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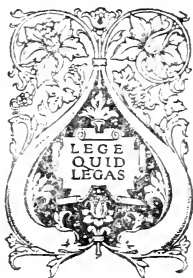




# THE EVOLUTION OF RELIGION


BY  
WILLIAM A. HINCKLE, M. D.

“As for truth it endureth and  
is always strong, it liveth  
and conquereth forever more”




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TO  
MY WIFE



## Foreword.

In these days, when the so-called supernatural is everywhere becoming natural, when law and progress are more and more being recognized as universal, it is not surprising that there should be a growing tendency to discredit the supernatural in religion and to make religion a natural product of human evolution. The superhuman origin and authority of the Bible, the foundation upon which rests the claim that Christianity is a supernatural or revealed religion, is being discredited. The reality and desirability of such authority is being disputed. Even the superhuman origin and nature of Jesus, the cornerstone of orthodox Christianity, is being denied.

While much has been written along these lines, little of it has been so concise, readable, and reverent as to appeal to the average man. Recognizing this dearth of available popular literature on these important subjects, the author has endeavored to show in a brief and interesting manner the evidence, or rather the lack of evidence, as to the superhuman origin and character of our Bible, our religion, and of the great teacher, Jesus. As a corollary, some evidence as to their natural origin and character has been adduced.

While it was his purpose to discredit the supernatural origin of religions in general and of Christianity in particular, the author feels that in doing so he has done no injury to the cause of true religion, but has rendered it service.

W. A. H.



## Preface to the Second Edition

The demand for a second edition of this little book within a year is most gratifying, for it would seem to indicate that, in a measure at least, it has fulfilled the purpose for which it was written, namely, to show briefly and in such a way as to appeal to the man of the street that religion is a natural and necessary product of human evolution and not a supernatural revelation; to show that true religion is ethics, not theology. If these pages help to attain this end the effort was well worth while, for to do this is to have a part in the evolution of the Religion of the Future, which will mould the people of the future even as religions of the past have moulded the people of the past.

While nothing has here been presented that is new to scholars, for the convenience of those who may wish to verify the truths herein set forth or who may wish for further information on these great subjects, the following literature is especially recommended.

For general reference see articles Bible, Canon, Gospels, Jesus, Nativity, Christology, Creeds, Trinity, Reformation, Inquisition, and so on, in standard works of reference, particularly the following: The Encyclopedia Biblica, 4 vol. (The Macmillan Co., New York); A Dictionary of the Bible, 5 vol. (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York); Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, 12 vol., The Jewish Encyclopedia, 12 vol. (Funk & Wagnalls, New York); Ten

Great Religions, 2 vol., by James Freeman Clarke (Houghton-Mifflin Co., Boston).

For special works on these subjects the following will be found valuable.

As to the origin and authority of the Bible:

Origin and Character of the Bible, by J. T. Sunderland (American Unitarian Association, Boston); Who Wrote the Bible, by Washington Gladden (Houghton-Mifflin Co., Boston); Bible Myths and their Parallels in Other Religions, by T. W. Doane (The Commonwealth Co., New York); Babel and Bible, by Friederick Delitzsch (G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York); Canon of the Bible, by Samuel Davidson (Peter Eckler, New York); the same, abridged, appears as article "Canon" in the Encyclopedia Britannica; The History of the Canon of the New Testament, by B. F. Westcott (The Macmillan Co., New York); The Evolution of a Great Literature, by Newton M. Mann (J. H. West Co., Boston); The Bible for Learners, by distinguished Dutch scholars (Little, Brown & Co., Boston); Supernatural Religion, by W. R. Cassels (Watts & Co., London); Seat of Authority in Religion, by James Martineau (Longmans, Green & Co., New York).

As to the evils of superhuman authority:

A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom, 2 vol., by Andrew D. White (D. Appleton & Co., New York); A History of the Conflict between Religion and Science, by John W. Draper (D. Appleton & Co., New York); History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages, 3 vol., History of the Inquisition in Spain, 4 vol., by Henry C. Lea (The Mac-

millan Co., New York); A Short History of the Inquisition, by E. M. Macdonald (The Truth Seeker Co., New York); Memoirs of Extraordinary Popular Delusions, by Charles Mackay (E. P. Dutton & Co., New York).

As to Jesus and the Trinity:

History of the Dogma of the Deity of Jesus, by Albert Réville (Williams & Norgate, London); The Sources of our Knowledge of the Life of Jesus, by Paul Wernle; The Trinity and the Incarnation, by Richard Armstrong (American Unitarian Association); The Evolution of Trinitarianism, by Levi L. Paine (Houghton-Mifflin Co., Boston); History of the Christian Religion to the Year Two Hundred, by C. B. Waite (C. B. Waite & Co., Chicago); History of Dogma, 7 vol., by Adolph Harnack (Little, Brown & Co., Boston); Life of Jesus, by David Strauss (The Macmillan Co., New York); Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chapters 21, 27, 47, by Edward Gibbon.

While in no sense a complete bibliography, these few references will suffice to point out the way to those who would find a firm foundation for their faith.

W. A. H.





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## CHAPTER I.

# The Foundation of Faith

or

## What Shall We Believe?

It was said by one of olden times: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." This bit of good advice is no less appropriate now than it was nineteen hundred years ago when Paul, its reputed author, addressed it to the Thessalonians. Had he told us by what process we should "prove all things," by what means we are to know what "is good," what a lot of bad mistakes his followers might have avoided! Perhaps he did not think it necessary to give explicit directions about so simple a matter. Perhaps he thought that all rational beings would know that to prove anything requires the exercise of their reason, that faculty which entitles them to be called rational.

Simple as seems the proposition that we should investigate or prove all things by the process of reasoning, and that we should accept, believe, or hold fast only that which to us seems good or true, yet there are many who in laying the foundation for their belief would assign to this faculty of the human mind a role of only secondary importance. Especially is this true

in religion, in which many would place authority above reason, forgetting that without reason there can be no authority.

One who would found his beliefs on authority must first determine what to him shall be authority. To do this he must exercise his reason. If the authority to be followed be a religious one, then he must choose between the Christian Bible, the Mohammedan Koran, the Buddhist Tripitaka, the Brahman Vedas, and other so-called sacred books or authorities. To "prove" these authorities and determine to which one he will "hold fast," he must depend upon his reason. He may consciously or unconsciously reason that his ancestors, his friends, and his countrymen have for generations accepted the Bible as authority, and, therefore, that it must be the authority. Or he may carefully read, study, and compare all these sacred books, and then, by a more complex process of reasoning, may decide to accept the Bible or some other book; or he may reject all of them.

If he should accept the Bible as authority, then by further reasoning he must determine which of the various versions of the book he will follow. In the same way, he must decide if this authority is fallible or infallible; whether it is authority on all subjects or only on certain subjects. By some process of reasoning he must reconcile or explain away all the apparent

contradictions in this authoritative book, and by reasoning he must determine the meaning of every sentence in the book. Back of every decision, back of every belief is some kind of reasoning, either conscious or unconscious, simple or complex, logical or illogical. No authority can be authority to any one until it has been accepted as such by that higher authority, his reason,—that authority which to each individual is superior to all others. However crude, imperfect, or unreliable that higher authority may be, it is always the court of last resort.

As has been so ably pointed out by others, if a superhuman revelation has really ever been given to man, it could be such a revelation only to those who were the direct recipients of it. To all others it is merely a human revelation, a matter of human testimony. If gods or angels really did talk to Mohammed, their message was a superhuman revelation only to him; to all others it is but a human revelation from Mohammed. The truth or falsity of this revelation each person must determine for himself by using his reason.

When it is claimed that any person whosoever is or has been in more direct communication with the Infinite than that possible to ordinary mortals, and when it is claimed that such person has received a revelation from such source, the evidence of such claim should be ex-

amined by each individual in the light of reason, and by that light must each determine for himself whether he will accept the claim as true. It matters not whether the claimant be a Moses or a Mohammed, a Joshua or a Joseph Smith; the claim of each should be subjected to the same scrutiny. Only thus can we hope to learn the truth. Likewise, if any assume to have unusual or more direct influence with the Supreme Ruler than that possessed by humanity in general, these claims, too, must be judged in the light of reason. It matters not if the claimant be a fortune-telling mendicant who for the price of a meal will agree to change the decrees of fate, or if he be an infallible pope who for other considerations will presume to influence the destiny of the soul of man: all such claims must be tried alike before the bar of reason.

Even beliefs that are founded on the testimony of others are really based on reason; for we must always use our reason to determine the value of testimony. Hence, in the last analysis, belief is always based on reason. A belief based on insufficient or illogical reasoning we call prejudice or credulity. One based on unconscious reasoning by a specialized process we call instinct. When we can demonstrate a belief to be true, then it becomes knowledge or human experience.

As rational beings we may be justified in

believing or accepting as true certain theories which as yet we can not demonstrate. Reasoning from the things we know, or from those we think we know, we may come to believe that there is that in man which survives the change we call death,—a something we call the soul. We can not demonstrate this to be true and thus class it with facts, but as the belief does not contradict human experience or knowledge, we are justified in holding such belief if it does no violence to our reason.

Naturally, human beliefs will vary much, because human ability to reason logically varies much, and because the premises from which we start also vary. But as unreliable as is human reason, and as uncertain as are the beliefs to which it leads us, it is the only evidence we have of those things of which we can not know. When we stray from the beaten path of knowledge, reason is our safest guide; on the shoreless ocean of speculation, reason is our surest compass.

How irrational then must be any belief based on authority; how unjust any creed which would make reason subservient to revelation; how absurd any plan of salvation which demands of all human beings a definite and uniform belief about things unknown and unknowable. Imagine if possible an all-wise, all-just God creating man, endowing him with reason

to guide him, and then damning him because that reason led him astray. If we must use our reason whether we will or not, and if reason is our safest guide in dealing with the unknown, why try to lay it aside? Why not follow where it leads, especially in dealing with such important subjects as God, the Bible, and religion?

