never been heard of before. It was compiled by Mormon, but hid away where found by Moroni, the last of its prophets, who is said to have lived in the fourth century A.D., somewhere in this country. There was nothing to give the book the slightest authority or authenticity. It was a new revelation, mainly concerning some Israelites who had wandered away from Palestine and come to America over the ocean, in far distant times, even before the exile to Babylon. The

book had simply been brought out of oblivion, even if the story of its finding were true and not a fiction as it was.

Where are the golden plates? The Mormons say the angel carried them away. Yet within a few years after the alleged finding of the book and its subsequent publication as a revelation from God, without a scintilla of evidence of the truth of its contents or of the truth of its alleged finding, this book, a naked fiction, without any special intrinsic beauty of style, or merits, is in this the most enlightened country of the world, and this cultured age, with all its miracles, visions, prophecies, and historical narratives implicitly believed in by many thousands of people, as divinely inspired. To-day it is believed in by several millions of fairly intelligent persons, who regard it as equally authoritative as the Holy Bible of Jews and Christians, and probably venerate it more, believing, however, in both Bibles and, I may say, thoroughly orthodox in Christian tenets. Joseph Smith is venerated by the Mormons nearly as highly as Jesus Christ. The pages of history are full of the records of many almost forgotten and of a few surviving religions, and of incredible beliefs in all sorts of deities and astounding legends, but Mormonism illustrates, as probably no other religion ever did so thoroughly, the absolute and utter credulity and unreliability of ordinarily intelligent human beings under

the influences of superstition and fanaticism, in belief in any and all stories of the supernatural. Men and women under certain conditions and environments will believe anything supernatural, especially if it comes down to them from supposed antiquity, and Mormonism absolutely confounds and disproves the old stereotyped and once supposed invincible and overwhelming argument for the genuineness of biblical miracles on account of the supposed belief of the Israelites in them only through or because of ocular evidence and ancestral teachings and rites of worship, even if there had been a perfect continuity among their descendants in such teachings and rites, which the Bible history shows there was not, nor even continuous belief, for they often utterly forgot the God of Israel and worshiped heathen gods.

The fact is, as demonstrated by history and universal experiences, that any shrewd, intelligent, unscrupulous impostor, with thorough knowledge of human nature, devout austerity of manners, and enthusiasm in his work, can gather up followers for any creed, attested by any number of miracles, who will stand by him to the last and believe everything he teaches, and the times and his environments will determine whether his faith and the number of his followers shall develop into a great religion or not.

“Oh the lover may  
Distrust the look that steals his soul away.  
The babe may cease to think that it can play  
With heaven's rainbow. Alchemists may doubt  
The shining gold their crucibles give out.  
But faith, fanatic faith, once wedded fast  
To some dear falsehood hugs it to the last.”

## CHAPTER VII

### INTERNAL BIBLICAL EVIDENCE OF MIRACLES

MANY writers upon the subject of biblical authenticity and plenary inspiration, while admitting that the external testimony to its historical statements and miraculous stories may not in all respects be entirely satisfactory, yet claim that supplemented by all the internal evidences in the Bible itself, the truth of its plenary inspiration is absolutely impregnable. Now we regret to differ with learned scholars and theologians embracing many distinguished names, but we must on the contrary assert that there are many things in the Scriptures which not only do not *per se* add conviction to the external evidence whatever that may be, but rather tend to weaken and depreciate it, and are not in themselves in accordance with other teachings in the Holy Word, nor with proper conceptions of God as the omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent Creator of the universe and wise and merciful Father of all mankind. We shall in this section consider briefly some of those matters in the Bible itself which we think disprove the theory of its plenary divine inspiration and of its infallibility in all

things, and which will sustain our contention that while the Bible in its total summary of truth teaches the best religion of the world and the purest ethics, and furnishes in the Mosaic code the best civil and criminal laws as a whole of any nation of those ancient times, and that while "holy men of old," as probably some of subsequent ages, were inspired to teach the world about God, and of man's duties to Him and to his fellow-men, yet that some things they taught and recorded were only human and fallible.

The higher scholarly criticism of the past one hundred years in biblical and general religious fields has conclusively shown that the Hexateuch, or first six books of the Bible especially, and probably all the other historical and most of the prophetic and poetic books, including Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon, were compilations from ancient documents, traditions, and various other sources by unknown authors, that the editors, redactors, or compilers were not the persons whose names are given to the books as their authors, and that the original writers of the manuscripts from which the compilations of the books, as we have them now, were made, wrote from different standpoints accordingly as they belonged to different classes of Hebrew writers, as Jehovists, or Judaic, Elohist, or Ephraimitic, Deuteronomist, and Priestly schools. The idioms, language, thoughts, and

style of expression of all the sacred books, especially of the Old Testament, are very similar and show that they were all largely edited and compiled from older writings into their present form by one person or under his dictation. Doubtless the prophet Ezra, as already indicated, and as we gather from the book which bears his name, and from the Apocryphal book of Esdras (really the same name), and as Jewish traditions in the Mishna and Talmud assert, assisted by his colleague, Nehemiah, was the compiler of nearly the entire Hebrew Bible in its present form, excepting the books of Job, Esther, Daniel, and some of the later prophets, which were undoubtedly written after the exile.<sup>1</sup> Kings, Chronicles, Jonah, Isaiah (after fortieth chapter), Ezekiel, and Jeremiah were written during the exile. Which books were inspired and entitled to be put into the "holy list" or canon, and which should be non-canonical books, in both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, was an unsettled problem until about four hundred years after Christ, when the present canon was finally agreed upon by Roman ecclesiastics, after having been the subject of intense and even bitter controversies, both Jewish and Christian, for several centuries. As a matter of fact, the final determination and settlement of the canon embracing also all the books now called Apocryphal by Protestants and rejected

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Notes B, C, and D, pp. 215-216.



by them, was made by Pope Innocent I, in 405 A.D.,<sup>1</sup> and so we have the blasphemous absurdity of one man, only a weak, erring man, deciding for the whole Christian world and for all time in that ignorant and benighted age, the question of inspiration of biblical books, assuming, as it were, to put the Almighty's seal of inspiration on them, the Church meekly obeying the pontifical bull, establishing the canon issued by the assumed successor of St. Peter as head of Christendom and vicegerent on earth of Jesus Christ. What mockery of divine things!

Some of the Apocryphal books which the bull of Pope Innocent admitted into the inspired canon, such as the second book of Esther, Tobit, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, are simply puerile fables, and it is astonishing that learned Jewish rabbis and Catholic scholars would ever admit them into the fellowship and sanctity of the other sacred books, greatly detracting as they do by such association from veneration for them. There is no divine attestation, we assert, to the biblical canon, nor is there, we believe, any such attestation claimed *per se*, and consequently the canon entirely depends upon *ex cathedra*. Any person is entitled to receive and believe which books of the Bible are really inspired and canonical, and which, if any, are not according to his convictions. With Rev. Dr. Briggs, profound thinker and

<sup>1</sup> Johnson's American Encyclopedia, p. 40.

biblical scholar, the many controversies about Bible canonicity, as well as discussions of miraculous stories, seem to have had little influence, for he considers some of the books as legendary and some of the miracles as merely fictions, written to explain and enforce moral truths, and, singularly enough, bases his belief in the inspiration of Scriptures only on such of the books as from the sublimity and beauty of their moral teachings and delineations of divine character, give internal attestation of inspiration. As he broadly sums up his theological theorem, "Upon the witness of the Holy Spirit." Of course the attestation of the Holy Spirit would be conclusive and final if we could only be sure of its decisions. Dr. Briggs does not furnish the test. This same "attestation" of the Holy Spirit would, of course *a fortiori*, apply equally as well to everything beautiful, pure, and true taught in the sacred books of other religions as in ours. But how can we obtain the witness of the Holy Spirit, excepting to each individual's reason, as to miracles, ordinances, and historic statements? How can we obtain the spirit's proof and judgment otherwise? And how know when we have it? Dr. Briggs does not inform us. Our Bible says, "From God cometh every good and perfect gift," and whatever is holy, perfect, and true, is of God and hath the attestation of His Holy Spirit. Further than this, we see not and know not excepting as our

*reason* convinces us. And this seems ultimately to be Dr. Briggs' "Witness of the Holy Spirit," and in full accord with his liberal views of the Bible and of other religions. The great German scholar, Dr. Julius Wellhausen, says:<sup>1</sup> "Of the Hagiographa, or holy writings, including Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Esther, and Chronicles, by far the larger portion is demonstrably post-exilic, and no part demonstrably older than the exile. Daniel comes down as far as the Maccabean wars, and Esther is perhaps even later. Of the prophetic literature, a very appreciable fraction is later than the fall of the Hebrew kingdom, and the associated historical books, the earlier prophets of the Hebrew canon, date, in the *form* in which we now possess them, from a period subsequent to the death of King Jeconiah, who must have survived the year 560 B.C., for some time. Making all allowances for the older sources utilized, and to a larger extent transcribed word for word, in Judges, Samuel, and Kings, we find that apart from the Pentateuch, the pre-exilian portion of the Old Testament amounts in bulk to little more than half of the entire volume. All the rest belongs to the later period, and it includes not merely the feeble aftergrowths of a failing vegetation, but

<sup>1</sup> Wellhausen's "History of Israel," Introduction, p. 1.

also productions of the vigor and originality of Isaiah xl to lxvi and Psalm lxxiii."

An able Jewish scholar, Rabbi Berkowitz, in a sermon preached in Kansas City, Missouri, on the Passover Sabbath, April 8, 1892, says, *inter alia*, "The Jews of to-day are not the Jews of old, nor are they responsible for the long forgotten and obsolete dogmas which create the ire of the followers of Ingersoll; yet we are held responsible for them by those scoffers. Do they not know our history? Has Judaism, even for a day, in this age, asserted that the Old Testament was aught but the gropings of the human mind in its ardent and zealous efforts to learn and obtain the truth? Has Judaism even for a day asserted that the Old Testament was divinely written, verbally?"

We will now take up and review some of the Bible stories which we think militate strongly against the theory of its plenary inspiration from the internal point of view. We commence with Genesis, third chapter. The authorship of that book has generally been ascribed to Moses, but there is no evidence whatever existing that he wrote it. It contains intrinsic evidence that it was originally compiled from many sources. Its historical and traditional revelations doubtless came largely from Assyrian, Chaldean, and Egyptian fountains, and possibly much from the Zoroastrian Persian priests, whose religion antedated

Moses by one thousand years, and whose grand teachings had spread far and wide over Central and Western Asia by the time of Moses. The latter doubtless was acquainted with that religion, and learned his pure monotheism from it. He was also, as Exodus tells us, thoroughly versed in the learning and religion of Egypt, his native country, which we know from history, among its many subordinate deities, recognized and believed in one "great supreme God of Gods." Moses may have originally written the manuscripts of Genesis and Exodus, as well as the other three books of the Pentateuch, although, as already said, there is no evidence but tradition that he did so, and all those books, especially Genesis, contain intrinsic evidence that many matters were interpolated into them in years long after his time. He was, no doubt, the leader and lawgiver of the shepherds of Goshen, or Hebrews, after their migration or expulsion from Egypt, about 1500 B.C., a great and good man, though Egyptian annals have no contemporary history of him.

The first chapter of Genesis is a wonderful story of creation and the cosmogony of the earth and its condensation and molding out of primeval chaos. According to modern science it details very nearly correctly the order of the astronomical, geological, and paleontological changes and evolutions which occurred through long eons or

ages, whilst the earth was being fitted by the great Creator, through successive preparatory stages, for vegetable and animal life; not, of course, as seemingly, literally stated, in six ordinary days, but actually during a series of ages, periods of very long and indefinite duration, as is generally taught by all advanced biblical scholars, as well as by all scientists of this day. In fact, only very ignorant and fanatical Jews, Christians, Mohammedans, and Mormons, cognate religionists, now believe the story of the creation literally. The second chapter of Genesis is evidently from another and mythical source. The supernatural comes in. It contains intrinsic evidence that it is not of or in line with the original and natural account of creation in the first chapter, but was woven out of other legends. Woman had already been created with man, "male and female." God had created them, she man's predestined and inseparable mate for time and eternity. All of the other progenitors of the tribes of the animal kingdom had been previously created and all God's work in creation had been finished according to the first chapter, and declared good and perfect, and His day of rest, the Sabbath, had come.

But the mythical story in the second chapter of Genesis tells us that the creation of woman, man's natural complement, the crown and glory of creative energy, without whom man was nothing

but a useless freak, was an afterthought of Deity, because it was found, probably after His enlightenment by observation and experience, as the story suggests, "that it was not good for man to be alone," and because among all animals brought before Adam to name "there was no helpmate found for him." And surely all the human race must be everlastingly grateful to him, that he rejected for a mate all of the other creatures brought before him, if it were so. Then, according to the legend, the finale to the great work of creation was enacted by the Deity, when or how long after the day of rest we are not told, creating and fashioning Eve out of one of Adam's ribs while he slept. When considered with reference to all the environments of the narrative of creation, and apart from our deeply instilled and almost hereditary reverence for the Bible, would we not be apt to regard this story of the creation of Eve as a silly oriental myth? Really in its context and surroundings it bears its own refutation.

We have in other religions, especially in the Egyptian and Hindoo, fabulous histories of the creation, but we must say in justice to Genesis none equaling it in grandeur and simplicity, nor any so nearly corresponding with the true geological story "of the rocks and hills." There are various other legends about the primeval age, in various ancient histories, and they with

anthropological, paleontological, and geological discoveries of the past century or two, rather tend to prove that there were other progenitors of the various races of men originally created besides Adam and Eve, in the various continents of the earth. But whether created in one pair or many pairs, as the other orders of the animal kingdom probably were, as indicated in the first chapter of Genesis,<sup>1</sup> man and woman were undoubtedly brought into existence at the same time in consonance with nature's general plans and purposes. The creation of either sex without the other at the same time, is an unreasonable theory, and would have been out of harmony with apparent creative designs, and is, besides, contrary to the statement of the creation of man and woman on the sixth day. "Male and female created He them."<sup>2</sup> The method of their creation is of little importance compared to the awful tragedy which soon after befell them,<sup>3</sup> the most awful tragedy, if literally true, which ever befell the human race, the most dire in its consequences and the story of which demands the most careful consideration and analysis.

Doubtless our first parents were created perfect mentally and physically. God said they were "very good," and we have no reason to suppose

<sup>1</sup> Genesis, ch. i, verses 20-25 inclusive.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., ch. i, verses 27, 28.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., ch. iii.



that they differed from their posterity in form, mind, powers, passions, or in other respects when first created, excepting in not possessing any hereditary taints of diseases or depravities. They were perfect, sinless, but liable to sin. All their organisms and powers were good, and we believe are naturally good in their posterity when not diseased and corrupted by inherited evil traits, as most are now. God had pronounced all His works, including Adam and Eve, to be "perfect" and "very good." They are placed in the Garden of Eden. Here we will digress awhile. Where was this garden? Or is the story of it merely a myth? Its mythical existence is shown by the story of its location. Although spoken of as located where the "river which went out of Eden," and from thence was parted and became the heads of four well-known rivers and the locality as existing when Genesis was written, which was certainly long after the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. no such region of the earth where the four great rivers named, or any other four great rivers had their origin or fountain heads from one river, has ever been known in history or geography to exist. The four rivers named could never have had the same territorial origin.<sup>1</sup> It is impossible, but

<sup>1</sup> Josephus' "Antiquities of the Jews." Book First, ch. i, says: "Now the Garden was watered by one river which ran round about the whole earth, and was parted into four parts." Such was ancient geographical knowledge.

myths, like the fables of the Arabian Nights, do not regard impossibilities, they are only the more alluring. The heads of the four rivers, Euphrates, Pison, Gihon, and Hiddekel, supposed to be the historic and modern Euphrates, Tigris, Ganges, and Nile, are three thousand miles apart. The story is an ancient legend of the same character as the Elysian Fields and the Gardens of the Hesperides of Greek literature, or the fabled Island of Atlantis, in the Atlantic Ocean, of the ancient geographers and poets, and is either the basis of, or evolved from, similar mythical creations in the folklore of ancient Persia, India, and Egypt.

Eden has at one period or another been fancifully located by Jewish, Christian, and Mohammedan writers, in nearly every region of the globe. Some have located it in the tropics, and some at one or other of the poles, which are supposed once to have had tropical climates. The latest theory of its location we have seen was in an article on the subject by a prominent Christian divine, who claims that Eden was located where the Persian Gulf, or Sea of Oman, now rolls its waves. The reverend dreamer admits, of course, that every trace of the wonderful garden has been obliterated. This last romantic theory is as good, and probably as nearly correct, as any other of the multitudinous disquisitions on the subject, and besides has the merit, if believed, of rendering entirely useless further speculation or

research. An Eden submerged ages ago under the coral groves of Oman's Sea is not easily investigated. But the question of Eden's location, like the place where the mythical Noah's Ark finally rested after its stormy voyage on the billows of the universal Deluge, is really not a matter of much consequence, and excepting to illustrate the uncertainty of even what is claimed as inspired narrative, controversy on the subject is really unprofitable, even if interesting. We believe it was a fabled garden. All we know of it or can ever know is that Genesis says, "The Lord planted a garden eastward in Eden. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from thence it was parted and became four heads," etc. The fanciful character of the story seems sufficiently shown by the allegation of one mighty river irrigating the garden, and after leaving its confines, parting there and becoming reservoirs or heads of each of the four great rivers named, the source of one of which, the Gihon, supposed to be the Nile of Egypt, was in a different continent, and thousands of miles apart from the others whose sources are each also widely separated. All ancient geographies are more or less fabulous and very obscure, even when partly correct, and the story shows that the geography and topography of Eden were very illy defined in the mind of the author of Genesis. But to return from the digression.

Adam and Eve came into possession of the garden just from creation at God's hands, perfectly guileless, innocent, and pure as newborn babes. Credulous, without any knowledge or experience, and totally unknowing and unsuspecting of sin or evil, they are permitted to eat of the fruit of every tree in the garden but one, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and of this they are enjoined not to eat, for the reason that if they should eat the fruit thereof they should in that day surely die. The death interdicted must have been natural death, but they did eat of the fruit of that tree and did not die. It gave to them a conscience or knowledge of good and evil.<sup>1</sup> Was this knowledge designed to have been kept from them? It seems so from the context. But what was the tree growing there for? God in His omniscience knew that the pair would eat the fruit. But would not this interdicted knowledge if communicated to them previously, have prepared them against the serpent's future wiles, if the tragedy were not predestined? And what was the tree of *life* growing there for, if not to counteract the evil done? They had not been forbidden to eat of *its* immortal fruit. Unfortunately as it seems for the hapless pair and their posterity, that they did not immediately after partaking of the forbidden fruit eat also of the fruit of the tree of life, for which they

<sup>1</sup> Genesis, ch. iii, verse 22.

seem to have had sufficient time before they were debarred from the garden. Had they done so it would seem that life and immortality had been, beyond mistake, fate, or peradventure, irrevocably secured to them and all their posterity forever.

Why was God so apparently determined that Adam and Eve should not "put forth their hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever," thus revoking the doom incurred by eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Was the knowledge of good and evil incompatible with immortality? Certainly not, because it is not so now, as we are taught in the Gospels, and was not so then, as Genesis informs us that if our first parents had eaten of the fruit of the tree of life they should live forever notwithstanding their sin. Those were most wonderful trees, the fruit of the one imparting conscience or the knowledge of good and evil and resulting death, and of the other imparting quenchless immortal life, conqueror of death. They were trees of no botanical order or species ever since known on earth, and must have been the one extinguished, after imparting its knowledge so baleful of eternal results, and the other transplanted from the terrestrial to the celestial paradise, for we are told in the Book of Revelation, of the Tree of Life growing by the side of the Crystal River in the home of God.

After being enjoined not to eat of the fruit of

the tree of knowledge of good and evil, to the astonishment of the new children of God, a great serpent standing erect comes before Eve, and in her speech tells her that if she will eat of the forbidden fruit she shall not die as God had told her and Adam they would, but on the contrary, should become as Gods, knowing good and evil, which they must naturally have supposed was most desirable knowledge. In this connection it does not perhaps matter, at least not with the orthodox, that the Bible elsewhere says, "Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see my face and live"<sup>1</sup>; "No man can see God at any time"<sup>2</sup>; "Whom no man hath seen, nor can see,"<sup>3</sup> and yet that Adam and Eve are represented as having talked with God face to face. Now who gave the serpent, if only a serpent, cunning and ability to talk, or if it was Satan, the evil one in serpent's guise, who permitted him there? Was it not God, and did not God know of the temptation and certain ruin Satan was planning? Most certainly! If He is omniscient, none can doubt it. Now is it strange that the innocent pair, filled with curiosity and desire, believed this wonderful serpent unlike all others of his kind they may have seen, standing erect and gifted with their speech? Why should they not believe it too was a God?

<sup>1</sup> Exodus, ch. xxxiii, verse 20.

<sup>2</sup> John, ch. i, verse 18.

<sup>3</sup> Timothy, ch. vi, verse 16.

It seems natural that they should have so believed and confided in its words and promises, negating as it did the other God's declaration that they should die if they ate the fruit and promising them with continued life, also the knowledge of good and evil. They certainly believed the serpent's words and doubted God's. We must remember — and this should be carefully borne in mind — that they knew not any evil yet, nor any distinction between good and evil, nor was there any apparent reason why they should not believe the serpent as well as God, nor did they know what disobedience, sin, and death were. Having no moral sense or guide, how could they sin or know sin? The temptation was overpowering. Seeing that the fruit was pleasant to the eye, and to be desired to make them wise, and apparently good for food, in their childish innocence, curiosity and appetite were beyond control, and they ate the fruit from whose essence was imparted to them their first knowledge of sin. Was not this a most astonishing method of imparting moral knowledge through the palate and stomach? For so eating of that fruit, and lest they should next pluck and eat of the more wondrous fruit of the tree of life, standing hard by the other tree, and so avert the late decree of death, and thus secure and repossess the peerless gift of endless life for themselves and their posterity, we are told the hapless pair were driven

out of Paradise, and cherubims armed with a flaming sword which turned every way, were placed at the entrance of the garden to guard the way to the tree of life.

The mystic Garden of Eden has never since been seen by human eyes or trodden by human feet. It would hardly seem useful to dwell so long upon this ancient myth, were it not from it, Christian orthodoxy, thousands of years after the supposed occurrences of the tragedy, has evolved the existence and quasi-divinity of Satan, — the omnipresent and omniscient evil being, — the gloomy doctrines of the fall and of original sin, with all their consequences to the human race, the tri-unity of God, and the vicarious sacrifice and atonement of one of the supposed persons in the Trinity, — metamorphosed Adam and Eve — *eo instanti*, from happy, sinless immortals into utterly lost, sinful, dying mortals, and deduced the passing at the same time from God, for their disobedience, of the inconceivably awful sentence of mortal death and eternal punishment on themselves and all their posterity forever. The latter part of the sentence, eternal punishment, only to be avoided for any, as provided in the councils of heaven, then held, by Jesus Christ, one of the persons in the mystic Trinity, Son of God, really God Himself, then engaging to come to earth four thousand years afterwards, and to be conceived and born of a



human woman, as an incarnation of God, and then as such to offer Himself as a sacrifice upon a cross, as an atonement, to whom? Verily to Himself as God, and for what? Why, for Adam and Eve's sin of eating the forbidden fruit, and for the inheritance or imputation of the same original or metaphorical sin, as personal guilt to each of their prospective myriads of posterity, as well as for the actual sins of themselves and all such posterity, through all future ages, in case they should *all* believe in and accept this dogma! Or as atonement for so many of their posterity only as might actually in all the subsequent years of time so believe and repent of not only their actual sins, but also of the aforesaid original sin, although the most of such posterity might know nothing of and have never heard of such original sin. The efficacy of such to be, future atonement, we are taught, extended in some mysterious way, as well to all the good people, the elect, who lived and died previous to the Savior's crucifixion, as to those who lived after such expiation, although those who lived and died in Israel, or out of Israel, among the Gentiles, in the long centuries which intervened before the death of Christ, so far as we have any knowledge now, knew nothing of this wonderful scheme of atonement and salvation. No information of such scheme of atonement was ever before the Savior's life on earth, and for that matter not then, nor for

a generation or more afterwards given in the Scriptures or elsewhere. Certainly not in the old Scriptures then existing.

We think this is a truthful presentation of the story of the fall and of the orthodox doctrines evolved by mediæval Christian ecclesiastics therefrom, stripped of all the mysticisms and metaphysics with which that school of theology has surrounded them to begot the human mind. Of course the "People of the Book," the Israelites, the original authors and custodians of the Bible, never knew or believed such doctrines. We read nothing more of Adam and Eve in the Hebrew Scriptures, excepting their paternity of children, age, and death, after living for centuries. In the New Testament epistles, however, many comments written, supposedly over four thousand years afterwards, are made upon their disobedience and its dire consequences in bringing sin and death into the world. Jesus Himself, in all His grand discourses, had nothing to say about the primeval fall or the wonderful system of atonement then supposed to have been conceived in heaven.

Subsequently, beginning several centuries after His death, the present system of orthodox religion was elaborated and formulated in the Dark Ages by monastic mysticism and fanaticism, largely directed by Athanasius and St. Augustine, into the amazing scheme of redemption as aforesaid,

claimed to have been devised in heaven at the time of the fall of Adam and Eve, and thence running down through all the ages, as a corollary to the wonderful miracles and sacrificial worship of the Hebrews, which were mainly designed, it is said, as typical of the sacrifice and atonement of Jesus, and finally culminating in His death. Now, verily, is the story of Eden anything but a myth of the ancient Zoroastrian or Chaldean Magii, endeavoring to account for the introduction of sin and evil in the world originally, which was a favorite quest of old-time philosophers? Doubtless an ancient Mesopotamian legend of a primitive paradisaical Garden of Eden and home of our first parents, was recast by an infusion of later Zoroastrian tenets about evil and Satan during the Babylonian exile, into the present Bible version of older Hebrew writings, which, as heretofore stated, was redacted and compiled by the prophets, Nehemiah and Ezra, after the return of the bulk of the Jews to Palestine about 450 B.C.

The Hebrews previously, as may be gathered from a study of their few pre-exilian sacred books, evidently had no knowledge of or belief in Satan until they mingled with the Persian and Babylonian priests during their long exile. But we will return to the Edenic story. What reason have we to believe that our first parents ever passed through a supernatural process of physical change of their bodies from immortal and

changeless, to mortality, to liability to future disease and death? What evidences are there in nature, anthropology, paleontology, or other sciences to prove that they were ever otherwise physically, mentally, and morally than their posterity? None whatever! Nothing but the naked story of Eden and the fall! Is that sufficient evidence, or is it indeed any evidence at all? It is said that it was revealed to the writer, whosoever he was, by Deity, and therefore must be true. But that is a mere assumption, without any testimony whatever, and disproved by the internal testimony. A mere begging of the question, and therefore proving nothing.

So incongruous and absurd is the story that if forced to believe it and the awful doctrine of eternal punishment deduced therefrom, or reject the Bible, I should discard the latter, excepting wherein historically sustained. Any religion that teaches literally the dogma of eternal punishment is *ipso facto* false. The statement that Adam and Eve were driven out of Eden after their disobedience, lest they should eat of the fruit of the tree of life and thereby live forever, indicates that the fruits of the two trees were antagonistic, and that, whereas the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil resulted in depriving Adam and Eve of bodily immortality, the eating of the fruit of the tree of *life* would have restored that boon to them, notwithstanding the previous

sentence of death. In other words, it was an antidote to the first fruit, if eaten, and annulled God's decree. Can it be that God would have thus virtually ignored His sovereignty, and left the question of temporal death and eternal misery on the one hand, and of endless life and happiness on the other, to the chances of destiny as to whether one or both fruits were eaten? Certainly such arbitrament does not comport with the character of the Almighty. Would their eating of the fruit of the tree of *life* with the gift of physical immortality have also restored them to God's favor again, and thus closed forever the yawning abyss of hell? They seem to have had time to eat of the fruit of the tree of *life* after they realized their sin and before they were banished from Paradise. If so, if they knew of such tree of life, it seems, humanly speaking, most unfortunate for them and their luckless posterity, that they did not hasten to eat that immortal fruit, for it seems, had they done so, — for the previous interdiction only applied to their eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, — then disease, death, and hell would have been forever unknown to mankind. But it was not, it seems, God's will that they should do so and thus escape such dire consequences. Indeed, according to the inevitable logic of the story, the whole tragedy was God's will if the story be true. But it is only a myth. Evidently constituted physically, as

their descendants are, death from old age and the wearing out of the vital functions of their bodies, if not from disease, was inherent in Adam and Eve's natures as well as in their children's and always was an essential condition of human life. Doubtless our first parents were perfect in every respect as just coming from God's hands, but yet, possessing in perfection all ordinary human faculties, passions, hopes, and appetites, as their descendants have, liable to degeneracy from vice and evil habits.

Neither the Bible, nature, nor human anatomy and physiology indicates that the laws of generation and heredity were ever changed. Did our first parents live otherwise and sin otherwise than God knew they would when He gave them being? Certainly not! To assume otherwise denies His omniscience. God knew they would succumb to the tempter's wiles just as well when He first placed them in the garden as He knew when they ate the forbidden fruit. Innocent and unsuspecting, knowing not evil from good, nor any moral distinctions, prohibited from eating certain fruit, by one being whom they must have supposed greater than themselves, and solicited to do so, by another being whom under the circumstances they must have supposed a Deity also equal or nearly equal with the other, I have no conceptions of the Almighty which would permit me to believe that He deliberately allowed such

a tragedy to occur. If true, the most momentous that ever occurred on earth, a tragedy vastly greater than the crucifixion of Christ, for that, if orthodoxy be true, simply made it possible for man to escape from some of the resultant horrors of the fall, and only from a part of them, the natural death of all human beings who might ever live, being one of its inevitable results, the other being the undoing and eternal ruin of the whole race, and to prevent that, making the tragedy of the crucifixion necessary. By the fall, God's perfect sinless and immortal children, destined to be progenitors of myriads of descendants, who would inherit their natures and destinies, in a day became utterly changed and depraved, lured by an evil monster in their innocence from their Godlike state to utter moral and physical ruin, and doomed in themselves and all their posterity, who otherwise would have been ever holy and immortal, to earthly death and to eternal misery. The omnipotent God knowing all that was happening, able to prevent, and yet not putting forth His hand of mercy to save, merely His fiat, to save! Away it is a Mephistophelian story, an unhallowed dream. But, say the orthodoxists, — for on the story of Eden and the fall, their entire system of doctrine depends, and if Eden is a myth, then the Trinity, atonement of Jesus Christ, and eternal punishment, all are myths, — Adam and Eve were free agents, and

God could not interfere to save them from the wiles of Satan, except by destroying their free agency.

Well, let free agency be destroyed, if upon its maintenance as a principle was involved, as known to God, the temporal and eternal ruin of the entire human race. But such free agency as Adam and Eve had, was a delusion. According to the context of the story in Genesis, it was such free agency as exists in an infant five years old against overmastering temptation. It was virtually guileless infancy in a contest with the embodiment of guile and treachery. The theory and argument of free agency in such cases are delusions. Should not God have advised and warned them against the insidious tempter? Is there any intimation that He did so? Would such warning have destroyed their free agency? Adam and Eve's disobedience was apparently no more heinous than any ordinary violation of God's laws by innocent children. They had, so far as the pages of the Bible inform us, no conception of the awful penalty liable to be incurred,—a penalty which must seem to any reasonable mind, uninfluenced by religious bias, absolutely incommensurate with the offense. What could they know of even temporal death? They had as yet seen no one die. Why did not Omniscience warn them of the archtempter and his wiles? The story of Eden cannot be one of



fact, and as an allegory it is difficult to comprehend its purposes, excepting as designed to account for the origin of evil in the world. If a real tragedy, humanly speaking, it would seem it had been better, infinite mercy indeed, if the sin could not have been prevented and the tragedy arrested, that the sentence of death upon the offending pair had at once been carried out, if such awful results must have necessarily followed their disobedience, and new immortals created to beget posterity, and re-people a paradisiacal earth. If the story is not a myth or legend, but a fact, then we can only say that it seems to us, — and we are incapable of understanding how it can seem otherwise to any one who has fair reasoning powers and uses them, and is not a slave to religious bigotry, — that either God knew and willed the drama of the fall and its awful results as part of His universal economy for purposes beyond human ken and foreign to human weal, or else that His original plan in the creation of Adam and Eve was then and there thwarted by man, destiny, or Satan.

Neither theory, according to a proper conception of God, can be true, and hence we must believe the story of Eden to be entirely mythical. Indeed, it is contrary to every attribute of God and is derogatory to the doctrine of biblical plenary inspiration, or rather of any inspiration at all, instead of furnishing any internal attestation

to it. Really the story as a literal fact of a supernatural occurrence has very few believers at present among Jews or even Protestant Christians. The most earnest and perhaps the only really earnest believers in it in this age are Mohammedans, Mormons, and Roman Catholics. It is astonishing that while so many Protestant Christians regard the story of Eden as a myth or fable, they should nevertheless absolutely believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, the vicarious atonement of Christ, and eternal punishment, as Eden is the corner stone of the orthodox temple built up on such doctrines, and without Eden the whole structure must fall.

While on this subject, and before dismissing it, we desire to say that apart from their many poetic beauties and wonderful portrayals of paradisaical and celestial scenery and inhabitants there does not seem to us to be anything more absurd and horrible in the whole realm of literary composition than Dante's "Inferno," Milton's "Paradise Lost," and the portraitures of hell and the judgment day in Pollock's "Course of Time," the latter, by the way, a poem little known now, but very popular in the early part of the last century. Each of those poems is wholly based upon the story of Eden, the Apocalypse of the Book of Revelation, and of the dreadful creed of divine vengeance. which orthodox fanaticism

has manufactured out of them. We cannot conceive how any sane mind and healthy soul endowed with proper conceptions of God and love of fellow-men, can peruse the awful "hells" of those poems with any feelings but horror and disgust. Yet Dante's "Inferno" and Milton's "Paradise Lost" are popular with many people, and splendid editions of these poems, ornamented generally with horrible pictures of hell, Satan, and his devils, and the writhing and burning damned, are produced annually and sold in great numbers as souvenirs for birthday and holiday presents from relatives and friends. We have read those poems several times, only the more sadly to regret each time such splendid talents wasted, in our judgment, in such works and the more utterly to condemn their horrible portrayals of infinite hate, misnamed justice. Much harm and no good are done by these poems. Morbid feelings in religion are engendered and perverted conceptions of law and justice taught. In them mercy and love are utterly ignored, while in "Paradise Regained" mercy is vouchsafed to those only who are saved by the atonement of Christ and their acceptance of the dogmas of orthodoxy. It is true that the horrible fantasies of the world, of the damned in these poems, with the storms of divine vengeance, and the waves of the ocean of eternal flames ever pursuing them, in that world of despair

once almost universally believed in as real and thundered forth from every pulpit in Christendom, are now only read as weird fictions by most intelligent people. Their dreams of the "hell" of those poems will be mingled in the not distant future only with historic memories of that other old orthodox institution, the Spanish Inquisition, which with its horrible instruments of torture was used by the Church of Rome for many centuries to give hundreds of thousands of heretics a foretaste of hell.