In the light of reason, let us examine the foundation of our faith; let us "prove" our beliefs and "hold fast" only that which is good,—that which will stand the test of reason or experience. Let us follow this heavenly light though it leads us away from the flesh-pots of contentment, through the dead sea of our cherished hopes, over the arid desert of disappointment; aye, let us follow, though our friends forsake us and our enemies make war upon us, and though famines of doubt and pestilence of despair make us to grow sick at heart; carefully, cheerfully, let us follow the light of reason, for only thus may we hope to reach the promised land of truth.



## CHAPTER II.

# The Evolution of the Bible

or

## How the Words of Men Became the Word of God

Every great religion has its sacred book or books, which its adherents consider of more than human origin and authority. The Brahman has his Vedas; the Buddhist, his Tripitaka; the Parsee, his Avesta; the Mohammedan, his Koran; the Hebrew, his Scriptures; and the Christian, his Bible. On these sacred books the followers of these various religions build their faiths; by them they form their creeds; from them they draw their inspiration. In many respects all these sacred books are much alike. They all contain the highest ideals, the purest morals, and the sublimest conceptions of God and man that were known among the people with whom these sacred writings originated. Likewise, all of them contain much that is neither edifying nor inspiring.

Living in a land of Bibles we should know something about the origin and reputed authority of this sacred book. Not only should we know what the Bible says, but we should know what the Bible is if we are to know why

we believe what we believe. Concerning the Bible, its origin and teachings, there are two extreme views. There is the belief held by a great majority of Christians that in some miraculous, indescribable, unknowable way God wrote the Bible or caused it to be written. To them it is a sacred revelation to be read, but not to be questioned, a book to be believed, but not to be analyzed. They are prone to read the Ten Commandments, which tell of our obligations to God and to our fellow men. They repeat those beautiful Psalms which make the soul thrill with love and hope. They meditate upon the Beatitudes of Jesus, and a spirituality strange and new steals over them. They read of Paul and the Apostles, and they are filled with an ardent desire to bring all mankind unto a realization of the higher things of life. Like a fond, indulgent mother who can see no evil in her erring son, they close their eyes to those parts of the Bible which are degrading to man and a blasphemy to God. They judge the whole by that which is good, and declare the book from cover to cover to be absolutely and literally the direct and infallible Word of God. With them, when science and the Bible conflict, science is wrong; when human experience and the Bible disagree, human experience stands for naught; when reason and the Bible are opposed, reason must go.

Then there is another extreme class. They know the history of the Bible. They see the many absurdities and contradictions in its pages. They hear how the laws of nature are set aside at the request of human beings. They read how the sun in his eternal rounds of night and day was even stopped at the command of Joshua that the Chosen People might have more time to complete their bloody slaughter. They read in the twenty-first and twenty-second chapters of Deuteronomy that it was God's command that a disobedient son and a fallen woman should be stoned to death. In the thirteenth chapter they read: "If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend which is as thine own soul, shall entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods \* \* \* thou shall surely kill him; thine hand shall be the first upon him to put him to death." In the sixth chapter of Second Samuel they read how the law of the Lord was kept in an ark which no man dare touch, and how once when the ark was being moved on an ox-cart, the oxen stumbled and the driver, Uzzah, put forth his hand to steady the ark, lest it fall. "And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error, and he died by the ark of God." Again they read in First Samuel, the sixth chapter, how the people of

Bethshemesh were curious concerning the ark and looked inside of it. For this the Lord "smote of the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of Jehovah, he smote of the people seventy men and fifty thousand men." This class reads these and hundreds of similar passages in the Bible and their sense of justice and humanity cries out against attributing such outrages to God. They judge the whole by that which is bad, and declare the Bible to be the work of men, and bad men at that, who are trying to shoulder the responsibility of their crimes and meanness upon an unprotesting God.

Neither of these conceptions of the Bible is acceptable to the scientific mind, for neither of them is justified by the evidence concerning it. But there is a conception of the Bible which does no violence to truth, to reason, or to the fundamental teachings of any true religion. This true and rational conception, which is slowly but surely supplanting the old superstitious belief, is arrived at by a study of the origin, growth, and character of the Bible.

When one affirms that to be true which is contrary to reason and human experience, he must offer positive evidence of the truth of his claim before rational men are expected to believe. If such evidence cannot be produced, then the claim falls without being refuted. For

example, Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, says that an angel appeared to him and told him to dig in the earth at a certain place. He says he did as commanded and found a book with gold leaves, on which were writings in an unknown tongue. With the book was a pair of spectacles, by using which he was able to read and translate the writings into English. As evidence of the truth of this wonderful story he offers us the translation he made, which is called the Book of Mormon. Do you believe this story? I do not. We are under no obligations to believe it. Joseph Smith has offered no reliable evidence of this wonderful tale, and as his story is contrary to reason and human experience, we must refuse to consider the matter seriously. We are not called upon to disprove the miraculous origin of this Mormon Bible. The Mormons must prove it.

The same holds good with reference to the Christian Bible. When any affirm that it is of more than human origin and authority, we are not called upon to disprove their claim, but they must offer some positive evidence of the truth of their assertion. This they try to avoid by endeavoring to shift the burden of proof upon the disbeliever. To do this they assert that ancient traditions and beliefs must be accepted as true unless disproven. The assumption that the antiquity of a tradition or

belief is evidence of its truthfulness holds good only when such traditions and beliefs are not contrary to reason and human experience. If ancient traditions are to be accepted as true regardless of their character or source, then we must accept the sacred writings of the Brahmans, the Buddhists, the Parsees and many others whose traditions of superhuman origin are far more ancient than those of the Christian Bible. No, the burden of proof can not be shifted to the disbeliever.

Let us examine some of the other evidence offered and see if it is sufficient to establish a belief in the extraordinary claims that are made for the Bible. First, we are told that the Bible itself claims to be of more than human origin. This is a mistake. Nowhere does the Bible claim to be the Word of God. There are certain passages in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, which do claim to be the direct Word of God, though these passages are comparatively few. But unless we are offered some reasonably certain evidence that God really did say these things to these men, we must refuse to accept these passages as literally true. We refuse to believe that God spoke to Joseph Smith, to Buddha, and to other men, and we can do no less with Moses, Aaron, or Isaiah; for there is no more evidence of the one than of the other.

The closing verses of Revelation are often

quoted by superficial readers as a Bible declaration that the entire Bible is the infallible and unchanging Word of God. The Revised Version reads: "I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophesy of this book, if any man add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophesy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book." A careful reading of these verses will show that they refer only to the book of Revelation and not to the entire sixty-six books of the Bible. Nor could these passages mean otherwise; for as we shall see later, the Bible as we know it was not in existence when the book of Revelation was written.

Again, it is claimed that the Bible must be of more than human origin because it is more profound, more beautiful, and more inspiring than other books. Even if this claim of superior excellence were true, it would certainly not imply that the whole or any part of the Bible is the superhuman Word of God. No other dramatist ever wrote as did Shakespeare; no other poet sang as did Homer; no other orator spoke like Demosthenes. Were these men and their works, therefore, more than human? No, superior excellence can not be

accepted as evidence of superhuman origin. Then, too, there is much in the Bible that is far from beautiful and inspiring. Take the book of Esther—it is but a tale of vice and drunken debauchery, of crime and murder. Nowhere does the name of God appear in the whole book. In it there is but one decent character, and she receives no word of commendation from the writer, but is rather condemned. If the beauty and spirituality of some of the Bible passages indicate that they are of God, then the book of Esther and some of the other Old Testament passages would just as truly indicate that they are of the Devil.

Another bit of testimony offered as to the superhuman origin and authority of the Bible is that certain Bible characters prophesied or foretold certain events. Even if these reputed prophesies were genuine, it would only indicate that those who made them were good judges of the trend of human events, or that they had extraordinary powers of intuition. A few such prophesies would certainly not indicate that all the books of the Bible are of superhuman origin and authority. Reputed prophesies of future events which later came true are found in other books both sacred and profane, yet these books are not on that account regarded as of other than human origin.

The last evidence offered as to the superhuman



origin and character of the Bible is what is called the *evidence of the spirit*, or *spiritual insight*. This so-called evidence is said to be a sort of spiritual consciousness, which some believers claim assures them that the Bible is the Word of God. This same sort of evidence is offered by many as proof of other creeds and doctrines. The average mortal can see little difference between this spiritual insight and an ordinary belief based on desire and imagination. Spiritual insight as reliable evidence is open to two serious objections. First, it is evidence which those of us not so gifted can not verify, so it can be no evidence to us. Second, those gifted with spiritual insight do not always agree in their testimony. As we shall see later, they disagree much among themselves concerning matters where a little common sense and reason and a little less spiritual insight would have caused them to differ less. When those gifted with spiritual insight can not agree, ordinary mortals had best follow the dictates of their reason. There has never been, nor can there be, any evidence offered for the superhuman origin and authority of the Bible but what would apply equally well to other so-called sacred books.

If we accept the Bible as of human origin and authority, we will expect it to partake of the natures of the men who wrote it. We can then

overlook the mistakes and excuse the human weaknesses portrayed in the book. But if we accept the Bible as a superhuman revelation from God, we must expect it to be of the nature of God, perfect in every detail, free from errors and contradictions, and infallible in every subject of which it treats. That the Bible does not measure up to this divine standard of perfection is well known to every Bible scholar. Time will not permit our citing the numerous mistakes and contradictions which are so prominent in the Bible. Voltaire, Paine, Ingersoll, and other infidel writers have long emphasized these imperfections. One infidel writer has compiled a whole book of Bible contradictions.

Christian Bible scholars in general have now come to know and admit these errors and contradictions. Dr. Briggs, Professor of Theology in the Union Theological Seminary in New York, some years ago, in his famous inaugural address, said: "It has been taught in recent years, and is still taught by some theologians that one proved error destroys the authority of the Scriptures. I shall venture to affirm that, so far as I can see, there are errors in the Scriptures that no one has been able to explain away; and the theory that they are not in the original text is sheer assumption upon which no mind can rest with certainty. If such errors destroy the authority of the Bible, it is already

destroyed for historians. Men can not shut their eyes to truth and facts. But on what authority do these theologians drive men from the Bible by their theory of inerrancy? The Bible itself nowhere makes this claim. The creeds of the Church nowhere sanction it. It is a ghost of modern evangelicalism to frighten children." For this statement Dr. Briggs was condemned by the Presbyterian Church and excluded from fellowship.

Dr. Gladden, a profound Bible scholar of the Congregational Church, says that the Bible is not infallible in the sense in which it is popularly supposed to be. In it, he says, "human ignorance and error have been suffered to mingle with the stream of living water throughout all its course; if our assurance of salvation were made to depend upon our knowledge that every word in the Bible was of divine origin, our hope of eternal life would be altogether insecure." He further says the Bible is not infallible scientifically. It is not infallible historically. It is not infallible morally. And he says "the attempt of any intelligent man to maintain the theoretical and ideal infallibility of all parts of the writings is a criminal blunder."

Even Jesus frequently showed his disrespect and disapproval of many of the Old Testament laws and customs. He said: "Ye have heard

that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil; but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." Again he said: "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love your enemies."

Likewise, the evidence of science is opposed to the infallibility of the Bible. This evidence may be summed up in the words of Professor Huxley, who said that the order of generation as demonstrated by geology can not be harmonized with the process of creation as told in Genesis, even though the seven days of creation be considered as seven indefinite periods of time.

But the greatest of all testimony against the superhuman origin and authority of the Bible is the history of the evolution of the book itself and the formation of the canon. The canon is those books which constitute the Bible.

The Old Testament is a collection of thirty-nine books, written by various authors during a period of about one thousand years. The Hebrews divided it into three divisions. The first division was called The Law. It consisted of the first five books of the Bible. These five books contain the early traditions, history, and laws of the Hebrew people up to

about 1400 B. C. The second division of the Old Testament they called The Prophets. It included twenty-three books. Generally speaking, these twenty-three books are the records of the traditions, history, and customs of the Hebrew people from where The Law leaves off, or from about 1400 B. C. to about 400 B. C. The third group of the Hebrew Scriptures was called The Writings. It consisted of eleven books of a varied character, such as Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Daniel, Esther, and others. The Jews held The Law in high esteem. It was regarded by them as more sacred and authoritative than The Prophets, while The Prophets were held as more sacred than The Writings. In fact, The Writings can hardly be said to have been regarded as sacred at all.

Before the Babylonian captivity, the Hebrews appear to have had little knowledge or reverence for those records which later came to be regarded as sacred. Just what part of them was in existence at that time is not agreed upon by Bible scholars. It is generally conceded, however, that at least the Ten Commandments and perhaps part of Deuteronomy had been written and were in the hands of the priests. When the people returned from the Babylonian captivity about 536 B. C. and began to rebuild their temple and renew their national life, a new rev-

erence for ancient traditions and laws seems to have been kindled among them. In the fifth century B. C., Ezra, the scribe, and Nehemiah came from Babylon to Jerusalem and brought with them a certain Book of the Law. This book was doubtless substantially the same as we know it today. When, where, and by whom it was written is unknown. That it was not written by Moses, to whom it is generally attributed, is conceded by most Bible scholars.

About 444 B. C., Ezra and Nehemiah called the people together and read to them this new Book of the Law and bound the people by a solemn covenant to accept and henceforth obey it. The *Encyclopedia Biblica*, which represents the consensus of opinion of Bible scholarship, says this event took place somewhat earlier than 400 B. C., and that by 400 B. C. the canonization of The Law was completed.

Dr. Davidson, who is probably the greatest authority on this subject, says that the public authority which Ezra conferred upon The Law was the first step in the formation of the Bible canon. In other words, about 400 B. C. the people, under the direction of Ezra, had decided that this Book of the Law was of more than human origin and authority. By what reason or spiritual insight they came to this conclusion we are not informed, but this event marked the beginning of the Bible.

At this date most of the other books of the Old Testament were in existence, but they had not yet been gathered together, nor were they then regarded as other than human documents. With a sacred book or Bible once adopted, it was but a matter of time till other writings were also accepted as sacred. By about 200 B. C. the twenty-three books which are grouped together as *The Prophets* were accepted as sacred by the Jews and were added to the canon. During the next century, or by about 100 B. C., the third division of the Old Testament, called *The Writings*, was also canonized and so became a part of the sacred writings or the Word of God.

After the canonization of *The Law* there was a complete and final estrangement between the Jews and the Samaritans. So while both of these people accepted *The Law* as the Word of God, the Samaritans never accepted *The Prophets* or *The Writings*, which the Jews later added to the canon of the Scriptures. The Sadducees, too, are said to have accepted only *The Law*, though positive evidence of this is wanting.

These additions to the Scriptures were not made by the unanimous consent of the Jews. Some of these books were regarded by many of the Palestine Jews as sacred, but their right to this distinction was hotly disputed by others.

On this subject the scholarly Professor Davidson says: "The canon (of the Old Testament) was not considered to be closed in the first century before and the first century after Christ. There were doubts about some portions. The book of Ezekiel gave offense because some of the statements seemed to contradict The Law. Doubts about some of the others were of a more serious nature—about Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon, Esther and Proverbs. The first was impugned because it had contradictory passages and a heretical tendency; the second, because of its worldliness and sensual tone; Esther, for its want of religiousness; and Proverbs, on account of its inconsistencies." It was not until about 90 A. D. that a Jewish synod finally decreed that The Writings were the Word of God. They were accepted then, not unanimously, but by a majority vote.

Practically all the Old Testament was originally in Hebrew, a language which for centuries had been falling into disuse. At the time of Jesus, Aramaic was the language of the masses, and Greek the language of the educated. Naturally, there was a demand for the Hebrew Scriptures in the Greek language. By the second century B. C. they were translated, probably by some of the Alexandrian Jews. To this Greek translation there were added fourteen



other books and supplements by the translators. These additions were originally written in Greek, and were not accepted as sacred by most of the Palestine Jews, though they were thus regarded by the translators. This Greek translation, which was called the Septuagint, was the version most in use during the time of Jesus, and was doubtless the text from which he and his disciples quoted.

Thus, at the time of Jesus there were three different sacred Scriptures: 1—the Samaritan Scriptures, consisting only of The Law; 2—the Hebrew Scriptures, consisting of The Law, The Prophets, and The Writings; and 3—the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures, consisting of The Law, The Prophets, The Writings, and fourteen other books and supplements.

The history of the twenty-seven books that constitute the New Testament is somewhat more definite than that of the Old Testament. After the death of Jesus certain documents began to appear among the Christians. The first of these were letters or epistles written by Paul to some of the churches which he had organized and which needed his encouragement and advice. Later other letters or epistles by other early Christian writers came into circulation. Still later various gospels or short sketches of the life of Jesus and his disciples were written.

These early writings were very numerous. During the first two centuries A. D. more than forty gospels were in use and a much larger number of acts, epistles, and revelations. We have records of more than one hundred and thirty of these, many of which were regarded as sacred in the early Church. Some were in the hands of one bishop or church, and some were in the possession of another. From this great number probably running into the hundreds, the twenty-seven books which now form the New Testament were selected. This process of selection was slow and occasioned much difference of opinion and not a little hard feeling.

The first collection of these writings of which we have record was made by one Marcion, a heretic, about 145 A. D. His canon consisted of ten of the Epistles of Paul and one gospel or story of Jesus. This gospel was neither of the Four Gospels as we know them. So the first New Testament of which we have record had eleven books in it. Marcion did not regard these books as of superhuman origin.

The next canon of the books which was declared sacred was about 180 A. D. to 190 A. D. This was vouched for by Irenaeus, a man of much prominence in the early Church. He laid the foundation for our present New Testament. His canon was composed of the Four Gospels, The Acts, seventeen epistles, and the book of

Revelation,—twenty-three books in all. Twenty-two of these books are the same as those in our New Testament. Five of our books he does not include; in their stead he adds one book which we do not accept. Irenaeus seemed to be gifted with more spiritual insight than reason. He argued that as there were four quarters to the earth, four universal winds, and as animals had four legs, so there could be neither more nor less than four gospels. And to this man, more than to any other, we owe our present New Testament canon.

Clement of Alexandria, another Church Father, had a canon of the New Testament about 210 A. D. In it were five books which are not in ours, and three of the books which are in our Bible he ranked as of inferior authority.

Origen was another Church Father who had ideas concerning what was the Word of God. He flourished about the middle of the third century, and was one of the most learned men of the early Church. In the Old Testament he includes three books not in our Bible, and he omits twelve books which we accept. In the New Testament he includes six books which we do not have, and five of ours he classes as uncertain.

We might extend this list to great length, showing how the spiritual insight which is

said to have guided the Church Fathers in the formation of the canon failed to make them see the matter in the same light.

Up to the fourth century, our knowledge of the different books which had previously been held sacred is derived from the writings of the early churchmen. With the fourth century new evidence appears. The oldest Bible in existence dates only from about the middle of this century. There are three of these old Bibles which afford very valuable evidence about the disagreement as to the Bible canon. The oldest Bible is now in the Imperial Library in St. Petersburg. It contains all the books which are in the Protestant Bible and two others besides. The second old Bible is in the Vatican Library at Rome. It is about the same age as the first one, dating from the fourth century. This manuscript is incomplete. It ends by mutilation at the 9th chapter and 14th verse of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Up to this point it agrees substantially with the third old manuscript, which is in the British Museum in London. This third old Bible dates from about a century later than the two preceding ones. These second and third old Bibles contain, besides the books of the Protestant canon, nine additional books in the Old Testament and two in the New Testament.