In not very remote future times, we predict these poems, along with much of the once standard theological works of Athanasius, St. Augustine, John Calvin, Rev. Jonathan Edwards, and many other once famous writers of that class of fanatics on the same subject, will be relegated to antiquarian collections as mementoes of the old dreadful tenets of semi-barbarian orthodoxy. They are a blighting curse upon the human soul and intellect, deadening the finest sympathies and obliterating all rational sense of justice and mercy, when the mind and soul are fully possessed of their morbid sentiments and dwarfed and depraved ideas of Deity. This has been illustrated in the lives of many of the most bigoted advocates and teachers of orthodox Christianity. Their natures were hard and unforgiving. They seemed to have had in them very little of the milk of

human kindness. We will not specify individual cases. They were the people who burned poor old women as witches and who piled the fagots around the so-called heretic martyrs of the Dark and Middle Ages, who were really the best people of those days.

Their doctrines naturally made them persecutors of men of science and liberal-minded Christians. Pagan Rome never murdered half as many Christians as the Holy Church of the Dark Ages. Who made the Stygian gulf of hell, with its outer abode of everlasting darkness and internal flames, horrible monsters, and awful horrors a world of woe for lost sinners, compared with which the Hades of the Greek mythology was a paradise? Was it not the Christian's hell, invented by the old Fathers? Dante, Milton, Calvin, and Edwards merely illumined it. What of mercy, what of anything but inexorable hate, is apparent in the conception of the utmost horrors and agonies made to be the portion of the lost forever? Why was not banishment from paradise forever alone sufficient? No darker horrors could possibly be conceived by a human mind and scarcely by a God. The God of those poets and divines does not exist. The God of the Bible truly portrayed and comprehended is all holy and of infinite mercy and love. He punished but for the good of His children.

“ The quality of mercy is not strained,  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from Heaven  
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed.  
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.  
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest,  
And earthly power does then show likest God,  
When mercy seasons justice.”

— *Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice."*

## CHAPTER VIII

### INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF MIRACLES, ETC. — *continued*

THERE are many other supernatural statements and some historical narratives in the Scriptures which do not of themselves carry internal evidences of authenticity, but rather tend to unbelief. Some of the miracles are of a low order of supernaturals, entirely deficient in character and in all qualities and surroundings which should go towards constituting internal evidence of their genuineness, not to mention the entire absence of any historical or other proper testimony in their favor. The grand ethics of the Bible standing alone would be more convincing of their divine inspiration without the miracles. The power, beauty, and truth of the inspired teachings do not depend at all upon the legendary miracles, and the ethics are not necessarily connected with them. Nor, on the other hand, should the inspired teachings be impaired in authority by historical inaccuracies or weak and trivial miraculous legends.

Some miracles, such as the burning of the unconsumed bush in the desert of Midian, out of

the midst of which God spoke to Moses, the ten plagues of Egypt, the passages of the Red Sea and of the river Jordan by the Israelites, the cloud behind them in their marches by day and the pillar of fire by night, which are said to have followed them during their forty years' wanderings in the deserts of Arabia, the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego walking with the Son of God in Nebuchadnezzar's sevenfold heated furnace; of the mysterious handwriting, his own and his empire's doom on the walls of his banqueting hall during Belshazzar's bacchanalian feast; of the raising from death of Lazarus and of Jarius' daughter, and the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, these and many other occurrences narrated in the Bible are grand and wonderful miracles, if not myths and legendary stories, and we might well suppose appropriate manifestations of omnipotent power, and from their character might furnish internal support to general biblical authenticity and inspiration. The Edenic drama, however, the story of Moses' and the Egyptian magicians' rods turning into serpents when thrown down before King Pharaoh; and Moses' serpents, then swallowing the others; the story of Balaam and the ass, of the sun and moon standing still for a whole day at the command of Joshua, of Samson and the three hundred foxes, of Saul and the witch of Endor, and other supernaturals which might be referred to,



do not from their character add any strength whatever to biblical authenticity, but being published and held as equally true among believers with all other miraculous narratives, tend strongly to impair the credibility of all.

It is idle, as Renan in his "Life of Christ" justly says, "to claim in view of such incredible Bible stories, and of the vast multitude of other legendary and fabulous stories which abound in books of our own and of other religions, and which equally with the Hebrew and Christian miracles have been implicitly believed in for ages by myriads of people of all religions, that evidence sufficient to sustain ordinary historical facts should be considered sufficient to prove miracles." Some ordinary historic statements are believed merely upon the statements of reliable historians, ancient and modern, but miracles cannot be proved in such way. We believe in the divine inspiration of all the messages of holiness, mercy, and humanity, which are found in our Bible, as well as in the bibles of all religions, and we believe so upon the authority of our Bible, which says that "from God cometh every good and perfect gift."

Such teachings, like axioms in geometry, prove themselves to be from deity, but supernatural reversions, changes, suspensions, or abrogations of the divine laws of nature, which constitute miracles, cannot prove themselves. They must

be proven as all other historical facts. Apart from the stories themselves, as they are found in our Bible and in the sacred books of other religions, there is virtually no proof of miracles existing. Bible histories, like other reliable ancient histories, are sufficiently trustworthy to authenticate of themselves many natural historical facts, but they cannot alone give credence to supernatural narratives.

Josephus, in his books of Jewish antiquities, merely follows Bible history down to the return of the exiles from Babylon and the rebuilding of the second temple, and his stories of miraculous events are merely copied from the Bible, with some variations from our present versions, probably owing to interpolations, differences in translations, etc. So Herodotus, the Greek, Manetho, the Egyptian, Berosus, the Chaldean, and other pagan historians who wrote anything of the Israelites, only repeated what they obtained from traditions or from ancient Hebrew writings. Really there exists no corroboration whatever of any biblical miracles in any histories of Egyptians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Persians, Greeks, or any other surrounding nations, and very slight corroborations of even ancient Hebrew secular history. Such as there is, and it is generally unimportant, has been found in Egyptian pyramids, temples, and mummy sarcophagi, of kings, and in the débris of ruins of Nineveh, Asshur,

and Babylon. So that, we may say, that of historical or monumental corroborations of biblical miracles, there are none whatever either Jewish or Gentile. The alleged corroborations, contemporary or otherwise, of any miracles of other religions, and of the innumerable Christian miracles of saints and martyrs of the dark and mediæval ages, are entirely unreliable and worthless, and so regarded by all good scholars and trustworthy historians, whatever may be their religious beliefs. We shall now, in addition to previous comments herein, refer to some of the Bible miracles which we consider as Apocryphal and mythical or legendary, as also to some matters of merely secular Bible history, insufficiently authenticated. Generally Bible history, until it runs back into the very early years of time, is reliable. As this is not in any sense a Bible history or commentary, but only a consideration of its most important matters of miracles and doctrines, the things we shall review, instead of being taken up consecutively, are found here and there in the Scriptures, and are used as they seem most appropriate for our purposes.

There are inconsistencies in the Bible. Why should God, in whom there is no "inconsistency, variableness, or shadow of turning," harden Pharaoh's heart, as we are told He did against the terrible warnings of the great plagues, and then punish him and his people for not letting

the Israelites go out of Egypt? According to Exodus, God induced Pharaoh not to let them go. Is not this charging God with duplicity? We know it cannot be. God cannot do so. Nor could He have sent one of His angels to go and put a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets,<sup>1</sup> so as to entice him to go to battle with the Syrians at Ramoth Gilead, that his army might be defeated and himself killed.

Did the Heavenly Father literally order the extermination of the petty tribes of the Canaanites, men, women, and little children, with the besom of destruction in their ancient homes surrounded with the vines and fig-trees which they had planted, merely that the ruthless invaders might appropriate them to their own use? So Moses, or whoever wrote the Pentateuch, teaches! And so Joshua teaches! What harm or wrong had they done their despoilers and murderers? None whatever. But it is said they were idolaters and God wanted them destroyed. Perhaps so. But their innocent children might have been saved and brought up differently. And their conquerors were also most of the time idolaters, especially after the conquest of Canaan, notwithstanding the teachings of Moses and the divine laws. Doubtless, as the history tells, the most of the Canaanites were exterminated, but we opine only under the

<sup>1</sup> Second Chronicles, ch. xviii, verse 20.

same old warrant of ambition, greed, and lust of conquest, under which Cambyses, Alexander, Cæsar, Attila, Genghis Khan, Timour, Cortez, Pizarro, Napoleon, and other conquerors deluged the earth in blood. The Mosaic laws, civil and criminal, compose a code of laws, wonderful and advanced in humanity for that early age.

It forms the basis of the laws of most civilized nations, and so far as its subject matters extend, was mostly good. Yet, though Moses proclaimed all those laws, without exception, as coming directly from God, there are in that code, judged by the standard of true morals and the Decalogue, some monstrous wrongs permitted, especially in reference to slavery, polygamy, divorces, and social morals. Slavery was allowed, and slaves were permitted to be captured in war and bought and sold, not only of foreign peoples, but also of their own kinsmen, Israelites. Men were permitted to have plural wives without any limit as to numbers, and they were also authorized to put away and divorce their wives at pleasure, no matter how many children they may have borne them or how old they were. Did God really authorize such social wrongs? It is hard to believe it. We cannot believe it.

The Bible in that is *untrue* when it says He did. Jesus did not believe it, for He said that *Moses*, not God, on account of the hardness of the hearts of the Israelites permitted divorces for any

cause, but that from the beginning it was not so, tacitly thus declaring that although such was the Mosaic law, it was not the law given by God; thus Himself discrediting Scripture. The Savior made no special condemnation of slavery and polygamy, possibly because those crimes were not brought to His attention. It is folly to teach that God sanctioned or gave such immoral and unjust laws, and if He did not, then so much of Scriptures is untrue, and plenary inspiration is at once discredited. "The greater part of the legislation of the Mosaic code was superseded once for all by Jesus."<sup>1</sup> And yet Jesus is reported as saying: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am come not to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily, I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one *jot* or one *tittle* shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be fulfilled."<sup>2</sup>

Evidently Jesus' language was not correctly reported by the evangelists, or else by the "law and the prophets and all things," He merely meant only the moral law. He did not mean the sacrificial and ceremonial laws, for He paid little attention to them, and they passed away forever when the last temple was destroyed, and no descendant of David was then sitting upon

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Briggs, "The Bible, the Church, the Reason," p. 289. Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew, ch. v, verses 17-18.

Judah's throne. Nor did He mean the predictions of the prophets, for many of them have been unfulfilled. "If we insist upon the fulfillment of the details of the predictive prophecy of the Old Testament, many of those predictions have been reversed by history."<sup>1</sup>

Was it the God whom we worship, or was it only Israel's God, who said "that if a man smite his servant or his serving maid with a rod, and he die under his hand, he shall be punished. Notwithstanding, if he live a day or two, he shall not be punished because the slave was his property"?<sup>2</sup> Perhaps, moreover, the poor mangled slave may not have been a stranger of other race or color, but a kinsman Hebrew! Did God really, as Moses says He did, command, that if a man seduced a bondmaid who was betrothed to another man, the maiden should be flogged for her sin, but because she was a slave, the vile seducer could make a petty sacrifice at a trifling cost, and go unpunished?<sup>3</sup> Surely not the God we worship! We will not believe that He gave such a law. No such immoral and barbarous law can be found in the Confucian Analects, the Zend Avesta, the Vedas, the Tri Pitakas, or the Koran.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Briggs, "The Bible, the Church, the Reason," p. 286. Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus, ch. xxi, verse 21.

<sup>3</sup> Leviticus, ch. xix, verses 20, 21, 22.

The statement in the Bible that such laws were proclaimed by God through Moses, is *ipso facto* proof that the statement is untrue, and that so much of the text, at least, is anything but inspired. And the immoral inference from such law, publicly announced as it purports to have been, is logically that had not the slave maiden been betrothed, the sexual intercourse with her as a slave would not have been wrong, or at least have merited or received no punishment for either one. Did God order through Moses, as we are told He did, specifically, all the petty details of the minutiae of the Hebrew sacrificial worship, of the garments of the priests, of the ribbons, fringes, and other ornaments of the curtains of the Shekinah, of the rings, bolts, and nails therefor, and of the trifling arrangements for slaughter and sacrifices of bulls, heifers, sheep, goats, pigeons, and doves? Truly the Lord was concerning Himself *de minimis*. Sacrifices to be made, in order, as proclaimed, that through the reeking blood and the hot flames from the burning flesh of the victims on the sacrificial altar, an atonement or expiation for the sins of the people might be made by propitiating God through the "sweet savor," arising from the sacrificial offerings! What an occupation for the God of the universe to be engaged in! What besotted worship! A worship probably suited to the human conceptions of a deity who would devise it.



Does anybody, Jew or Gentile, unless infatuated with the old forms and beliefs, and supinely following them, now believe that God ever ordained such sacrifices, or that such sacrifices now or ever could in God's economy, really atone for sins? Or that such bloody, bestial offerings were types of the Savior's future crucifixion, as orthodoxy teaches? Or were indeed types of anything but of the superstition, ignorance, and barbarism of the priests, and the people who performed such rites of worship? The idea of the Almighty who "sitteth upon the circle of the universe and ruleth over all" enjoying, and being appeased, or being influenced in any way by a "sweet savor," arising not from the delicious fragrance of odorous flowers or of burning incense, which supposedly might be agreeable to Him, but from the fumes of reeking blood and burning flesh of the poor animals slaughtered for sacrifices! The thought is disgusting! All refined and humane minds, one would think, would instinctively revolt from such an association of repulsive ideas. A great many thousands of beasts and birds were often slaughtered in the grounds of the Temple at Jerusalem in one day, at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, and other great occasions, and the grounds of the Temple were turned into market places for buying and selling the animals, as well as into shambles for wholesale slaughter. Is it conceivable that God would suspend or

revoke nature's eternal laws and work miracles, sometimes on very ordinary occasions, as we are taught, for the especial benefit and encouragement in their folly, of the ignorant and besotted semi-barbarians who could enjoy such mummeries, and call them worship of God? Rather, methinks, He might have worked miracles to enlighten their minds and win them from such sacrificial abominations.

We are often told by divines who gloss over such things in the Bible, in their sermons and writings, that "a glory gilds *all* the sacred pages," but such instances as above referred to, of unjust laws, stupid miracles, and heathenish worship, as well as many other blemishes which might be noted, sadly darken many pages of the Bible. In fact, few of the biblical books excepting the Proverbs, inspired Psalms, the Prophecies, and some of the Epistles are free from blemishes. Some of the prophetic teachings, it is true, represent God with human infirmities and passions, but that is merely adapting their teachings to the capacities of their hearers or readers. The vulgar opening of Hosea's book, with his "wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms," is not very attractive. Many Christian ministers and Jewish priests, nay most of them, are not honest with their people, and do not expound to them the whole truth, but conceal or gloss over or give some sublimated or mystical

exposition to all the dark features of old Bible story.

Better the sale for gold, of indulgences and forgiveness and absolution for sins, carried on by the priests of Rome in the Dark Ages, than the debasing Mosaic sacrifices. Were they indeed anything more than the systems of worship of the surrounding pagan nations adopted by the Israelites and ingrafted by them upon the Zoroastrian worship of one God instead of the heathen worship of many gods? And really only as it taught monotheism, and naturally, therefore, leading to higher ideals, running through the whole system, and better laws, civil, criminal, and ecclesiastical, was Mosaic sacrificial worship much superior to the Egyptian, Assyrian, or Grecian forms of worship, as it was inferior to the Zoroastrian worship of Central Asia, which had no sacrificial mummeries, though that religion was perhaps one thousand years older than the Mosaic. It was the oldest and original monotheism of earth, so far as we know. No! Such absurd sacrificial worship never came from God, only as all things of earth may be parts or segments of the circle of His providence and economies, of the social and religious evolutions which He permits and guides.

The statement that the clothes and shoes of the Israelites in their forty years' wanderings in the Arabian deserts never grew old or worn out,

and the story of Balaam and the ass are only on a par with many of the Oriental fables in the "Arabian Nights." How they ever got into the Pentateuch is a mystery. And how they can now be believed by intelligent Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans is a still greater mystery. Must we believe merely because it is in the pages of Exodus, not only that the sandals and clothes of the grown persons never got frayed or torn during the forty years of their wanderings, but also that new clothes grew or were furnished by angel hands, as children were born, and that their clothes continued growing and expanding on their bodies as they grew up to maturity? A whole generation, we are told, passed away and another grew up in the mountains, vales, and deserts during those forty years. What nonsense will not and have not mankind believed under the teachings of priestcraft and the influences of religious delusions! It must require an amazing amount of credulity to believe such things without a tittle of evidence, excepting that "it is so written," or to believe as a literal fact the poetic fable or allegory that the "sun stood still upon Gibeon and the moon in the vale of Aijalon and hastened not to go down for a whole day" at the command of Joshua, in order that one petty nation of semibarbarians might have sufficient light to exterminate another. Where is to be found, or can be produced by those who believe it

as a real fact, any corroborating historical and astronomical testimony of such an amazing event as there needs must have been, at least in astronomical reckonings, if true? There is not on earth a scintilla of such evidence. Josephus corroborated it, but his statement, like his corroboration of other Bible miracles, comes from the original story in Joshua, and hence is but a repetition of it. But really the environment and language of the story show it to be merely an extravagant poetic embellishment or legend. How did the Danite Hercules, Samson, manage by himself to collect three hundred foxes and tie together and set fire to the tails of so many, and thus sending them loose, burn up the grain and vineyards of the Philistines?<sup>1</sup> Had the writer of the story been reading the exploits of the fabled Grecian Hercules? Must we perforce also believe the story of the fountain of water, to slake his thirst gushing out of the jaw bone of an ass with which he had slain one thousand Philistines? That jaw bone must have been made of steel, or else in the slaughter of so many armed enemies it would have been early crushed into fragments. And whence came the water supply of the fountain, as it had no connection with the earth? A much prettier finale for the story of the exhausting work of the slaughter of one thousand Philistines had been the miraculous gushing of a spring by the

<sup>1</sup> Judges, chap. xv, verses 4 and 5.

wayside to slake the thirst of the tired Danite champion.

Samson was the Hebrew Hercules. All ancient peoples had their heroes who performed miraculous prodigies of bravery, strength, and agility, and were made demigods. We need but to refer without special comment to the stories of the resurrection of the dead man in Second Kings,<sup>1</sup> when his corpse was let down into the tomb of the prophet Elisha and came in contact with his bones; of the witch of Endor, and Saul, king of Israel, holding converse with the ghost of the dead prophet, Samuel, whom she had called up and away from his distant tomb into that lone forest at the bidding of Saul. Would God so use a proscribed witch, all of which sisterhood He had ordered Saul to destroy for their sorceries? Of the lost ax rising from the bottom of a river and floating on top of the stream at the behest of the prophet Elisha, thus annulling or suspending for a time the universal law of gravitation for so trifling a matter as the recovery of the ax which had slipped from its helve into the river? As miracles these instances are now "back numbers," if we may so express the changed beliefs of most men. These are one and all, evidently with many other miracles we might refer to, myths, fables, or extravagant poetic fictions, and originally so written, without a particle of corroborating evidence, as

<sup>1</sup> Second Kings, chap. xiii, verse 21.

*facts*, externally or internally, from the character of the miracles.

The internal attestation from the nature of the miraculous environments is unfavorable to them. Only the very ignorant, very credulous, and bigoted, believe such stories any more. Those cited, and many other Bible legends which might be referred to, can add no conviction, *inter se*, as to the general authenticity of miracles, or even of biblical inspiration, but rather tend to impair belief in both. No Bible miracles have any corroborating historical support whatever. The story of Jonah and the whale, and of the miraculous vine which grew up over him in a day to shelter him from the sun, is all certainly an allegorical fiction and not a story of supernatural facts, written perhaps by some gifted and liberal Jew during the exile, or afterwards, to illustrate the national selfishness, exclusiveness, and illiberality of his race, and teaching beautifully the doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God, His love for all men, and merciful readiness to forgive all who genuinely repent of sins. No atonement even intimated. It is to our conception one of the most beautiful of ancient poems, for poem it is, and should be rendered into meter, illustrating in most forcible language the same grand truths as the "Gentle Portia" in the "Merchant of Venice" teaches the cruel, selfish, bigoted, and avaricious Shylock. We think it clearly shows on its face

that it was written allegorically to enunciate and impress upon all men, and especially all Jews, those great moral and social truths, and not merely as a literal supernatural story, though for ages the story of Jonah's whale and gourd have been believed and defended by Christians, though not very strongly by Jews, as genuinely miraculous.

When we come to the consideration of New Testament miracles, we find that none of them, outside of the Gospels and Acts, have any corroborating contemporary evidence or historical support. No references are made to them in the various Epistles. The omission is extraordinary and goes to show that the Gospels and Acts, as we now have them, were later productions. Some of them are of such importance and character as, considered with reference only as to character and surroundings, might give internal support to the theory of inspiration of these teachings. But some of them by their intrinsic character and environments, we think, have a contrary influence. Of this latter class of supernatural stories, — and there are many such, — let us consider as first and most important the story of the temptation in Matthew<sup>1</sup> and Luke. It is only found in those two Gospels.

<sup>1</sup> Matthew, chap. xvi; Luke, chap. iv.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE STORY OF JESUS' TEMPTATION

IN order to comprehend the story clearly in all its bearings, one should have a fixed opinion of or belief in Jesus Christ, as to His nature and individuality.

*First.* Was He God, the second person of three persons in the Trinity of Godhead, divine, uncreated, the three *persons* in one being, distinct but not separate? If so, then, though incomprehensibly and mysteriously conceived by and born of Mary, the Jewess, we affirm He was only the semblance of man and was to all intents and purposes Almighty God.

*Second.* Was Jesus so born merely an incarnation or manifestation of God in human form? If so, He was to all intents and purposes God and not man. His humanity and deity were one and inseparable, while such existence and manifestation continued. He was only God and not man in any sense during such incarnation, and the mystic conception of the Divine Trinity is only a human fantasy.

*Third.* If not God only, in the incomprehensible Trinity, or God incarnated for a time in hu-

manity, then Jesus, whether born from theophanic conception of His mother, or really as the son of Joseph and Mary, was only a human being. In either case, and especially if born of theophanic conception, He was as God willed, His Son, and in the latter case divinely human with God — like faculties and possibilities, but only human still, and never God, but only man.

These are the only three conceivable characters Jesus Christ in humanity could bear, or in which rationally we can comprehend Him. Of course we cannot comprehend Him in the Trinity, but we can know, however mysterious the relations, that as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, not as interchangeable characters, for if interchangeable, then there is no Trinity, that He was and must always be only God. God cannot cease to exist or divest Himself of deity, and hence if Jesus were God He was inseparably so. If Jesus was God manifested in human form and flesh, He was only God, and there is nor can be no Trinity of persons in such relation. As a human being, however, conceived and born, though possibly endowed with almost Godlike powers and capacities, Jesus could only be a human being. These three propositions, we think, are irrefutable and cannot be controverted successfully. Now if Jesus were God, as Trinitarians claim, He could not at one time be God, and at another time only man, or partly God and partly man. If divinity ceased in

Him, or left Him at any time, He could only be man, though he might be all His life preëminently the Son of God, and gifted, as I believe He was more than any other mortal, with God's spirit and presence. But we state it as an axiomatic truth that God is and always must be God, whether in a Trinity or alone, or in any incarnation, in any form of being.

God could not die on the cross, and when Jesus died there, He died as a man. If God were merely manifested in Jesus as His Son, in any sense, though not incarnated, the Father would be yet absolutely and unchangeably God, and Jesus would not be God. But as God and the logical consequences of the orthodox creed must be accepted in all their bearings, Jesus must always have been divine, and could not — it would be inconceivable that He could — divest Himself of any attributes of deity. Hence how could Jesus as God put Himself into Satan's hands, or in his power, to be tempted of him and to be subject to his diablerie for forty days? As God, what could it amount to if He did? What example to man, or what good could be subserved? Why do the evangelists Mark and John omit to say anything about Jesus' temptation? It was a matter of transcendent importance, if literally true, and most of the really important events in Jesus' life were recorded by each evangelist. If Jesus were only human (and there could be no temptation, nor

could it avail anything if he were not merely human), how could Satan take Him up into a high mountain and show Him, excepting in a metaphorical sense, all the kingdoms of the world? There were no mountains in Palestine of sufficient height from which a radius of more than fifty miles of the surrounding country could be seen, and only so much of the then Herodian Kingdom of Judea could Jesus probably see, and He could see but a part of that one of the kingdoms of the earth, and that but a small and obscure kingdom! As God, Jesus saw and knew all kingdoms and empires, for all were His, and His vision extended not only throughout the earth but throughout all the universe.

No matter what the mysteries of His being, as the one or triune God, Jesus was only God, or else only man. Was the one God, or the triune God in one, or only one man being tempted? What temptation indeed would it be to offer God, or the divine Son of Him who created and owned the universe, who was King of kings and Lord of lords, the dominions and kingdoms of this world, when Satan who made the offer was merely a subject and servant of God and had nothing, excepting what he might hold by sufferance, to give? Furthermore, if not too ludicrous a matter to discuss, is it conceivable that Jesus as God, or as the Divine Son of God, permitted the devil, God's arch enemy, to carry Him up to the dizzy pinnacle

of the Temple at Jerusalem, and after placing Him in that ridiculous position, next tempt Him—that is, not merely ask Jesus, but as temptation is defined, “*solicit, induce, allure Him, get Him to weigh and consider the inducement,*” for a petty display of Jesus' power—to cast Himself headlong down to the marble pavement of the holy court below? What for? *Cui bono?* Why, to supposedly gratify Jesus' vanity by such a display of His power, really in his acquiescence, to make Himself a servant of Satan.

Was the evil one thus trying to dethrone God? For such, according to orthodoxy, must have been the result of the success of his temptations. Doubtless, of course, if the temptation was a real incident, Satan sought to baffle God and allure Jesus from His service. This purpose of Satan the story clearly shows. Is it conceivable he could have hoped to do so if Jesus were one of the persons of the Trinity?—and the context clearly shows Satan knew Jesus' character and relation to God, and that that character was son, minister, and messenger of God, as man. We are told elsewhere in the apostolic writings that the object or purpose of Christ's part in submitting to the temptation was to make it an example to His followers, in that He was tempted in all things like as they would be, and that His example would give them strength to resist temptation as He did. Now as God, or as one of the persons in the Trinity in the

temptation, there could be no force or merit in the example of Jesus to mortals at all. It would simply be comparing the omnipotence of Deity with the feebleness of human childhood. And if Jesus were human or quasi-human, with divine qualities and gifts, in either case the argument from example would still not be *apropos*, because Jesus was, as Christians all believe, in His native powers and resources, if not really divine, yet undoubtedly the greatest, noblest, and best of mankind, strong and self-possessed, panoplied in love and supreme trust in God, and so immensely greater and better than His fellow-men in every respect, that consequently there could be no benefit of example in a tragedy where there was almost infinite goodness and power to resist temptation in the exemplar, and mere human ability, with good and evil always contending for the mastery, in doubtful struggle in the frail creatures for whom the example was given. And if only as an example, who initiated the temptation, Jesus or Satan? Did Satan initiate it for such example? Then was he indeed seeking to do good? In fact, when the Apostles represent Jesus as merely an exemplar in the satanic temptation, they virtually deny His divinity and the basic principles of orthodoxy.

Really, the story of the temptation is not *sui generis* with all the rest of Jesus' life and teachings. It is simply a legend of early Christianity; a

product of the amazing superstition and fanaticism of the times, and so put into the two Synoptic Gospels. It should be eliminated from them even as an allegory, because, according to the tenets of orthodoxy, if Jesus was really God, it borders on the profane and sacrilegious. If He was only a man, it has features in it which are impossible and ridiculous. The story should be relegated to works like Rev. Bernard Peck's Apocryphal Life of Jesus, before-mentioned, as one of that wonderful compilation of early Christian superstitions and fables believed in as true by many Christians for centuries during the early and Dark Ages, but now only exciting our wonder and curiosity as mementos of the astonishing and almost inconceivable superstition and credulity of ancient times. Jesus Himself discredited the story by never once alluding to the "Great Temptation" in all His ministry and discourses. Like the visions in the Book of Revelation attributed to the apostle John, but which were not admitted into the New Testament canon as inspired for several centuries after they were written and in common use, practically the "Great Temptation and Revelations" are now largely regarded as allegories or religious fictions, and are now believed in by few intelligent thinking people as realities. Mark nor John do not in their Gospels even allude to the story of the temptation. Why their silence in passing unnoted such an important

event in the life of Jesus, if true? What good ever grew out of the legend? As a sort of companion piece to the story of Eden and the fall, it whetted and gratified the fancy of the Dark Ages for wonderful mysteries and incomprehensible creeds, and furnished the bigots Athanasius and Augustine a basis for their dogmas. But instead of affording any internal attestation, cumulative or isolated, to gospel authenticity or inspiration, when critically examined it is evidently a wholly absurd and irrational myth and tends to discredit all supernatural stories.

The late Bible Revision Committee in making up the Revised Version would have been fully justified, and performed a great service to liberal Christianity, by expurgating the story of the temptations from the two Gospels as an interpolation or fanatical legend. Neither internally nor externally is there a scintilla of reason or evidence to support it as a fact. It is derogatory to God and the Savior. On less ground did the Revision Committee expurgate the legend of the Pool of Bethesda and the impotent man,<sup>1</sup> wherein it is stated in the King James and other old versions that at certain periods an angel came down from heaven and troubled its waters, and that whosoever immediately stepped in or was put into the pool was cured of whatever disease he had. And that an impotent man who had long tried to get

<sup>1</sup> St. John, chap. v.



into the pool immediately after the water was so troubled, but could not, was there immediately cured by Jesus saying unto him, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk."

The revisionists also intimate that the story of the woman taken in adultery and brought before Christ is an interpolation. Another miracle which the revisionists certainly ought to have expurgated even without evidence of interpolation is the story of the devils cast out of the insane man,<sup>1</sup> asking and obtaining permission of Jesus to go into a herd of swine feeding nearby, and then after entering into them, driving all the swine into the Sea of Galilee. Were the devils drowned as well as the swine? They certainly ought to have been! Can any sane person believe that God would or did inspire the evangelist to write such a story? He could only know it to be a fact through inspiration from God. It might well have been presumed by the revisers that the story was an interpolation and was not in the original Gospel. The story might well do for a companion piece to the fable in Rev. Pick's book of Apocryphal Miracles, of Jesus, when a child, turning some boys, who offended Him by taunts and nicknames, into goats and then shortly afterwards at the intercession of His mother, transforming the goats into boys again.

Jesus we believe in as Son of God, the divine man and prophet, peerless, of woman born, and

<sup>1</sup> Matthew, chap. viii, verse 22.

though humanly and really the son of Joseph and Mary his wife, divinely created and inspired for His great mission of pardon, humanity, liberty, and truth to all the world; truly, as Renan says, the greatest, best, and noblest being who ever lived on earth, and worthily the Son of God. Such fables as the foregoing legends interwoven into the Gospels only obscure His glory. Only one other created being can we compare Him with, and that was the great and mysterious Melchizedek, King of Salem,<sup>1</sup> priest forever and Son of God, like Jesus Christ, "who was without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life."<sup>2</sup> This great and mysterious king who is spoken of a number of times in the Bible without much information being given about him, and who was an associate and contemporary of the patriarch Abraham, was most likely none other than the great prophet Zoroaster, who lived and taught only of the "most high God" at that time, besides being, according to Persian traditions, a king. The difference of names where the identity of the person seems the same does not amount to much, as Moses and Abraham, as well as Zarathustra or Zoroaster, have many various names in the histories and traditions of Canaan, Egypt, Arabia, and Persia. But the language, titles,

<sup>1</sup> Genesis, chap. xiv, verse 18.

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews, chap. v, verse 6, and chap. vii, verses 1-4 inclusive.

styles, and descriptions of the Bible identify Melchizedek with Zoroaster as the divinely sent and great teacher of earth's most ancient religion, and also as king, son, priest, and prophet, as was Jesus two thousand years afterward, of the one most high God. The singular terms in which Melchizedek is spoken of, and the almost impenetrable mystery which is left about him in the Bible, seem to closely identify him with the Persian and Chaldean traditions of the great and good Zoroaster, who was said by ancient Persian legends to have been taken to Heaven and had interviews and instructions from God and His angels before entering upon his ministry. He and Jesus Christ are the two greatest and grandest characters on history's pages, and if Zoroaster and the mysterious Melchizedek are one and the same, then he was a grand compeer of the great Nazarene. One of our great secret orders perpetuates the name of Jesus in its rituals, and another the name of Melchizedek in its highest and final password and ritual.

“Hail, patriarchs, hail! Behold in me  
The Centre of your mystic ring,  
Your password through eternity,  
Melchizedek, your priest and king.”

There are other narratives in the Bible which from want of harmony with just and elevated conception of deity, and on account of their

character and environments, only serve to illustrate human weakness and credulity, rather than help sustain biblical authenticity or strengthen the claim for its plenary inspiration. These instances will readily occur from our point of view to students well posted in the sacred text, and need not be specifically referred to. And there are also many minor differences in various statements, such as the conduct of the malefactors who were crucified with Jesus,<sup>1</sup> and also as to what occurred to St. Paul in the theophany, or divine vision, which was the instrument of his conversion on his journey from Jerusalem to Damascus for the purpose of persecuting the followers of Christ,<sup>2</sup> which contradictions, though of course of small importance, squarely conflict with the doctrine of inerrancy in all Scriptures, because of errors in the originals or because of errors in translations. But we will pass these instances by merely with this brief reference to them, and will only note, specially, one or two more very prominent historical statements in the Bible as bearing directly on the question of internal evidence of authenticity and plenary inspiration.

In the Second Book of Chronicles<sup>3</sup> we find an

<sup>1</sup> Matthew, chap. xxvii, verse 44, and Luke, chap. xxiii, verse 40.

<sup>2</sup> Acts, chap. x, verse 7, and chap. xxii, verse 9.