There is a fourth old Bible of a somewhat

later date, which is now in the Royal Library in Paris. It was written sometime between the fifth and eighth centuries. From the Old Testament it omits three books which we accept, and instead has seven books which are not in our Bible. In the New Testament it omits three books that we include and includes three that we omit. So we see that the four oldest Bibles in existence differ greatly as to what is the Word of God.

With all this disagreement as to what writings were sacred and what were not, it was very desirable that there should be some definite information on the subject. Books were being read in some churches and accepted by some bishops which other churches and bishops declared were not sacred. So after about three hundred years of this disagreement, some of the churches undertook to decide the matter. A council of some thirty bishops was held at Laodicea, 365 A. D., in which they decided which books were canonical and might be read in the churches. The canon they adopted differed from our Protestant Bible in including two extra books in the Old Testament and in omitting the book of Revelation from the New Testament.

The decision of the Council of Laodicea did not meet with the approval of all the churchmen. Two who dissented from this decision

were St. Augustine and St. Jerome, men of great influence and authority in the early Church. St. Augustine had written much on the subject of the canon, and was the predominating influence at a council of African bishops held in Hippo, 393 A. D. This council decided that all the books except one now included in the Protestant Bible were canonical, and six other books as well. With the exception of two books, the canon they adopted was practically the same as the Catholic Bible of today. Other Church councils later ratified the decision of the Council of Hippo.

These Church councils were not General Church Councils, so their decisions were not binding on the Church as a whole, though they were accepted by the majority. There were some eminent churchmen who dissented from the decree. St. Jerome contended that the six books which the Council of Hippo had accepted through the influence of St. Augustine should not be a part of the Bible. He favored a canon which is the same as the Protestant Bible today. For the next thousand years the question remained unsettled.

It was not regarded as necessary that the Church should have a definite Word of God, for the Church itself was the supreme authority. Then came the Reformation, when Luther and other bold spirits disputed the authority of the

Church and declared that the Bible alone was the source of authority. These reformers even disputed the authority of certain books of the Bible which the Church had tacitly accepted for a long time, so the Church must needs decide once for all just what books were the Word of God and what were not.

To meet this and other demands of the Reformation, a General Church Council was called, which met in Trent, 1545 A. D. The prelates composing this council were of very different opinions concerning the Scriptures. Some favored dividing the books of the Bible into classes, those which were canonical and, therefore, authoritative, and those which were not. Others wanted all the books classed together without distinction. After thirty days of disagreement, a majority was finally secured which decreed that the canon which had been approved by St. Augustine and the Council of Hippo, with two additional books, should compose the Bible. People now attribute to God what was really the work of Irenaeus and St. Augustine. Following the declaration as to what should be the Word of God, the Council of Trent added these words: "If any receive not as sacred and canonical the said books entire with all their parts \* \* \* let him be accursed." Never before the Council of Trent was it imperative for a Christian to be-

lieve all the Bible. Never before must one believe or be damned.

Who were the men that by the authority of the Church decreed this new doctrine of the infallibility and authority of a book? Dr. Westcott, the great authority on the New Testament canon, says: "This fatal decree, in which the Council \* \* \* gave a new aspect to the whole question of the canon, was ratified by fifty-three prelates, among whom there was \* \* \* not one scholar distinguished for historical learning, not one who was fitted by special study for the examination of the subject in which the truth could alone be determined by the voice of antiquity."

Thus we see that fifteen hundred years elapsed after the death of Jesus before the Church decided what was the Word of God, and then determined the matter by a vote of human beings. However, this decree settled the question for all good Catholics.

To stem the rising tide of the Reformation, the Church threatened with eternal damnation all those who followed Luther and the other heretics. These threats of a supposedly infallible Church were not without their effect on the ignorant and superstitious masses. Luther, Calvin, and other leaders of the Reformation, met these threats of an infallible and authori-



tative Church by the doctrine of the supreme authority of the Bible.

While the reformers believed in the supreme authority of the Scriptures rather than of the Church, they had opinions of their own as to what books should constitute the Scriptures. They did not accept the canon which the Church had decreed. Their spiritual insight led them to different conclusions. The Protestant canon was not settled till more than one hundred years after the Council of Trent. In 1647 A. D. the Westminster assembly declared the Bible as we know it to be the Word of God, and also declared that seven books and three supplements of the Catholic Bible were not the Word of God. Some of these excluded books are undoubtedly superior to some that were retained.

The Greek Church followed the example of the Catholics and Protestants, and at the Synod of Jerusalem, 1672 A. D., officially decreed what should be the Word of God. They accepted the same canon that the Roman Church had adopted despite the fact that for more than a thousand years they had refused to accept the book of Revelation as sacred. So the Catholic Bible in its present form has existed only since 1546 A. D., the Protestant Bible only since 1647 A. D., and the Greek Bible since 1672 A. D.

**The Calvinistic Council of Switzerland in**

1675 A. D. carried the doctrine of the super-human origin and authority of the Bible to its logical conclusion by decreeing that "Almighty God not only provided that His Word, which is a power to everyone that believes, should be committed to writing through Moses, the Prophets, and the Apostles, but he has also watched over it with a fatherly care up to the present time, and guarded lest it might be corrupted by the craft of Satan or any fraud of men."

Before the invention of printing, Bibles, like other books, were written by hand. This process was slow and tedious, and many mistakes and alterations were made; so it is not surprising that no two copies of the Bible were exactly alike. The American revision committee is authority for the statement that there are more than one hundred and fifty thousand different readings in the various copies of the New Testament alone. Dr. Wescott says: "There can not be less than one hundred and twenty thousand of these different readings, though of these a very large proportion consist of differences of spelling and isolated aberrations of scribes. Probably there are not more than sixteen hundred or two thousand in which the true reading is a matter of uncertainty." Think of it—sixteen hundred or two thousand places in an authoritative book where we do not know which

of the various readings is the correct one. With the invention of printing, all this changed; some uniformity of text was inevitable. The Latin translation of St. Jerome was accepted as official by the Catholic Church. Most of the Protestants accepted King James' English translation as their Word of God.

To one who has followed the history of the evolution of the Bible, it must be clear that there was a time for each of the books of the Bible when it was not regarded as of more than human origin and authority. The freedom with which the Church Fathers and the founders of the Bible canon rejected some books and accepted others is evidence that they did not look upon them as sacred in the sense in which many modern Christians do. Of this Dr. Davidson says: "It is clear that the early Church Fathers did not use the books of the New Testament as sacred documents clothed with divine authority." He further says that "one hundred and seventy years from the coming of Christ elapsed before the collection of the New Testament books assumed a form that carried with it the idea of holy and inspired."

While the belief that the Bible was more than other books had been gradually gaining ground during the centuries before the Reformation, it was not looked upon as infallible—free from errors or mistakes. Dr. Gladden says that the

theory of the unchangeable and absolute divinity of the words of the Scriptures had no practical hold upon the early Church, and "It was not until the period succeeding the Reformation that the dogma of Bible infallibility was clearly formulated and imposed upon the Protestant Church."

The Reformers early taught that not only the meaning but the very words of the Scriptures were dictated by the Holy Ghost. This view was long maintained with all strictness, and many a man has been made a heretic for denying it. Within the last century this doctrine has been somewhat modified. The arguments and the ridicule of infidels on the outside, and the study and investigation of the Christian critics on the inside of the Church have begun to show the Bible in its true light. What, then, is the Bible, and what shall be our attitude toward it?

The Bible is a collection of writings by many different authors covering a period of many centuries. The Old Testament is the best literature of the Hebrew race. It records their myths and fables, their songs and poetry, their hopes and their beliefs, their religion and their philosophy, their laws and their customs, their traditions and their history. It contains much that is true and good, and much that is false and bad. It is the records of their religious

and political evolution from a roving band of idolators till they became a mighty nation, worshipping only one god. Then it records their decline. After their rise and fall, memories of their departed glories filled them with an undue regard for the records of their better days. So these writings gradually attained a sanctity and a reverence which every dying people bestows on the annals of its departed glories. Such is the Old Testament.

The New Testament records how from this declining race came one of those great spiritual leaders which have at intervals appeared among the sons of men to inspire them with the lofty ideals of a better life. Like other great and good men, his purpose was misunderstood and his teachings misconstrued by the people. He was treated to a crown of thorns and honored with a martyr's doom. After his death, like other great teachers, he was deified and given a reverence not his due, and one to which he did not aspire. The records and traditions of his life and his teachings grew and multiplied in profusion. Later some of these writings came to be considered as sacred. These sacred records are the New Testament. Later these New Testament records were added to the sacred writings of the Old Testament, and both were then regarded as of superior merit and authority. During the Dark Ages, with their dearth of

scientific acumen and critical insight, this reverence grew till at last the Church declared them to be the superhuman and infallible Word of God.

Such, in brief, is what the Bible is—a human record of the political and spiritual evolution of human beings and their growing conception of God and religion. The Bible itself teaches us this. History shows it to be so. Human experience disproves any other origin. Reason disputes any other conception of the book.

The historical facts here presented concerning the origin and evolution of the Bible are known and admitted by practically all Bible scholars and should be known to every Christian. Yet these truths are never presented to the laity. As a result, many who look to the pulpit for truth and guidance have been led into narrow and false beliefs concerning God and the Bible. They have been taught that a divine revelation is the foundation of religion, and so have acquired low conceptions of some of the great fundamentals of life. Many others who could not accept this revelation as divine have, therefore, rejected both the revelation and religion. A narrow and irrational theology has filled the world with infidels. Dr. Gladden says, "This kind of 'lying for God' has driven hundreds of thousands already into unreconcilable aliena-

tion from the Christian Church. It is time to stop."