<sup>3</sup> Second Book of Chronicles, chap. xiii.

account of a battle between the armies of the petty kingdoms of Judah and Israel, or the ten tribes, in which it is stated that the army of King Jeroboam of Israel was defeated with a loss of half a million of his chosen soldiers *slain*. This was about 957 B.C. Now if the statement were that five hundred thousand of Jeroboam's men had been killed and wounded, it should tax human credulity to the utmost, but the language is "slain," "killed," and it is incredible. The narrative does not state how many of the soldiers of Judah and Benjamin were slain. Probably a greater proportion of killed to wounded occurred in the conflicts in ancient times, when such weapons as spears, javelins, battle axes, and swords were used at close quarters and men fought with more savage ferocity than in civilized warfare, but to such a vast number killed there would probably be an equal number wounded. Mind, the text says slain, and if that is inspired, or even truthful if not inspired, it can't be argued that it means killed and wounded both. So that understood as it reads, the loss on the side of Israel alone was probably one million men killed and wounded, and the loss on both sides of one million five hundred thousand men killed and wounded. Now the whole territory of both kingdoms did not comprise at that period over fifteen thousand square miles, as most of the outside territory of Edom, Moab, and other regions conquered by King David had previously

revolted and regained their independence. Much of Canaan was mountainous and desert.

The population of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin at that time, including the city of Jerusalem, was no doubt equal to the population of the other ten tribes, and the aggregate population of both kingdoms was not probably over two million two hundred and twenty-five thousand. Six hundred thousand was doubtless the outside number of available soldiers of both kingdoms. And yet we have in this historical statement in the commonly accepted canonical Book of Chronicles, a half million of the one army of Israel slain in one battle, with a probable loss in killed and wounded on both sides, according to ordinary calculations, of one million five hundred thousand men, or more than half the entire population of the two kingdoms, estimating one hundred and fifty people to the square mile, which is a large estimate. The statement of the number killed in the battle is absurd. Any argument as to its credibility would be simply a waste of time, as much so indeed as it would have been to discuss with George Rawlinson his belief that actually the "sun stood still upon Gibeon and the moon in the vale of Aijalon."<sup>1</sup> We may say, *en passant*, that writers upon the evidences of Christianity and of biblical inspiration generally, by affirming the literal truths of all super-

<sup>1</sup> Evidences of Christianity, by George Rawlinson, pp. 87, 88.

natural occurrences in the Bible, including such preposterous legends as Balaam and the ass, the sun and moon standing still at Joshua's command, the poetic fictions of Jonah and the whale and others of the same character, do much in this age to impair the force of their arguments in favor of the truth of other more reasonable miraculous narrations and of biblical inspiration of ethics, prophecies, and other divine teachings.

In the great battle of Gettysburg, July first, second, and third, 1863, in our Civil War, justly regarded as the Waterloo of the Rebellion, in which about two hundred thousand men fought in desperate and bloody conflict for three days, according to the official accounts, only six thousand three hundred and thirty-four were killed, and twenty-eight thousand one hundred and eight were wounded, a total of only thirty-four thousand five hundred and forty-three killed and wounded on both sides. With this single comparison, which we think is sufficient, of one great battle with another, and fought under somewhat similar circumstances, taking all the surroundings into consideration, the grossness of the exaggeration of the number killed in the army of Jeroboam needs no further illustration to any reasonable and well-informed mind. Of course, as we have intimated, there have been no doubt other battles, especially in ancient times, when the number of

killed and wounded were comparatively greater than at Gettysburg, but no such slaughter ever occurred in any battle upon earth, of which we have any reliable history, as in the battle narrated in Chronicles. A knowledge of the small territorial area and population of Judah and Israel assists in showing how grossly exaggerated that historic statement must be. The Books of Chronicles were undoubtedly written either during or soon after the Babylonian exile, and the motives for the exaggeration of the loss of the ten tribes in the battle, and their terrible defeat, were probably mainly a desire to extol and glorify the Davidic dynasty, and the hatred of the Jews against their sister kingdom for rebellion against that dynasty represented by King Solomon's son Rehoboam, and the dismemberment of his grandfather's empire, which hatred existed for centuries, even after the Israelites had been conquered and expatriated in 721 B.C. from their country by the Assyrian monarch Shalmaneser, and so scattered over Central Asia that henceforth their identity not only as tribes, but even as Hebrews, was, and has ever since been, utterly lost. Jewish historians, poets, and prophets were always addicted to extravagant adulations of David's royal family, their reigns and conquests. The prophets predicted that David's descendants should forever occupy the throne of Judah, and that there should be no end of his kingdom. But these



predictions of the prophets, along with many others, were reversed by time and history.

The total destruction of the Assyrian army of Sennacherib, of one hundred and eighty-five thousand men in one night by an angel of the Lord, has no historical corroboration in ancient annals, sculptures, or otherwise. Dr. Briggs and other scholars say the story is untrue. It may simply have been a transposition of facts. His army, or a part of it, may have possibly been caught in and overwhelmed by a desert simoom in Arabia or elsewhere. History says many thousands of the army of Cambyses, king of Persia and Babylon, were destroyed in a great sandstorm of the African desert of Libya a century afterwards. A similar disaster may have befallen the army of the Assyrians, and Jewish poets ascribed it to the direct intervention of the Almighty for vengeance upon their enemies. Or the writer of Chronicles may have confounded the story of Cambyses' disaster with the Assyrian.

## CHAPTER X

### THE TRINITY

AS already said, the facts of Bible miracles, as well as of the historical narratives, like all other histories, sacred or profane, depend upon evidence internal and external. Men generally admit this proposition to be correct, and yet it is a singular fact, in the discussion of biblical questions, that whenever any doubts are expressed concerning the truth of certain occurrences in it, miraculous or otherwise, or any commonly received doctrines are denied, most Christians become indignant and repel such doubts by charges of heresy, unbelief, or atheism, and decry all criticism as if all biblical subjects were too sacred for investigation. Yet many of the books of the Bible have come down to us without even the authority of certainly known authorship. Books written by well-known and reputable authors have a *prima facie* claim to credibility, but without such known authorships they have no such standing *per se*, and should be judged solely upon their merits. Age alone cannot authenticate books. We know too well that ancient religious books as well as ancient histories are full of exaggerations and fabulous stories.

The authorships imputed to most of our biblical books we know have no authority, and as the searching criticism of the present age has discovered, are generally fictitious. Nearly all Jewish and early Christian history was originally written from tradition and folklore. Tradition, it is said, "sometimes brings down truth that history has let slip, but is oftener the wild fireside stories of the times." They had in ancient days no books such as we have now. Manuscripts of vellum, Nile papyrus, thin barks, or lambskin only were used, and they were few and costly, and all written, until a short time before the discovery of the art of printing in 1452, without using chapters, sections, verses, or punctuation, just a continuous mass of letters, usually only consonants without vowels, the connection of which into words, sentences, and sense had to be deciphered by the subsequent reader or translator of the manuscript as best could be done. Hence additions and interpolations were easily made by those wanting to support their own theories or to establish certain states of facts, and were difficult to detect. Copies were few and costly, and marginal notes of previous copyists and translators were often incorporated into the original text, especially in religious and controversialist writings. Such are known to be facts. We know that the Gospels and Epistles of the apostles, even more so than the books of the Hebrew Bible, have been added to, interpolated,

and greatly changed in words and expression. We now have no Christian or Jewish writings of the first century A.D., excepting Flavius Josephus' works, and some of Paul's Epistles. None of the Gospels were written until long after the Epistles were written, because the Epistles do not refer to them.

Strange and extraordinary events never lose anything, but usually gain much, in exaggeration and embellishments by transmittal in popular traditions, especially when fostered by religious enthusiasm. All of Christ's life and teachings and the apostolic missionary work of the first century were only preserved in memory and traditions, at least until about its close. What an opportunity in that superstitious age to build up legends of the miraculous conception and birth of Jesus, the satanic temptation, the miracles narrated of Him and the circumstances connected with His crucifixion and resurrection! Jesus, if born according to the common chronology, four years before the beginning of A.D., was thirty-seven years of age when the crucifixion took place, 33 A.D. The Gospels were undoubtedly written after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, which took place 69-70 A.D., and probably before the close of the century, and solely from memories and traditions. The traditions about Jesus in consequence of the unlimited faith and devotion of His disciples and subsequent

converts, and the superstition of those times, we can well believe, from some of the Gospel miraculous stories, as well as the amazing Apocryphal legends which have come down to us through the centuries, were astonishingly embellished and magnified in rehearsals. Natural occurrences were transformed into the miraculous. Angels and demons were around Him always.

It is only human nature and the experience and history of all time about great founders of religion that it should have been so. All manner of traditions and legends of wonderful miracles were intertwined in after-years with the memories of Zoroaster, Abraham, Moses, Confucius, Buddha, and Mohammed, as well as Jesus Christ. And so the annals of all great men, conquerors, founders of empires, etc., are crowded with stories of universally exaggerated deeds. Such is the result of fame and human nature's worship of greatness alone. Certainly Jesus with His wonderfully magnetic and sympathetic character and His great wisdom and unerring knowledge of human nature, even if not accompanied with supernatural powers, was enabled to perform many wonderful works, such as curing the sick, imparting strength to the weak, and restoring the insane to their right minds, which doubtless became the basis of the future traditions of His miracles. He was doubtless really, as He was called, "the great physician" of bodily ailments as well as of souls.

Curing the insane in those days was popularly believed to be "casting out devils." All persons afflicted with lunacy were supposed to be demoniacally possessed. But we should note that even to Jesus' powers, however great and however derived, there were undoubtedly limitations, depending greatly upon the faith and devotion of His followers.<sup>1</sup> When in Galilee, His native country, "He could do no mighty works because of their unbelief." Such little apparently casual statements we note often illustrate biblical narratives and teachings more clearly sometimes than whole pages do. These few words of the evangelists absolutely nullify the doctrine of the Trinity. If Jesus were divine, as one of the persons or incarnations of the Deity, the belief or unbelief of people in Him could be of no manner of consequence to His powers. He might, because of their want of faith in Him, refuse to perform miracles or mighty works, but the texts cited emphatically say "He could not." Here *en passant* we desire to say that it is very much to be regretted that the great French savant, Dr. Ernest Renan, one of the forty "immortals" of the French Academy of Sciences, and a sincerely good man, in his "Life of Christ," a most attractive and doubtless mainly accurate biography, should feel himself called upon to account for some of the Savior's wonderful works by suggesting that He sometimes used thaumaturgic

<sup>1</sup> Matthew, chap. xiii, verse 5. Mark vi, verse 8.

arts! That is the only unpleasant thing, the only *faux pas* in its pages, to mar the charm of that elegant and sympathetic biography of the great prophet of humanity, who Renan truthfully declares, from the absolutely reliable testimony we have as to His life and character, was the greatest and best man who ever has lived or probably ever will live on earth.

Short as His life was and brief as His biographies, enough is known of Jesus, which is true beyond all question in the Gospels, apostolic Epistles and traditions, to demonstrate that He was more than human and grandly above all other men, the incarnation of truth, purity, and goodness, absolutely incapable of resorting to any device, sham, or deception, and that whatever mysterious works He actually performed, were done through His own power or divine assistance. Some of the stories of His miracles as transmitted down to us may be fables. But that He had almost unbounded influence over His followers, their devotion to Him in life, and their entire self-abnegation in His name and cause after His death, in lives of missionary privations and ultimately martyrdoms, sufficiently attest. When a mere child, a rustic from the obscure village of Nazareth in Galilee, He almost paralyzed with astonishment the haughty priests and scribes of the Temple by His perplexing questions and wonderful answers. His great knowledge of Jewish

institutions and history and profound grasp of all theological and moral subjects were astonishing. Whence came all His knowledge and the lucid and beautiful language in which His teachings were expressed? His parents and surroundings could not have imparted such culture to Him. He had brothers and sisters and they were very ordinary persons. He had unquestionably communion with God in some way, such as they wot not of. There is a hiatus of eighteen years in His life, from twelve years of age until He came to John at the river Jordan to be baptized at thirty years of age. What was Jesus doing all these years? If at home working with His father at the carpenter's bench, He must have been employing all His leisure hours in communion with God and in studying diligently any manuscripts of Jewish literature He could get. And He may have been away in Persia, among the Jews there, studying the great religion of Zoroaster, or in India studying Buddhism. Many of His teachings are but amplifications of theirs. The legend of His conception and birth is the same as Buddha's, excepting that the Christ was the son of a Galilean peasant woman, and Buddha was the son of an Indian queen. There is a strange similarity in the stories of the advent of the mysterious Melchizedek, king of Salem, Buddha, and Jesus Christ, excepting that Melchizedek is said to have been "without father, without mother, without descent,"<sup>1</sup> having neither be-

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews, chap. vii, verse 3.



ginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually." Some theologians have supposed Melchizedek and Jesus Christ to be one and the same incarnation of deity. If they were, why not also Buddha? His life and teachings were very similar to the Savior's, and a religion which is twenty-five hundred years old, and whose followers yet number one-third of the human race, certainly was from God. Jesus may also have known and studied Confucius's works. Confucius gave first the Golden Rule to the world, and of the precepts of men who antedated the Christian era, none are better known and few are cherished as his simple Analects. In a rather interesting work, partly true and partly fictitious, entitled "Jesat Nassar," published in 1890 by a learned Jewish family named Mamroevs, Jesus is represented as having spent most of the years of his youth traveling in the countries surrounding Palestine, seeking and acquiring knowledge. But whether their suggestions are correct or not, Jesus was evidently an extraordinarily gifted being, and endowed with wisdom and knowledge unaccountable from the usual conceptions of His youth's surroundings. But do the Scriptures teach that He is God? In order to believe so, we must so arbitrarily construe sundry mysterious and ambiguous passages, and distort or disbelieve Jesus' own positive and unqualified declarations, "I can of mine own self

do nothing. My Father is greater than I." <sup>1</sup> And many similar and equally clear and positive assertions of His subjection to and dependence upon God, which He made on various occasions, some of which we heretofore quoted. <sup>2</sup> In a few of Jesus' sayings there is apparently some mystery as to His sonship and preëxistence, but in those quoted there is none as to His divinity. They are clear-cut and thoroughly explicit in stating His inferiority to God and absolute submission to His will.

Coming down to us through sixteen centuries of orthodox translations and manipulations of the Gospels, why should they not be understood and believed just as spoken by Jesus? Why under such circumstances discard His clear and emphatic utterances and build up mystic and incomprehensible creeds based upon some other mysterious expressions and upon supposed conditions of human relations to God that never had any but an imaginary existence? And if Jesus made the distinct disavowals of divinity and declared His dependence upon and filial submission to His Heavenly Father's will as quoted, then the doctrine of the Trinity is not true, nor countenanced by anything He said, but is solely an invention of ecclesiasticism

Just as are, and have no more scriptural authority, the third and fourth sections of the Westmin-

<sup>1</sup> John, chap. v, verse 30, and chap. xiv, verse 28.

<sup>2</sup> See page 55.

ster Confession of Faith, which are as positively enunciated as the doctrine of the Trinity is, *viz.* Section three: "By the decree of God for the manifestation of His glory some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained unto everlasting death." Section four: "These angels and men thus predestined and fore-ordained are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished." That is absolute election and predestination. These dogmas are mere inventions of fanaticism and bigotry and are wholly unauthorized by the general tone of the Scriptures. They are a mere sectarian patchwork made up from a few isolated expressions of St. Paul's and other apostolic writings, based upon the fable of Eden and the great temptation of Matthew and Luke's Gospels, and the intangible dreams of the Apocalyptic revelations, but only through far-fetched constructions and distortions of their meanings. There are no reasonable grounds for any such unnatural metaphorical, or mystical construction or interpretation of Jesus' teachings either in relation to His sonship to God, or to the awful doctrine of the eternal predestined ruin and misery of nearly all the human race. Those doctrines were gradually evolved by the Church of the Dark Ages; they were not beliefs of primitive Christianity. When Rome became the Church, all Christians

were required to believe those and other orthodox dogmas under penalty of anathemas, of temporal and eternal ruin. And when conditions prevented orthodoxy from enforcing and perpetuating them by such means, it has sought to do so by distortions of scriptural teachings, and all manner of sophistry. Much of the literature of the ages has been perverted to such purposes. In one of the sublimest poems ever written, the Russian poet Derzhavin's "Invocation to God," which has never been surpassed for beauty and grandeur by anything in the Bible, or in any book or language, a forgery has been perpetrated in some of its publications years after its first appearance by some trinitarian bigot, by changing the fifth line of the first stanza, which reads as originally written, "Being above all Beings, mighty one," into "Being above all Beings, three in one," thus not only spoiling the grandeur of the poem, but making the author do what he never intended to do, teach the doctrine of the Trinity. Derzhavin wrote this peerless song of sublimest adoration to God in 1810. He died July, 1816.

The tenets of the first three centuries of the Christian churches — for there was then no paramount church nor any distinctive creed — were mainly the same as those sustained by Arius, Pelagius, Celestius, and Julian, Bishop of Eclanum, in Italy, during the ecclesiastical conflicts of the fourth century. Those tenets were clearly set

forth by Celestius when the question of his ordination to the ministry came up in the famous Council of Carthage, 411 A.D. Those tenets were:

*First.* That Adam would have died even if he had not sinned.

*Second.* Adam's sin injured him only, not the race.

*Third.* Children are born as pure as Adam was before he fell.

*Fourth.* Men neither die because Adam fell, nor rise again in consequence of Christ's resurrection.

*Fifth.* Unbaptized as well as baptized infants are saved.

*Sixth.* The law, *i.e.*, Mosaic, as well as the Gospels, leads to heaven.

*Seventh.* Even before Christ's advent there were sinless men.

These grand, true, and beautiful tenets of Celestius and his colleagues were supported by a great many of the bishops, and particularly most of the Asiatic and African bishops, at this council, but they were all condemned by a majority and his ordination was refused.

After that council the doctrines of orthodoxy made rapid progress under the sanction and domination of Rome, though in the Eastern churches there were still many Arians, as those holding the above tenets were generally called. The Arians believed in the divine sonship of Jesus, but not in the Trinity. But there were, even among Trinita-

rians, for centuries afterwards, many conflicting opinions notwithstanding the decision of the Council of Carthage and the teachings of Chrysostom, Origen, St. Augustine, Athanasius, and others, and orthodoxy was only finally formulated into its present dogmas by Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, England, about 1100 A.D. He was the leader of medieval scholastic Christianity. There has always, however, been a conflict between extreme and moderate orthodoxy, the former represented by the school of St. Augustine, Calvin, and Presbyterianism generally, and the moderates by Semi-Pelagians and Arminians, chief of whom were Arminius, Wesley, and the modern Methodists, differing mainly upon the questions of man's status after the fall and the eternal decrees of God in election, foreordination, and predestination. One of Calvin's theses was that, "Such moreover was the relation subsisting between Adam and his descendants, that God righteously regards and treats each one as he comes into being, as worthy of the punishment of Adam's sin, and consequently withholds His life, giving fellowship from Him."

Jonathan Edwards in one of his sermons represents the Almighty as holding each one of Adam's posterity over the yawning fiery gulf of hell and threatening to drop them therein, and only restrained by unmerited compassion and grace through Christ to save the predestined

elect. Furthermore, he says that the happiness of the redeemed in heaven would be enhanced, instead of being imbittered, by the knowledge that others of their fellow-creatures (this includes, we suppose, near and dear ones when on earth) were suffering eternal torments, by reflecting upon the infinite love which had without any merits of their own chosen and preserved them to eternal happiness.<sup>1</sup> And the man who taught the above, and much more of the same kind of blasphemy was considered in his day a great Christian divine, an exemplar and teacher of his fellow-men, and his works were standard doctrine until fifty years ago. He may have been a good man in his way, but his ideas of divine justice, mercy, and love are incomprehensible and awful.

Arminius denied the doctrines of election and predestination, and the personal guilt of Adam's descendants in his fall, but affirmed all the other tenets of orthodoxy. Whatever may be the relation of Jesus Christ to God, and whether He was of supernatural conception and birth, He is not God, nor does the Bible anywhere teach that He is. Jesus, we affirm and believe, is Son of God, not only in the sense in which Adam is called the "son of God,"<sup>2</sup> and as patriarchs and prophets are frequently styled in the Bible, "sons of God," because of their service, obedience, and faithfulness

<sup>1</sup> Edwards' Sermons, 11 and 13.

<sup>2</sup> Luke, chap. iii, verse 38.

to Him, but also as the inspired prophet and Messiah of the universal religion ushered in by Him.

As to His parentage, Jesus was undoubtedly from His birth believed by His relatives and Galilean countrymen to be the son of Joseph and Mary his wife. The story of the espousal only, before Jesus' conception is doubtless a part of the sacred myth, but if true, and the actual marriage or coming together had not already taken place, it made, according to Jewish custom, virtually no difference, and no discredit to parents or child. We know from Jewish literature that the betrothal was the higher and more sacred obligation, and the marriage ceremony afterward, if performed, only confirmatory and not essential. The couple were really after the espousal, husband and wife, and a legal divorce was necessary to release them from betrothal bonds. Doubtless they were married, and the myth of Jesus' nativity grew up after He became famous, most probably long after His crucifixion. It was part of the myth of His supernatural conception to affirm that Joseph and Mary had not previously lived in marriage relation. After Jesus' wonderful career and His departure from earth, He was virtually deified by His followers, and when the Gospels were written about the close of the century, all sorts of legends were rife concerning Him, multiplied and magnified immensely by the terrible scenes and experiences of the war with the Ro-



mans, and the utter destruction of Jerusalem and desolation of all Palestine.

Many apocryphal gospels and teachings of Jesus were written, some before and some after the four Canonical Gospels. Among these were the Arabic gospel of the childhood of Jesus, the gospel of St. Thomas, the gospel of St. James, the gospel of Joseph the carpenter, the gospel of Pseudo Matthew, or logia of Matthew, the Evangelium Nicodemi, and a number of others, all still wholly, or partially extant. All these, concurring in much, and differing in many essentials from each other and from the Canonical Gospels, were in common circulation and largely believed for centuries.<sup>1</sup> The Canonical Gospels, as said by John,<sup>2</sup> did not nearly contain all the sayings and miracles of Jesus. The spirit of exaggeration and the marvelous, which filled the popular legends about Him, is clearly manifested by the same apostle, in saying, that if all the things which He did were written, he, the apostle, "supposed that even the world itself could not contain the books." In reality, the world was full of mythical and legendary stories about Him, many of which, as collected by Rev. B. Peck, already mentioned, though amazingly ridiculous, astonishing, and incredible, were for centuries believed in by Chris-

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke, chap. i, verse 1, indorses them, or similar gospels or declarations.

<sup>2</sup> St. John, chap. xxi, verse 25.

tians generally. Some of them, including the many marvelous stories of Jesus' supernatural birth, doubtless had much influence in fashioning the narratives of the two evangelists. In fact, as we know from traditions, the Canonical Gospels were only a choice of material from among many manuscripts.

We have no knowledge that any of Christ's works or sayings were kept otherwise than in memory and tradition until a half century or more after His death. None of the evangelists excepting John, profess to have been cognizant of what they wrote. The authorship of all is uncertain. The stories of Jesus' conception and birth as narrated in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke were certainly unknown in His lifetime. He never referred even most distantly to them. At any rate, born of honest parents and in wedded love, there can be no sensible reason given why, if so born, Jesus was not as pure and sinless as if born from mere virginal or theophanic conception. God was the Almighty Father in either case, and all rational beings are His children. There is absolutely nothing holier in the universe, we affirm, than honest maternity, nor more sinless, innocent, and pure than a child born of wedded love. It is God's grandest and most beautiful conception and creation of an immortal being, and it is an insult to its parents to say that it "was conceived in sin and born in iniquity," which is

merely a refrain of the old Mephistophelian story of the fall. We repudiate such doctrine and wonder that every good and virtuous woman in the world does not repudiate and scorn it as unjust and false. The dogmas that all are born in sin and fit only and justly doomed to be damned from birth, was a product of superstition, priestcraft, and fanaticism, and has done more to degrade woman and keep her in the old-time condition of semi-slavery than any other tenet of religion. No wonder that the Moslem, believing in the innate impurity and sinfulness of woman, and through Eve the cause of sin and death, grudgingly admits her to his celestial paradise at all, and only as the slave of her husband and his immortal houri. The ancient monkish Christian conception of her position in the orthodox scheme of salvation was not much more alluring than the Islamites.

Jesus' mother said to Him, when as a youth of twelve He was found by herself and her husband in the Temple at Jerusalem among the rabbis and priests asking and answering great questions, "Son, why hast thou done thus? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." Would she have spoken thus of Joseph as His father if the story of His supernatural birth were true? Nor did she ever otherwise intimate that He was any other than her and Joseph's son, the same as His brothers and sisters. We find numerous records of Jesus having had brothers and

sisters mentioned in the Bible.<sup>1</sup> As one of the sequences of the doctrine of the utter sinfulness and total depravity of man, as a result of the Edenic fall, which was mainly evolved in the fourth and fifth centuries after Christ (we have no evidence that it was ever taught earlier) by Athanasius, Chrysostom, Origen, St. Augustine, and other mystics, the fanatical priests and monks (celibates living secluded from the world to avoid its temptations and contaminations) in the mountains and deserts of Palestine, Arabia, and Libya, taught and believed (the denial of the dogma was afterwards made mortal heresy by the church, consigning the heretic to eternal damnation) that no one born of woman by natural conception could possibly be from birth sinless or other than an heir of hell, through Adam's fall alone, even if he in life afterward committed no actual sins. Hence the doctrine of the supernatural conception of Jesus was deemed necessary, as one of the persons of the Trinity, in the scheme of atonement, and was so formulated. This was after the final triumph of Rome in 411 A.D. at the Council of Carthage over the primitive Unitarian faith of Arianism. That Council heralded to the world the tenets of orthodoxy mainly in the form they have since been taught.

<sup>1</sup> Matthew, chap. xii, verse 46; chap. xiii, verse 55. Mark, chap. vi, verse 33; chap. xv, verse 40. John, chap. ii, verse 12; chap. vii, verse 5.

Many Fathers of the early centuries of the Church, as well as ascetics and monks, decried marriage and rapturously extolled celibacy and virginity. Women, Chrysostom said, were necessary, evils and their beauty and winsome ways a curse to men, and that even the natural union and cohabitation in marriage were sinful, though he admitted marriage was originally ordained of God to procreate the human race. St. Augustine, after reformation from his early years of unbridled and reckless vice and libertinism, taught the same morbid asceticism and abstinence from marriage. Thus, doubtless, the legend of the supernatural or theophanic conception of the Virgin Mary was the product of the monastic idea of the impurity of the union of husband and wife, and that a holy child could not be born of such union. It was simply an exemplification of the theory of original sin, mainly, that since the fall it was the order of nature and consequently the will of God that every descendant of Adam and Eve should be born in sin, hence, according to St. Augustine and Calvin, all were born inevitably lost sinners. These ideas were the inspiration of the story of the theophanic conception of Mary, evolved in the second century, perhaps later. It did not exist in Jesus' lifetime, and we do not know that it was in the original Gospels. No mention is made of it in the apostolic Epistles or in any writings of the second century. Paul did not know of it when

he wrote Romans.<sup>1</sup> When it was evolved to gratify Jewish vanity and the Jewish devotees, who mainly composed the church of the first and second centuries, by claiming the fulfillment of old prophetic mysterious predictions in regard to the perpetuity of King David's throne and the future coming of a prince of that line, which was the dream and hope of the Jews for ages amidst all the disasters which overtook and followed them, the parentage and descent of Jesus as the Messiah were attempted to be traced back to David. But no such lineage is shown through Mary. Only the lineage of Jesus from David through Joseph is shown.<sup>2</sup>

Only Matthew and Luke of the evangelists give genealogies, and they show the descent of Jesus through Joseph from David through different lines of ancestors, probably paternal and maternal. No descent of Mary from David is shown. If she had such descent, her genealogy would undoubtedly have been given. But the importance of the combination does not seem to have dawned upon the evangelists, as seen in after-times. The assumption of orthodox writers of past or present ages, that Mary was of David's line, is wholly gratuitous and without any foundation in the Gospels or elsewhere. She has no other history. Hence, if Joseph was not Jesus'

<sup>1</sup> Romans, chap. i, verse 3.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew, chap. i. Luke, chap. iii.

father, there is absolutely nothing in the Gospels or elsewhere to show that Jesus was of the lineage of King David, and consequently the prophetic predictions which were supposed to have centered in Him as a Prince of David's blood, and which are so often quoted, were never fulfilled and did not apply to Him at all. The story of Jesus having been born, not at Nazareth (though He is always called the Nazarene and never the Bethlehemite), the home of Joseph and of Mary, but at Bethlehem, the "City of David," and far away from His parents' home, which was invented, probably, to claim the fulfillment of old biblical prophecies, would be of no consequence if He were not Joseph's son, even if it were true. But it is probably not true historically, for the census of Quirinus<sup>1</sup> did not take place, as has been proved by Roman Imperial records, until 6-7 A.D., when Jesus was, according to chronological data, ten or eleven years old.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, it is unreasonable to believe that the Roman pro-consul Quirinus or Cyrenius should have had old Jewish genealogical records hunted and searched, for the purpose of determining where an obscure Galilean and his family should be enrolled in a Roman census, and on account of an obsolete family tradition, that his ances-

<sup>1</sup> Luke, chap. ii, verses 1-7 inclusive.

<sup>2</sup> Briggs, Study of Holy Scripture, page 530, where the story of the census is shown to be untrue.

tors once lived at Bethlehem centuries before, should have cited Joseph, a poor man and unknown outside of his native village, to go from Nazareth to distant Bethlehem with his young wife to be listed.

The story was evidently framed long after Jesus' crucifixion in order to have His birthplace accord with an old prophetic declaration,<sup>1</sup> and remodeled to suit the occasion, which prediction was probably made about the time the ten tribes of Israel were carried into captivity, and referred to the hope of a prince of David's line who should in future time come and rule over the reunited children of Judah and the remnants of Israel. The song of the angels at the birth of Jesus was more likely heard among the romantic hills and vales of Nazareth and over the blue, starlit Sea of Galilee than over the plain of Bethlehem. The shepherds were more probably watching their flocks in the fields in the soft moonlit evenings of May than in the wintry nights of Christmas tide. As Jesus was frequently styled in the Gospels and Epistles "the Son of David," He must perforce, therefore, as the writers of them had no evidence of Mary, His mother, being of the lineage of David, have been really regarded by them, notwithstanding the legend of His miraculous birth, as Joseph's son, and hence a descendant of David. St. Mark and St. John in their

<sup>1</sup> Micah, chap. v, verse 2.



Gospels do not even allude to the story of His supernatural birth, which is certainly unaccountable, if known to or believed by them.

The unadorned facts of the Gospels carefully considered and harmonized with all the meager traditional light of those days, seem to dissipate the myth, and teach that Jesus was really the son of Joseph and Mary. By His relatives and neighbors Jesus was universally regarded as their son. So Paul teaches.<sup>1</sup> The legends of St. Matthew and St. Luke are contrary to their genealogies, and the genealogies are pointless and valueless if they do not show His descent from Joseph. If the theory of the theophanic conception of Jesus was, that He was to be born merely as an incarnation of Deity, He could have no hereditary or other taint from His mother, of original sin, even if His mother were not immaculate or had not been herself conceived without any taint of sin. The Catholic Church only, of all the churches of Christendom, teaches, as we understand, that Mary was herself immaculately conceived and born sinless to become the "Mother of God," as Catholics style her. This dogma was first enunciated at a general council of Catholic clergy in 511 A.D., but never formally adopted and proclaimed by the Church until so proclaimed by Pope Pius IX in his bull styled "Infallibilus Deus," on December 8, 1854, with the assent of nearly all the cardinals of the church.

<sup>1</sup> Romans, chaps. i and iii.

The bull declared "that the most blessed Virgin Mary in the first moment of her conception, by a special grace and privilege of Almighty God, in virtue of the merits of Christ, was preserved immaculate from all stain of sin." The dogma has no Scripture authority whatever, and is universally rejected by the Greek and all Protestant churches. Moreover, it is unnecessary, for if God could make the Virgin Mary immaculate from the moment of her conception, He could as well ordain the immaculate conception and birth of Jesus, either as Deity incarnated, or as God's divine Son, or the son of Joseph and Mary. With God nothing is impossible. If Jesus was an apotheosis of Deity, really only God manifested in human form, then He was as already said only God, and there could be no duality or trinity of being in Him as a mere manifestation of God. He was in such case really and only God, and it mattered not in that case whether His human mother, merely so for the incarnation, was immaculate or not, for He would be sinless as God. But if only a demi-son of God, if there are hereditary imputed taints of original sin, as orthodoxy teaches, as well as hereditary tendencies to sin and disease as of other human traits, personally, mentally, and morally, they would be inherited and transmitted from the mother alone as well as from a parentage of both human father and mother. If a child could through divine power be conceived

and born free from those hereditary strains from a non-immaculate mother, as Mary's mother is presumed to have been, it could also be preserved from them by the same power through a non-immaculate father. Hence, if such divine interference, according to the Catholic doctrine, in the case of Mary at her own conception or at the conception of Jesus, took place and she was made immaculate, so could a human father be made immaculate by the same divine power. So there was apparently, according to the Catholic dogma, no necessity morally for the theophanic conception of Mary, even if Jesus was to be a human sinless born son of God, or a preëxistent created being going through a reincarnation or new birth, and not absolutely and only God, the Almighty manifested in human body.

We desire to be reverent, but think it right to consider these questions in all their bearings, as from the two evangelists' narratives of Jesus' nativity in connection with the story of Eden and the fall and the Apocalypse of St. John, the doctrines of the Trinity and the vicarious atonement of Jesus have been entirely formulated. The story of the virgin's conception of Jesus seems to be merely a mythical legend without any reasons for it or proof of it. According to the doctrine of the immaculate conception, Jesus could have been born as absolutely pure and sinless, as the son of Joseph and Mary, as from

theophanic agency. The story is certainly an entirely unnatural one, and so challenges the most rigid examination. It depends entirely upon the statements of the two evangelists, and to them it could only have been communicated nearly a century after its occurrence by God alone, through direct communication. Did He do so? The world wants some corroborative proof. The same applies to the immaculate conception; all the disquisitions and speculations about it are merely mystical, scholastic, and ecclesiastical theories without any scriptural support whatever.

What does it all amount to? Jesus, if God incarnated through birth from Mary, was only the one God Almighty still. If a Son of God previously created and living in Heaven, from the beginning of the ages and reborn supernaturally through Mary, He was only a fellow-creature and higher Son of God than if of the blood of Joseph and Mary. In either case Jesus had but one Father, God, and doubtless He says to all His followers as said the glorious angel in Revelation to John, "See thou worship me not, for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets and of them which keep the sayings of this Book, worship only God."

Jesus was known all His life by His neighbors of Nazareth as the son of Joseph, nor was there ever during His lifetime any intimation of mystery about His birth or parentage, or that He was other

than the legitimate son of Joseph and Mary. Who Mary was we are not told. No genealogy of her was ever given by the evangelists, and she was doubtless a Galilean peasant girl, of good but obscure family. The legends of Matthew and Luke about Jesus' birth savor much of similar fancies in the Egyptian and Hindoo religions about the births of Osiris and Buddha.