Some will say, "If you take away the superhuman origin and authority of the Bible, you destroy religion, you take away our only moral guide and leave us drifting on an unknown sea." Not so; the foundation of religion and morals is independent of any book or verbal revelation. It is a part of man and nature. True religion is a realization of one's relations and obligations to God and his fellowmen. The Bible, like other writings, both sacred and profane, may help to point out the way to true religion and to God, but it is no necessary part of that religion, or of God. All that is good or true or helpful in the Bible will still remain for us after belief in its superhuman origin has ceased to exist. With this view of the Bible as a work of man, all its cruelties and immoralities, its absurdities and contradictions, Deuteronomy and Esther, Jonah and the whale—all cease to trouble. They are but the chaff amidst the wheat, the dross amidst the gold.

These facts take away no fundamental truth of any true religion, for there is no religion higher than the truth. No ancient tradition, no Church council, no Christian creed can decide for you or for me what is true, what is good, what is inspired, what is the Word of God. God's ever inspiring word is written on every

page of nature. The laws of nature are the laws of nature's God, not proclaimed alone to a favored few in ages past, but ever revealed in every age to every man whose mind and heart are open to receive the sacred truth. No, this does not leave us drifting helplessly on the great unknown. It leaves us with our reason, which is the safest guide when upon the boundless deep. Better to sail alone upon a shoreless sea, tossed by the waves of thought, drifting with the winds of truth, guided only by the stars of hope and reason than to be soothed to sleep by a siren's song amid the rocks and breakers of a false belief.



## CHAPTER III.

# Revealed Religion

or

## The Danger of Superhuman Authority

Today is a day of progress. Old beliefs are passing away and new facts are taking their places. The indefinite and distorted image of truth, seen but dimly by our fathers through the gray mist of the intellectual dawn, has assumed a more definite and tangible form with the sunrise of reason. The crude arts, sciences, philosophies, and customs of our ancestors have fallen short of our desires, and we have exchanged them for others better suited to our needs. The childish and superstitious religion of our sires we have found inadequate to our spiritual demands, and we have modified it to harmonize with our growing ideals. The superhuman origin and authority of the Bible, which was the foundation of that religion, we have found unreliable and unsafe; and today we are replacing that foundation by one more ample and enduring.

No other line of investigation is destined to have so far-reaching and beneficial an influence upon civilization and religion as the scientific

criticism of that ancient and wonderful book. Yet no other study has been so stubbornly opposed; no other advancement has been so bitterly contested; no other tradition has resisted so stoutly the inevitable light of truth as this ancient superstition concerning the origin and authority of the Bible. In no other warfare have so many great and good men fought alone and unaided the battles of human progress while the masses have looked on, and jeered, condemned, and persecuted them.

If we could only promulgate new truths without discrediting old and opposing beliefs, progress would be rapid and easy. In matters of religion this cannot be done.

“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 delusion, hugs it to the last.”

Unfortunately, men will not forsake their old religious habitation even for a better until the old one is no longer satisfactory. Dissatisfaction with the present is the first step toward progress. For this reason liberal Christians and other advanced thinkers are compelled to devote much time to discrediting and destroy-

ing the old faiths. They must first uproot the weeds that the flowers may grow. They must first expose errors that the truth may be seen and recognized. They must first make the old temple of religion no longer tenable before the worshipers will build better and more grandly.

This work of criticism and destruction is just as important as that of construction, and must come first. Yet the critic is often misjudged and condemned as an enemy of religion and of all that is good. Despite discouragements and persecutions, these apostles of truth have labored and suffered; they have condemned and constructed; they have enlarged and improved the temple of religion till those who have stopped to read the handwriting of progress on the walls of the temple have observed that the old conception of the Bible and religion is slowly but surely passing.

The old belief that was almost universal for so many centuries was that in some mysterious and miraculous way God wrote the Bible or caused it to be written. Not only the thoughts, but the exact words and even the punctuation marks were believed by many to be the direct dictation of the Holy Ghost. Consequently, any attempt to in any way change, correct or improve the Bible has always met with bitter opposition.

About the middle of the seventeenth century,

Nikon, patriarch of the Russian Greek Church, called together the most learned and devout scholars to correct certain mistakes which, through ignorance and carelessness, had crept into the Sacred Writings. Straightway great masses of the people, led by the monks and priests, rose in revolt against those who presumed to improve upon the Word of God. The name of Jesus had previously been misspelled, so this mistake was corrected. This led to the wildest fanaticism. The monks of the great convent of Solovetski, when they learned of the change, cried aloud in terror: "Woe! Woe! What have you done with the Son of God!" and they closed the gates of their convent, and for seven years defied the powers of the Church and State until at last subdued by an imperial army.

Not only was such belief in the literal inspiration of the Bible almost universal, but for long centuries people accepted this book as authority on every phase of human thought and activity. St. Augustine, the greatest theologian produced by the Church during the first thousand years of its existence, said: "Nothing is to be accepted save on the authority of the Scriptures, since greater is that authority than all the powers of the human mind." Bunyan said of the Bible: "Every book of it, every chapter of it, every word of it is the direct utterance of

the Most High." Cheever said: "The Bible does not contain the shadow of a shade of error from Genesis to Revelation." Nor were such beliefs confined to ancient times. Dr. Talmage said: "The Bible is either all true or all false." Mr. Moody said that, "unless every word and every syllable, from Genesis to Revelation, is true, we have no Bible, and we might as well gather together what we have been calling our Bibles and build a bonfire of them, and build a monument heaven-high to Voltaire and Paine." Sam Jones said: "I believe the Bible from cover to cover; I believe the whale swallowed Jonah, and if the Bible said that Jonah swallowed the whale, I would believe that too." Fortunately for us such blind belief is now much less common than it once was.

I would not be understood as condemning the Bible when I say that such beliefs concerning it have been a detriment to true religion and to civilization. The Bible is a valuable book, one we could not well dispense with. The book itself is all right, but people's ideas about the book have often been very wrong. It is these bad beliefs about a good book which have been such a detriment to the world, and it is our duty to help correct them.

Neither the Bible nor any other book can safely be clothed with superhuman authority. However good a book may be, its precepts may

be misunderstood, and then such authority becomes a danger and a detriment. But if that book be the ancient traditions of a less enlightened people, and if much of it is written in parables and figurative language, and if many of its teachings are uncertain and apparently contradictory, then it becomes doubly dangerous if clothed with superhuman authority. Then, too, a book of superhuman authority and uncertain meaning must have some one to interpret it to the less enlightened. However wise and good they may be, those who profess to be able to explain such writings may be wrong; in fact, they often disagree; but whether right or wrong, they naturally take unto themselves somewhat of authority. Hence the danger of believing in the superhuman authority of any book. The deplorable results of such beliefs are written on every page of history.

The Chinese have a book which they believe to be of more than human authority. It teaches, among many good things, an undue reverence for the past. Following this superhuman dictum, China has looked to the past for her inspiration and ideals and, as a consequence, has retrograded from her ancient glory. In recent years, China has begun to question the authority of her ancient traditions, and now the dawn of a new civilization is breaking over the ancient Empire.

The people of India have ancient writings which they consider of more than human authority. These writings contain many good things and some things which are not so good. Among the latter is the belief that the things of this life are of small importance, and that the most desirable thing is to renounce and be free from the bondage of the flesh. Following this supposedly superhuman teaching, these people have disregarded things physical until they, who were once the sages and the philosophers of the world, have retrograded to a race of slaves and mendicants. India's only hope of advancement lies in her ability to break from this authority of her past.

The Mohammedans, too, have a book which they claim to be of more than human origin and authority. Like other sacred books, this one contains precepts both good and bad. Among the bad things, it teaches religious intolerance and the propagation of their faith by the sword. Following these mandates, which to them are of more than human authority, the Mohammedans have been baptized in a sea of blood. Today there are signs that Islam is breaking from the traditional authority of her book, and by placing reason above that authority is tending to a higher civilization.

Likewise, the Mormons have sacred writings which they accept as of more than human origin

and authority. These writings contain some bad teachings among the good. They teach the sanctity of plural marriages. Following this doctrine, men who by nature are intelligent and law abiding citizens have become polygamists and outlaws.

We, too, have a sacred book which our ancestors have bequeathed to us as of more than human origin and authority. Like other sacred books, ours contains much that is good and some that is bad. Like the devotees of other sacred books, we have often been guided by the bad and have neglected the good our Bible contains, much to the disrepute of the book, much to the discredit of our religion, and much to the detriment of mankind. Let us reverently but fearlessly review how their belief in the super-human authority of the Christian Bible has led our ancestors astray, that we may draw what good lessons we can from their bad mistakes.

Primitive man saw stretching out before him the land and sea, broken only by the hills, the valleys, and the rugged coasts. Quite naturally he believed the earth to be a great flat plain. The men who wrote our Bible seem to have held this belief in common with the rest of mankind, for they wrote of the earth as if it were flat. They spoke of the firmament or heavens as if they were above the earth and supported by pillars.



When men began to observe and reason, they came to believe the earth was round, and that the so-called firmament or heavens was merely the space surrounding the earth on all sides. Those who accepted the authority of the book and who professed to be able to interpret its teachings protested against so flagrant a contradiction of the Word of God. They quoted from Revelation VII:1, which reads: "And after these things, I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth." Clearly, if the earth had four corners it could not be round. They quoted from Job XXVI:11 how "The pillars of heaven trembled." They quoted from I Samuel II:8, which reads: "For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's; he hath set the world upon them." These, and many other passages, they quoted from the Bible to prove that the new conception of the earth was wrong. Long and severe was the struggle between those who based their belief on observation and reason, and those who based theirs on the super-human authority of the book. The result we all know. Modern interpreters of the Bible now tell us that "the four corners of the earth" and the "pillars of heaven" are poetical or figurative language. Perhaps they are correct, but before science proved the rotundity of the earth, the interpreters all declared these passages to be literally true; and they violently

opposed all attempts to advance or sustain any opposing theories.