He was the grandest and best of men, as truly the Son of God by His life of absolute devotion to His service and the welfare of men, as if the story of His supernatural conception was literally true. Evidently if the story were extant in His day Jesus attached no importance to it, for He never once alluded to it. He left of His life work and teachings not a line, not even so much as a "writing in the sand."<sup>1</sup> The only memorials He left were in the remembrances of His devoted disciples. Never had any man a grander, nobler leader, nor ever king, conqueror, or prophet, braver or more faithful followers, willing for His memory and the faith he left them to sacrifice everything they had on earth, to meet the bitterest persecution and even cruel martyrdoms, without a fear or murmur. Glorious leader! But whether of theophanic conception or the son of Joseph and Mary, aside from its bearing on the doctrine of the Trinity, matters really but little. Jesus was in either case among His fellow-men preëminently the Son of God, the

<sup>1</sup> John, chap. viii, verses 6-8.

Prophet of prophets, the divine Teacher, and His peerless life and work left a record in the hearts of His disciples and a perennial influence for good, such as no other man, born of woman, ever did, and which in His religion will continue, we believe, through all the ages of time, ever expanding until it covers the earth. Only Zoroaster of Persia, Buddha, and Confucius ever approximately wielded the influence on the destinies of the world which Jesus Christ has done. Their spheres of influence never were so broad, and in the centuries past have been diminishing. His has been expanding wider and wider, especially during the last few centuries, and will apparently soon be universal. His kingdom, power, and glory are the same, whether He was of earthly or heavenly origin.

The "open sesame" to a broad and consistent interpretation of the Holy Bible and honest observance of its ethics, is to be found in the short but sublime and all comprehensive creed of the Prophet Micah.<sup>1</sup> "What is it, O man, that thy Lord doth require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Just before<sup>2</sup> the prophet said: "Will the Lord be pleased with ten thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body

<sup>1</sup> Micah, chap. vi, verse 8.

<sup>2</sup> Micah, chap. vi, verse 7.

for the sin of my soul?" This summary of our whole duty to God and men, and condemnation of all sacrifices, is a negation of all dogmas, rites, and mysteries which seek to make any other conditions and requisites for religious justification than merely walking humbly with God, as best we know how; a creed vastly grander and more comprehensive than the Athanasian, Nicene, the so-called Apostles', or any other sectarian formula limiting God's sovereignty and man's opportunities. It is world-wide and universal, infolding in its divine circle of grace, Jews and Gentiles, all nations and faiths who will live up to those precepts. All other dogmas of religion are unnecessary. The Ten Commandments of Moses, the Sermon on Mount of Olives, and the Lord's Prayer, the sublimest ever uttered, are only exemplifications of Micah's creed. Whatever in the pages of Holy Scripture will stand the test of and square with Micah's creed and the Lord's Prayer, and with rational conceptions of infinite power, omniscience, omnipresence, and love, we believe is inspired of God, and whatsoever is not in harmony with such tests is only of man. Such is our creed, so we hold. So we understand the Bible and its every page. The creed of Micah came surely from the Holy Spirit, and to the honest, fearless seeker after truth, the Holy Spirit will surely illuminate everything in the Bible as truth, or error inspiration, or non-inspiration.

Holding to such creed as our sure anchor, the Doctrine of the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as enunciated by Dr. Briggs, is correct, but without such test and anchor of faith, it may, to the sectary and fanatic, be a mere "Ignis Fatuus." It does not make much difference, so long as a man's faith is anchored upon such a rock, what his mere theoretical religion may be, if he honestly and diligently seeks the truth, and in all things lives up to the best light he has. A very good creed also is one said to be that of the Rev. John Watson, an able writer whose literary cognomen is "Ian Maclaren," of Liverpool, England, formerly, if not now, a Presbyterian minister: "I believe in the Fatherhood of God. I believe in the words of Jesus. I believe in the pure heart. I believe in the service of love. I believe in the unworldly life. I believe in the beatitudes. I promise to trust God and follow Christ, to forgive my enemies, and to seek after the righteousness of God." What more is required? It is the duty of every human being and his privilege, too, to follow his convictions of truth, when his mind is in a sane and normal condition, wherever such convictions may lead him amidst the infinite varieties of life's duties, always following justice and mercy, and doing no wrong to any of his fellow-beings. The best and truest religion, the divine one, is the religion which makes men and women happiest and best, most pure, unselfish,



and useful in their daily lives and conduct. Such is the test of true religion. Such religion is the safe one for time, safe for eternity, and it needs no creed made out of old dogmas to hedge it around.

## CHAPTER XI

### RELIGIOUS MISCELLANIES

FURTHER considering the internal evidences of biblical plenary inspiration, it should be said that while the Bible is a storehouse of grand and sublime truths, scintillating like diamonds, throughout all its pages, yet even in the sphere of ethical teachings there are some defects in it which are not in harmony with the character of God as taught therein, and hence cannot be inspired. For instance, God would hardly have directed the Israelites, as we are told in Exodus,<sup>1</sup> to borrow vessels of gold and jewels of silver from their Egyptian neighbors under the specious promise of returning them after they should come back from a three days' journey, for a picnic, into the wilderness of Arabia, when it was well known to the Israelites that this was a false pretense, and that the real purpose was to rob the Egyptians. Moral ideas, the distinction between *Meum* and *Tuum*, were not highly developed in those days, and Moses seemed to imagine that God was as ready to plunder the Egyptians as His people were, and, therefore, he said so. They had, it is

<sup>1</sup> Exodus, chaps. xi and xii.

true, been heavily oppressed and wronged for a few years, but the sons of Ham had given them homes and lands several hundreds of years before, had fed their starving bands of nomads, and been very kind to them. The memory of those benefactions and good treatment, until the one Pharaoh reigned who "knew not" Joseph, ought to have kept the Hebrews from deceitfully robbing them.

It is not possible, at any rate, that God directed them to get even with their oppressors through such deception and false pretenses.

There are many other inconsistencies and imperfections of character ascribed to God, many expressions of merely human passions, feelings of cruelty, hatred, vengeance. Many contradictory enunciations of moral obligations and purposes, which we instinctively feel could not have been expressed by God, and hence must be either perversions of His commands, or merely interpolations or expressions of the feelings and passions of the writers. To sustain these statements, we do not need to go to outside reviews or commentaries, but to the "Law and Testimony" itself. God is ever one and the same, always consistent, changeless, and can never under any circumstances be influenced by or give utterance to base and cruel human feelings and passions, and wherever in the pages of the Bible He is represented as so influenced, it is not inspiration from Him, but

merely human conceptions of Deity which are so portrayed. We do not here refer to expressions in the Bible of God's hatred of sin, which is frequently conveyed in very forcible language, in order to emphasize His abhorrence of evil, but to commands ascribed directly to Him, which teach cruelty and vengeance, feelings which an infinitely holy and merciful being cannot have; commands which He could not give. We will illustrate our views by a few parallel texts out of many which might be selected, involving contradictory moral commands and purposes to God.

Exodus v, 1. And afterwards Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel.

Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.

Exodus xx, 13. Thou shalt not kill.

Exodus xxii, 21, 22. Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers

Exodus x, 20. But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go.

Exodus xi, 10. And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh; and the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go out of his land.

Deuteronomy ii, 34. And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women and the little ones, of every

in the land of Egypt. Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child.

Psalm xxxiii, 45. For the word of the Lord is right; and all His works are done in truth. He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

Psalm xxxvi, 7. How excellent is Thy loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wing.

James v, 11. The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. Matthew v, 44-45. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and

city, we left *none* to remain.

Deut. iii, 2. And the Lord said unto me; . . . and thou shall do unto him, as thou didst unto Sihon, King of the Amorites. Joshua vi, 21. And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city; both man and woman, young and old, with the edge of the sword.

Joshua viii, 1-2-24. And the Lord said unto Joshua . . . Thou shalt do to Ai and her king as thou didst unto Jericho and her king. . . . And all the Israelites returned unto Ai and smote it with the edge of the sword. . . . And Joshua burnt Ai, and made it a heap forever, even a desolation unto this day (v. 28).

1st Samuel xv, 2, 3. Thus saith the Lord . . . Now go and smite Ama-

persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and unjust.

1st Corinthians xiii, 13. And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love verse 8. Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away.

Ecclesiastes iii, 19-20. For that which befall-eth the sons of men be-falleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no præmi-nence above a beast: for

lek and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

Psalm cix, 7, 8, 9, 10. When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few; and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places.

1st Corinthians xv, 22. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

Verse 53. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. St. John v, 25. Verily, verily, I say

all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.

unto you, the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

These, with many other selections which might be noted, prove that though most are, all the teachings of the Bible are not inspired, because some are contradictory, evil, and inconsistent with the holy attributes of deity, love, mercy, truth, and infinite compassion for the erring. Other inconsistencies and incongruities may be noted. After the brutal, adulterous crime of David, King of Israel, with Bathsheba, the beautiful wife of Uriah the Hittite, and the cowardly betrayal to death by the adulterer: of her brave husband while he was in David's army fighting for his king and country, it is hardly conceivable that God through His prophets ever afterwards (though the king may have repented of that and other crimes) should always, without qualification, speak of David as "a man after God's own heart."<sup>1</sup> Another dark crime of David was the cruel murder, by the Gibeonites, by his participation, of the seven innocent sons of Rizpah, and of Milcah, who was once his wife. A most barbarous deed, and Samuel, or whoever wrote the books, inti-

<sup>1</sup> Book of Kings and Chronicles.

mates that it was by God's orders.<sup>1</sup> The world has been full of crime and bloodshed since the beginning of time, and while God for inscrutable reasons has permitted it, yet I will never believe that He ordered evil to be done.

Even some of the great Nazarene's teachings seem unreasonable and can hardly have been correctly reported or translated, unless intended for conditions of society such as we imagine will be in the millennial age. In fact, the universal love, the total unselfishness, manifested in the Sermon on the Mount of Olives, though in entire harmony with Jesus' nature and character, were hardly expected by Him to be the practical rules of life in that age, but were intended for man's life in the kingdom of heaven on earth, such as He expected it to be in the future when men "shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up the sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," and "when the lion and the lamb shall lie down together and a little child shall lead them." Is it possible that for merely saying to his brother, "Thou fool," one would be in danger of hell's fire as the term is ordinarily understood? The time may come when a man could meekly turn his other cheek for another blow when struck by a ruffian on one cheek without inviting plunder, persecution, and even death from all the wicked, as

<sup>1</sup> Second Samuel, chap. xxi, verses 1-10 inclusive.



the world has always been, but he could hardly safely to himself and family do so now. Or when despoiled by a robber of his cloak, cheerfully give him his coat also! To so act, meekly and humbly, one would have to love his neighbor, not only as well, but better than himself, which Jesus did not teach. He died for the salvation of men. Others have given up their lives for the common welfare of their kindred or countrymen, but we are not taught ordinarily to seek or invite persecution and death. Some of these teachings scarcely emanated from Jesus as broadly and unqualified as the evangelists wrote them.

It is said Christians are not expected to obey those injunctions, and others similar to them, literally, and that they are not to be understood as literal requirements of duty in daily life, but merely as strongly teaching and enforcing the great duties of humility, moderation, charity, and patience under wrongs. Possibly, and Jesus no doubt wished to enforce as He illustrated, in Himself, ordinarily, those virtues. But even He, though usually meek and gentle, was not always so. Sternly and fiercely He drove with cords the money changers and gamblers out of the Temple, and His terrible denunciation of the scribes, priests, and Pharisees<sup>1</sup> for their corruption, hypocrisy, selfishness, and bigotry, has never been excelled in bitterness. The early Christians we

<sup>1</sup> Matthew, chap. xxiii.

know in Jesus' time, and long afterwards from the Evangelists, Book of Acts, and traditions, were practically socialists or communists, and had all things in common, and, of course, those who lived in that way could and would be more unselfish, kindly, and tolerant to each other than if living in ordinary conditions of society. They would naturally give to the teachings of the Master upon all social subjects a wide latitude among themselves, an interpretation not intended for the world at large

Enthusiastic followers after His death most likely exaggerated His teachings on some questions beyond their practical lines. He could hardly have said broadly, and with literal exactness, "that it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven," for, if so, no man of wealth could be saved. Its practical application might suit the early Christians who had "all things in common." "Neither was there any among them that lacked, for as many as were possessors of land or houses sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet, and distribution was made to every man according as he had need."<sup>1</sup> What would Christ have said to myriads of the Croesuses of the church militant since His day? What would He have said to many of His

<sup>1</sup> Acts, chap. iv, verses 32, 34, 35.

vicegerents, pontiffs of Rome, who had in the Middle Ages greater incomes than many sovereigns of Europe, and some of whom left immense wealth, mostly wrung from the poor laity, to their relatives, and in a few instances even to their illegitimate children? Or to the archbishops and bishops of the Church of England of to-day, who have salaries of fifty thousand dollars and twenty-five thousand dollars annually, who live in Episcopal palaces, and are waited upon and served by liveried attendants? Jesus' teachings upon social matters were evidently for a future time, or conditions of the world, when the "knowledge of God should cover the earth as the waters cover the seas;" when all men should live up to the doctrine of the Golden Rule, when all should be in truth brothers and sisters, and "when none should harm or annoy others in all God's holy mountain."

Whenever and wherever the unlimited doctrines of non-resistance and of people enjoying all things in common, excepting upon a small scale, have been even partially put into practice in religious, socialistic, or communistic experiments, the results have been unfortunate, resulting neither in public nor private good. Besides, such rules of life literally understood are at variance with other teachings of the Bible. Many of the good men of old, patriarchs and kings, who were high in God's favor were very rich. Some of them are commended by Jesus.

In the Book of Proverbs, we are enjoined most forcibly to resist the tyrannical, wicked, and extortionate, and taught as among our highest duties to be industrious, frugal, and economical, in order that we may provide for our families in comfort and lay up a competency for old age. St. Paul says that, "He who provides not for his own, and especially for those of his own household, is worse than an infidel."<sup>1</sup>

In the medieval ages the grasping clergy dwelt much in their sermons upon the futility of the rich endeavoring to get to heaven, and thousands of the wealthy kings, princes, barons, and merchants were only absolved upon their dying beds upon making bequests of their lands and moneys to build magnificent cathedrals and churches and endow monastic institutions, or provide rich incomes for lordly ecclesiastics.

The Bible contains the grandest religion and much of the most important and ancient history of any book in the world. It was compiled from the writings of great prophets, statesmen, warriors, poets, priests, and philosophers, "holy men of old," and yet some of them entertained very singular and diverse opinions on many important subjects.<sup>2</sup> Ecclesiastes, chaps. ii and iii, teaches the doctrines of Diogenes and the Stoics, and annihilation after death. This was the tenet of the Sadducees.

<sup>1</sup> Timothy, chap. v, verse 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ecclesiastes, chaps. ii and iii.

A later chapter, v, teaches the Epicurean philosophy. Jesus taught always free agency. Paul taught fatalism, election, predestination. "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him who formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?"<sup>2</sup>

The Old Testament nowhere in its pages, excepting by remote inference, in about the same terms as the Analects of Confucius, cheers us with the hope of immortality and eternal happiness, while the New Testament on almost every page is full of it. Jesus Christ really was the first prophet who "brought life and immortality to light" in Israel, though the Essenes and Pharisees believed in it in a way before His time. The Bible is a many-sided book, and those inconsistent doctrines, though set forth amidst other sublime ethics, cannot all be inspired, whatever creeds and ecclesiastics and councils of the Church may teach. Hence only the absolute truths as to God and His attributes (as assumed in the beginning of this book) of eternal life and eternal ethics are from God. But much of it is of man and from man only, and what is of man is sometimes inconsistent and erring, as all human teachings are liable to be.

<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiastes, chap. v.

<sup>2</sup> Romans, chap. ix. verses 20-21.

The Bible purports to come from God and be a revelation of His will to mankind, and as such, coming through man only, it naturally challenges the most rigorous criticism and investigation of its claims. Explicitly, often in its pages, it invites all to "search the Scriptures and hold fast to all that is good," and hence by implication to reject anything in it that may be found inconsistent with its great cardinal truths. Its messages are predicated for eternity as well as for time, and those really from God, all wise and perfect, must all be consistent with each other, and whatsoever is not so consistent we have a right to pronounce of mortal inspiration only.

What Jesus taught of social duties in His sermon on the mountain was fully as beautifully and more comprehensively expressed by the apostle Paul when he said: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become (as) sounding brass (and) a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to be able to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love suffereth long and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked; taketh not account

of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth, but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease;" whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away.<sup>1</sup> "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> First Corinthians, chap. xiii, verses 1 to 8 inclusive.

<sup>2</sup> Philippians, chap. iv, verse 8.

## CHAPTER XII

### SECOND ADVENTISTS AND CONNECTION OF SECRET ORDERS WITH THE SUPER- NATURAL IN RELIGIONS

NEARLY all of the human race, and especially of the uneducated, love mystery and the marvelous, and more readily believe stories tinctured with such fascinations than honest, prosaic, logical truths. Poetic fictions are welcomed when sober history is often discarded. The Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation, the first a historical, prophetic fiction, written by an unknown author, after the death of Alexander the Great, when his great empire was partitioned up among his four generals, Antipater, Seleucus, Ptolemy, and Antigonus, and the other merely ecstatic religious dreams of the holy enthusiast St. John, during his banishment to the lone Isle of Patmos in the eastern Mediterranean, have afforded the bases of a thousand predictions by fanatics, generally combined from both those books, and supported often by weary mazes of learned arithmetical, mathematical, and astronomical calculations, of the near approach of the end of the world and the



judgment day in each of the centuries since the crucifixion of Christ. It was believed by His disciples that those events would occur not many years after His ascension.<sup>1</sup>

Even Grecian sibylline oracles and astrological star combinations and calculations, in the early centuries of Christianity, used to play a part in such predictions. The disciples of Christ, as we know from the Gospels, Revelation, and Epistles, and from traditions and fragments of history, believed that day was imminent. Soon after the departure of the Savior from earth, and probably in the lifetime of some of the Apostles, His second advent was expected and frequently afterwards for centuries. In Matthew xxiv, 29-51, Mark xiii, 6-37, Luke xxi, 25-36, the speedy coming of that day was undoubtedly heralded. About the year 1000 A.D., the whole Christian world was convulsed with terror on account of predictions that the end of all things terrestrial and the second coming of Jesus was at hand, accompanied as those predictions were by irrefragable demonstrations of arithmetical proofs, from prophecies, from the books of Daniel and Revelation, mainly based upon the chaining of Satan, and the casting of the great arch-enemy of man into the bottomless pit.<sup>2</sup>

In my time, and I remember exceedingly

<sup>1</sup> Matthew, ch. xxiv.

<sup>2</sup> Revelation, ch. xx, vs. 1-3.

well, the almost universal consternation and alarm which the predictions of Rev. Wm. Miller, an Adventist, formerly a Baptist minister, produced all over the United States. He proclaimed that the end of the world and final judgment would surely come on April 19, 1843. It was wonderful. Thousands of people became insane, brooding over the near coming of the dreadful day. Many committed suicide. Singular as it may seem, nearly all those who did so were professed Christians who naturally ought to have rejoiced at the prospect of meeting their Savior.

I was young, but was not much perturbed, and wondered why good people should go insane, or what suicides would gain or evade, even if the great judgment and conflagration of the earth, which I doubted much, were near at hand. A wonderful comet appearing in the southwestern heavens early in March of that spring and swiftly looming up from the horizon and moving rapidly until its nucleus was near the zenith, and its dark, sword-like tail far down in the sky, added greatly to the general alarm; certainly presaging, as many believed, the coming dread catastrophe, and bringing sure confirmation to the predictions. All the church services for many months previously were crowded, and very numerous conversions occurred. Many thousands of people in various parts of the coun-

try, principally in the middle States of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland, Virginia, and Tennessee, abandoned farms, shops, and offices and quit business in order to get ready for the coming of the Lord. Many families abandoned their homes for weeks before the predicted time, and went into mountain hills and caves. Thousands of people near Cleveland, Ohio, and Buffalo, New York, assembled on the lake shores on the morning of the supposed last day, dressed in ascension garments, ready to meet their Lord in the air. But the day passed and nothing happened. Miller, it was said, found that he had made a mistake in his calculations, revised them, and fixed upon another day in the early ensuing summer. But the great day had passed. The prophet had lost his prestige, and but little attention was paid to his revised calculations or prophecies. It was said that believing his interpretation of prophecies and calculations therefrom were correct, he lost faith in the Bible and became a skeptic.

Oh! the folly and credulity of human beings! What absurdities in the name of religion will they not believe! In what weird and mystical rites, doctrines, secret orders, monastic legends, supernatural delusions, through faith will they not unite and adopt! The world, at least the Christian world, is even now full of Second Adventists' trashy books and wild millennial predictions.

Many times during the past nineteen hundred years has it been disturbed and frequently almost convulsed by such delusions. After the failure of each successive prediction, the prophets were discarded and discounted only to make room for new ones in each century, to appear with a new installment of "end of the world" prophecies, and those in turn, in a few years, to be again dishonored and forgotten. So in all probability the future will produce more such prophets, to be followed and believed in by other idiots for a time.

The latest collapse of such schemes and schemers, and perhaps of brazen religious humbuggery, was the "heaven" of a so-called messiah and son of God, whose human name is Swinefurth, lately existing for a dozen or more years (a short time ago disrupted and its inmates scattered) at Rockford, Illinois. But enough of Adventists. So, despite them and their prophecies, springtime and summer, autumn and winter, seedtime and harvest, which the good God gives us, will doubtless continue in their regular succession and courses; generation after generation of human beings be born, love, live, and die, and all the turmoils and vanities of men go on, as in the past, through countless ages, until the earth may grow old and worn out, and become a lifeless planet, only filled with sepulchers, with none to weep over departed friends. Whether it will become

such a dead world as the moon is now supposed, by scientists, to be, or else, through the ceaseless influences of insufficiently counterbalanced centripetal attraction, may in its lessening orbit gradually swing too closely to the sun and be absorbed by gravitation in its limitless ocean of electric fires, the great God only knows.

History teaches that, when any great religious movement has become successfully developed, its priestly hierarchy, influenced partly by religious enthusiasm, and largely through love of power, place, and wealth, have used all manner of agencies and influences to dominate the minds of men, and permanently establish their control of the people, ostensibly for religious purposes, but really for the permanence of their power. Of course, many of the clergy of all religions are good, honest men. The more ignorant men are, the greater usually is their veneration for the ministers of religion and belief in their superior sanctity. Hence the power of the priesthood is the more easily retained, and naturally the revenues and donations obtained from the laity for salaries, churches, endowments of bishoprics, parochial homes, and manifold other religious purposes, become larger. For centuries during the Middle Ages, nearly one half of the property in Europe, especially landed estates, had become absorbed by, and was owned or under the control of, religious and monastic orders, bishops

and other clergy of the Catholic Church. And in order, more completely to hold and retain their control over the popular mind, the designing and artful ecclesiastics of all religions, anciently established secret conclaves or orders, in which the initiates were taught mystic and supernatural legends of the faith, and bound by many rites and obligations, sometimes of a fearful character, to believe in and be faithful to the creed and hierarchy. Ostensibly those secret orders may not have been publicly announced as established for such purposes, but usually their organization was so designed by the dominant hierarchy and under its control. Such orders were always more or less grounded upon superstition and supernaturalism.

Such societies existed throughout India from very ancient times as adjuncts and supporters of Brahmanism, generally composed of the priestly and aristocratic castes exclusively. In China after Confucianism became the dominant religion, such secret orders soon sprung up as its champions. Buddhism developed very many of them, especially in the mountains of Thibet, which were full of secret orders of monastics, mostly under the control of the Grand Lama. Egypt under its ancient Osirian priesthood had many fanatical secret orders, especially recruited from their ranks, whose authority was greater even than the Pharaohs, and whose edicts of secret

imprisonment or death, fulminated against heretics and enemies of the holy hierarchy, spread terror everywhere, and were mercilessly enforced. Grecian, Roman, and Scandinavian mythologies had such secret, oath-bound orders and lodges among men and even women. The Eleusinian and Dionysian mysteries of Greece and the priests and priestesses of the Delphic oracles of Apollo, the order of Vestal Virgins of Rome, and the secret conclaves of Druid and Scandinavian priests, of Thor and Odin, into whose mysteries only the custodians of their holy books, incantations, and rites, and their devoted servants, were admitted, had absolute power over the people. Such, too, were the ancient Jewish orders of the Nazirites, Rechabites, Essenes, and also, most probably, the Pharisees. Mohammedan countries also have their secret orders in the dervishes, who are intensely fanatical recluses.

After the adoption and patronage of Christianity by the Roman emperors, and especially during the Dark and Middle Ages, secret religious orders rapidly grew up. Out of them the crusades developed, and from the crusaders grew up the religious, military, political secret orders of the Knights of the Temple, or Knights Templars, Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, of Malta, of the Red Cross, and Knights Hospitallers. After the religious mania, in which the wars of the crusades were born, had worn itself out, and Europe grew tired of them,

those orders of knighthood, in the years of peace, grown rich, ambitious, and dangerous, as secret political associations united with their semi-religious character, under the absolute control of their grand masters, became a menace to the governments of Europe. They were finally crushed out by those governments, their franchises and privileges revoked, and their property, which had become immense, as corporate bodies, was universally confiscated. Even the Roman See, which in the outset encouraged and helped build them up on account of their pride, arrogance, and wealth, and occasional dominance over the clergy, finally arrayed itself with the monarchs of Europe in antagonism to those orders, and they ceased to exist. Jacques de Molay, who was burned alive in France in 1314 for rebellion, was the last grand master of the Military Templars.

Several centuries ago, when the secret order of Free Masonry, originally organized as guilds or lodges of practical masons and architects, had become prominent and influential, as a factor in society, in some countries of Europe, and particularly in England and her colonies, those old orders of knighthood were theoretically revived, with nothing, however, similar to the originals, excepting their ancient traditions and forms, and were adopted and incorporated into Masonry, as higher lodges and degrees of that order, as a quasi-military branch of it, to which



order, however, the Knights owe allegiance and must belong as members in full concord and affiliation. The ancient position and prestige of the orders of knighthood, as sons and defenders of the Papacy, has ceased, and the secret orders of monks or brothers of Augustines, Franciscans, Benedictines, Dominicans, and Jesuits, and other affiliated societies organized during the Middle Ages, and mainly after the overthrow and dispersion of the militant orders of knighthood, for the promotion, perpetuity, and defense of Catholicism, by their zealous founders, have taken the place of those ancient orders as sons of the Church. Among the Protestant reformers of Europe, during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, many secret religious and *religio-political* orders grew up, which in the terrible religious wars and controversies of those times generally affiliated with Free Masonry.

Scotland, under the bigotry of Calvinism, became in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a very hotbed, so to speak, of religious orders and associations, of which the Covenanters and all the Scottish, Masonic Trinitarian Lodges and Consistories were the outgrowth. They had no especial basis, excepting popular legends and intense devotion to orthodox Christianity. The Presbyterian Covenanters united for self-defense and religious protection against

both Catholicism and the English Episcopacy. Masonry, as a religious and social order, developed gradually into present forms and organizations mainly during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The religious tenets and traditions of the order in the Blue Lodges and Chapters are Hebraic, but in the Commanderies and Consistories only Protestant doctrines and traditions are taught and symbolized, and hence Masonry as an order has always been antagonized by the Roman hierarchy. Nominally now, the order is non-sectarian, and merely speculative Masonry, and anyone who professes belief in the existence of God, Christian, Jew, or Mohammedan, or follower of any other religion, can be affiliated.

Masonry has always been an auxiliary of the Bible, and especially in maintaining belief in its supernatural legends. In the Blue Lodge Degrees, the ceremonies, obligations, lectures, and legendary teachings are entirely based upon and connected with the building of the First or Solomon's Temple, and the Royal Chapter Degrees with the building of the Second, or Zerubbabel's Temple, and those legends, with sundry extraordinary incidents, are taught as verities in the several degrees, although really they are outside of and additional to Bible narratives and without any biblical corroboration whatever and really purely fabulous. The most of the religious and historical teachings in the Blue

Lodge and Chapter Degrees are virtually the same as taught in the old Scriptures, whilst the Commandery and Consistorial or Scottish Rite Degrees, as they are commonly called, have mainly to do with legends of the crusaders and Christian doctrines, only excepting in the Red Cross Degree, which is based upon the Book of Ezra. Whatever the order may have been two or three centuries ago, when speculative Masonry was substituted for practical and operative Masonry, it has been, since then and is now, mainly a social, fraternal, and benevolent institution.

The teachings of secret orders, with their mystic rites and obligations, strongly impressed upon the mind, are generally imbibed and believed without questioning, especially by the young and inexperienced, as those first becoming Masons generally are. The order has thus unquestionably exercised a great influence with its membership in maintaining belief in Jewish and Christian history and miracles, though it furnishes no evidence whatever of their authenticity. In fact, the legends of Masonry generally are not in the Bible, and are simply the Cabbala of the order, and are usually received and believed by most Masons as supposedly having been transmitted down from antiquity. However, many intelligent Masons do not believe in those legends. As a matter of fact, none of the legends or rites of

Masonry have any foundation or authority whatever, outside of biblical story, and hence can add no confirmation whatever to its history, miracles, or prophecies. Whatever of actual Hebrew history there is in Masonic rituals or lectures, is derived from the Bible. So we affirm that no "Brother of the Mystic Tie," even after he has attained to the thirty-third and highest degree in Masonry, by virtue of his eminence and proficiency therein, knows really anything more of the work of building Solomon's or Zerubbabel's Temple, of Hiram, king of Tyre, of Hiram Abiff, of the ineffable name of God, or of the miracles of sacred writ, or of the early days of Christianity, than is found in biblical pages and in Josephus' works and the Jewish Talmud, and consequently no more than may be known by any Bible reader or reader of Jewish history.

Similar comments will apply to the simulated Moslem Annex of Masonry, the modern order of the Mystic Shrine, which in recent years has been ingrafted on Masonry by some enterprising inventor of secret novelties. The ritual and work of this order are mainly made up of fictitious Mohammedan legends, aphorisms from the Koran, and fables of the deserts of Arabia and Egypt, set off with pantomimic plays of traveling on camels over their sands and mountains, merely child's play, social and amusing, but unprofitable.

We write as a Mason and lover of the order, knowing all about it. It is a great social and benevolent institution, and its members generally are men of honor and integrity. In its social and benevolent features and high standard of moral duties, if lived up to, Masonry is peerless among the many secret orders; but practically, the most intelligent members of the fraternity regard the rites and legends of the order, as one of the most prominent and brightest Masons of the United States has well said, "as but the relics of a past age, and really continued more to preserve the ostensible antiquity of the order rather than to bind our consciences." We desire to emphasize, — and that is mainly the object of this short digression about secret societies whose work and rituals are supposed to be based upon, and confirmatory of, biblical history, — that neither does Masonry, nor any other of the secret religious orders or brotherhoods of the past fifteen hundred years in the Christian world, add to or furnish any contemporaneous, cumulative, or corroborative testimony to Bible inspiration or Bible miracles. The other many secret orders of our day are mainly organized for life insurance, or merely benevolent and social purposes, excepting the Catholic brotherhoods, and it is only because of the supposed corroborative testimony of Masonry to Bible history and miracles, of which it really affords none whatever, that anything

has been said here of the order. Its legends have been taken from the Bible partly, and are partly fictions. So, whatever of history it teaches, is not original. Of course, the Templar and Consistorial Degrees have some modern history.

## CHAPTER XIII

### SATAN

WE purpose now to consider more fully than the casual references hereinbefore made to the subject, the question of the existence of an evil deity called in the various bibles of the world the Devil, Satan, Apollyon, Lucifer, Belial, Ahri-man, Angro-Mainyus, Sheitan, Eblis, Set, Typhon, and many other names; also the questions of original sin and eternal punishment, tenets intimately connected with belief in the existence and power of the evil being. Considerable has already been written in these pages upon these subjects, but we propose more fully to discuss them, and endeavor to ascertain the truth. Does such a being as Satan exist? If so, does he have the powers usually attributed to him? Are we accountable for Adam and Eve's sin, commonly called original sin, somehow imputed to each one of their descendants as personal guilt, by orthodox Christianity? Will there be future eternal punishment, infinite punishment for finite sins, original, as well as actual sins, for all who do not come under the benefit of Christ's supposed atonement? These are momentous questions. As we

are but finite creatures, our acts and thoughts, good or evil, can only be finite. Excepting what is said of the serpent in Eden, commonly assumed by biblical commentators to have been Satan in disguise, and in two or three other brief references to him by name only elsewhere, rather incidentally,<sup>1</sup> nothing more is said of Satan in the voluminous pages of the Old Testament. We have, as has been said already, no reason to suppose that the Hebrews believed generally in such a being, until after they became acquainted with the religion of Zoroaster during the captivity in Babylon and Persia, nor that they had any idea of a future atonement to be made for sins.

As Zoroastrianism, then intermixed with Chaldean Magiism, was at that time the universal religion of those countries, of course the exiled Jews came into contact with it during their long residence there. Moreover, we know they did, from much that is said in the books of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Ezekiel, and in most of the Apocryphal books. During the exile, or subsequently, soon after the restoration, these books, as well as the books of the Old Testament in which allusions to Satan, *eo-nominee*, are found, viz., Chronicles, Psalms, and Job, were written or compiled, and the redaction of the Elohist, Jehovist, Priestley, and Ephraimitic old

<sup>1</sup> I Chron. ch. xxi, v. 1; Job ch. iv, v. 2; ch. ii, v. 1; Psalms, ch. xix, v. 6.



Bible versions, or of such fragments as then existed, were then made by Ezra, Nehemiah, and probably other Jewish scholars assisting them. In Persia and Chaldea the exiled Jews learned from the priests and Magi about Angro-Mainyus, the evil one, and through the intermingling of the Magian worship with the Persian imbibed, partly, the corrupted Zoroastrianism, which had been changed to teach of Satan, from an originally supposed dependency upon God, to being co-existing and co-eternal with Him, and contesting for supremacy with Him on earth and over the human race. Magiism, or corrupted Zoroastrianism, also taught that the evil one caused noxious plants and weeds to grow, created dangerous beasts, poisonous serpents and vermin, originated diseases and pestilence, and was always seducing men into sin and maintaining with Ormuzd a perpetual conflict for sovereignty on earth.