Those who believed in the rotundity of the earth quite naturally speculated as to the probability of people living on the opposite side of it. Against such a supposition, the interpreters spoke in no uncertain tones. The Church Fathers, almost to a man, condemned such a theory as contrary to the Sacred Scriptures. Many of them doubted if one who believed this heresy could be saved. Numerous Bible passages they quoted to disprove the theory, chief of which was Paul's letter to the Romans X:18, which says of the disciples of Jesus, "Their sound went out into all the earth." The interpreters said as the gospel had gone into all the earth and had not gone to the people on the opposite side of it, then there could be no such people. Concerning the second coming of Christ they quoted Luke XXI:27, "And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." From this passage they argued that there could be no people on the opposite side of the earth; for if there were, they could not see the second coming of Christ. Matthew also tells how the Devil took Jesus up into a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the earth. Clearly, no mountain could be high enough for one to see the opposite side of the earth from the top of it, so there could be no kingdoms there.

I would not presume to interpret these passages; but on them and similar quotations from the Bible, such great churchmen as Eusebius, St. Augustine, St. Gregory, Pope Zachary, and many others denounced this new truth about the earth and its inhabitants as contrary to the Word of God. However, the voyages of Columbus and Magellan proved that the earth was round and that people did live on the other side of it. The believers in the superhuman authority of the book were then compelled to recede from their former position. This they did by explaining that these passages were only figurative and were not intended to be accepted as literal. They said that the Bible was not written as a text-book on geography anyway.

We may not know which of these interpretations is the correct one, but we do know that until science had discredited the ancient or literal interpretation, the modern or figurative one was never thought of. The effect of this ancient belief based on the superhuman authority of the Bible was far reaching both in its opposition to science and in the persecution of those who accepted her teachings. In the sixteenth century Michael Servetus brought out a new edition of Ptolmey's geography, in which the land of Judea was spoken of as a meager, barren, and inhospitable country. The Bible speaks of this land as flowing with milk and

honey. Servetus was later tried as a heretic, and at his trial John Calvin, the founder of Calvinism, used this simple geographical statement of Servetus against him with fearful power. Calvin said that such a statement was **contrary** to the Word of God, that it necessarily **inculcated** Moses and grievously outraged the Holy Ghost. In vain did Servetus plead that he was merely quoting the words of Ptolmey, which were true as any one could see for himself if he would but take the trouble to investigate. For two hours they roasted Servetus over a slow fire of green wood, while he begged his executioners in the name of their common God to pile on more fuel and end his awful agony.

With the belief that the earth is round came the theory that it is not the stationary center of the universe, but that it rotates on its axis and also revolves around the sun, the real center of the solar system. Copernicus, who made this great and epoch making discovery, well knew the danger of disputing the superhuman authority of the Bible and the Church, and not until after his death did his wonderful theory become known. Against this hypothesis were launched all the powers and invective of the Church, both Protestant and Catholic. Martin Luther said of Copernicus and his theory, "That fool wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy, but the Sacred Scriptures tell us

that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still." Melancthon cited passages from Psalms and Ecclesiastes which he declared asserted positively that the earth stands fast and that the sun moves around it. He said: "It is a part of a good mind to accept the truth as revealed by God and to acquiesce to it." John Calvin condemned all who dared say that the earth was not the stationary center of the universe. As proof of the correctness of his position, he quoted from the first verse of the Ninety-third Psalm, which reads: "The earth also is established that it cannot be moved," and he said: "Who will venture to place the authority of Copernicus above that of the Holy Spirit?" Even John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, said that this new discovery tended to infidelity.

However, the interpreters of the Sacred Book were wrong again. With his telescope Galileo not only proved the theory of Copernicus to be correct, but he also discovered in the starry vault many other worlds greater than our own. For thus daring to dispute the authority of the book and its interpreters, Galileo brought down on his head the condemnation of the clergy and the Church. He was denounced as an infidel and an atheist. The interpreters said the theory of other worlds than ours was of the Devil and directly contrary to the Scriptures. They said that if there were other worlds and these worlds

should prove to be inhabited, how could their inhabitants have descended from Noah and Adam, and how could they have heard of the death and resurrection of Jesus? Pope Paul V., the infallible head of an infallible Church and the official interpreter of the sacred book, solemnly decreed that "The doctrine of the double motion of the earth about its axis and about the sun is false and entirely contrary to the Holy Scriptures." Accordingly, Galileo was imprisoned and tortured and made to recant that discovery for which he should have been crowned with honor.

Among those who championed this new theory was the illustrious Giordano Bruno, and well did he pay for this and his other heresies. After being persecuted and imprisoned for years, he was tried as a heretic. His doctrine of a plurality of worlds was declared to be repugnant to the Scriptures and inimical to the plan of salvation. On refusing to recant, he was delivered to the authorities to be punished "as mercifully as possible and without the shedding of blood," which meant that he was to be burned alive at the stake. The sentence was executed in Rome in sight of the Vatican. A monument erected three hundred years after Bruno's execution now stands in the shadow of St. Peter's Cathedral, a constant reminder to all mankind that superhuman authority is a dangerous thing.

But this question of the earth and its relations to other planets was not to be settled by ecclesiastical decrees, by papal bulls, or burning fagots. New champions arose to defend the truth. Long and bitter was the conflict between the champions of the book and the champions of science. As usual, science won a complete victory. Despite the fact that the ancient interpreters of the Bible, including Catholic bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and popes, including Calvin, Luther, Melanchthon, Wesley, and other leading Protestants, had one and all decreed that this new scientific theory of the universe was directly opposed to the teachings of the Word of God—despite all this, modern interpreters tell us that they are in perfect accord. They now tell us that the passages previously supposed to refer to the subject are figurative, and that the Bible is not supposed to be a text-book on astronomy anyway.

We may not know whether the ancient or the modern interpretation of the book on this subject is correct, but we do know that the belief that the Bible was of more than human authority was responsible for Bruno's being burned at the stake. It caused Galileo to be imprisoned and tortured, and brought down the condemnation of the Church, both Catholic and Protestant, upon the heads of Copernicus, Kepler, Newton and many other devotees of truth, and delayed the progress of science for centuries.

But it was not alone in geography and astronomy that the authority of the Bible was being questioned. Our fathers read in Genesis that the earth was made in six days, and for more than a thousand years they accepted this statement as literally true. The date at which this event took place was estimated by Bible chronologists to have been about six thousand years ago. Modern scientific study of the earth's surface and of the fossilized remains of animals has demonstrated that the earth is millions of years old instead of thousands, and that it was not made in six days but was slowly evolved through countless ages. It has also demonstrated that lower forms of animal life lived and died before man appeared on the earth.

The danger of such teachings was at once apparent to those who maintained the super-human authority of the book. If animals lived and died before the time of Adam, how could sin and death have come into the world as a result of Adam's transgression? Upon this new geological teaching, such eminent Protestant authorities as John Wesley, Bishop Watson, Adam Clark, and many lesser lights set the seal of their disapproval as being contrary to the explicit teachings of the Bible. But science progressed as usual, and those who accepted the authority of Genesis were under the painful necessity of reconciling it with geology.



Various attempts were made to harmonize the two. The most plausible and popular explanation was the one advanced by Gladstone. He said that the six days of Genesis were not six days of twenty-four hours, but were merely six periods of time. Huxley, in his memorable reply to Gladstone, conclusively demonstrated that the order of creation as told in Genesis can not be reconciled with the teachings of geology even though the six days be considered as six indefinite periods of time. That Gladstone's interpretation of Genesis, which has since been so widely accepted by clergy and laity, was born of necessity, and was not the natural rendering of the account is evidenced by the fact that no one ever advanced such a meaning until science made the old one no longer tenable. Relying on the groundless supposition that the author of Genesis did not mean what he said and did not say what he meant, there are yet many who profess to be able to see no disagreement between the story of creation as told in the Bible and that told by science. They see nothing unreasonable in the account that there was light and darkness, evening and morning, day and night, with plant life existing before the sun was made on the fourth day.

After so many irrational and futile attempts of the reconcilers to preserve the scientific credibility of Genesis, it is refreshing and encourag-

ing to hear such an eminent churchman and theologian as Canon Driver say: "From all that has been said, however reluctant we may be to make the admission, only one conclusion seems possible,—read without prejudice or bias the narrative of Genesis creates an impression at variance with the facts revealed by science." Dean Stanley is even more emphatic, for he tells us that the various efforts to twist the early chapters of Genesis into apparent agreement with the teachings of geology have totally and deservedly failed. Professors Oort and Hooykas, two eminent Dutch scholars and theologians, tell us that "as a scientific product the narrative (Genesis) has no value. A moderately good schoolboy in our day can easily point out the writer's mistakes." Recognizing these contradictions, it is not uncommon now to hear the Bible account of the beginning of the world referred to as a myth or song of creation. We know not whether the author of this book spoke figuratively or literally when he told how the world was made, but we do know that because the interpreters believed the story to be literally true and of more than human authority, they bitterly opposed the advancement of learning and persecuted those who could not accept their interpretation.

About this time there was also laid the foundation of another branch of learning, which yet

further discredited the superhuman authority of the book and widened still more the breach between science and revealed religion. The theory that the higher forms of animal life, including man, had been evolved from lower forms, met much hostile opposition from those who held the book to be the final authority on the origin of man. The orthodox world, both lay and ecclesiastical, with a chorus almost unanimous, condemned the theory of evolution as a doctrine of the Devil, contrary to the emphatic teachings of the Bible, and opposed to the essentials of salvation. The infallible pope condemned as an "aberration" this teaching of Darwin. This new heresy struck right at the heart of Christian dogma. If man had evolved from lower forms of animal life, then he was not created in the image of God and had not fallen from a high state of original perfection. If there was no fall of man, there was no occasion for a redemption and no need of a redeemer. Thus the theory of evolution disputed the whole orthodox plan of salvation, and it is not surprising that the believers in the authority of the Bible opposed this new discovery.