These ideas, in perhaps a modified form, were, during the exile, first indoctrinated into the Jewish theology, as well as the Zoroastrian belief in the resurrection of the dead, the immortality of the soul and the future judgment, which Christianity directly through Jesus, and remotely through the Pharisees and Essenes, Jewish sects of His day, inherits from that more ancient religion. If these doctrines were taught at all by Moses and the prophets, they were very ambiguously and dimly defined. To the Persian religion, the

sect of Pharisees (derived from the Persian name, Parsi, or Parsis), as well as the sect of the Essenes, undoubtedly owed their origin. But the powerful sect of the Sadducees, who were really the aristocracy and literati of the Jews, "who say that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit,"<sup>1</sup> adhered strictly to the ancient Torah. Jesus taught the doctrines of the Pharisees, and yet they were His bitterest enemies, mainly probably on account of His denunciations of their pride, arrogance, and veniality. Through the reformed Judaism of the Pharisees, Satan became also a prominent factor in the Christian dispensation, in its evolution from the old dispensation or out of it. During the terrible persecution of the Christians for two and a half centuries after Christ by the Roman emperors, and in the centuries afterwards, through all the dark ages of superstition, ignorance, and fanaticism, the whole world was supposed to be literally overrun by the devil and his angels, who were in league with the wicked heathens to crush out Christianity. Most Christians, in common with the Zoroastrians or Parsees, Hindoos, Mohammedans, and Mormons, yet believe in such a being, and that he is incessantly and everywhere, omniscient and omnipresent, with or without God's permission, they do not exactly know, engaged with his angels of darkness in the nefarious work of

<sup>1</sup> Acts, ch. xxiii, v. 8.

seducing human beings of all faiths and of no faith, from the paths of goodness and virtue, and alluring them into sin and wickedness,—the devil apparently more than holding his own in the great conflict with the Almighty.

Now does such a being exist? Did he ever exist? Are Dante's "Inferno" and Milton's "Paradise Lost" horrible realities? Is Satan a creature of God, as Christians and Moslems generally believe, or is he self-existent, eternal, and independent of God, as the followers of Zoroaster taught and perhaps teach yet? If the latter theory is correct, then the Zoroastrian doctrine, granting the premises of Satan's independence and self-existence, is at least logical, and the endless conflict between God and Satan, a necessary, reasonable, and natural sequence. But orthodox Christians believe, with all other Christians, that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, and infinite in wisdom and goodness, and they further believe, which Unitarians and Universalists do not, that Satan was in the beginning created by God and was once one of the powers of Heaven, highest of angels and arch-angels, and that afterwards by rebellion against his Creator, long before the creation of man, he fell from his high estate and was, with myriads of his followers, rebel angels, cast out of the celestial paradise into a bottomless abyss called hell, away beyond the boundaries of organized

creation. And they believe that Satan and his followers have ever since been and ever will be, through all eternity, utterly wicked and rebellious, ever warring against God and hating man, and yet at their will and pleasure, permitted by the Almighty to come to earth out of their infernal home, and to ever work by every phase of temptation and blandishment, sometimes even in the guise of "servants of God and ministers of light," which He permits them to assume, the more successfully to carry on their work of deception and villainy, to seduce and lead astray the children of men into sin and resulting misery here and eternal ruin and suffering hereafter.

If such is Satan and his mission, and the work of his angels by the permission of God, what is the stern, inevitable logic of such a doctrine? Why does God, the Almighty, with infinite knowledge of Satan's work and purposes, and infinite power to prevent, permit him and his fellow-demons to exist, or at least to continue such hellish work year after year, from age to age? He knew from the beginning what Satan would do if permitted, for God is omniscient. He knew what Satan would accomplish when He permitted him to enter Eden and tempt Adam and Eve to sin and death. To deny it is to deny God's omniscience. To doubt God's power to prevent Satan from entering Eden or accomplishing his devilish purpose there, is to doubt

God's omnipotence. Now, according to the orthodox creed, in the forum of reason, is not the Almighty ultimately responsible for Satan's work? If the premises of the orthodox theory are true, then logically there can be no other sane conclusion, seemingly irreverent as this conclusion may be. The old adage, "*Facit per alium, facit per se,*" is forever true, and must be as applicable to Deity as to man. The stern logic of the conclusion cannot be avoided or evaded by saying that it is irreverent (truth can never be irreverent) or that God is not governed by the same moral laws as men, for in the Bible God appeals to men to judge Him by the same moral code He gave to man.

Nor can the conclusion be avoided by the stereotyped argument that Adam and Eve were made free agents to choose between good and evil, for if so they were equally free and good before Satan came into the Garden of Eden and would have continued good, so far as the context of the story shows, indefinitely, had he been kept out. But besides, the story shows they were not free agents, because their moral powers had not been tested, nor did they know how to use them and protect themselves from evil, for they did not know any moral distinctions, or any difference between right and wrong, and hence could not have any discrimination of the two ways, or any power of resistance of evil. Much less have

their posterity such power with their fallen natures and inherited tendencies and traits of evil. None of us are free agents absolutely, nor were Adam and Eve. They were forbidden to eat of the fruit of the tree which would have given them knowledge of and enabled them to discriminate between good and evil, and it seemed to be the desire of the Almighty to keep from them such knowledge. Even had they known the difference between good and evil, the influences and capacities for and against, to make them free agents, or keep them such, should have been entirely under their control, based upon full knowledge of the blessings resulting from good and the curses resulting from evil deeds. With knowledge of inevitable results, the sin resulting in their case from their disobedience, or in case of any of their children, under temptation of passion and appetites only, might easily have been avoided and resisted had not in Adam and Eve's case, overmastering Satanic influences, and in the case of their descendants, overmastering hereditary and Satanic influences, also been superadded.

Innocent, artless, guileless, ignorant Adam and Eve, in the toils and temptations of Satan, had no free agency whatever. It is simply a mockery to talk of it, according to the environments of the legend. The foil of abused free agency, set up by bigoted ecclesiastics and scho-

lastics as an apology or excuse or justification of the awful doom, which otherwise would not have occurred, of death and eternal punishment, incurred by Adam and Eve for themselves and in all their posterity for eating the forbidden fruit, is the sheerest sophistry and hypocrisy. Satanic influences have confessedly in all the teachings of the believers in orthodoxy and the evil one, been the source and cause of all sin and evil, and have overwhelmed all the good in man which otherwise free agency, real free agency, under normal good impulses and normal consciences, might have enabled him successfully to develop. In other words, surrounded with perpetual Satanic temptations to sin, with the hereditary propensities of men since the fall, coöperating with Satan into abetting and fanning into ungovernable flames, the natural fires of appetities and passions, there has been no free agency of man since the fall, and for the reasons already stated, there was certainly none before, if Eden is a fact. Free agency means equally balanced powers, mental and moral, equal opportunities and influences for good and evil, ample natural and spiritual powers to choose the good and eschew the evil, with reason, to enable us to control in turning the scale in favor of good. But in the orthodox cult of a world full of hellish influences, ever working with the passions of men assisted by hereditary natural depravity,

to lead them into evil; free agency is a wholly delusive theory, a promise of hope and freedom to man as illusory and deceptive as fabled

“ Dead Sea fruits that tempt the eye,  
But turn to ashes on the lips.”

Our human theater of mental vision is very limited, it is true. We cannot fathom the plans and purposes of the Infinite. Many argue that the orthodox theory of God's moral government, though apparently illogical and unjust, may in His universal economy be right and best. But we have only our moral perceptions and our intellects, based upon God's moral laws in the Bible and in nature, to guide us in the paths of reason, justice, and truth, and from such lights which He has given us, the orthodox ideas of Satan and his mission and work are wrong and derogatory to God. Unless our ideas of His sovereignty, justice, and mercy are wholly wrong, and that He governs upon moral lines of which we have no conception and which are antithetic to the ethics of the Bible, the omnipotent, holy, and all wise Sovereign of the universe could not and would not permit such a fiend as Satan to exist and carry on with impunity his nefarious work. To permit him to do so would be a surrender or abandonment of every one of His holy attributes, and hence, *ex vi termini*, the Satanic



theory of orthodoxy with all its horrible sequences of earthly sin and eternal punishment is utterly illogical and false. "God sitteth on the circle of the universe." He is ever on its throne and holds the helm of its government, and He cannot and does not permit such an evil being, one of His creation, to thwart all His purposes of infinite love. Orthodoxy dethrones God, and Satan's realm in its creed, is an "Imperium in imperio." Incredible! He is represented in the Apocalypse of Revelation as a roaring lion, going about in his mission and with his minions of evil, unchecked everywhere, on earth at all times, vested with powers of omniscience and omnipresence, everywhere present at the same time, knowing all the thoughts, passions, and doings of all men, and continually tempting all to sin and rebellion against God.

Under such overmastering influences, man's boasted free agency seems only freedom to sin. What wonder ancient Zoroastrians, believing Satan possessed such powers, supposed him to be a deity, contesting with God, and really having much the greater influence with men and having most followers? We believe the Satanic ascriptions in the New Testament, as well as the few found in the Old, to be mostly allegorical, and, with the descriptions of the dark world of sheol, hades, or hell, to be fanciful colorings of the original text; in many instances perverted to

change the idea of the Greek world of departed spirits to correspond with the morbid delusions and fanatical creeds of the bigots of the Dark Ages, and all of them, however, inwrought in the Scriptures, to be entirely human ideas and beliefs, not of God, but born of the superstitions and darkness of those ages and totally unworthy of credence now. Whether allegories, perversions of the original teachings, or merely superstitious fancies, or however they got into the Scriptures, those teachings impeach God's wisdom, mercy, and justice, and limit His sovereignty, and are, therefore, untrue.

To read the old creeds, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the works of Calvinistic theologians, portraying the powers of Satan and the unutterable horrors of hell, the impression is conveyed that we must believe in such tenets as essentials to salvation. Must we really believe that God is dethroned in His moral government by Satan, and believe in the eternal punishment of all the myriads of men whom God has, according to orthodoxy, permitted Satan to deceive and ruin forever? Only a few of those numbered among the elect, being enabled by special grace to persevere and get to heaven? The teachings of some of the orthodox theologians of a hundred years ago seem almost incredible.

Rev. Edwards in one of his sermons, *inter alia*, says:

“The view of the misery of the damned will double the ardor of the love and gratitude of the saints in heaven.”

In the thirteenth of his published sermons he says:

“When the redeemed shall see how miserable others of their fellow creatures are; when they shall see the smoke of their torments in hell, and the raging flames of their burnings, and shall hear their cries and shrieks, and shall consider that they, in the meantime, are in the most blissful state, and shall surely be in it to all eternity, as the lost shall be in hell, how they will rejoice! How joyfully they shall sing to God and to the Lamb when they shall see this!”

And if some of their fellow immortals thus suffering, are father, mother, son and daughter, brother, sister, and others, once near and dear on earth, the redeemed, according to Dr. Edwards, would rejoice in Paradise, and their happiness be absolutely enhanced by the knowledge that those most dearly loved on earth and closest in the ties of blood and kindred, were suffering everlasting torments, and from that knowledge realizing the amazing grace which, all unmerited, had elected the saved to enjoy endless bliss.

We doubt if even the devil could be joyous over such ineffable horrors! How can anyone have such conception of the inexorable vengeance of a being who says in the Good Book “that He is

our Father," that all people are His children; that He is love itself and infinite in mercy; that as in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all live"? Thank God the evolutions of religion are bursting the shackles of such teachings and are ushering in the dawn of a brighter day. The world is awakening to the light. Few Christians, even of the orthodox, believe in the hell of a century ago. The horrible portraitures such as we heard in our youths from the pulpits of the world of the damned and its awful eternal horrors, are never preached now and would depopulate the churches if again revived. The hell of the past is in fact absolutely eliminated from polemical essays and sermons nowadays. Its oceans of fire, drinking of melted lead, and brimstone, myriads of howling, cursing demons, flitting about among the lost souls, and the horrible undying worm in whose folds the wretches were writhing, visions which sometimes yet haunt the dreams of those who in childhood, seventy years ago, heard such things thundered from every pulpit, are now relegated to the domains of fanatic superstitions and fossilized beliefs. Those horrors have been transformed by the demands of modern Christianity into the milder punishment of mental tortures and eternal exclusion from God. The evolutions of religious belief in the near future will certainly eliminate Satan and the ancient hell from the universe.

There is and always has been evil in the world. The pages of history sicken us with the records of it; our own observations disgust us. But all evil comes from the passions and appetites of the children of Adam and Eve, who were created with them, just as their descendants are. In the economy of God's government no devil was created to redouble temptation and fan the flames of passion. Why God created man as he is and always was, we know not, but doubtless in His wise economy it is best. As Adam and Eve were, so we their children are. We inherit all the nature and tendencies for good and evil that we possess, and we have free agency sufficient to induce us to love and prefer the good, even when overborne by our frailties and carried into evil. None are wholly good; none are entirely evil. When God created our first parents He knew just what they and their posterity would be and do, and His purposes have not been thwarted. When we do evil it is the inexorable law of our nature that we must suffer, but it will be temporary and finite punishment. When we do well we are recompensed with good; and there will be equable adjustments of punishments and rewards here and hereafter, and an ultimate restoration to good. We do enough and too much evil, and God did not create a devil to help by overpowering temptation to make us infinitely more wicked than we are liable to be naturally.

Most of human sin grows out of ignorance, passion, and heredity, not much from deliberate choice of sin. If our first parents and all their posterity should have been forever sinless without Satanic temptation, then *ex necessitate* it was God's will that the primeval state of innocence should cease, and the world's history of sin, disease, and death should be written as it has been. Such, if true, is the inevitable logic of the story of Eden and the fall. Orthodoxy can take either horn of the dilemma.

There are undoubtedly, as many of the most eminent Jewish and Christian scholars of the present day assert, and clearly prove, numerous matters in the Bible that are not inspired nor are they communications from God, as we understand inspiration to be. Many errors of fact that have got into successive editions and redactions of its various books, many mere legends and traditions derived from folklore originally, and magnified into the miraculous, many allegories, metaphorical and poetic fictions, often grand and beautiful, but outside of the realm of fact, so that it is often difficult to know what is really intended to be taught as veritable truths, or to separate allegories and illustrative fictions from actual facts, or to clearly understand the truths they are intended to convey. Inspiration is only wrought certainly into and can be clearly predicated of its sublime ethics, its revelations of God's attri-

butes, and its history of the progressive development of our race, along through the centuries from the beginning of time. It teaches emphatically that God ever rules in the universe, and that nothing ever happens contrary to His will. There are no accidents in human life, none at least in God's economy. Jesus says that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His knowledge, and that God numbers every hair of our heads. Yet orthodoxy teaches that God sits on His throne and permits Satan to go on forever with his accursed work of evil, irresistibly dragging down the vast majority of the human family into endless misery, God only sometimes helping man in the conflict with Satan, who is generally the victor, when He could at once easily compel Satan to cease his work forever, or else annihilate him. The theory of orthodoxy is utterly absurd and derogatory to God. Its reign is waning. The world, in the not distant future, will have a loving Almighty Father, but no Satanic majesty in its moral government.

Good and evil, we repeat, virtue and vice, as the results of natural forces, affections, passions, temperaments, heredity, social influences, and life environments, are interwoven into our lives and involved absolutely in God's mysterious governmental economy. Says Rev. Minot J. Savage in an article on the subject: "Here let it

be clearly understood and kept in mind that an infinite being must be held as ultimately and solely responsible for whatever he either ordains or permits. Keep also clearly in mind the distinction between an evil that is only temporary, and one that is eternal. Any kind or amount of evil and suffering that are temporary, that are only experiments in the development of a soul, may conceivably be justified by the final outcome. But in the nature of the case, eternal evil and suffering can have no outcome excepting more evil and suffering, and cannot, therefore, in morals be justified.”<sup>1</sup>

This argument is logical, clear as a demonstration in mathematics, and unanswerable excepting by sophistry. We indorse every word of it. Moreover, we add that eternal evil and suffering cannot be justified by any system of morals of earth or heaven that is true, for the code of morals which God has given us in the Bible must be in the answer of our consciences, the code universal and eternal. Therefore by that code, eternal punishment cannot be true. St. Thomas de Aquinas, one of the great Catholic Fathers of the Middle Ages, says: “God eternally knows all things as present, and through that knowledge those things themselves are caused.” *To know, with God, is to be.* What He knows now, or in the future, is done, and all things are

<sup>1</sup> *North American Review*, vol. 148, p. 921.



as He wills. There are no such beings in the universe, or at least on earth, as Satan and his angels, and all that any religions have ever taught of such denizens of hell and of hell itself are delusions born of priestcraft, superstition, ignorance, and fear.

Enough, alas! too much, temptation to sin is evolved from human passions, human wants, and sufferings; often absolutely dominated and controlled by overmastering heredity, without any need of help from Satanic influences. Indeed, this heredity in our physical and moral natures is really the law of nature in the propagation of all animal life. It is the "visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children of the third and fourth generations of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands" (or really all of them) "that love God and keep His commandments." It was simply the misconception by Moses of a physical law as a moral law. The dreams of St. John in Revelation about Satan and hell, and his infernal powers on earth (if indeed the Revelation is St. John's and not the product of some visionary mind), have no basis of credence or support elsewhere in the Bible and are utterly unsubstantiated. As has been already said in these pages, for several centuries after their appearance their authorship was doubted, and on account of their extraordinary character, and unsustained by any evidence or reasons whatever

to substantiate any claims to inspiration, they were refused admission into the New Testament list or canon, and were classed as Apocryphal writings.

Narratives of casting out devils from persons supposed to be possessed of them, are not found in the Hebrew Scriptures, and those narrated in the New Testament or claimed to have been performed in subsequent times have no confirmatory evidence, as miracles tending to prove there were or are such beings, and the environments of such stories, show that the demons, of which those persons were said to have been possessed, were purely imaginary, and that they were only sufferers from insanity.

Again, infinite punishment for finite and ephemeral sins is an unjust, impious, and immoral doctrine, untrue by every analysis and test of reason and justice. Our sins are the events of a fleeting day; our lives are but a shadow of time. The punishment supposed is, for, maybe, millions and billions of years, endless, eternal. According to orthodoxy, the punishment is virtually the same for all sins, and for persons of all ages and conditions. Indeed, according to Calvinistic theology, hell is for all human beings, excepting the eternally elect and predestined to heaven, without, it would seem, much, if any, regard to merits or demerits, because the "elect are so divinely hedged about during earthly life that

salvation through final perseverance unto the goal of the heavenly life, was a termination and gift of infinite grace which absolutely must result.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, in St. Paul’s Epistle to Romans, if his language originally has not been tampered with by fanatics, that school of theology had broad warrant for such doctrine.<sup>1</sup> For he saith to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” “Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth. Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory?”<sup>2</sup> To the same effect in a previous passage we find: “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also

<sup>1</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith.

<sup>2</sup> St. Paul’s Epistle to Romans, ch. ix.

justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified." <sup>1</sup>

Who authorized Paul to teach the doctrines of election, predestination, justification, and, of course, through no matter what intermediate mazes of sin and crime, preceded probably by conversion, the final perseverance and salvation of the elect? Paul was not authorized by the Savior to teach such doctrine. Jesus never taught it. His parables of the great marriage supper and of the owner of the vineyard who paid the eleventh-hour laborers the same wages as those who had borne the heat and the burden of the day, did not teach election and predestination, but only illustrated that of many who were invited to the heavenly feast, only a few got there, and not always those who had first and best opportunities, and that sometimes those who came into God's moral vineyard late in life were equally rewarded with early converts, probably because they were more zealous in God's service and did more acceptable work.

As an amelioration of the awful doom of some of the myriads who are condemned to endless punishment, we are told by the believers in that doctrine that there are gradations in the sufferings of the damned accordingly as they are young or old, were greater or less sinners, or had greater or less light and opportunities in earthly life.

<sup>1</sup> St. Paul's Epistle to Romans, ch. viii, vs. 29-30.

Note, this is merely a concession to the liberalism of the age. The Scriptures, if they really teach the doctrine of eternal punishment, warrant no such distinctions. But even if so, *cui bono?* Let us illustrate. The child of a dozen years who has come to the knowledge of good and evil and dies unconverted, must, according to Calvinism, go to eternal punishment. A wicked man who has lived to old age in sin, dies and goes to hell. Now, it is endless hell, hopeless hell, for both, and little matters it to the poor child that his sufferings may not be quite so severe as the old sinner's, when they must be, as his, eterna<sup>l</sup>. So with those who go there, who have had less knowledge or opportunities than others, what matters it to them if hell is endless? For by those who believe in a spiritual and not a bodily resurrection, we are not informed how the fiery billows of perdition can burn and torture the disembodied spirit? For the old-fashioned hell of our ancestors, we suppose, a bodily resurrection is essential.

Away with such a creed! It is a horrible delusion, another Mephistophelian doctrine. But let it remain in the Scriptures, if it really is taught there, as a curiosity, a relic of bigotry, ignorance, and superstition. All denominations of Christians, excepting Unitarians and Universalists, still teach it in its old-fashioned terms, in confessions of faith and liturgies, but it is seldom or never preached as of yore from pulpits, and few,

excepting Catholics, really believe it or are influenced by it in their daily lives. But in these latter days, in order to temper the dogma of eternal punishment to weak and doubting Christians who would rebel against it in its naked deformity, it is in vogue to repudiate the old-time hell, with its oceans of fire, its infernal tortures of the undying worm, and its drinks of molten lead, with vivid descriptions of which we used to be regaled in sermons in our boyhood days, such sermons as intelligent, orthodox Christians would not now tolerate, and to teach that hell is a condition or result to which the sins of the wicked and impenitent bring them, and not a world, abyss, or place of literal bodily torture prepared for such by the eternal decrees of God. That unconverted of their sins when they die, the wicked could not live in heaven with God and the redeemed any more than pure good men and women could live agreeably in close companionship with the wicked and impure on earth, and hence must necessarily gravitate to hell and the companionship of devils, and must there, as moral qualities either improve or degenerate, *ex necessitate*, continue growing in wickedness, and that their sufferings result only from remorse and the torments of their consciences and regrets for loss of heaven. That the ancient traditional fires are fictions, that any change of heart and repentance in that world

among the wicked and damned is impossible, or would not be heeded by God, if possible, and hence that the horrible condition of the lost must, from necessity, eternally continue. This is, of course, a great modification of the old dogma of hell, and made as a concession to the liberalism of the age, though not in accordance with the descriptions in Revelation which were insisted upon literally as infallible and inspired pictures of hell for eighteen hundred years. But really this latter day, and apparently more liberal and humane theory of eternal punishment, does not in the least change or modify the relations of Satan to God and man. He and his angels are still permitted their work, as of yore, of enticing souls and filling hell in each generation of mankind with most of the human family just the same as ever, and the eternal result is the same, excepting that in the present conceptions of most Christians, mental torments are substituted for the old-time material fires of hell.

In fact, the modernized Christian hell is substantially the mythological Greek Hades, with the exception that only a vast majority of souls go to the Christian Hades, and not all, as they did to the dominions of Pluto across the gloomy Styx. And when it is considered that material fires could not probably under any conditions affect disembodied or incorporeal essences, unless after the resurrection in some mysterious way,

material bodies were furnished the lost in hell, the modernized idea of change of punishment in perdition does not seem to amount to much of a gain. The lost are, as in the old idea of hell, lost forever, and forever exiled from mercy and from God. Their punishment and doom are eternal, and the old serpent, the devil, pursues his ancient vocation on earth after more victims, unrestrained, and that vocation will continue, so far as we are informed, while the world rolls on its axis. The new theory does not seem to be much of a gain for the lost, excepting as they may blame themselves more and God less, in the contemplation that the eternity of their exile from God is a necessary result, according to God's laws, of their impenitence on earth. But the result, the endless doom of the lost under God's decrees, is the same under either theory or condition of hell, and Satan's work on earth, unrestrained of God, continues ever the same. So that practically there is no gain to the lost in the modern theory of hell and its limitations, excepting in the absence of fiery torments, which they, under the old theory, were forever enabled to sustain, but which as spirits could not hurt them anyhow.

But if not doomed by the decrees of the Almighty to eternal punishment and exile, why should there be no end of it? Why not a world of probation and repentance? Certainly there is



no proportion of justice between finite sins and eternal punishment. No sane man will argue that there can be. A fanatic is not sane. There may be punishment in a future life; all sins and violations of God's moral and nature's physical laws are punished; but most, we opine, are punished on earth. Some offenses and offenders may not have had meted out to them due punishment on earth. But our memories will remain, and we shall know all in the future we knew here. Surely, if in the future life, the wicked can have the volition to continue in sin and unrepentant, they can also have the volition to repent. Feeling remorse for past misdeeds, as admittedly they will, loathing the companionship of the wicked and desperate, as well as naturally longing for the joys of heaven, and association with the good and happy — surely they will sooner or later eschew love of sin, and heartily repent of past misdeeds. This must in the immortal nature of man be so. Therefore, according to the new orthodoxy, as only the stubborn persistence in rebellion of those who have gone to the bad world keeps them there; therefore, *per contra*, sincere, humble repentance would at once open their prison doors and admit them to a reconciled God and the heavenly Paradise. This is practically the Catholic doctrine of purgatory, liberally and universally applied.

Under the new theory of orthodoxy, no decree of God bars universal repentance, and universal

restoration of all humanity to heaven. Therefore, under the new theory of future punishment carried out to legitimate and natural results, the evil world would soon be depopulated, excepting of any incorrigibles who might prefer remaining there, "rather ruling in hell than serving in heaven." The result would be the universal salvation and restoration of all the human family to eternal happiness, a result which only the supposed eternal decrees of God, as interpreted by orthodoxy, or the incorrigible stubbornness of the wicked, could prevent of fulfillment. If reason, memory, volition, identity of self, remain with us in the future life (and if not, we would be no longer the selves we were on earth), then there is no reason — there can be no reason given — why repentance could not be in that life as well as in this, and no reason why infinite mercy would not be — yes, if infinite, *must be* — vouchsafed to the wretched and penitent in that world as well as in this.

Our modern ideas of hell are merely evolutions of the intelligence and charity of the age, from the old Zoroastrian, Egyptian, Brahman, Buddhist, Greek, and Christian beliefs of the past, and they are keeping pace with the progress of liberal religious sentiments. Doubtless in the coming years, those old imaginary realms of darkness and despair, of those various old religions, will be forgotten, or only remembered through antiquarian literature and classed with other biblical Apocry-

pha. As the light of knowledge spreads, true religion assumes fairer and happier forms, and the goblins of ignorance, bigotry, and superstition vanish, as the shades of night before the sunrise. It is one of the peculiar phases of religious belief, and doubtless owing largely to the influences of early training and impressions which are hardly ever entirely shaken off, no matter how erroneous, that Rev. Charles D. Briggs, the accomplished Bible scholar, usually so liberal and advanced in his religious views, who seems, from the tone of his writings, to have little faith in miracles generally,<sup>1</sup> and who in many instances denies, *in toto*, and in other instances strongly questions the commonly assumed authorship of biblical books, and who points out so many errors and interpolations in them, facts utterly at variance with the dogma of their infallibility, should apparently believe in the doctrine of eternal punishment, though he says but little on the subject in any of his writings, and indeed seems to evade the discussion of it.

Another apparent inconsistency in his teachings is, that while he refers so strongly and depreciatingly as he does in many places, to the conflicting doctrines of many eminent Jewish and Christian writers of all ages, in reference to biblical exegesis

<sup>1</sup> He says in "The Bible, the Church, the Reason," Appendix, p. 279, "But it has been found easier to prove the Divinity of Christ without miracles, as if there were no such things as miracles and predictions in the Sacred Scriptures."

and belief, and himself differs so widely from many of them, upon a multitude of matters of biblical history, canon, tradition, authority, and doctrine, he should himself persistently urge that the Holy Spirit in the Bible taught so and so, on many questions, and that the Holy Spirit's guidance on all controverted questions should be and was the only sure standard of biblical interpretation. Doubtless, he is theoretically correct. But who is to make the application? The Holy Spirit's only guidance is in the language and text of the Bible, and it has spoken only in the same text through many centuries, and to thousands of priests and scholars in all their diversified interpretations, the same as it speaks now. Who is authorized apart from the Bible text itself to affirm that the Holy Spirit means or declares so and so upon any question of fact and doctrine? The Catholic Church assumes that the Pope of Rome, as vicegerent of God, is infallible, and has authority to declare in accordance with the canons of the Church and the decrees of general councils what are the Holy Spirit's teachings as to any and all matters in the Bible. Protestants, however, as well as the Greek Church, and of course Rev. Briggs, deny his authority to do so.

As a matter of fact, although surely we must admit that the Holy Spirit's guidance should be the infallible standard of construction and belief, if that guidance and teaching were always surely

vouchsafed to ministers of the Gospel or to any special persons, yet the burning question is — How are we to know certainly at any time or place who is under such guidance and what construction of its teachings is infallible? Who is the inspired prophet or expounder of Scriptures, and when expounders differ, who or which is infallible? Underlying these questions is the whole subject of biblical authenticity and interpretations, doctrines and miracles. Oh, could we but know surely the Holy Spirit's will and have His guidance in all things, all questions pertaining to the Bible and religion would be speedily settled. But the endless and eternal controversy, as Dr. Briggs well knows, between all creeds and sects, bishops, priests, and controversialists, translators and interpreters, Jews and Christians alike, has been and is: not that the Bible standard is not the infallible one, but as to what the Holy Spirit in that standard does surely teach. God is the Holy Spirit, and He delegates or transmits His wisdom and knowledge only in finite degrees to man.

The Bible is God's teaching through men to man. Man's reason is given to interpret and apply it. So Briggs' standard of interpretation is the true one, but only in this, that the Holy Spirit speaks in the Bible to each reader of it according to the light of his own reason and conscience. Absolutely in all things what the Holy Spirit does teach in the Bible is the whole open field of

Scripture controversy over again, and the truth will never perhaps, in all its essentials, be fully known on this side of eternity. Each individual has in the Bible the Holy Spirit's guidance for himself as he honestly and fearlessly reads and believes it, and God has vouchsafed to man on earth no other guidance. It may teach me one thing on any given question. It may teach Dr. Briggs otherwise on the same subject. The error between us, if there be one, is in our different enlightenment and judgment. Such seems to us to be the whole sum and substance of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit's guidance. God's attribute of infallibility is not given to man. Man is groping his way to light, but its effulgence will only fully irradiate the future life where we are promised, "We shall know as we are known." The Holy Spirit's guidance is only vouchsafed in this life through human intellects. And so it is God's will. He alone knows ultimate truth. All man can do is to seek for that truth as earnestly as he can. Jesus Christ left His teachings only to the memories of his followers. So Dr. Briggs' standard resolves itself only in the Bible as it is and as it is understood by various minds.

The Holy See of Rome assumes to be the infallible expounder of the Bible, but only the membership of that church believes in such infallibility. The guidance of the Holy Spirit has been sought in all ages by the prophets and priests of all reli-

gions, but it has only been obtained to the degree that they have been inspired to teach the truths of religion, imperfectly, as we have them in the various Holy Books of earth. But absolute divine guidance, so that the human exponents of God's teachings shall be understood the same by everyone in all things, has never been obtained, and most likely never will be this side of eternity. Each and all of the thousands of biblical translators, commentators, and polemical writers, Jewish and Christian, in all their multiplicity of writings, versions, and interpretations, claimed to have sought and many to have found the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But the world knows the conflicting results. So that such guidance should be clearly known and infallibly correct, how are the teachers or how are their followers to know, unless all honestly agree? Why if there is such guidance, independently of the written word, should so many claiming it differ so widely as they do, and always have done?

Is Dr. Briggs an infallible exponent of the Bible? From the air of authority with which he speaks, one is apt to imagine that he feels so. Generally we indorse his views upon Bible exegesis. He is brave, liberal, and honest, profoundly learned, of great ability, and possessing the courage of his convictions. He doubtless seeks the highest light, but man can only partially obtain it through the teachings of the Bible, and in nature's open book, and the light is refracted to each one according to the different

mediums of intellect, capacities, and environments it filters through. The supreme truth is only in God Himself. We do not think that Dr. Briggs is correct in assuming that Jesus is the Yahveh or Jehovah of the Old Testament, and that all or any of the Mosaic sacrifices, ceremonies, and services are typical symbols of His future coming to earth, and vicarious sacrifice on the Cross, or that the old prophetic ascriptions to Jehovah, ever refer to Jesus. We have already stated many reasons why we believe such assumption is unauthorized. In addition, we may remark further that if Jehovah exists in the triune personality of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, He so existed, as well, during the old dispensation as afterwards, and this relation would undoubtedly have been spoken of through inspiration in the days of the prophets, as well as in the new dispensation, if it were so. But it is not, and God is everywhere spoken of in the old Scriptures as one and only one God, as if to exclude any other idea of Deity, but oneness.

Isaiah, the greatest of all the Hebrew prophets, absolutely puts the seal of condemnation, as if by anticipating them, upon such later theories, in many of his prophetic teachings and particularly in the first chapter, wherein he declares emphatically that all the Hebrew sacrifices and sacrificial rites were not only unauthorized by Jehovah, but were an abomination to Him, and hence they could not be in any way typical or symbolical of His



future coming to earth in human form and as a sacrificial vicarious atonement. Others of the prophets, and particularly Micah, affirm the same disapproval by Yahveh, of sacrifices.<sup>1</sup> Apart from such prophetic condemnation, we may reasonably ask, why should God manifest or typify Himself as a future Messiah, born of woman, through the debasing symbols of the similar heathen rites of the surrounding idolatrous nations, the bloody sacrifices of beasts and birds? Is it reasonable? Does it comport with Almighty wisdom, power, and glory, that He should do so? The idea of such sacrifice being acceptable to God, is repulsive, and its frequent denunciation by the prophets must be in accordance with God's aversion to this unseemly worship. The sacrificial worship of Israel was simply an institution of a semi-barbarous people copied from the customs of the surrounding nations, and was not from God. It is absurd to believe otherwise in the light and civilization of the present day, and it would not now be believed as ever from, or sanctioned by God were it not so taught in the Pentateuch. It was simply an absurd and barbarous system of worship of a barbarous age, adopted mainly from the Egyptians, to the worship of whose gods the Israelites were always so prone to return for centuries, notwithstanding Moses and the prophets. So besotted were they that they were frequently guilty of human sacrifices, as well

<sup>1</sup> Micah, ch. vi.

as of beasts; to Baal, Rimmon, Moloch, and other gods.<sup>1</sup>

The Almighty has revealed Himself to the extent that men were qualified to comprehend His messages in the ages of the world's ignorance through chosen missionaries. Zoroaster, Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Buddha, Confucius, Socrates, Plato, Seneca, Cicero, Antoninus Pius, were all, in greater or less degree, inspired teachers of God's will. Jesus Christ, the greatest of all prophets, was nearest divinity, and His teachings most divine. Doubtless even Mohammed, the Mormon teachers, Swedenborg, and other authors of assumed revelations, had missions to perform in the divine economy of some importance; but there was little of originality in their teachings, or in the historic or miraculous fictions which they promulgated. The knowledge imparted to their followers, by those who were given the Holy Spirit's light, had naturally to be communicated in the ideas and language of the teachers and hearers to their fellow-men, and fallibility was inseparable to the communication of the messages. In after-times, translators and expounders of those messages, from the manuscripts in which they were originally written, made changes, additions, or interpolations which they supposed gave greater clearness and emphasis to their teachings. In so doing, they sometimes injected their own sense of what obscure or doubtful

<sup>1</sup> II Kings, ch. xvii, v. 17.

readings ought to be when translated into other languages and versions. Such we know has been the case with all ancient writings, and especially sacred books, all versions of which greatly differ. Such would naturally be the case, even more so, in controversial matters or renderings into other languages of texts which affected different sectarian doctrines and creeds, than in matters of mere morals, law, history, etc. Investigation and comparison of texts and contemporaneous writings have shown this to be the case, as well with our Bible as with the sacred books of other religions. Nothing is too sacred for fanaticism and bigotry to pervert and change, to justify their own purposes, or maintain their usually narrow and illiberal doctrines. The translations of our Bible in the Dark Ages, by incompetent or sectarian translators, suffered from such experiments. Ancient writings of all kinds, from want of system in composition, no division or separation into chapters, sections, and verses, mingling of subjects, all capital letters, or no capital letters, no system of punctuation at all, and other defects, were very difficult to translate correctly, or to understand. Many ancient languages, as the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, had a rather narrow vocabulary, and hence the same words were so used and might have a dozen different meanings or shades of meaning, according to the subject-matter or context, and hence it was easy and natural, for

instance, in translators of biblical manuscripts who might be imbued with strong bias or sectarian feelings, to give a bearing to their renderings of the text entirely in harmony with their doctrinal views, but really at variance with, or something else than the original.

No manuscripts of Bible books of an earlier date than about the year 1000 A.D. are now in existence, and that was an age of extreme ignorance, bigotry, and superstition. Indeed, all ancient writings, sacred and profane, are from these and other causes imperfect and more or less unreliable. Ignorance, superstition, credulity, incorporation of mythical as well as purely legendary matters, are discernible in all ancient writings. As to the Bible, largely from the ambiguities of expression, and the different shades of meaning given by ancient translators and interpreters, notwithstanding the honestly sought for and, doubtless, supposed guidance of the Holy Spirit, have resulted the formation of innumerable sects of Christians, some teaching Trinitarianism, and some Unitarianism; some the doctrine of eternal punishment; others the belief in universal salvation; to others creeds diametrically opposite and at variance, not only about such important matters, but contending also, and sometimes bitterly, about such non-essentials as modes of baptism, and whether infants and adults, or only adults, should be baptized; administration of the Eucharist or Lord's Supper; ques-

tions of election, predestination, foreordination, transubstantiation, and yet other matters more trivial; some sects of Christians even making certain of those comparatively unimportant differences, as regarded in the light of reason and common sense, absolute barriers to common Christian fellowship, or even a passport to heaven, of those good, pure, and worthy who otherwise held contrary beliefs. No doubt St. Augustine, Chrysostom, Philo, Origen, Eusebius, Arius, Pelagius, Celestius, St. Thomas de Aquinas, Savonarola, Loyola, Giordano Bruno, Servetus, Calvin, Luther, Neander, William Penn, Priestley, Dr. Channing, Swedenborg, Sir Isaac Newton, Wesley, and thousands of other good men and able Christian scholars, were equally honest, and each perhaps sought and believed themselves to be under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and yet all held different religious opinions, and arrived, many of them, at widely opposite conclusions, none of them entirely agreeing with the others in their writings and teachings on biblical matters.

On the other side, Strauss, Renan, Gratz, Wellhausen, Wendell Phillips, Emerson, Theodore Parker, and other great scholars and philosophers, who were no doubt equally as learned and well informed in biblical lore, reached entirely different conclusions on almost all scriptural subjects from those other great men. All minds are differently constituted. No two persons on earth are exactly

alike physically or can exactly see or think alike; and in the divine economy, diversity of thought and opinion, in all fields of knowledge among all men, seems to be the universal law. Hence the guidance of the Holy Spirit is in each man's conscience and judgment. Each one should study the Scriptures for himself and obey the voice of God as it speaks to him in its pages, and that is literally following the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Its guidance of another may not be the "inner voice" for myself.

## CHAPTER XIV

### UNIVERSAL SALVATION

TO me the whole Bible, as one religion and light coming from God, the Universal Father, teaches that life is but a probation and that all human beings will sooner or later enjoy God's boundless mercy. The scheme of salvation of narrow orthodoxy, including the sacrificial atonement for and redemption of some, and the eternal punishment of most of the human race, was not evolved in the old dispensation, even remotely, nor taught by Jesus Christ. As has been already said, it was evolved in the Dark Ages of Christendom by narrow-minded, bigoted ecclesiastics. The Hebrew olden sacrifices were not types of Jesus' death. Half of the time in the history of Israel they were offered to Baal, Moloch, Rimmon, Ashtaroth, and other deities of the surrounding nations, and in the same groves and on the same altars, and by the same priests, as had been used and officiated for the worship and offerings to Elohim or Jehovah. No intimation whatever of the sacrifices being of a symbolic character or as typical of the death or sacrifice of some other being, much less of deity, or of one of the persons

of a triune God, was ever given in the Old Testament. Such ideas were evolved first in the apostolic writings, and only allegorically in them.

If the sacrifices, instead of being the adoption of a religious custom of surrounding nations, were really typical of Christ's Crucifixion, why was it thought necessary to slaughter thousands and tens of thousands of victims for centuries annually? And why a variety of animals, bulls, heifers, goats, sheep, and birds? What was symbolized by cutting the animals to pieces before offering them on the altars? Or by offerings of bread, cakes, wine, etc.? At some of the great feasts, thousands of animals were slaughtered at one time. Would not a monthly or yearly sacrifice of one animal as a type or symbol have been sufficient and vastly more impressive and refining than the daily sacrifice of hundreds or thousands, and thus avoid turning altars, erected to worship of God, into shambles? The priests and Levites, it is true, mostly got their food from the sacrificial animals, but why go through the forms of sacrificing all of them? If the sacrifices were designed, as claimed by Trinitarians, to remind the children of Israel of the future coming of a Savior of sinners, who was Himself to become a sacrificial atonement, certainly from any knowledge we now have, they never so spoke of them nor regarded them. Nowhere in the Bible are they mentioned in that light. They were spoken of solely as propitiations



for sins. Frequently God, through the prophets, spoke of His abhorrence of such sacrifices.<sup>1</sup>

Would He have done so if they were really typical symbols of the Crucifixion of His Son? If in the latter days of Israel's adversities, the prophets spoke of a Messiah to come in the distant future, He was heralded as Shiloh, or as a great prince of the House of David who would reign over all Israel in righteousness, and would possibly subdue all the world to His dominion, or at least restore the pristine greatness of the Kingdom of David and Solomon, the glories of which age, when their empire extended from the Mediterranean or "Great Sea" to the Euphrates, and from the river of Egypt to Damascus, the Jews never ceased to extol and exaggerate, and for a return of which through a prince of that royal line in future ages, their hopes ever went out, and their last dying prayer to Jehovah was uttered.

All of Israel's impassioned poetic visions when not perverted or added to, as they were frequently by subsequent Christian translators and expounders, had sole reference to such a prince. All of the prophecies of Isaiah from the fortieth chapter to the sixty-sixth, were additions made during or after the captivity, and the grotesque headings of chapters, not only in Isaiah, but in all the prophets, were made by Trinitarian scholars after the division of the Bible into chapters and verses,

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah i, 11-15. Micah vi, 6-7.

and prove nothing and are often entirely inapplicable and inappropriate. Jesus' death was not an atoning sacrifice, predestined from the day of the Edenic tragedy, but a most wicked and ruthless murder of the great Prophet and Founder of Christianity. All of Jesus' mission on earth was outlined in His great sermon on Mount Olivet, and there is not in it a single intimation of the doctrines of the orthodox creed, and His simple teachings are grander and truer than all the incomprehensible dogmas ever written. Though some of the expressions in the apostolic letters as we now have them seem to countenance the orthodox scheme of atonement and redemption, there are reasons in the Gospels, and many facts of subsequent history, which prove conclusively that such doctrines were evolved long after Jesus' time and were sustained by the manipulations and perversions of the sacred writings by bigoted translators. One instance in point we will give. In the King James version of the Bible in the First Epistle of John, ch. v, v. 7, the text reads: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." This, as an entire interpolation, is left out of the revised version of the Bible by the many able scholars who made it. This bold interpolation shows conclusively what Trinitarian fanaticism in the Dark Ages would do, and leaves us to imagine what renderings it probably gave to

many other texts, and especially somewhat obscure ones on the same subject. The Trinity was, as already stated, first formally adopted and enunciated as a creed by a bare majority out of some five hundred bishops and suffragans of the Council of Nicea, 325 A.D., and Unitarianism, which had been the faith of the greater part of the Christian world for the first two centuries and a half, and of most of the Eastern or Asiatic churches, and of some of the Western churches, until that time, was superseded and anathematized by the majority of the Council as aforesaid. But there were, nevertheless, many of the ablest bishops and priests who still adhered to the Unitarian or Arian creed, and it was not until the Council of Carthage, 511 A.D., that orthodoxy was finally established by the Romish Church then dominating all Christendom.

Many of the greatest scholars and theologians in Christendom have opposed orthodox tenets, and this especially during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. The names of Socinus, Milton, Locke, Sir Isaac Newton, William Penn, Dr. Channing, Dr. Priestley, Daniel Webster, Dr. Franklin, Presidents John Adams and John Quincy Adams, are among the brightest of those centuries.

The Rev. I. E. Roberts, an eminent scholar and minister of the Unitarian Church, in a sermon delivered in Kansas City, Missouri, a few years ago, said:

“In the first one hundred years of Christianity lived and wrought its founders. They were the Judean Prophet and His Apostles, and their immediate successors. They were prophets in the highest sense of the term, not because they foretold future events, but because they were good men and inspired teachers. They walked with God. Their inspirations were from God. They were men of faith; of such faith in the truth to win its way, that they did not dream of any necessity of augmenting its force with dogmas or dramatizing it with symbols. Of such faith in God's kingdom, that they needed not the poor reënforcement of an autocratic priesthood or a supernatural church. This was the age, brief though it was, from whose sown seed all the generations since have been gathering the abundant harvests.<sup>1</sup>

“With the beginning of the second or mechanical age of the Church, dogmas first took their rise. During the first one hundred years of the ministry of Christ and His Apostles, no writer, Pagan, Jew, or Christian, is known to have set forth the doctrines of the immaculate conception, the material resurrection, or the miracles of Jesus. None of these things were written or taught during the first century. The doctrines of the divinity of Christ and of the trinity were not formulated till the beginning of the fourth century; the doctrine of original sin not until the fifth century, and that of the atonement still later. Of all the doctrines comprising orthodoxy, and which men have for

<sup>1</sup> See p. 26.

centuries been taught they must believe or be forever lost, not one was ever formulated by Jesus Christ, or by His Apostles, nor by any one, until centuries after their time. But the mechanical age of religion, the age of creeds and dogmas, is passing away. Men are again seeking the spirit of that creative age, in which the immortal founders of Christianity, without creed or formula, simply confessed, by life and teaching, their love to God and man, and in serving God, served both man and God, and thus fulfilled religion's highest laws."

"Before the problems of eternal life, all men stand equal. The wise man and the ignorant, the patriarch and the child, are alike mute and helpless, but all peoples of all ages and religion have believed in the life beyond. This human instinct, this deathless hope, symbolized itself in the Christian festival of the resurrection, which is linked by its name of Easter to the spring celebrations of the Teutonic nations, and by its associations with the Hebrew Passover. This festival points chiefly to the supposed resurrection of a great prophet from the tomb, but in its wider meaning it stands for the universal human instinct of the power of life to transcend change and death. This deathless hope was not conferred on man by any culture or religion. It was before them both. It is an essential and inseparable part of human life. It has withstood doubt and fear, and endures perpetually in spite of man's inability to demonstrate the fact of

immortality. It is in accordance with what man knows of life's progress from lower to higher forms, and is the one assumption that gives *unity* and *sanity* to the universe. It may be best that man does not know more about the life beyond. It must be best, or God would have given us more knowledge of it. Our work for the passing day is here. Death should only be looked upon as the deliverance of life from the bondage of mortality, a bondage more to be feared because it is a pleasant one."

Verily, as Dr. Roberts says: "Immortality of man is the one assumption that gives unity and sanity to the universe." For man merely to live, work, die, without any hereafter, what for? what good? If such be his end, in what would consist, or where be found, the sanity of his creation, and the adaptation of all this marvelous world to his uses, enjoyments, and means of knowledge and happiness? The world could exist without him, with all its glories and blessings. Seed time and harvest, winter and summer, could come and go, but what for? Of what avail in the logic of wisdom that man should be created with all his semi-divine powers and intellect merely to live and enjoy those things for a few years and die in annihilation? Such an end to man would be, it seems to us, an unsurmountable reflection upon the omnipotence, omniscience, wisdom, and supposed infinite love of God. But a still greater reflection upon the

wisdom and power of Deity it would be to admit that in all this creation of myriads of immortal beings, God's purposes were so fantastic, or so over-ruled, or controlled by Satan, or destiny, that the great majority of the human race are doomed to suffer an eternal death of hopeless misery after this life is over! Literally, if all but an elect few are so doomed, then the creation of man had apparently better never have been. But the decrees of orthodoxy were born of bigotry and insanity. The truths of God's infinite wisdom and love brush them aside as mere cobwebs.

## CHAPTER XV

### SUMMARY OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM

THE books of the Hebrew and Christian Bible compose a wonderful collection. As a compendium of the history, religions, legends, and traditions, of the myths, folk-lore, ethics, and poetry of the ancient Hebrews, and indeed generally of the countries bordering on the eastern Mediterranean Sea, it is unique and of inestimable value. There is no other book on earth like it, nor any of such transcendent importance to all mankind. It is a many-sided book. It contains sublime ethics and revelations of deity, heights of oratory, gems of poetry, and glimpses of a future life, which for grandeur, simplicity, originality and beauty, the libraries and literature of all nations and all times may be challenged in vain to equal. Its sketches of primitive patriarchal life and customs are more fresh and charming, old as they are, than any modern stories of romance. Its ethics are the truest and purest of any of the holy books of other religions, and hence must have been composed under divine inspiration. They bear, *per se*, their own credentials and stamps of divinity, even as the God of our Bible has no peer in the



delineations of deity in the other bibles of the world, grand as some things in them are. Our Bible contains the earliest and most reliable history of man extant, notwithstanding some imperfections. The truth of the ethics of our Bible and their adaptation to human experience and needs is self-evident. They are really, as similar ethics in Zoroaster, Buddha, and Confucius' teachings, axiomatic truths, and their divine origin does not depend upon Bible miracles or history.

The prophets who were inspired to teach the moral truths to their fellow-men may have been so much influenced by their environments of superstition, universal in those ancient times, as to have intermixed much of the history they wrote with myths, fables, and unreliable traditions, and in their simplicity believed and penned those legends they found in common use, as historical facts. They did so no doubt, and honestly, as all ancient historians have done. But the light of the moral sun which illuminated their minds was unclouded by passion, ignorance, and superstition. The ethics of our Bible are hence the world's heritage. But the historical and miraculous narratives in it having to depend upon matters of memory, writings of other men, traditions, and time, like all other human affairs, depend for their authenticity upon evidence and proof. And whilst regarding as unauthentic the miraculous stories of the Bible, it is but justice to say that many of them are

wonderful conceptions of the human mind; the grandest and most poetic, illustrating the higher culture of the age, and those of inferior character the lower strata of ignorance and superstition.

Our Bible is, we say once for all, preëminently superior, as a whole, to all the other sacred books of the world, and, notwithstanding its many purely human features and defects, it will doubtless ever remain as the supreme inspiration of divine light to the world. It invites from everyone the most rigid examination of its claims and the honest expression of belief or disbelief. The unfair and sometimes ribald commentaries of Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, Paine, and Ingersoll, have not materially diminished the luster of the Bible nor greatly weakened its influence. Doubtless it has lost something in power, truth, and beauty from the original writings, in its compilations from unknown authors, and in its many translations during thousands of years into various different languages, from the ancient manuscripts. How foolish the claim of the Holy Spirit always directing compilers, translators, and copyists in their work and keeping them from committing errors. Why did not the Holy Spirit, as means of avoiding errors, instruct the workers to use originally chapters, verses, punctuation marks, vowels, etc., and indeed teach them, in the beginning of the compilation of the Bible books, the art of

printing? Facts are wanted, not conjectures or fictions.

God has apparently always worked on earth, through ordinary human agencies, and man has had to use his intellect to discover those agencies. How much the original sense of the Scriptures has been changed in controversial matters by both Jews and Christians, by incorrect renderings, or even interpolations of translators and copyists, who wished to infuse their own ideas into the text as the correct version of what it should be, it is very difficult in many matters of controversy now to determine. We know, however, that many emendations, alterations, and additions have been made, as shown by the late revised version of the Bible and by comparisons of other versions and ancient commentaries. Even the Lord's Prayer, than which there is nothing grander or more beautiful in Scripture, has been tampered with and an addition made to it. The Jewish rabbins taught in the Talmud that it was right to pervert or change any text of Scripture when deemed by them to be for the interests of Judaism to do so. In view, then, of errors, alterations, interpolations, and even contradictions, in some statements, if for no other reason, the claim of Bible inerrancy is idle. Especially as to Scriptural history, biography, chronology, prophetic visions of futurity which have been unfulfilled, it is absurd, says Dr. Briggs, "to suppose that the superintendence of

inspiration extended to such merely human matters. Such does not seem to have been the province of the Holy Spirit, nor is the welfare of mortals, here or hereafter, involved in the absolute accuracy of Bible history or of Bible miracles. We know that in many such matters it is not accurate."

Even as to biblical doctrines and tenets, there is, as Dr. Briggs further truly says, "a spirit in man which prompts many writers to add to truths, which they have received, the suggestions of their own minds as to the sense of what they think ought to have been stated." This disposition he illustrates by the instance of the pious fanatic, Ignatius Loyola, founder of the order of Jesuits, who boldly taught his followers that Jesus after His resurrection first appeared to His mother before appearing to Mary of Magdala, because, he said, it was the proper thing for Jesus to do so, that, as "Mother of God," Jesus must first have been seen by His mother after leaving the tomb. Loyola required the brothers of his order so to believe and teach, although the Gospels say Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene. Loyola, with the concurrence of Rome, thus perverted a plain statement of the evangelists to accord with his fanatical views, thus indorsing also an ancient tradition to the same effect, which held the evangelists' statements to be erroneous.

In fact, the Catholic Church held for centuries

that the early traditions and oral teachings of the Fathers were paramount in any matters of difference to the written word of the Gospels and Epistles, and substitutions were frequently made, thus subordinating the doctrine of plenary inspiration to mere traditions. Yet, as is the Bible now, with the imperfections of the many centuries of translations out of languages known as "dead," through which it has come down to us, it is, we repeat, the grandest book of earth, and the best, peerless in its ethics and theology, and to the honest and intelligent reader, discarding all bigotry and fossilized creeds, and fearlessly seeking the truth, not alone in one or a few texts, but in the spirit and concord of all its pages, teaching a pure and holy religion, comforting in time, and safe for eternity. Its historical narratives, Jewish and Christian customs, laws, and miracles, we may believe in or reject as our convictions and consciences guide us. We do not need to believe in mysterious doctrines, unintelligible or incomprehensible. There are enough grand, plain, clear-cut truths for our guidance. We do not need to be non-resistants, communists, or Adventists, neither are we required to eschew any of the reasonable and healthful pleasures of life for asceticism, penance for sins, or solitary fastings, nor forbidden the honest accumulation of property by industry and economy. The world is for all to be happy and enjoy life. There

are privileges, pleasures, and duties for all, and a wide latitude for beliefs according to the general tenor and rational interpretations of the Bible. "The Scriptures," Jesus said, "were made for man, and not man for the Scriptures."

## CHAPTER XVI

### A GENERAL SUMMARY OF BIBLE EXEGESIS

AS a summary of what historical, ethnological, theological, geological, and general scientific examinations of the Bible by eminent scholars in the past century have accomplished, as general conclusions in reference to the most important incidents in its history and literature, and without going more fully into details or comments than has already been done in these pages, we affirm the following conclusions concerning some of the most important historical and miraculous narratives in it which have been indubitably established by such examinations, and will doubtless stand the test of future criticism.

*First.* The creation of the world or its evolution from primitive chaos into conditions fitting it for the existence of life, vegetable and animal, certainly antedates the account of Genesis, according to Hebrew chronology, by many hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of years during the Archaian, or Eozoic, Paleozoic, Mesozoic, and Cenozoic Ages. The "beginning," when God created the heavens and the earth, goes back into the years of eternity, and only the Creator knows

the date. Whether our earth was originally an immense body or matter thrown off by the sun in a great explosion of its electrical forces, or formed from an accumulation and aggregation during countless centuries of the meteoric masses whirling through illimitable space, until finally consolidated into spherical form and given its present orbit by Omnipotence, we shall never know unless we learn it in the future life. But science teaches that for many hundreds of thousands of years after such creation or consolidation of its original material, the earth was going through the formative processes which left its mountains, plains, hills, valleys, oceans, seas, and rivers as they have been since the advent of man, and filled up its cavities with the vast deposits of coals, oils, gases, and minerals which exist, for the use of man, nearly everywhere.

Different thermal conditions than ever known in history must have existed for centuries at some time in order for the propagation and growth of the wonderful vegetation from which all the deposits of coal, petroleum, and gases which now exist were formed and generated. Neither man nor animals, so far as science has discovered, were in existence during those periods, nor was man in existence during the long subsequent period, when the earth and the seas were inhabited by the monstrous forms of ancient extinct fossil animal life, such as the mastodon and the immense am-



phibia of the ancient oceans. In the "beginning" the processes of creation, as narrated in Genesis, were in the illimitable past, and even the creation of man was, doubtless, many thousands of years before the Mosaic chronology, as computed by Archbishop Usher, or the authors of the Septuagint version of the Bible.

Very few, if any, scientists now place any reliance on either of these chronologies, or in the fabulous longevity of the antediluvian patriarchs. The six days of creation, though doubtless used by the writer or compiler of the Genesis records in the ordinary sense of the word "day," are supposed now by most scientists and Bible scholars to mean periods of one thousand years each, or even much longer periods, corresponding to the evolutions and developments of the various processes of creation or formation, in the Cenozoic Age of the world. There is indeed a singular correspondence in the probabilities of primeval chaos when the "earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep," and the recognized geological order of the creation or evolution of the flora, sea and land, animals, and, lastly, of man, with the narrative in the first chapter of Genesis, affording good reasons for believing that the narrative of the creative evolution was inspired of God.

The sages of ancient Egypt, Persia, and Babylon, from whose writings and traditions Genesis

was doubtless largely compiled, were not in all probability thoroughly acquainted with the structure of the earth, and the indications of the geologic ages. Apart from the narrative of creation in the first chapter of Genesis, the Bible antediluvian history, as well as its chronology, is, evidently, largely mythical, and the same may be said of its narratives down to the time of Moses. After his time, they have more coherence and reliability, though undoubtedly many of its pages, down even to the period of the Davidic dynasty, are mixed with myths, legends, and fables, and yet greatly superior to all sketches and fragments of all other ancient histories of that remote period, which are generally entirely unreliable. The Davidic empire was the golden age of Israel. David and Solomon were undoubtedly great men and great patrons of learning and philosophy, and from that time Hebrew history is generally accurate, though, like all other ancient histories, frequently marred by exaggerated and extraordinary legends.

*Second.* It may be regarded as the certain result of discoveries, by the investigations and processes of the Higher Criticism, that Moses did not write the Pentateuch in its present form, or Book of Job, usually ascribed to him; that Joshua did not write the book bearing his name; that David did not write the Psalter, but only, at most, a few of the sacred songs; that Solomon did not write

the Song of Songs or Book of Ecclesiastes, and only a small portion of the Book of Proverbs; that Isaiah was the author of none of his Book of Prophecies beyond the fortieth chapter, and that most of those, after that chapter, were written in Babylon during or after the exile; Jeremiah did not write the books of Kings or Lamentations; Ezra did not write the books of Chronicles, Ezra, or Nehemiah.

Says Dr. Briggs: "The great mass of the Old Testament was written by authors whose names or connections with those writings are lost in oblivion. If this is destroying the Bible, the Bible is destroyed already. But who tells us those traditional names were the authors of the Bible? The Bible itself? The creeds of the churches? Any reliable historical testimony? None of these! Pure conjectural traditions. Nothing more."<sup>1</sup>

The books of Ruth, Jonah, Esther, and Daniel are religious historical fictions in prose. The authors of them are unknown. Ruth is a most beautiful idyl of ancient Hebrew domestic life and womanly devotion. Boaz, Ruth, Naomi, are doubtless genuine historical characters. The books of Job, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs are Hebrew poems, the first a poetic fiction. Psalms is a collection of Israel's sacred songs, composed by various authors, including Solomon, at various periods, and compiled during or after

<sup>1</sup> "Study of Holy Scripture," p. 287.

the exile with the other books into one Bible. The same may be said of Proverbs, *i.e.*, a book of moral, economic, social, and prudential rules. None of these nine latter books are probably inspired works, excepting only in the sense that lessons of the good, pure, and beautiful in everything and in all books are from God.

*Third.* Judicially, no miracles of either old or new dispensation, nor of any other religion, are literally true, or at least sufficiently authenticated, or, as Scotch verdicts sometimes are rendered, "not proven." Some of those miracles may have been natural phenomena, exaggerated. Most of them are undoubtedly mythical or legendary, and were gathered up from popular superstitions and folklore by the writers of the various biblical books. Among the most prominent of the legendary narratives and mythical miracles are:

A. The Noachic Deluge. It is now generally held by Christian scholars that the Deluge, as recorded in the Bible, was local and not universal. Nor does the language of the Bible necessarily imply that it was universal. The traditions of such an event—for undoubtedly such traditions existed, from very ancient times, in the fabulous histories of Babylon, China, Greece, Egypt, and India, as well as in Genesis—may have been based upon the fact of some great seismic convulsions of the regions

bordering on the Mediterranean, Persian, Red seas, and the Euphrates River, in very remote antiquity, whereby the waters may have overwhelmed the adjacent countries, the seats of the earliest civilizations known on earth. If the stories of the great longevity of the antediluvian peoples are true, the earth must have had a vast population at the time of the great cataclysm if universal, and the story of only one family being preserved with animals, birds, and reptiles, gathered from all quarters of the globe into the ark, is quite unreasonable.<sup>1</sup>

There are indications on the earth's surface of the erosions of mountains and hills, and the filling up of valleys by some great force which is believed by scientists to have been a glacial deluge of a period previous to the existence of man and animals upon earth, and which probably extended all over the earth. According to that theory, in the Mesozoic or beginning of the Cenozoic Age, the whole earth had a tropical climate and was covered with an immense tropical vegetation from pole to pole. Then a period of intense cold followed, in which all the earth was covered with snows, finally condensing into glaciers of ice many thousands of feet in thickness, especially in the polar regions. Again a change in the temperature of the earth's atmosphere occurred, and the

<sup>1</sup> "Narratives of Genesis," by Ryle, p. 112.

vast masses of snow and ice began to melt, submerging the earth, the vast ocean carrying on its surface, from the polar regions to the equatorial, great masses of Arctic ice and rocks, and crushing through mountains and all obstructions in the rush of its mighty waters towards the equator, uprooting in its course and carrying on its flood, as well the mighty forests which had covered the earth and depositing them in valleys to form the vast beds of coal and the laboratories of oils and gases which are found in such almost inexhaustible quantities in so many countries of the world.

I had the great pleasure of hearing the grand naturalist and scientist, Professor Louis Agassiz, lecture on the very interesting subject of the glacial age and theory, in the winter of 1864 at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C. When the glacial deluge occurred, if the theory be true, — and it accounts for many remarkable changes upon the earth's surface, which a mere temporary submergence of waters could not have occasioned, as well as for the vast formations of coals, which otherwise would be unaccountable, — it must have been in a geologic age before the Mosaic chronology, and the creation of man, for no human being could have been living upon the earth during the glacial period, and no remains of men or animals are found in the great coal formations.

So that the glacial deluge could not have had the remotest connection in time or fact with the Noachian Deluge.

*B.* The passage of the Israelites through the wall of waters of the Red Sea and the river Jordan. These events have already been sufficiently commented on. There is no evidence whatever in Egyptian records or monuments, as there would have been, if true, corroborating the Bible accounts, that they occurred, as stated, in Exodus. Possibly the Israelites may have passed over some marshy grounds bordering the sea on its northern extremity, on their migration from Egypt, and doubtless did at some point ford the river Jordan in their passage into Canaan. No Egyptian annals or records of any kind have ever been found commemorating, or even referring to, the passage of the Red Sea, although plenty of annals and monumental inscriptions of that date, and especially of the monarch who then ruled over Egypt, still exist. Herodotus, the Greek historian, who traveled in Egypt about 450 B.C., and who wrote fully of the history, religion, and customs of the people, makes no mention of it. Nor does Manetho, the native Egyptian historian, who wrote about 275 B.C. The mummy of the Pharaoh, Meneptha, son of the great Rameses II, in whose reign the ten plagues of Egypt are said to have taken place, and who

was overwhelmed with his army in the Red Sea, according to the song of Miriam,<sup>1</sup> is now said to be in the British Museum in London. It was found in the sepulchers of the kings of Egypt in one of the pyramids, and no hieroglyphs or inscriptions of any kind on his sarcophagus, or tomb, have any reference to these wonderful events. Indeed, as most of the older books of the Bible were originally poems, it is a question whether many of the miraculous stories were not merely important events gilded with the extravagance and license of oriental imagery, and not penned as literal statements of facts.

Few intelligent persons now, Jews or Christians, believe that the story of the sun and moon standing still at the command of Joshua was ever intended as a statement of fact. It is evidently an exaggerated poetic fiction as a finale of a song of triumph for the great victory over Israel's foes.

The context of the story of the passage of the Red Sea, the "strong east wind" blowing the shallow waters of the marshy bayou at its northern extremity into the deeper sea and thus making a way for the Hebrew host, shows that the march of the people on foot, without animals or vehicles, divested of any poetic embellishment, was an extraordinary, but not

<sup>1</sup> Exodus, ch. xv, v. 19.



supernatural occurrence. The Egyptians with their horses and chariots following after them over the boggy ground may have been overtaken and drowned by the returning tide after the subsidence of the simoom.<sup>1</sup> And so divested of the garniture of florid Asiatic poetic imagery and supernatural embellishments, doubtless most of the miracles of the Scriptures may be similarly resolved into natural occurrences.

C. The story of the manna falling every morning, and the flocks of quails coming every evening and alighting by millions around the camps of the Israelites, to be taken for their food, and indeed, with the manna, their only food, during their forty years' wanderings in the desert of northern Arabia. And also of the stream of water gushing from a rock at the command of Moses, following and meandering around with them through the deserts and over the mountains for the same period. One account<sup>2</sup> says this stream burst out from the rock in the beginning of their migrations, but another and later account of the same miracle, possibly from a different author,<sup>3</sup> says the stream began its flow near the close of their journeyings. Now, did the stream without any channel run up hill and down valleys and over mountains and burning sands, or had engineering, cuttings

<sup>1</sup> Exodus, ch. xiv, v. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus, ch. xvii.

<sup>3</sup> Numbers, ch. xx.

and fillings, or embankings to be done? It is evidently a fable, as is the story of the manna and the quails, a generic product of that land of wonderful legends. No earthly commemoration of the poetic fiction is to be found in the topography, geology, or natural scenery of the country, or in any contemporary Babylonian or Egyptian history.

Upon no rules of legal evidence of any historical events can these narratives be sustained. To believe them literally is to fling all evidence to the winds, and be ready to believe in everything supernatural told us, simply because it comes in the guise of religion.

*D.* The story of Balaam and the ass. This is so utterly absurd that one wonders if it was not extracted from "Baron Munchausen," or the "Arabian Nights." It is incomprehensible that millions of sensible human beings have for ages believed the story without a scintilla of proof. In fact it is so utterly unnatural and absurd as to be incapable of proof. The story of the walls of Jericho falling prone of themselves before the encircling Hebrew army, using no arms, or engines of war for their reduction, but simply blowing upon rams' horns, is nearly as silly as the story of Balaam and the ass. Moreover, consider the Almighty Father commanding the Israelite intruders, against whom the people of Jericho had never raised an arm, to slaughter every

man, woman, and little child in the doomed city, excepting the harlot Rahab and her relatives. That command alone is sufficient evidence that the legend is not true. No wonder that the thousand and one religions of earth with all their legions of miracles, saints and angels, devils and fiends, have had countless millions of votaries, when intelligent cultured people even now believe such legends as literal truths, and not fabulous or allegorical. One can only wonder at the supineness of human credulity when reason vacates her throne over the mind at the behests of priestcraft and superstition.

*E.* The phenomena of the sun and moon standing still. Really of the earth and moon stopping abruptly for a day in their revolutions round the sun at the command of Joshua! Enough, methinks, has been said in these pages on this subject already. But we will hazard a few more considerations on the stupendous story. It was written, most probably, as an exaggerated poetic fancy or exultation over the defeat of the Canaanitish army. Most liberal Christians and advanced Bible scholars believe the story was written by Joshua, or whoever was its author, as a poetic fiction. It certainly was original, and so extravagant that no other poet has ever emulated such a flight of fancy, or is ever likely to do so. It is simply amazing

that it ever was believed, as it has been for so many centuries by Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans, as a literal fact, and especially since the Copernican system of the revolution of the earth, moon, and planets around the sun has been universally recognized as correct.

Standing as a supposed fact, this story alone casts discredit upon all Bible miracles. The belief of Christians in it, as well as the belief in such miracles as Balaam and the ass, and of the story of the devils going into the herd of swine, is a stronger, nay, an overwhelming argument against the authenticity of those and all other miracles, a stronger argument than the mere publication of them, for these may have been merely written as allegories or popular myths, but the belief in them as facts shows that the credulity of human beings in stories of the supernatural is so great as to make ordinary human testimony about such matters utterly worthless. No amount of evidence can prove such absurd stories to be true. Intelligent reason recoils at them. It is derogatory to the attributes of God to suppose He would lend His power to the performance of such miracles. Any person who can believe such stories as literal facts, can easily believe anything whatever of a miraculous character taught by the books or priests of his religion. Possibly God, in His omnipotence, could so arrest the

movements of all the bodies of the whole solar system, and perhaps also of all the suns and their attendant planets of the whole universe, which most likely such a miracle as Joshua's would involve, and might suspend all the laws of momentum, gravitation, and attraction, but there is no evidence whatever that He did so, and the probabilities are countless billions to one that He never did so. And if He did so, in Joshua's case, what for? Where would be the relation between such a stupendous exhibition of Almighty power and the question of exterminating a few thousands more or less of God's children, even though they were Israel's enemies? Such a miracle would, it seems, wreck the universe! Astronomy teaches that God never worked such a miracle in the case of even one of the most insignificant of the heavenly bodies. But as a mere poetic fiction or allegory, the story is harmless, and such it probably is.