But despite the supposed authority of the book, the condemnation of the pope, and the opposition of the Church, the thinking world has gradually come to believe the doctrine of evolution. Today it is accepted by practically

all scientific minds. The reconcilers now tell us that this new discovery is in no wise contrary to the teachings of Holy Writ, for, as usual, they have found that the book does not mean just what it says and does not say just what it means. Then, too, they tell us the Bible was not written as a text-book on anthropology any-way.

Students also early discovered that an ark of the size described in the Bible would accommodate only a small part of the animals it is said to have held, to say nothing about the immense quantity of food necessary to sustain them during the long period they were on the water. The reconcilers tried hard to explain away these difficulties. Some suggested that a cubit in those days was more than a cubit is now. Some suggested that God put all the animals into a deep sleep so they would need no food. The question of how land animals reached the islands of the sea after the water subsided also demanded an explanation. The versatile St. Augustine explained this by suggesting that they were transported thither by angels. Antiquarians and comparative mythologists have now conclusively demonstrated that the account of creation, the story of Adam, and the history of Noah and the flood are old Chaldean and Babylonian myths and legends adopted by the Hebrews and transmitted as their own. They

have also discovered that man inhabited this earth long before the supposed time of Adam.

Scientific investigation has also discredited the story of the ingenious people of Babel, who built a tower so high that even God was afraid that they would carry out their design and reach heaven; so he came down and confused their tongues that they might not understand each other and could not finish the tower. This is the superhuman explanation of how the different languages originated. The God who inspired that story seems not to have had a very accurate idea of the location of heaven and its distance from the earth. We know now that this story, like many others in the Bible, was a legend borrowed by the Chosen People. The study of philology has demonstrated that the different languages did not originate in the manner described in this story.

After these and numerous other conflicts between science and the Bible, in all of which the latter came out shorn of some of its authority, the reconcilers and apologists discovered that the book was not intended as a text-book on scientific subjects but was an authority only on moral, spiritual, and superhuman things. Science has also had somewhat to say on things superphysical and in this field she has disputed the authority of many teachings in the book.

One of the prominent teachings in both the

Old Testament and the New Testament is that of obsession, or that demons and devils frequently inhabit human beings, and thus produce various forms of disease. This belief, which was almost universal in their day, was accepted by Jesus and his disciples, who often cast these evil spirits out of those possessed. Out of one woman Jesus is said to have cast seven of these devils. Out of two lunatics he cast a number of devils, which by his permission entered a herd of swine. Believing that disease was due to demoniacal possession, the priests and the Church quite naturally devised ecclesiastical formulæ for getting rid of these aforesaid devils. Numerous were the methods employed to attain that end. The evil spirit was commanded in the name of Jesus to come out. If that was not sufficient, and it usually was not, other and severer measures were employed. Physical torture was often resorted to in the belief that by thus punishing the unwelcome guest, he would depart and return no more. If exorcism, imprisonment, and torture did not cure the afflicted, as a last resort they were often burned alive at the stake. After all, was not fire the logical weapon to use against the devil?

In accordance with this ancient belief, sanctioned by the superhuman authority of the Bible, for centuries patients afflicted with such

nervous and mental diseases as hysteria, epilepsy, insanity, and idiocy were subjected to the most revolting treatment, including death at the stake. We have no reliable statistics of the thousands of physically and mentally defective who suffered punishment and even death as a result of the old superstition that devils produce disease. Both laity and clergy accepted this belief as in perfect accord with Divine Revelation. Protestant leaders were no less loyal to the literal interpretation of these teachings of Holy Writ than were the Catholics. John Calvin, Martin Luther, John Wesley, and many lesser lights persistently and conscientiously defended the theory of demoniacal possession.

A similar belief which prevailed among our ancestors was that plagues and epidemics were a direct punishment from an angry God, or were the works of the Devil. Such teachings find ample authority in the Bible, and until recent years were supported by the universal Church. As a result, plagues and epidemics were treated by prayers and holy water, by charms and non-material measures. Supporting their beliefs by the teachings of a superhuman book, its votaries persistently opposed hygiene, sanitation, and preventive and curative medicine as attempts to thwart the will of God. Scientific investigation has now amply demonstrated that physical and mental infirmities are not due to devils

but to physical and mental causes, and that plagues and epidemics are due to neither deities nor devils but to poor hygiene and sanitation. The Bible is now no longer an authority on the practice of medicine as it once was.

Another ancient superstition distinctly sanctioned by this book is witchcraft, or the unholy alliance of a human being with the Devil for evil purposes. (See Acts VIII:9; Acts XVI:16; I Sam. XXVIII:3; I Sam. XV:23; Lev. XX:27; Micah V:12; II Chron. XXXIII:6.) Concerning witchcraft and its deserved punishment the teachings of the Scriptures seem clear and decisive. Exodus (XXII:18) reads, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Many other passages in both the Old and New Testament breathe the same authority for witchcraft and its punishment.

The reality of witchcraft was valiantly defended by the leaders of the Church. Pope Innocent VIII only expressed the universal sentiment of Christendom when he issued his famous bull exhorting the clergy to leave no means untried to detect sorcerers and especially those who by evil weathers destroyed vineyards, gardens, meadows, and growing crops. The Protestants were no less energetic than were the Catholics in trying to suppress this imaginary evil. John Calvin, Martin Luther, the Mathers, and John Wesley stood firmly with Rome in



this matter. Wesley said: "The giving up of witchcraft is in effect the giving up of the Bible."

Following the explicit teachings of this book, which was to them of more than human authority, its advocates permitted and committed atrocities against innocent men, women, and children which are without a parallel in the history of the world. The delusion spread from the Continent to the British Isles and then crossed the sea to our own fair America. For centuries, all over Christendom, innocents were sacrificed to superhuman authority on the altars of ignorance and superstition. So widespread and numerous were these executions that Macay says, in France, about A. D. 1520, the fires for the execution of witches burned in almost every town. In one township there was not a family that had not lost at least one member burned as a witch. In all, some three hundred thousand human beings were executed and untold thousands were punished in a lesser degree. We of a later day and a more scientific age reject the authority of the Bible concerning witchcraft.

But as unfortunate and appalling as were the results of the Bible teachings concerning this delusion, they are mild and insignificant compared with the doctrine of religious intolerance and persecution which our ancestors

drew from this same sacred book. From the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy they read, "If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend which is as thine own soul shall entice thee secretly saying, 'Let us go and worship other Gods' \* \* \* thou shall surely kill him; thy hand shall be the first upon him to put him to death." In the ninth verse of the first chapter of Galatians they read: "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

Such precepts from this supposedly super-human book have probably been the cause of more suffering and cruelty than any other fiat that ever fell from the lips of gods or men. Complying with these mandates, the Inquisition imprisoned, tortured, robbed, and killed hundreds of thousands of Jews, Protestants, and Mohammedans because, in the words ascribed to Paul, they taught a doctrine different from that which they had received. Words are inadequate to describe the inhumanities of the Church to the unorthodox and even to many sound in the faith. The number of victims of the Inquisition is very uncertain. Draper says between the years 1481 and 1808 A. D. the Inquisition punished three hundred and forty thousand persons, and of this number thirty-two thousand were burned alive at the stake.

This goodly number does not include the much greater number who were killed in the wars precipitated by the attempts to fasten the Inquisition on such other countries as Germany and The Netherlands; neither does it include the unnumbered thousands who by flight escaped punishment and death. Hugo estimates the total number of victims of the Inquisition at five million.

But religious persecutions were not confined to the Church of Rome. Both branches of the Christian Church accepted as authority the same Bible, hence the Protestants breathed the same spirit of intolerance that characterized the mother Church. Being less numerous and powerful, the Protestants naturally have fewer crimes charged to their account. Martin Luther asserted the right to punish heresy. John Knox appealed to the Old Testament to support his contention that those who were guilty of idolatry might justly be put to death. John Calvin believed in punishing heretics. He had Servetus burned at the stake and wrote a book in defense of religious persecution. The Protestants not only retaliated upon the Catholics, but they perpetrated the most fiendish cruelties upon the Quakers, the Puritans, the Anabaptists, the Unitarians, and other Protestant bodies who differed from them in religious belief. In Great Britain, Ireland, and Holland,

the spirit of Protestant intolerance was most manifest, though it was not wanting even in our own America. We have no reliable statistics of the thousands killed as a result of Protestant intolerance or of the tens of thousands punished in other ways.

The unnumbered host of human beings directly sacrificed to religious intolerance on the authority of the Bible are but a handful to the millions that perished in the religious massacres and wars and the Crusades, all of which were either a direct or an indirect result of the belief in a superhuman authority.

And so we might continue at great length showing how this supposedly superhuman book sanctions slavery and polygamy, and how it has often been advanced in defense of intemperance, and to assist the hands of kings and despots against the common people. But enough of these saddening tales of a darker day. We speak of them not to ridicule religion, but to defend her fair name against those who have ignorantly defamed her. We recall these things not to condemn those who participated in these depredations, but to excuse them. They followed the light as they saw the light. They believed in the superhuman authority of an ancient book, and they blindly tried to follow its behests. We cite these things to show that a superhuman authority is a dangerous thing, is

an enemy of civilization, and is a detriment to the spirit of true religion.