*F.* The slaughter of five hundred thousand soldiers of the army of Israel in one battle by the army of Judah. This has been hereinbefore sufficiently discussed. Also the destruction of one hundred and fifty thousand men, the entire army of Sennacherib, King of Assyria, in one night by an angel of God.<sup>1</sup>

*G.* The story of Jonah. Certainly an extravagant allegory, but under that guise incul-

<sup>1</sup> Mitchell's "Isaiah," p. 45.

cating the grand moral truth that God cares for all men, a truth much needed by the Israelites. Instead of the poem having been written very anciently, as used to be believed, the best biblical critics now assign to its composition a date during the exile or subsequently.

*H.* The drama of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and of Nebuchadnezzar's seven times heated furnace in the plain of Dura. Very grand, but there is no proof of it historically, or otherwise, which there ought to be if true. Berosus, a Chaldean priest of high character, wrote a history of Chaldea about the year 300 B.C., not very long after the alleged miracle. Many fragments of his work exist, but they contain no reference to the wonderful event. No mention is made of Daniel or of the three friends who were cast into the furnace. They, as well as Daniel, were doubtless fictitious personages. The book was evidently written long after Nebuchadnezzar's time, and subsequently to the death of Alexander the Great, for it contains frequent allusions, veiled under the guise of predictive prophecy, to the great Macedonian conqueror, and the successors to his dismembered empire. It was probably written by a Jewish rabbi, but is full of much later Christian interpolations. It is as great a favorite, almost, of millennial dreamers and Second Adventists, as the Apoc-

alypse of Revelation, and equally as unsubstantial.

If we must believe everything that comes down to us in so-called sacred books without other evidence than the books themselves, then we might as well believe the absurd fables of the Hindoo Vedas, and the Finland Kalavelas, as well as the ancient legends of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Islamism. Advanced Bible scholars now generally regard the Book of Daniel as a religious romance written to enforce great moral truths, and especially a belief in the absolute certainty of protection and safety for those who trust in God. There is not a particle of commemorative or corroborative evidence of the furnace story, or of Daniel having been thrown into a den of lions and afterwards coming out unharmed, or of such a person having at any time been made the chief prince or deputy ruler of the kingdom of Persia.

*I.* The Book of Esther, Queen of Ahasuerus, King of Persia, is a romance pure and simple, with little, if any, substratum of facts. It was written probably to enforce the same moral ideas as the Book of Daniel. There are extant contemporary Persian and Babylonian histories of those times, and not one word of the incidents related in either Daniel or Esther is found in them. No such personage as Esther probably

lived. Certainly the events mentioned in the book are such as no historian of ancient Persia would fail to notice. Can we believe that first many Jews, and subsequently seventy-five thousand Persians, were murdered, as the outcome of the Agagite conspiracy, and that no historian would record the story of Queen Esther, and such turmoils and slaughter? How came Haman, the Agagite,<sup>1</sup> with his family and race to be so numerous and powerful in distant Persia, when, according to the First Book of Samuel, the last of that tribe of people, so hated by Israel, and Israel's God, had, centuries before, been utterly exterminated by Saul, King of Israel, and Samuel the Prophet, as they had once before that time been nearly exterminated by Joshua in the wilderness of Arabia?<sup>2</sup> The destruction of Haman and the last of the tribe of the Amalekites seems to have been the great sensational feature of the drama which the writer of the book was working up for the delectation of the Jews, the hereditary enemies of the Amalekites, from whom the Agagites sprung.

ƒ. Jesus Christ through His mysterious soul, birth, and divine endowments of wisdom and power, was spiritually Son of God, and naturally born of Joseph and Mary, was also Son of man, and, through Joseph, of the lineage and blood

<sup>1</sup> First Book of Samuel, ch. xv, v. 8.   <sup>2</sup> Exodus, ch. xvii.



of King David, thus uniting in himself all the attributes and characteristics predicted of the "Messiah" by the prophets. He never gave any indorsement to the legend of the theophanic conception, nor was it ever taught until many years after His Crucifixion, and then probably only as it was evolved in the halo with which time and love and veneration had enshrined Him. Neither of the Gospels, in present form, was in existence until some time after his death, probably in the second century. Some of the Apostolic Epistles speak of a "Gospel," or "the Gospel," but none of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, and hence they must have been compiled after all the Epistles were written. The citations of Matthew and Luke, from Old Testament books, are inapplicable, but show the apparent necessity to their minds of sustaining the legend by them, and that, without the support of such references, the story of the virginal conception would hardly have gained credence even in that age of supernatural beliefs.

St. John in the first chapter of his Gospel evidently speaks of a soul conception, born with the body, and it was evidently of this spirit birth in and with his natural body that Jesus made the mysterious declaration of His having come from God and that before "Abraham was, I am." His mother Mary, wor-

shipped by the Catholic Church as the "Mother of God," contrary to the divine teaching of the eternity and self-existence of God, notwithstanding the angelic announcement which is said to have been made to her of His birth, never seemed to realize that Jesus was other than her and Joseph's son. In the absence, as hereinbefore stated, of any evidence that Mary was a daughter of King David's line, if Joseph was not Jesus' father, then the citations and references from the prophets as to the birth of a Messiah or Prince of David's blood were inapplicable to Jesus.

There are no reasons for supposing that Jesus knew of the story of His miraculous birth. He never, even remotely, alluded to it, but seemed to teach that He had been endowed with a preëxistent soul which came from and had been with His Father God. He was aware of the universal recognition given Him by all the people who knew Him from childhood as the son of "Joseph," the carpenter, and no word or intimation did He ever give that such recognition of Himself, or of His brothers and sisters, was not correct. Romans and Galatians teach distinctly that Jesus was of natural parentage and birth.<sup>1</sup> Had it not been thought essential, during the second century, when the Gospels were compiled, in order to sustain the atone-

<sup>1</sup> Romans, ch. i, v. 3. Galatians, ch. iv, v. 4.

ment theory, that Jesus should have been born immaculate, the idea of His theophanic conception would never have been originated. With the earliest worshipers of the one true God, the ancient Zoroastrians, disbelieving in the virtue or necessity of any blood atonement, or any other atonement or sacrifice for sins, excepting by the repentance of the sinner himself, and his pardon thereupon by the only infinite redeemer, we must, of necessity, believe the story is mythical. In addition we note here that the two Gospels of Matthew and Luke speak of the "Espousals" of Joseph and Mary before the conception of Jesus, and of no subsequent marriage, so they were really husband and wife at the time, as they were always afterwards recognized.

*K.* The narrative of the temptation of Jesus by Satan has already been sufficiently criticised in these pages. There is not, and from the nature of the case, could not possibly have been, any external evidence to support the story, and internally the reasons for discarding it from the Bible as untrue and sacrilegious are, we think, overwhelming.

*L.* The story of the angel descending from heaven at certain times to disturb the waters of the Pool of Bethesda, in St. John's Gospel,<sup>1</sup> for the purpose of imparting miraculous proper-

<sup>1</sup> Gospel of St. John, ch. v, vs. 2-9.

ties to the waters, has been discarded from the revised version of the New Testament by the able scholars who made the revision as an interpolation. The story of the woman taken in adultery, and Jesus' conversation with her, was also virtually rejected by the revisionists as an interpolation, but permitted to remain in the Gospel, probably on account of its lesson of mercy and repentance. We merely refer to these two comparatively unimportant incidents to help illustrate to what extent interpolations in the original Gospels and other biblical books in the early ages were possible and probable, when the fanaticism, bigotry, or peculiar sectarian views of the translator, redactor, or copyist made it seem to him advisable in the interest or creed of his sect or party.

*M.* The story of the legion of devils being cast out of the insane man by Jesus and receiving from Him permission to go into a herd of swine nearby, and actually entering into them and driving them into the sea, is so absurd and out of place in a book of divine ethics, that one can only wonder how it ever got into the evangelist's biography. It is undoubtedly from its silly character an interpolation by some copyist who had heard or seen the legend and believed it. It ought to have been discarded by the revisionists and put into Rev. Dr. Pick's collection of Apocryphal legends of the Savior

once believed in, but now universally discarded. Such foolish tales disfigure the Good Book, and tend to impair even the force of its grand moral lessons. This and a few other miracles, besides several others of the same quality herein referred to, should have been expurgated from the Bible by the revision committees as hardly worthy to be retained therein, even as curiosities of ancient literature and beliefs. As old legends they are valueless and unattractive even as supposed allegories or myths, really answering no apparent good purpose whatever.

N. No evidence whatever has ever been found corroborating the story of the supernatural darkness which is said to have enveloped the world at the time of Jesus' Crucifixion, or in proof of the statement in St. Matthew<sup>1</sup> that many of the dead in the sepulchers around Jerusalem arose from their tombs and were seen by their relatives and friends in the city. This was a most astonishing circumstance, if true, and it certainly would have been at once heralded all over Jerusalem and the surrounding world. Was it so done? We answer no, because it was never heard of, or published elsewhere than in Matthew's Gospel. Why did not the other three evangelists mention the amazing occurrence? Why did not the Apos-

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, ch. xxvii, vs. 52, 53.

tolie Epistles refer to it as corroborative of mortal resurrection?

Dr. Briggs' "argumentum ad silentiam" in this case is alone sufficient to refute the story. It is a legend pure and simple. Josephus forty or fifty years afterwards wrote his book of Jewish antiquities and certainly from his silence had never heard the story, nor of the earthquake. He was a believer in miracles, for he indorses all the old Bible miraculous stories, and would have undoubtedly referred to these had they been commonly talked of. He was a boy of eighteen or twenty years of age at the time of the Crucifixion. If the story of the resurrected dead saints are true, whatever became of their bodies again? After the excitement attending upon the Crucifixion was over, did they visit Jesus to honor Him, and then go back to their lonely tombs to become dust and ashes again? Or did they remain on earth for days or years and finally die natural deaths a second time, or become "wandering Jews" forever, like the hero of Eugene Sue's celebrated romance of that title? At least, it would naturally be supposed that having thus cast off the garments of death and been resurrected to mortal life again they would certainly remain on earth to greet the Savior after His resurrection, or possibly stay and be with Him until His Ascension, and by analogy with what we are told

the holy dead will do after reanimation at the general resurrection, ascend with Him from Mount Olivet before the eyes of Jesus' wondering disciples. But they are never further heard of or noticed by the evangelist. We are left in mystery and wonder to imagine what became of those resurrected saints after they were seen and conversed with by their living friends in Jerusalem. Presumably those reanimated saints, from the tenor of the narrative, returned to their graves soon after Jesus' resurrection, there again to resume the ashes and habiliments of death. If so, what was the object of their temporary resurrection and resumption of mortal garb, and what good did they accomplish? Did they appear in Jerusalem in the ceremonies of the tomb or in the garb of the day, and if so, how were their garments furnished them? They were probably Jewish saints who knew not Jesus. Why were they reanimated and how many were they? Matthew says: "Many bodies arose."<sup>1</sup> And why were the friends and relations who saw and doubtless conversed with those reanimated dead, in the holy city, forever mute and dumb about the interviews? Not one of them ever told the story of the astounding visit of their, maybe, long ago departed friends, and of the secrets of the unseen world, imparted by them, so far as the world has ever been informed. Matthew, alone of the

<sup>1</sup> Matthew, ch. xxvii, vs. 52-53.

evangelists, tells the story of the resurrected dead, and he is silent on all those other questions.

From the manner and context of its interpolation into his Gospel, it looks like an interpolated legend, added at some time, in some compilation, by an enthusiast or fanatic. We have read many lives of Christ by orthodox writers, and in not one of them are the questions naturally suggested by the story in Matthew of the resurrected dead ever even broached. Methinks, if the story were true, the reanimated saints would have long remained in Jerusalem as an irrefutable object lesson in themselves to all the people of the certainty of resurrection of the dead and immortality. In no way otherwise could such a lesson have been given, and it would forever have silenced the disbelieving Sadducees, as it would have absolutely attested the truth of the Pharisees and Jesus' teaching of the resurrection. But the saints come and go for a few hours possibly, in silent procession, and then like Hamlet's ghost "troop back to their tombs," and that is all.

Now why are people required by the Christian ministry to believe such unnatural and entirely unauthenticated legends? Is it simply because we find them in our Bible, and because they have been there for centuries (many of them of dense ignorance), originally written there we know not certainly when, where, or by whom? Or because, like the silversmiths of Ephesus, they



realize that the great orthodox temple would fall and crumble, and their occupation be gone, if such stories were classed as mere legends? Where is the evidence, or even the probabilities, of the truth of such stories? The masses of the intelligent Jews, who then lived, did not believe the supernatural incidents said to have been attendant upon the Crucifixion, even if they then heard of them. We are told those who indited them were inspired and could only write the truth. But who were they, and how do those who tell us they were inspired know any more about the fact of inspiration than those to whom they tell it? Their Gospels have many differences. Such is the claim which the priesthood of every religion has always urged to support all religions and all miracles. Out of a dozen or more Gospels of Jesus' life by as many various authors, the four of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were only adopted as canonical by a council of bishops in the fourth century A.D. Several of those other Gospels are still used in Armenia<sup>x</sup>, Egypt, and Abyssinia. But suppose, as we believe, those who originally penned the books of the Bible, no matter who they were, and whether they were the authors whose names are given to the various books or not, were inspired to teach of God and His attributes and His moral laws, and those lessons only, and incidentally of their own volitions, wrote the biographical and historical records, why necessarily must all they

wrote about mere human matters be regarded as inspired of God? Certainly if inspiration was given holy men only to teach of God and man's duties to Him and their fellow-men, there was no especial reason why it should be given to them to impart scientific, astronomical, geological, geographic, or historic knowledge. In truth, the Bible itself shows it was not given for such purposes. It was not plenary inspiration for all purposes, but only special inspiration to impart religious truths. This applies as well to other religions and to their histories and miracles as to ours. What good to the world, excepting for merely educational advantages, would divine enlightenment in reference to history, sciences, poetry, traditions, etc., be? Why was it necessary for the welfare of men that the ancient sages should have such universal inspiration? At any rate the Bible clearly shows they did not have it. The knowledge they could thus have imparted, as inspired, might have made men more intelligent, but not necessarily any better.

The Bible nowhere teaches that its kings, lawgivers, prophets, and priests had universal inspiration. Many of the laws and ordinances of Moses prove in themselves that he was not inspired as a lawgiver, or even as the author of ordinances and forms of religious worship. The missions of the prophets and priests were evidently solely to teach moral and religious truths. When they

undertook to write history and teach astronomy, geography, etc., the books show they were frequently in error. So Jesus taught of Moses. We may say absolutely, upon the warrant of the Bible itself, that the only test of inspiration is exalted goodness and the divine truths taught of God and the relations of men to Him and to each other, and such inspiration was only given of God for His glory and for human welfare. Hence miracles, if permitted by Deity for attestation of inspiration, would be enacted and be visible in all ages and all countries for such purposes, and their authenticity would be such as none could question or disbelieve. God, we believe, in His all-wise providence, has never permitted any miracles excepting as they are found in His creation and works of nature, which all can see and explore. The mission of inspiration is to teach men higher and grander moral truths than they can learn merely from nature.

“Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit,” so says St. Peter, so the Bible everywhere teaches. But why should the Holy Spirit undertake the mission of inspiring men of the things they could learn as well from their fellows or could teach them as well from their own knowledge? Hence in its historical and biographical narratives, its chronology, astronomy, and geography, many of its civil laws and social and domestic regulations, purporting to have

come directly from God, we know there are many errors, and that inspiration cannot be predicated thereof, despite the dogma of orthodox infallibility. We think we have given many good reasons in these pages for this assertion. God knows we only seek the truth, and prayerfully we have sought it. We affirm the sufficiency of the Scriptures for moral light, and that any honest intelligent man or woman endowed with ordinary knowledge and common sense has as patent a right to judge of biblical infallibility and the truth of everything in its various books and Epistles, as any other man, be he pope, cardinal, bishop, or priest, and no man or body of men, council, synod, or propaganda, has authority from God to pronounce "Anathema Maranatha" on any human being for anything in religion he or she may honestly believe or teach, if no moral laws or social proprieties are infringed. Any declaration to the contrary, by any ecclesiastical authority, is but an arrogant assumption by fellow-men and an infringement of religious liberty. God never authorized any mortal to be styled by his fellow-mortals, "Holy Father, His Grace, His Reverence, Lord Cardinal, Archbishop, or Bishop," nor any of such assumed dignitaries to sit in judgment upon anyone's religious belief or mode of worshiping God. Each human being is accountable to Him alone for such matters, and any attempt to influence religious belief

otherwise than by argument and persuasion is persecution. If reverence is ever due to men at all in a religious sense, it should be accorded only to the pure, good, and unselfish, be they of high or low estate.

We do know that many things in the Bible are not of God, that many of its miracles are but legends, and some of its laws are unjust. Their character and environments alone prove them such. Some of the miracles have doubtless a substratum of fact, but it is often difficult to separate the fact from the allegorical or fabulous environment. There are historical statements in it which are untrue or exaggerated; some contradictory narratives both of which cannot be correct; some laws, rites, and doctrines contrary to our human sense of truth and justice. Hence we are required by the Bible's grand general precepts as well as by our manhood and moral sense, to examine and sift, as we can, all its evidences for ourselves, "to search the Scriptures" and believe only as our reason and conscience are convinced. There is now abundant evidence external, as well as in the Bible itself, to support those statements, owing mainly to the labors of many great scholars in the past hundred years, showing conclusively that, however inspired and inerrant its ethics may be, its historical, chronological, biographical, supernatural, and scientific teachings were not inspired, but had in them

many errors. Many of the Mosaic laws and all his sacrificial rites, if indeed Moses was their author, which is very doubtful, we aver, without hesitation, from their nature only, never came from God.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus Christ was, we believe, born of human parentage, with the gift of a nature divine, the greatest, best, and most highly endowed being of whom history has any record. There can be no doubt of His life, character, and teachings; the evidence is overwhelming. He was truth personified, and all He did and all His life was in accord with His character and mission as the Savior of men, by redeeming them from their sins and follies. No other being fills the place in history He always had and ever will fill. Yet from His own hand we have not a line. All His works and sermons are hearsay, traditional, and were transmitted to the world by His followers. Why it was that His words in His own hand, in their original purity, were not given to the world is a mystery. Much controversy over them would apparently have been avoided, and many irrational creeds would never have been formulated. He knew best. But after His departure from the world it soon became filled with wonderful

<sup>1</sup> Brown's "Chronicles in Dictionary of the Bible," vol. i, p. 397; Sayce's "Early History of the Hebrews," 1897 edition, p. 146; H. E. Ryle, "Narratives of Genesis," 1892 edition, p. 87; Julius Wellhausen's "History of Israel."

legends of supernatural works performed by Him, and these increased naturally in that ignorant and superstitious age in number, variety, and extravagance as the years passed on, and many of them, but only a tithe of those current, were in the generations afterwards interwoven into the Gospels, with some dilutions of His teachings, by the evangelists, who adopted the current beliefs of His supernatural works in their day. Many Gospels were published, some very extravagant, which still wholly or partly exist. Whether any of the miracles were realities, we do not know. Some certainly were not. None have been proven by any external testimony, not even the testimony of the Apostolic Epistles. But in subsequent ages they were all believed, because found in the Gospels, just as the followers of all other religions believed in their sacred books, with all their miracles, and just as the Mormons now believe in the miracles of the Book of Mormon, which occurred, if at all, thousands of years before that book was ever heard of.

No authenticity to miracles can be given them by human belief, founded on merely human story. There is no use to mince words on this subject. Men in all ages have been prone to invent and believe wonderful stories about great warriors, statesmen, poets, and especially founders of new religions, are so now, and were vastly more credulous in ancient times when natural

sciences and true philosophy were unknown and when belief in the supernatural, and, we may add, the incredibly supernatural, was universal. Angels and archangels, devils, genii, devas, witches, hobgoblins, and ghosts, in the popular belief, used to literally swarm in the world, and many persons had, as was believed, an attendant angel or demon through life.

Perhaps the writer of this book may be so normally, or it may be, so abnormally constituted, that he cannot believe in such beings or in their manifestations either in the past or present time, but if so, and his reasoning thereabout is erroneous, it is his misfortune and not his fault, for he has humbly and earnestly sought not only earthly light, but also divine guidance all his life. He has carefully read and studied the Bible, every word of it, in all its books a number of times, many parts of it, especially the Gospels, very often, and has also studied carefully many of the best works on all sides of the great questions considered in these pages. One, and it seems to us the most important of all the Bible stories of the supernatural, may be true literally, and we should like to believe it, because of its far-reaching and most important consequences, because it is surrounded by many circumstances indicating its truth, and because we believe absolutely in Jesus Christ and immortality. We mean the Resurrection of Jesus, and the story of His life on earth after His Crucifixion.



He may not have been seen in His human body after His death, — that probably remained in the tomb, or was in some way disposed of by friends or enemies, — but He may have been visible in His “alter ego,” His immortal self, in His spirit. If so, He was a demonstration of immortality in being permitted to be seen by and converse with His disciples after His death. He lived, of course, after His Crucifixion. So must all believe who believe in a future life, and there was no supernaturalism in that fact, but only in the fact that God permitted His disciples to see Him, mortal eyes permitted to see the immortal, mortals permitted to converse with the immortal.

We know not where the soul goes after the death of the body. It may go immediately to God, to be with Him in “His Holy of holies,” or to some other world of the universe, or remain for a season with relatives and friends about its late earthly home. Jesus we know lived somewhere after His Crucifixion and natural death, and He may have, and there is really nothing astounding in the fact that He remained, as we are told He did, forty days on earth and was about and with His disciples. Certainly some being or apparition they saw and conversed with, whom they believed to be their late Teacher and Master, and why should it not be He? It was, if so, a supernatural vision, requiring no change of their natural organs of sight, possibly, but only that a divine illumination

revealed Jesus to them, and naturally they saw Him if He was resurrected in flesh. All other miraculous stories in the Scriptures are naught in importance and grandeur compared to this one, for if literally true, then by Jesus' Resurrection and sojourn of forty days on earth thereafter, He absolutely brought "life and immortality to light." According to the Bible, other dead had been resurrected bodily before: Samuel the prophet, by the witch of the wilderness of Endor; the sons of the widow at Zarephath and the woman of Shunem, by the old prophets Elijah and Elisha; and even one man was brought to life by mere contact with the dead Elisha's bones.<sup>1</sup> Jesus Himself and the Apostles Peter and Paul are said to have brought the dead to life, but these miracles had no corroborating history, and the reanimated subjects like the dead saints of Jerusalem, who are said to have come out of their tombs after Jesus' Resurrection and appeared on the streets, had no subsequent confirmative history and were never seen or heard of afterwards, excepting indeed one subsequent incidental mention of Lazarus. St. Paul says that Jesus was the first man raised from the dead,<sup>2</sup> and emphasized the same declaration by repeating it and adding, "Jesus had preëminence as the beginning, the firstborn from the dead."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> II Kings, ch. xiii, v. 21.

<sup>2</sup> St. Paul's Acts, ch. xxvi, v. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Colossians, ch. i, v. 18.

If these declarations of the Apostle be true, then all the other stories in the Bible of resurrected dead are fables, excepting the Resurrection of Jesus. But Jesus was seen or believed to have been seen by many of His disciples, some of whom long years afterwards, in the Apostolic writings which are undoubtedly genuine, testify that they saw and conversed with him during forty days after His Resurrection, and then saw Him go away into the empyrean above them. Among all the early Christians, including all those who lived in and about Jerusalem at the time, there was never expressed a dissent of doubt or unbelief in the story, although other differences early sprang up about His acts and teachings. The context of the Gospel narratives and St. Paul teach that Jesus' natural body was never seen again by His disciples after His burial,<sup>1</sup> and if seen at all, He was seen as the incorporeal, immortal, disembodied Jesus in human form whom God permitted His devoted followers to see, associate, and converse with. He was not evidently the same being of flesh and blood after His Resurrection as before. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven," and "the first man, Adam, was made a living soul, the last Adam (or Jesus) was made a quickening spirit."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I Corinthians, ch. xv.

<sup>2</sup> I Corinthians, ch. xv, vs. 45-50.

Jesus said to Mary of Magdala on the morning of His Resurrection, "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father and your Father, my God and your God!" What could His future ascension have to do with her touching Him if mortal? He did not want her to be distressed and alarmed by attempting to touch a visible spirit! On the same day He walked with two of His disciples sixty furlongs or ten miles to Emmaus and they held much converse on the way, but knew Him not until He suddenly vanished as a spirit from their sight.<sup>1</sup> A natural body resurrected from death would scarcely walk that distance in a few hours after Resurrection. On two subsequent occasions, Jesus came into rooms where His apostles were holding meetings with closed doors, unannounced and unseen, until He spoke to them. Why was this, and why did St. John note His extraordinary and mysterious appearance,<sup>2</sup> if not to indicate that Jesus' coming thus was supernatural? It is true that He is said to have, on two occasions, eaten with His disciples during the forty days He was on earth after His Resurrection, and that the Apostle Thomas is said to have touched the scars on His wounded hands and sides. These incidents seem inconsistent with the mere spiritual theory of His being, subsequent to the Resurrection, but they may, and probably are, merely legendary embellishments.

<sup>1</sup> Luke, ch. xxiv, vs. 13-36.

<sup>2</sup> St. John, ch. xx, vs. 19-36

Of course, change from incorporeal to bodily presence, as indicated by these latter stories, if real, would be supernatural. We know Jesus existed, lived a God-like life, and died on the cross for man. To believers in immortality, it should seem no wise unnatural for the Son of God as an immortal to live on earth in His spiritual being after mortal death, to be with His disciples for a time, and to be seen by them. God permitted Him thus to demonstrate to them the eternal lessons He had taught them. We shall doubtless all see in the future life with eyes resembling and counterparts of our mortal eyes. It mattered not that Jesus, while in His natural life, fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes. It mattered not that He raised the dead and healed the sick. Those miracles proved nothing, excepting that He was gifted of God with supernatural powers, as other prophets of Israel before Him had been reputed to be, and in fully as great degree. Elijah and Elisha had centuries before raised the dead and healed the sick as Jesus did. But in all those miracles, if facts, they simply dealt with the mortal and with time; there was lacking the demonstration of immortality and eternity. The appearance of Samuel's ghost to Saul at the bidding of the witch of Endor was a sort of demonstration, but it was inconclusive, and the story had no attestation. But if the life and the ministry of Jesus, as narrated by the

evangelists, and especially His post-Crucifixion life are true, then Jesus gave that complete and perfect *demonstration*. He literally "brought life and immortality to light." It is the seal to and the climax of all the Bible teaches. If not true, and especially His Resurrection and after-life, then the Bible, our Bible, is no better, nor any more authority, than others of the world's bibles now existing, excepting as its portrayals of God, and its teachings to humanity, may be best and purest.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE DIVINE EDUCATION OF THE HUMAN RACE

DR. BRIGGS in his "Study of Holy Scripture" says:<sup>1</sup> "The history of the world is, as Loesing shows, the divine education of our race, and every nation has its share in that instruction and contributes its quota of experience to the successive generations. The nations of the modern world have all come into line with their interplay of forces, making the problem more complex and wonderful. The old nations of the Orient, China, Japan, and India, with Africa and the islands of the ocean, share in that education and service. The world is one in origin, in training, in destiny. There is force in Renan's remark: 'Jewish history that would have the monopoly of the miracle, is not a bit more extraordinary than Greek history. If the supernatural intervention is necessary to explain the one, then supernatural intervention is also necessary to explain the other.'"

And again Dr. Briggs says: "The primitive sources of Bible history are mythologies, poems, laws, whether inscribed, written, or traditional,

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Briggs' "Study of Holy Scripture," p. 537.

historical documents, and the use of the historical imagination." . . . "We may say with reference to them all,<sup>1</sup> *i.e.*, biblical histories and writers, that they did not and could not distinguish between truth and fiction in any of the older legends and historical documents at their disposal. They could not separate the fact from its mythological, legendary, and poetical embellishments. Indeed, they preferred it as thus embellished, for it was more appropriate in this form for their purposes of instruction. Furthermore, it is evident that the Bible writers did not hesitate to indulge themselves in historical fiction when they had not sufficient information, and the lessons they wished to teach had yet to be taught."<sup>2</sup>

Really, this criticism of Dr. Briggs may as well apply to every miraculous narrative in the Old and New Testaments. Certainly so to the miracles herein specially reviewed, and possibly in his mind when he so wrote. Further on Dr. Briggs says:<sup>3</sup> "There is no evidence that the Divine Spirit guided those historians of Holy Scriptures in their historic investigations, so as to keep them from historical errors. The Divine Spirit guided them in their religious instructions, in the lessons they taught from history. But there is *no evidence* of any other guidance. The evidence is

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Briggs' "Study of Holy Scripture," p. 555.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 565.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 566.



all *against* such guidance as prevented them from making historic errors. They certainly did record errors." He enumerates many such. If Dr. Briggs is right, here is the whole question of Bible inspiration in a nutshell. We believe with him that the Holy Spirit guided the writers of the biblical books in their religious instructions and in the lessons they taught from history. But there is really no evidence of any other guidance. If not, then in all matters of historical narratives which include everything belonging to the province of history, biography, and miracles, as well as any other alleged facts, there is no presumption or probability of inspired guidance, and the authenticity of all such matters, including the statements of miracles, must depend upon the probabilities and the facts in each case.

Upon this theory, we have been guided in the discussion of particular miracles and particular Mosaic customs and ordinances. Some of those customs and ordinances are so contrary to the moral attributes of Deity that they cannot have been sanctioned or enjoined by Him, even according to the ideas of Dr. Briggs that they were gradual developments in God's training of the Israelites. Under such theory he claims that God indorsed the Mosaic laws allowing slavery, polygamy, and divorces; commends the purpose of Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac; that He

accepted the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter; that "the offering up of children and of domestic animals and grains (as sacrifices) was all a preparatory discipline for the religion of Christ," and that the theophanic angel commended the inhospitable Jael for her brutal assassination of Sisera. He excuses such errors in moral precepts because they were, as he says, necessary in order to educate Israel for a nobler time when Israel, as well as the Christian Church, would abhor slavery and polygamy and those other outrages as sins and crimes.

According to such argument and by analogy, all the crimes and wickedness which have occurred in all the nations and ages of the world might be justified as part of God's education of the human race, for the advent of Christianity. Dr. Briggs' ideas in these matters illustrate what absurd and inconsistent positions he has supposed himself compelled to take in his advocacy of the theophanic control and guidance of Abraham and Moses and other Bible characters, and of the Mosaic institutions, according to the strict letter of the Torah, thus singularly liberal and progressive in most of his Scriptural ideas and interpretations, and reactionary and strictly orthodox in others, which are entirely indefensible, but must be advocated and indorsed to sustain his theophanic and Christophanic theories.

Some of the miracles of the Bible are of such

character and so trivial in purpose when considered in the light of the divine attributes as to seem clearly unworthy of divine intervention and so merit little discussion as to authenticity. Therefore inspiration cannot be predicated, *per se*, of miracles as historical incidents. If challenged or doubted, — and any honest man has a right to doubt, — they should be proven, and the claim of biblical inspiration alone cannot be assumed as sufficient proof, for those who require evidence upon which to base their beliefs. Again we repeat if, according to Dr. Briggs, — and we fully indorse his position on this question, — there was no inspiration or guidance of the Holy Spirit to biblical writers originally, or, as compilers of more ancient manuscripts into our present biblical books, excepting in their religious instructions and moral lessons from history, then their narratives of supernatural occurrences, as historical facts, are of no more force and have no more sanction of the Holy Spirit than their narratives of other historical events, and are no more obligatory upon our belief, really much less so, as supernatural occurrences naturally require much greater proof than ordinary historic events.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### MISCELLANEOUS CONCLUSIONS

THIS is the age of great evolutions in religious belief. The idea of sacrificial worship of God by the sacrifice of animals as pleasing or acceptable to Him has been utterly discarded from all the great religions, and the theory of atonement for sins, through such sacrifices, is no longer held by any of them, only orthodox Christianity believing even in the atonement by Jesus Christ. This is a great advance upon the worships of past ages. Men of all religions are earnestly testing all the foundations of their faith. Many of the theories of a few centuries ago are becoming antiquated; the older Christian catechisms are rejected, and the various sects are contending for new statements of doctrines. This religious unrest not only exists in the Christian world, but is permeating other faiths, — Parsees, Jews, Brahmans, Buddhists, Confucianists, and Mohammedans. Out of this agitation, doubtless, great good will eventually result. Each of these religionists believes its sacred books alone to be the word of God, excepting the Christians, Mohammedans, and Mormons who also believe in the

Bible of Jews and Christians as well as in their own special holy books. But each is becoming better acquainted than ever before with the other faiths, and the elements of a common brotherly regard are being evolved between all. The Mohammedan believes as sincerely in Moses and the prophets and in Jesus Christ, though differing in some immaterial doctrines, as Christians do, and the Mormons whilst venerating their own founder and regarding the Book of Mormon as a revelation from God, subsequent to all others, yet profess, as firmly as Christians, to believe in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures.

So there is for Jews, Christians, Mohammedans, and Mormons, common grounds of belief which should bring them nearer together in the essentials of religion, viz., one God, devotion to His service, and a future life of happiness eventually for all, and in Jesus Christ, divinely sent, and inspired as a man only, if not as a manifestation or incarnation of Deity. The Parsee or Zoroastrian, Buddhist and Confucianist, though knowing little until recent years, of Moses and the prophets or of Jesus, agree with all the other faiths in supreme belief in God and a future life. These common grounds of belief should be sufficient to unite and harmonize all these religionists, so that, when opportunities occur, they could worship in the same temples, under the benign creed of the old Jewish prophet Micah, "All that is required of thee, oh man, is to

do justly — to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God.” So having in “essentials, unity, in non-essentials, liberty, and in all things charity,” and so live and work together in common brotherhood. The Hindoostanee Parsee, proud of the remote antiquity of his faith, the Buddhist and the Moslem all worshipping the One, Only God, each rejecting all sacrificial services as well as the Trinity and vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ, must have some charity in worshipping with their orthodox Christian brethren, but the great essentials of their creeds are the same, even if mystically diverse.

Liberal students of each of the great religions of the world have been for a number of years past, as they had not been before, investigating the other religions and their sacred books, and the result is that they are beginning to see and believe that however much they may differ in matters of history, miracles, forms, rites of worship; yet all those sacred books form in common the basis of the same moral code of God’s revelations to mankind and were undoubtedly given by Him in their various forms, as instructions in the education of the human race and adapted to the different ages, and the intellectual and moral conditions of the people when those books were written. The great Congress of Religions at the World’s Fair in Chicago in 1893, in which all the different religions of the world were represented, and their

tenets were presented and discussed by the ablest priests and scholars of each faith, accomplished a great work in the way of obliterating differences and antagonisms, and in unifying and harmonizing the various religious systems.

Good work in the same direction was probably done at the great Paris World's Exposition of 1900, although we have not seen any extended report of the same, and therefore cannot speak advisedly about it. Great good will undoubtedly result not only to the cause of universal religion, but also to human progress and national and race amenities generally from such great cosmopolitan religious conferences. The old-time belief in favoritism by Deity of the Hebrew or of any other particular race or nation, is rapidly disappearing. Consequently a broader humanitarianism, sympathy, and catholicity of opinions, than ever before manifested, are spreading over the world. The intense selfish exclusiveness and bigotry of the past ages, when

“Lands, intersected by a narrow firth,  
Abhorred each other. Mountains interposed,  
Made enemies of nations, which had else,  
Like kindred drops, been mingled into one,”

are fast disappearing with the now frequent intermingling of people of all races, religions, and conditions of life in business, commerce, and travel, and the more general diffusion of knowledge. Men

are everywhere beginning to believe in the Heavenly Father as the one God of all, "who is found of all who love and seek Him." The general dissemination and recognition of this great truth are rapidly advancing the sentiment of universal brotherhood among men. This sentiment of fraternity, toleration, and sympathy, is one of the great evolutions of religious thought and feeling, developing out of the race feelings, intolerance, and bigotry of the past.

There is much purity, beauty, and truth, as we have seen, in all the world's sacred books. The intelligent and liberal-minded of all faiths, especially many of our great Christian scholars, and those who have become cosmopolitan by travel in foreign lands, are gradually coming to recognize the truths in all religions as emanations from the same divine source. Broad-gauged Christians feel that the humble and sincere devotees of all other faiths are brethren with them in the universal fellowship of Jesus Christ and the love of God, and while seeking, as they may have opportunity, to lead them into the higher life of Christianity, yet respect their convictions and affiliate with them.

It will bear frequent repetition that "God is everywhere and in everything." He is our common Father. In Him, we of all creeds alike, live, move, and have our beings. He loves and cares for all alike. These truths in the evolutions of



human progress and development, will, we believe, soon have universal, practical, as well as theoretical recognition.

God does not let the universe run itself. His empire is a reign of universal, changeless, eternal, moral, and physical laws. But though governing all things by uniform and unchangeable system, He ever is, ever was, and ever must be at the helm of His empire, and all things are ultimately as He wills. How this may be we know not, but in the nature of His attributes and perfections, it must be so. If anything in the entire realms of matter, or of mind, or life, temporal or eternal, happens contrary to His will, be it the result of destiny, work of evil spirits, or free agency of man, the power that so acts and accomplishes results contrary to God's will, is necessarily greater than God and independent of Him, an *imperium in imperio*. Were it so the universe would be like a ship at sea without compass or pilot, and God's children could not safely rest in the consciousness of His infinite wisdom and love, if not accompanied by His absolute control of all things in His infinite knowledge and power. Here in this life we cannot understand many things; indeed, with all our knowledge we know but little of God's ways. The Bible teaches generally the doctrine of man's free agency, but in many pages the contrary, as in some of the Prophets, in Ecclesiastes, and in Romans ix, and

certainly that it is limited always by training, heredity, and environments. Our passions, appetites, and desires are given us for beneficent purposes, but are more or less dominated by hereditary influences as well as by surrounding conditions.

If all are "conceived in sin and born in iniquity," then none are free agents from birth, but are dominated by overmastering influences for evil. These conditions and influences certainly should be taken into account in the question of man's moral responsibility, for his actions in connection with influences to the contrary, and the light and knowledge he may possess. Many criminals are doubtless moral degenerates—some from childhood—and are morally irresponsible. For all violations of merely natural laws, nature provides certain punishment in disease and pain and premature death. For violations of moral laws, man is not competent to be the final judge. Only God who knows all the intents and purposes of the heart and all matters and questions affecting moral responsibility can be the exact judge. The punishment may be, and doubtless mostly is, in this life, or it may extend into the future life, but as the moral responsibility can only be that of finite man, for finite acts, so the punishment in equity can only be finite and limited. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" Of course nothing in the

universe can happen or result contrary to God's will, but ordinarily He, as the Bible teaches, in His wise economy, permits men to act on their own responsibility, overruling, however, and ultimately controlling all things and all acts of men in His wisdom as He sees best in His infinite plans.

If this theory — and it certainly seems to be the Bible theory — be true, then eternal punishment is untrue. Here we live largely under limitations, necessities, and environments. What we do, God foreknew, and so it was and is written. The mystery of our acts, good and bad, squared with God's fore-knowledge of all things and the certainty that nothing in the universe can be done or happen contrary to God's will and purposes, is impenetrable, and no human intellect can solve the enigma. St. Paul wrestles with it,<sup>1</sup> and asserts the doctrine that all men are clay in the great Potter's hands, and that our lives are as He wills. If so, the enigma is solved, but elsewhere in His Epistles, St. Paul seems to teach a different theory. There are, however, mysteries which the Bible does not solve, and which never have been solved, and of which the solution will be made known, if at all, doubtless only in the future life. Why and how God exists; how the universe came into existence from the voiceless void of abysmal night; from whence or how came the atoms, protoplasmic germs, and evolutions

<sup>1</sup> Romans, ch. ix.

thereof from which all things are; why and how the human race exists and is constituted as it is; why evil and sin abound; why disease and suffering and death are; what the purpose of this great drama of life is; how it comports with God's attributes;—all these things are incomprehensible mysteries, only made more so by the delusions of orthodox tenets.

All human life is a chaos of vanity, as says the Book of Ecclesiastes, unless in all its phases of light and darkness, good and evil, happiness and misery, it is *en rapport* with God's universal economy, and is so that all life's seeming incongruities will be adjusted, equalized, and harmonized in the eternal hereafter by infinite balances and compensations. So that sin, pain, and evil here will ultimately contribute to work out and evolve universal good and universal happiness. Such must be, it would seem, the ultimate result, if there be a purpose—and there surely is—in all the great drama of human life. It is apparently the only theory upon which all the mysteries of life can be understood, and the existence of sin and evil be harmonized in consistency with the attributes of God. Inspired with such faith and hope, we can bow our heads in lowly reverence and submission to His will, and amidst all the changes and vicissitudes, the troubles and sorrows of life, as well as in its joys, humbly say, "Thy will be done." No other theory than this, even though

it is the antithesis of the horrible tenets of orthodoxy, of eternal happiness for the millions and eternal hell for the billions of our race, it seems to us, can harmonize with all the varying conditions of men under God's moral government and reconcile us to all the vicissitudes of life.

When we accept this theory, we should be filled with complete and submissive trust in God and animated to use all our powers and faculties to make ourselves and our fellow-men happy. We are assured that God is the one Universal Father and cares for all His children. Hence while sorrows and punishments may be meted out to us for sins and for failures to use as best we could our talents and opportunities, yet those penalties will be for our reformation, and will result and end in our ultimate and eternal welfare.

This life and the future are and can be but one. They are only changes of conditions and environments. The demands of infinite justice, which bigotry has for ages dinned into our ears with threats of its awful, merciless, and eternal hell, will be met and harmonized in that future life by infinite adjustments, and finally canceled by the omnipotence and fullness of infinite love. Many things which seem sinful here from want of knowledge of the motives and forces which actuate and even compel men to do apparently wrong, will be seen in the light of eternity to have

been right, and actions which perhaps may have been heralded as grand and good, will appear there in their naked deformity of purpose as wicked and desperately evil. But for all the good and evil of our earthly lives we believe there will be hereafter merciful judgments and infinite compensations, with such final adjustments and limited finite punishments for our sins, if not fully meted out to us here, as justice and mercy may require.

Some teach that beyond the confines of time nearly everything of earth and of our earthly lives are forgotten or banished from our memories in Paradise, and that only the wicked will remember in perdition. That only the singing of hymns and waving of palm branches amid the ecstatic joys of the celestial home will occupy the time and thought of the redeemed. That there will be no identity of self, no knowledge of relatives and friends on earth, no memories of the past, no continuance and everlasting enjoyment of our earthly treasures of thoughts and knowledge, of affections and hopes. If so, then indeed is future life a delusion, a chimera. If in the future life, even in heaven, we shall all drink of Lethe's cup and remember nothing of life on earth, of parents, wife, and children, of love's young dream and ecstasies, of the old home Elysium, aye, of all earth's good and ills, and only exist in perpetual idleness and sing monotonous

songs which inspire no memories and messages of the past, then is death to all intents and purposes annihilation or oblivion, and there might as well be a new creation of soul, as a continuance of the earth-born one, when all of its life, love, and memories past, is forgotten. Then immortality, if such immortality can be conceived, would be only a delusion, merely a theosophic metempsychosis, or metamorphosis, worse than Buddha's eternal round of unconscious spiritual existence, in animal or reptilian forms before Nirvana is attained.

No! We believe such theories are false! Soul sleeping, in mental paralysis, or oblivion, returning centuries, or it may be millions of years after death to gather up the atoms of the dust of our decayed bodies, from land and oceans, wherever winds and waves and endless changes have carried them, and thus rehabilitate our old decayed organisms, is another ancient delusion born of ignorance and superstition and akin to the belief of forgetfulness after mortal death, of everything we knew on earth. Blessed be Yahweh of old, the great and good God, in the higher and grander faith which is now beginning to illuminate the world as the mission and teachings of Jesus are better understood; death of the mortal body is merely the resurrection of the soul, the "alter ego," the "eternal life," born with us and developing in the sunshine of infinite love, in our finite mortality.

So the lessons of Jesus teach. So the "Great Apostle" St. Paul teaches.<sup>1</sup> So all the analogies of nature teach, and above all our spirits, hopes, and aspirations of immortality teach. They are hopes and aspirations which God Himself has endowed all human beings with, and which in His truth, He cannot, therefore, — we say it reverently, — permit to be in vain. God is eternally true. To endow us with such glorious hopes and permit them to end in nothingness, would be a delusion and mockery which God cannot do or permit. Immortality is true as God is true. We are, as Jesus Christ was, all born of God's eternal essence, and as He, the Son of God, lives, we shall all live, and sooner or later "all know even as we are known by Him" forever. This, under all the teachings of all religions, of dark ignorance and superstition of the past, as well as of light and knowledge of our day, is the universal deathless hope and faith, of all peoples and all religions, God-given and eternal. It is as old as when the morning stars sang together at creation's dawn for all the children of the Highest, including the new pair in Eden, and it is the deathless hope of all their posterity.

Therefore, we believe resurrection and the future life will be for each and all of human kind, as Jesus left the tomb and lived not in flesh, but in the spirit life and image of God. Not in our

<sup>1</sup> I Corinthians, ch. xv.



worn-out and earthly bodies. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." In that rejuvenated and glorious life and new and ever happy home, we shall all, as His children, see and know God, face to face. There, we believe without a doubt, all the human family, sooner or later, and not long perhaps after probations, — for some longer or shorter, — as justice in mercy may require, seeking pardon each for all the ignorant erring past, in the clear light of eternity, and each forever eschewing sins and follies, may and will repent if never before, and will be forgiven there, as all may be here. There will be no repetition of punishment. Whatever natural, physical, or moral penalties for transgressions of divine laws have been suffered here, — and most we think are punished sufficiently here, — will not be repeated in the future. It would be unjust, adding vindictive and accumulative penalties to expiations already made, and, notwithstanding the tenets of orthodoxy, contrary to the eternal principles of equity. If we shall live and know and remember there as here, even the "chief of sinners" can repent in the future life as well as in this, and no logical reason can be given by bigotry, why not, and why pardon may not be extended there.

God only knows our environments, mental, moral, and physical conditions, infirmities, and temptations. Very much that is deemed sin is not

sin, but is only the result of destiny, or rather of misfortune, heredity, and overmastering influences which destroy our freedom of will and clearness of judgment and moral perception, and thus render us moral weaklings. Very many criminals are doubtless quasi-insane and unaccountable morally, and should be restrained and not consigned to prisons, or the gallows. Tens of thousands, yes millions, of the best men and women of earth, have gone to the darkness of dungeons, and perished on the gallows, or in flames, for mere beliefs, for imaginary sins and crimes, for deeds and words for which they ought to have had the approbation of their enemies and persecutors, instead of punishment.

There is not, and cannot be, any past or future with God. All is present, eternity, now. Man's work and life here is all a part of his eternity, and in the same continuing plane of education and action. It is a continuous life, and there is no changing or reversing it, no hiatus in God's plans. Our work here is as much for eternity as the work and education of the future life will be. God is always educating and training us. We are all in His school, and we live here and are trained and governed under the same laws and principles as we shall work and live under forever. This ought to be, and it seems to us must be, the universal religion, and none other or contrary can be true. God has not fixed any arbitrary

time for limiting man's eternal weal or woe. Such limitations have been laid down and declared for Him, by puny, presumptuous men, as Moses and others of the prophets did, when they announced, under the bold caption of "Thus saith the Lord," sundry laws, ordinances, and religious rites, which He never enjoined or sanctioned. Some of these have been specifically noted and commented upon in these pages, and we stand upon the record made. God evidently created all people for His glory and their good, and for His glory and our good in His infinite plans we shall, and must, eternally live.

There are no blanks or failures in God's plans, no misfits. One single soul, eternally lost, ruined, damned, records an infinite failure in God's economy. It cannot be! There can be no such failure, no such record in the eternal years of God. We may go astray. We may for a time violate His laws, permissively, as far as man can, but He will evolve good out of the evil. We can never get outside of His care and mercy. He is never hardened against us. Such teachings are false. God does not hate, but only pities us in our follies and our sins. We can always return from the wilderness of sin and folly to His fold, nay, He will surely finally bring us there. Repentance now and forever, here and in the future life as well, will always gain His pardon. He loves His children evermore. We believe all the religions

of to-day, with all that is good and true in their teachings, will ultimately culminate in this coming universal faith; in the fruition of infinite, all-embracing mercy and redemption. Such is to be, we believe, the evolution of all religions, the crowning glory of all the divine training and education of mankind, throughout all the ages. "Glory to God in the highest. Peace on earth and good will to all men," shall become a reality.

## CHAPTER XIX

### CONCLUSION

IN summing up and concluding, it may be asked what of all these criticisms of the Bible? If these criticisms are sound and just, must there be a new Bible written, from which shall be eliminated whatever errors, or doubtful legends, or myths, there may be in the present one, and which shall be abreast in all things with the knowledge of the age, in all the fields of science and literature, in geology, astronomy, chronology, ancient history, civil government, and religious thought? Or shall we, adding in some things, and expurgating in others, remodel our Bible and make a new canon of its books, in order to satisfy modern criticism, by thus emasculating it and removing all questionable features? By no means! It would not then be the Bible of our fathers, nor of our childhood. Let the Bible remain ever as it is. Even the old King James version is better, with all its petty errors, more impressive, more beautiful and attractive in expression and diction, than the late revised edition. Our old Bible, the great landmark of Jews, Christians, and Moham-medans, is the best book on earth. Emphati-

cally we affirm and believe that no new Bible can ever be written which can compare favorably with, or that will ever supplant or supply the place of, our dear old Bible, even with its many errors. None that will ever supersede the old one. Its place in history and the realm of literature is fixed and inimitable. One half of the history and literature of the world in the past eighteen hundred years is inseparably bound up in its teachings, or warrings of the nations of Europe over its doctrines, and the missionary work of the past century has made it a household book in nearly all the world.

It will ever remain the great Sacred Book of earth, immeasurably the greatest, the pillar of light, like that which led ancient Israel in the desert nights, for all human beings on their way to eternity. Its errors of history, its legends of miracles, are of little moment, merely wayside notes of the civilizations, religious ideals and superstitions of the centuries through which it has come down to us. Its divine moral teachings illuminating all its pages are eternal. We can know no more of God than it tells us, and its ethics are changeless. It must ever remain the supremely Sacred Book of the world. Its theology and its ethics can never be changed or improved upon. Hence any new purported revelation from God, if any should ever be written, would be an imposture. New ethics and a new

theology would be false. Variations of our Bible teachings, like the Koran and Book of Mormon, could only be plagiarisms of its morals and literary beauties, and new miracles could only be false. Our old Bible's teaching of an ever living, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God, the all wise, infinitely merciful and universal Father of all human beings, of all races and creeds, can never be improved upon. No man can ever write any grander, holier book. The histories of the most ancient nations and peoples, the lives and family circles of the old nomadic patriarchs of Arabia and Canaan, the customs and manners of those far remote ages, cannot be again so elegantly and truthfully reproduced. The wonderful legendary miracles and historic poems of the Bible most faithfully portray ancient currents of thought, ancient beliefs, superstitions, and forms of worship, presenting a mirror of those times which the present or future can never reflect and can never be revived by historian, poet, or novelist. Its pastoral idyls and romances, its poems and sacred songs, are unrivaled and peerless. Its religion, divested of the fables and mysticisms which obscure some of its pages, is divine. Man has evolved from its allegorical sketches and parables many various philosophies, degrading conceptions of human nature, and horrible creeds of infinite hate and eternal torments. These creeds, if any

sanction at all is given to them in the pages of the Bible, are either based on perversions of allegorical teachings, or framed from fantasies of the bigots of the Dark Ages, interwoven by them into the original text,—delusions,—in harmony with the superstitions of the age, and are contrary to the higher and nobler revelations of Deity. Some of the teachings of New Testament books seem to sanction such creeds, but if so, they are at variance with their general tenor and grander truths, and with the whole divine economy, clearly revealed in the Bible as a system of truth, and are, therefore, foreign growths.

The geology of the Genesis narrative of creation is, so far as it goes and rightly understood, correct, and its general features are indorsed by modern science, whilst the philosophies of Egyptian, Babylonian, Chinese, Greek, and other ancient scholars, are worthless. The astronomy of the Bible is, of course, only what astronomers of olden times were able to learn of the celestial bodies by their unaided visions and crude geometry without assistance of photographic, spectroscopic, or telescopic instruments. Evidently inspiration did not extend to communicating a knowledge of the sciences to the ancient patriarchs and sages, it only gave them religious light.

In the literature of the world, our Bible's place is forever fixed. There is no occasion for a new one. Mohammed, Emanuel Swedenborg, and



Joseph Smith sought to supplant, or add to, the Bible, by imaginary later revelations, but the Al-Koran, Book of Mormon, and Swedenborg's Apocalypse, are but travesties of the grand old Book. A good Jew or Christian does not want any new Bible or paraphrase of the old. A philosophic Atheist cannot write a new Bible, because he does not believe in a God or a future life, and he cannot frame any newer or better ethics for the world than is found in the Scriptures. Nor could an Agnostic, who professes to know nothing of God and doubts everything, do any better. Nor could the Deist who believes in a God, but denies or doubts revelations from Him, improve on the character of the God of the Bible, or formulate any better or purer code of morals. Good Christians and profound scholars, like Sir Isaac Newton, Dr. Briggs, Mueller, or Dr. Channing, could not write a Bible which would supplant the old one, because they could neither improve its ethics nor teach anything new of God. They might eliminate some historical errors, some of the legendary miracles, and some of the Mosaic laws and ordinances from the Bible, but its great value as a faithful mirror of the ages in which it was written would be thus impaired, and its grandeur destroyed. No! The records of the Bible and its place in the literature of the world, like the ancient Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit classics, are fixed, sealed, and immutable.

The world will never have and never need another Bible, unless the Almighty should hereafter reveal the wonderful secrets of His being, — as He never has yet, — and the veiled mysteries of immortality and eternity.

The twentieth century of the Christian era is in its dawn. Judging from the great events and wonderful progress of the century just closed, and the prospective results of the religious, educational, industrial, political, social and economic forces now in operation all over the world, the new century bids fair to be the grandest era of human progress, and educational, social, and religious development, the world has ever seen since the beginning of historic time. Steam and electricity, operating railways, ships, telegraphs, telephones, and other mechanical appliances, have already united all countries in what should be peaceful bonds of trade and economic and social intercourse, as never before, and as not even dreamed of in the wildest flights of human imagination a century ago. We can converse and do business at our homes in one day in most of the cities and villages of civilized countries with the dwellers of America, Europe, India, China, Japan, Arabia, Egypt, South Africa, Australia, and most of the Islands of the oceans. Time and distance are almost annihilated. Doubtless other scientific and mechanical inventions and improvements in all these and other lines, and indeed in everything

pertaining to human welfare, in commerce, travel, social and religious intercourse, will yet be made. The Anglo-Saxon race with the other affiliated branches of the great Germanic, Teutonic, and Scandinavian family, will, judging from the trend of events in the past two centuries, in the not very distant future, control the world and the English languages, become, approximately, the universal language. Such seems, manifest destiny, and no second Tower of Babel will need to be erected to preserve unity of speech. Nations are coming more and more into fraternal and political harmony. Difficulties will naturally sometimes arise, and wars for a time may yet occur, but peace congresses and national arbitrations of troubles and disagreements, added to the closer assimilation of religious thought and feelings, through the general diffusion of rational Christianity, will surely prevent the past frequency of wars and mitigate the ruin and suffering caused heretofore, when they do occur.

The results of the war of 1898, between the United States and Spain, in the acquisition of Porto Rico and the Philippine Islands, with the prestige thereby gained to the United States, and the addition of territory and population, will undoubtedly greatly extend our commerce and intercourse with all nations, and tend to the wider diffusion of the principles of civil and religious

liberty and the general welfare of mankind. The peaceful annexation of Cuba to the United States, we believe will, in the not very distant future, occur. The successful conclusion of the war in the Philippines and the pacification of those fertile and beautiful islands under the good government which the United States has given them, is a *fait accompli*. The acquisition, a few years ago, of the "gems of the Pacific," the lovely and salubrious Hawaiian Islands with their charming climate and great production of sugar, tropical fruits, etc., was a most valuable and important addition to our territorial area. The magnificent possibilities which may result to our country from the acquisition of all those islands are yet in embryo, but undoubtedly will be wonderful.

In the winter of 1898-1899, through the courtesy of Hon. John D. Long, Secretary of the Navy, the writer had the great pleasure of making a trip to the Hawaiian Islands in the elegant United States vessel, the yacht "Iroquois," Lieutenant Commander Charles F. Pond, U. S. N., commanding, with the writer's son, Lieutenant B. B. Bierer, and Lieutenant G. L. P. Stone, assistants. He remained there several months enjoying the grand scenery of ocean and of all those islands and peerless climate, the finest and most equable in the world. The acquisition of the Hawaiian and Spanish islands in connection with the war with

Spain, and the happy settlement of the more recent troubles in China, with his wise domestic policy, will make ever memorable the administration of our lamented President, William McKinley, and intensify our horror of the cowardly and brutal assassination of so pure, lovable, and patriotic a man. Indeed, with the exception of Washington and Lincoln's, we think his administration, untimely shortened as it was, the most illustrious and important in our history.

The late war in South Africa between Great Britain and her neighbors of the Orange Free States and Transvaal Republic, was most deplorable, but we believe will eventually result for the best welfare of the people of those states, in their incorporation and consolidation with the other British domains in that region, and the formation of a great South African State, which will be nominally for years a part of the British Empire, but which will doubtless eventually become independent with a president appointed by the crown, but under a republican constitution and form of government, similar to the late federation of all the provinces of Australia. That South African Federation will doubtless continue to expand as the United States of America did, taking in additional surrounding territories of the uncivilized tribes, becoming in time a great African Empire, Christianizing and educating all the "Dark Continent" and assisting in the develop-

ment of all the great and varied resources of that wonderful region of the world.

The great war between Russia and Japan lately terminated will undoubtedly have a wonderful influence upon the future destinies of those empires, politically and otherwise, and its results be of momentous importance to all the world, and especially to Russia, Japan, and China, in the development of more liberal institutions in those countries and in all the Old World and in the broadening of commercial relations between all nations, and the more rapid diffusion of liberal Christianity. The United States and Great Britain nominally, and really morally, allies; if they continue as now and for many years past, to act in harmony on all foreign questions, as they certainly should; with their great colonial possessions, girdling the earth and dominating the oceans, with institutions though dissimilar, really both democratic and resting on the consent of the governed, will doubtless in the present century virtually rule the world, if both continue to be governed wisely and patriotically, largely shaping the world's future progress and history. In the years of this century, we believe the Christian religion, under the patronage of the great powers of Europe and America, judging from its rapid extension during the past century, and allowing for the more liberal and attractive teachings of missionaries and interpretations and translations of the Bible text by the best modern

scholars, as compared with the old dogmatic versions, lessening the points of antagonism between it and all other religions, will spread over all the earth, and intelligent people in all lands will come to recognize and adopt it as the truest, the best, the ultimate religion of the world. Then all men, when that time comes, will hail their fellow-men as brothers, worshiping with them in the same temples, as children of the same Heavenly Father, and inheritors by right of birth of the same eternal destiny. We anticipate no future divine revelation, no new Bible, but so great has been the progress of the race, and so astonishing the wonderful achievements of science in the century just closed, that sometimes we fancy, in the not very remote future, the mystic veil between time and eternity, between life and death, the visible and invisible, may be drawn aside and mortals be permitted to see into the spirit land and hold converse with the immortals. Are these merely visionary dreams? Not if the Bible is inspired, for it says the day is coming, "when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the seas, when nations shall not lift up the sword against nations, neither shall they learn war any more, and when all people shall know God, even from the least unto the greatest."

We will close with four stanzas from Derzhavin's Ode.

## TO GOD

## I

“Oh Thou Eternal One whose presence bright,  
 All space doth occupy, all motion guide,  
 Unchanged through time's all devastating flight  
 Thou Only God, there is no God beside,  
 Being above all beings, Mighty One,  
 Whom none can comprehend and none explore,  
 Who fill'st existence with Thyself alone,  
 Embracing all, supporting, ruling o'er,  
 Being whom we call God, and know no more.

## II

Thou from primeval nothingness didst call,  
 First chaos, then existence. Lord, on Thee,  
 Eternity hath its foundation, all  
 Sprung forth from Thee; of light, joy, harmony,  
 Sole origin. All life, all beauty Thine:  
 Thy word created all, and doth create.  
 Thy splendor fills all space with rays divine.  
 Thou art and wert and shall be glorious, great,  
 Light-giving, life-sustaining potentate.

## III

Thou art, directing, guiding, all, Thou art;  
 Direct my understanding, then, to Thee.  
 Control my spirit, guide my wandering heart.  
 Though but an atom 'midst immensity,  
 Still I am something fashioned by thy hand.  
 I hold a middle rank' twixt heaven and earth,  
 On the last verge of mortal being stand,  
 Close to the realms where Angels have their birth,  
 Just on the boundaries of the spirit land.



## IV

Creator, yes; Thy wisdom and Thy word  
Created me; Thou source of life and good,  
Thou spirit of my spirit, and my Lord.  
Thy light, Thy love in their bright plenitude,  
Filled me with an immortal soul to spring  
Over the abyss of death, and bade it wear  
The garments of eternal day, and wing  
Its heavenly flight beyond this little sphere,  
Even to the source, to Thee its Author there."

## APPENDIX

NOTE A. Briggs' "Study of Holy Scripture," page 287. "It may be regarded as the certain result of the science of the Higher Criticism that Moses did not write the Pentateuch or Job. Ezra did not write the Chronicles, Ezra, or Nehemiah; Jeremiah did not write the Book of the Kings or Lamentations; David did not write the Psalter, but only a few of the Psalms; Solomon did not write the Song of Songs or Ecclesiastes, and only a portion of the Proverbs; Isaiah did not write half the book that bears his name. The great mass of the Old Testament was written by authors whose names or connection with their writings are lost in oblivion. If this is destroying the Bible, the Bible is destroyed already. But who tells us that these traditional names were the authors of the Bible? The Bible itself? The creeds of the Church? Any reliable historical testimony? None of these! Pure conjectural tradition. Nothing more."

NOTE B. Many of the ancient Fathers were of this belief; among others, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Chrysostom, Augustine, and Irenæus. The latter wrote in *Adv. Horeses* iii,

21-22: "During the captivity of the people under Nebuchadnezzar, the Scriptures had been corrupted, and when after seventy years the Jews had returned to their own lands, then in the time of Artaxerxes, king of the Persians, God inspired Esdras, the priest of the tribe of Levi, to recast all the words of former prophets and to reestablish with the people the Mosaic legislation."

NOTE C. "But is there not some testimony as to authorship in the biblical books apart from titles? Yes, a little. In the Hexateuch, Num. xxi, 14 cites a poetic extract from the books of the wars of Jahveh. Jos. x 12, 13, cites a section of an ode of the battle of Beth-horon from the Book of Jasher. The Book of Jasher is also cited in II Sam. i, 18, where a dirge of David is given. It is also cited in LXX version of I Kings, viii, 12, with a poetic extract from Solomon. The Book of Jasher, containing poems from David and Solomon, could not have been written before Solomon. The writing which cites the Book of Jasher must have been written after the Book of Jasher. If now, as modern critics unanimously hold, the Book of Joshua and the Pentateuch belong together as a Hexateuch, then it is the testimony of the Hexateuch itself that it could not have been written in its present form before the time of David or Solomon." — Briggs' "The Bible, the Church, the Reason," page 137.

NOTE D. "The primitive sources of biblical history are mythologies, legends, poems, laws, whether inscribed, written, or traditional, historical documents and the use of the historical imagination. There can be little doubt that there is a strong mythological element at the basis of biblical history as well as of other ancient histories. The myth is indeed the most primitive historic form and mold, in which that which is most ancient is transmitted from primitive peoples. There are such myths in the stories of the Book of Genesis and in the poetry of Job, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and not a few of the Psalms." — Idem. Briggs, page 555.

NOTE E. "The Zend Avesta. Many interested, but necessarily honest readers, of the Zend Avesta overlook the fact that in the ancient documents comprised under that name, we have works of many different ages; that from leaf to leaf matters come before them made up of pieces nearly or quite dissimilar, and sometimes separated as to the dates of their authorship by many hundreds of years. They are accordingly apt to make themselves merry over absurdities which prevail in the later but still genuine Avesta, as if they were peculiar to the original Zoroastrian writing. It is at present intended to call attention to the now undoubted and long since suspected fact that it pleased the Divine Power to reveal some of the most important articles of our catholic creed,

first to Zoroaster, and through their literature to the Jews and ourselves. Surely the first object of religion, next to the suppression of unlawful violence or appropriation, should be the suppression of inaccurate statement; and to deny without any effort to become an expert, what every expert knows to be the truth, is, so it seems to me, to commit a crime in the name of Christianity, for which Christianity will one day be called to account.

“It is therefore to help the Church against well-furnished gainsayers, and to reëstablish her character for conscientious investigation, that some Christian specialists in orientalism have given the best years of their lives to save the endeared religion which once inculcated every honorable sentiment from continuing herself the victim of that most sinister of equivocation known as ‘pious frauds.’ How, then, should we handle the question of Zoroastrian influence with the Jews? I would say that any or all of the historical, doctrinal, or hortative statements in the Old or the New Testament might, while fervently believed to be inspired by the Divine Power, be yet freely traced to other religious systems for their mental initiative, that the historical origin of particular doctrines or ideas which are expressed in the Old or New Testament does not touch the question of their inspiration, unless we are prepared to accede to a docetic heresy doubting the reality of

our Savior's human nature. Every sentiment of veneration ought to induce us to trace, if it be possible to trace them, not only the fountain heads of His human convictions, but the supplying rills of His expressions. If we carefully study the genealogy of His body, with how much greater earnestness should we examine those of His mind. For it was His thoughts, humanly speaking, and sometimes His earlier ones, which not only constituted a part of His momentous history, but of course also actually determined His career. The theologies of Egypt should be also examined, as well as those of Greece and Rome.

“From India we have what seems a throng of rich analogies from the Buddhist Scriptures. There remains the ancient Persian theology, and here the historical connection amounts at one stage at least to historical identity, and is as such, I believe, universally recognized. Cyrus, the Persian, brought the Jewish people back when they had become a captive people, and rebuilt Jerusalem when it had become a heap, and book after book of the Bible dates from the reigns of the Persian kings, while Magian priests, who were of the religion of Cyrus, came later to do honor to the Son of Mary, and one of the last words of Jesus upon the cross was from the Persian tongue: ‘Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise’ (Luke xxiii, 43). Cyrus was originally, or at heart, a Mazda

worshiper. The word 'Mazda' (strictly 'Dah') meaning the 'Great Creator' or the 'Great Wise One,' is an especially well-adapted name for God, much more so than our own name for Him, and this revering title well expresses the enlightened tone of the book (Zend Avesta). If, then, any ancient volume could claim our attention, it would seem to be the Sacred Scriptures of that great Mazda worshiper, who under the providence of God determined the later history of the Jewish people. For had Cyrus, the Mazda worshiper, not brought the people back to Jerusalem, the later prophets might not have spoken there, nor might Jesus have been born at Bethlehem, nor taught in that region. Indeed, the influence of the great restorer Cyrus and his successors over the city was so positive that Jerusalem was for a considerable period after the return from Babylon in many respects a Persian city. Some of the most important features of the Pharisaic orthodoxy were, under the providence of God, taught directly, or indirectly, through the Persian influence; the name 'Pharisee' itself being the equivalent of 'Farsee,' a later form of 'Parsee.'

"Few scientific theologians will deny that the doctrine of immortality was scarcely mooted before the captivity, while the Zoroastrian Scriptures are one mass of spiritualism, referring all results to the heavenly or infernal worlds. Ame-

retatat,—immortality,—as one of the six personified attributes of the Deity, did not represent long life alone, but never dying life. Resurrection seems to be placed after the reception of souls into heaven, as if they returned later to a purified earth. And is this really not the doctrine of St. John's Revelation? In Yasht xix, 83, we have resurrection together with millennial perfection. 'We sacrifice unto the kingly glory which shall cleave unto the victorious Savior and His companions, when He shall make the world progress unto perfection, and when it shall be never dying, not decaying, never rotting, ever living, ever useful, having power to fulfil all wishes; when the dead shall arise and immortal life shall come, when the settlements shall be all deathless.' Compare these then with statements which appear after the return from the captivity, a captivity during which the Jews had come in contact with a great religion, in which the passages cited described a predominant tendency. What do we find in them? First, we have the jubilant hope expressed by the later Isaiah, 'Let thy dead live, let my body arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust! For thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth the shades.' And then the full statement in Daniel: 'And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting shame and



contempt.' And yet, as we have seen above, God's people had not fully accepted the meaning of this language at the time of Christ. We draw this inference, the religion of the Jews was originally Saddusaic."—"Zoroaster and the Bible," by Rev. J. H. Mills, in the *Nineteenth Century*, January, 1894.













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