Looking backward some two thousand years, we see dotting the shores of the Mediterranean Sea people who, with the rise of science and reason, had broken from the traditions and superstitions of their past and had built up civilizations, the light of which still glints and glimmers for us across the darkness of the intervening centuries. Then appeared among these people a book said to be of more than human origin and authority. With the spread of that belief human observation and reason became unnecessary and unsafe. Under the influence of that belief and the persecutions it entailed, the arts, the sciences and the philosophies of Egypt, Greece, and Rome were suppressed and the twilight of the Dark Ages came on apace. The profound philosophies of Plato and of Aristotle were degraded to conform to the theological vagaries of St. Augustine. Egypt exchanged the great men who had made her Museum and Library immortal for bands of solitary monks and sequestered virgins. In sunny Spain the Moorish civilization made way for the superstitions, intolerance, and persecutions of mediocrity. From Rome, where once religious tolerance held her peaceful sway, went forth the edicts of the Inquisition, and Christendom sacrificed as heretics her wisest and

her best. Where once investigation was encouraged, now to think was infidelity, and to question was to die. When the Church and book were most authoritative, the midnight of the Dark Ages was at hand and the spirit of true religion was dead. The burning fagot round the dying heretic was the only light that broke the gloom.

Then people began to think and question the authority of the past. The discoveries of Columbus, Magellan, Copernicus, Galileo, and other thinkers did much to shake the old belief in the authority of the Bible. Then came Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, Knox, and other leaders of the Reformation. They denied the authority of the Church and questioned that of certain parts of the book. Others followed the example of these leaders and began to read and think, to investigate and interpret, to accept and reject the Sacred Writings according to the dictates of their reason and conscience. From that day when people began to read the Bible in the light of reason, its authority has gradually lessened and its usefulness has increased. Just as people have questioned and discarded superhuman authority, they have advanced in science, in civilization, and in true religion. In Christendom today, those countries are least advanced who believe most in the superhuman authority of the book and the

Church, and those countries are the most enlightened where the people place reason above superhuman authority and accept as literally true only such parts of the Bible as are in accord with science. In Germany, Holland, France, Great Britain, and our own America, we see civilization and religion at their best, and in no other countries. Is there so much liberty of thought and freedom from religious authority.

To such a point has reason superseded authority in religion in these highly civilized countries that a good orthodox Christian may doubt the accuracy and the literal interpretation of practically all the Bible excepting the miraculous birth, deity, and mission of Jesus. All the other improbabilities in the book we may call figurative, or otherwise explain away or ignore. The significance of this fact is apparently unrecognized by the average churchman. If the story of creation as told in Genesis is figurative, then are not Adam and the fall of man also figurative? If there was no actual fall of man, what real need is there for a redeemer, and are not the Christ and the plan of salvation unreal? If we no longer accept as true the story that Eve had no human mother, then why do we still accept the story that Jesus had no human father? If we class as a myth the story that Samson slew a thousand men with the jawbone

of an ass, why do we still accept as true the more improbable story that Jesus fed more than five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes? If we doubt that the widow's son was raised from the dead by Elijah, why believe that Lazarus was raised from the dead by Jesus? If we disbelieve that Jonah was three days in the whale's belly and came out alive, why do we believe that Jesus was dead and in the tomb three days and then came forth alive? If we doubt that Elijah was caught up into heaven in a chariot of fire, why believe that Jesus ascended to heaven in a cloud? Are not all of these strange and improbable stories told in the same book and on the same authority? Can any one tell why we should reject one and accept another?

If we once admit that reason and observation are superior to ancient tradition and authority, where can we stop? The human mind can not serve both reason and authority; for when they conflict, she will forsake the one and cling to the other. The present position of orthodoxy, which is an attempt at compromise between the two, can not be long maintained. We must choose which we will serve. Between science and the superhuman origin and authority of the Bible there is an impassible and ever widening gulf which the reconcilers of the old faith have vainly tried to bridge. But why these per-



sistent attempts to reconcile the Bible and science? If the Bible is authority, what matters it that science and reason disagree with it? If the Bible is not authority, then why distort its teachings in a vain attempt to make it harmonize with them? The Bible or other sacred books may contain much that is good, much that is helpful, much that is inspiring; but they can have no authority that is binding. Their teachings we must accept for their intrinsic value and not because of any traditional origin.

There are many good, sincere Christians to whom the passing of the old faith and the coming of the new will bring much anguish and forebodings of impending evil. Many of these anxious souls are already crying with the Solovetski monks, "Woe, Woe! What have you done with the Son of God?" Many are already crying, "You have taken away our Bible and our religion and have given us nothing in return." No notion could be farther from the truth. Science has taken from the Bible and from religion only that which was a detriment to both. All that was good or true is still ours.

Science has taken nothing that she has not returned an hundred fold. She has taken away the cosmogony of Genesis and has given us astronomy and geology. She has taken away the creation of man and has given us his evolution. She has taken away the fall of man and has

given us his eternal progress. She has taken away the story of Babel and has given us philology. She has taken away miracles and has given us natural law and order. She has taken away superstition and ignorance and has given us reason and education. She has taken the false halo of deity from the brow of Jesus and has crowned him with divine humanity. She has taken away the authority of revealed religion, with all the dangers and disadvantages it entails, and has given us a rational and ever-growing religion, embodying all that was good in the old faiths, yet in complete harmony with all the learning of today, and in perfect sympathy with whatever progress the future may bring.

But the work of science is not yet finished. The dogmatic walls of the old faith must be torn down, for they cumber the ground where the edifice of a greater religion is being built. Already the foundations are laid, and on them the spiritual architects are building, better and grander than the world has ever known, a temple of universal religion. No narrow creed shall bar the sacred portals of that temple, but her doors shall ever open stand to all who seek the truth. Within her sacred walls the devotees of every faith may worship in security. No cup of hemlock there shall still the philosophic tongue. No crown of thorns shall there

adorn the brow of innocents. No burning fagots shall there await the doubting mind. No voice shall there command except the still, small voice of reason. On the sacred altar of this temple will rest the Bible, and every other book that has inspired the heavy heart of man. There the lowly Nazarene will be revered, and so will every other Son of God who has helped to ease the burdens of the world. The Holy Mother Mary will be adored, as will every woman who has played the sacred role of motherhood. Guided by the stars of hope and love, wise men from the east and from the west will lay their treasure at the feet of every new born babe and welcome it to a world of brotherhood, while all the worshipers join the strain of Peace on earth, good will to men.

## CHAPTER IV.

# The Evolution of The Trinity

or

## How Jesus Became a God

Broadly speaking, the Christian World may be divided into two classes, Trinitarians and Unitarians. The Trinitarians, or the so-called orthodox Christians, are by far the more numerous, including practically all the Christian denominations excepting the Unitarians, the Universalists, and some of the Quakers. Unitarians are those who believe in a first cause or God existing as a unity. Trinitarians are those who believe in a first cause, or God existing as a trinity, or as a God-head of three persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost—one of which persons, God the Son, was born as a human being of a virgin woman, without the aid of a human father, and lived some thirty-odd years as Jesus the Jew, finally being crucified by the Jews.

The doctrine of a Supreme God manifesting as a trinity, or as three *persons*, was not original with Christianity, but is a more or less prominent teaching in most of the world's great

religions. We must not on that account confound the triune gods of these other religions with that of Christianity, for they are essentially different. The Christian dogma of the Trinity emphasizes the claim that the man Jesus is one of the three persons of the Godhead, a claim which differentiates the Christian Trinity from that of all other religions. This dogma of the miraculous conception and deity of Jesus is a distinct and fundamental doctrine of orthodox Christianity.

Here let me emphasize that Unitarians make a distinction between divinity and deity which is not ordinarily observed by Trinitarians. When Unitarians speak of "the divine" or of "divinity," they mean God-like, of the nature of God, or very good; but they do not mean God. When they refer to the Supreme or to God they say "Deity." Thus they believe in the divinity of Jesus, i. e., they believe he was God-like, of the nature of God, or very good. They also believe in the divinity of all mankind, holding that all men are in a measure like unto God, or of the nature of God, and that the difference in the divinity of Jesus and that of mankind in general is a difference in degree and not in kind. Unitarians hold that Jesus was more divine than we are, because he lived closer to God or to the good than we live; and they hold that we, too, may attain a divinity

like unto his by following his example and leading the life he led. Consequently, Unitarians, though believing in the divinity of Jesus, do not accept the dogma of his deity, or that he was God, or a part of God, in the ordinary orthodox meaning of the word.

It is the growth or evolution of the orthodox Trinity that we would trace from the ancient Hebrew belief in one God to the modern Trinitarian doctrine which is apparently three Gods. We would trace it from the time when Moses cried, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord," to the fully developed doctrine which says, "We worship one God in trinity, and trinity in unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance; for there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost; but the God-head of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one; the glory equal; the majesty eternal." Take notice, "We must not confound the persons nor divide the substance," i. e., we must remember that there are three of these persons, and yet we must not forget that there is only one.

Just what Trinitarians mean by a God-head of three *persons* that are all co-equal, all co-eternal, and yet all *one*, has never been settled by them. They usually protest most emphatically against having the word "person" inter-

preted to mean person, though they refrain from telling us just what it really does mean. They sometimes suggest that *person* may mean *manifestation*, or *spiritual activity*, or some other vague and indefinite *something*, equally as meaningless and incomprehensible as the thing they are trying to define. While Trinitarians do not presume to expound or explain this mysterious doctrine of a God-head of three persons that are all one, yet they do presume to say that belief in this dogma is essential to salvation, and they do make such belief a requisite for Christian fellowship with them. If a belief in this doctrine is desirable or essential, we should have some knowledge of what these three persons or somethings are, so that we may know what we are expected to believe; yet any attempt to analyze or comprehend this fundamental doctrine of orthodoxy leads us to the most absurd and impossible conclusions.

To illustrate: the Trinitarian creeds tell us that these three persons or somethings are all equal and all one. If they are all equal and all one, then any definition or description of any one of them should also apply to the other two. Now, we are told that one of these somethings, God the Son, was born of a woman and had a human form like unto other men. He also apparently had all the organs, functions, and

faculties common to other men. He apparently possessed all that is required to make one an entity or separate person. If not, in what was he deficient that is essential to personality? Are we not justified in considering Jesus a person in the ordinary, every-day meaning of the word?

If Jesus was not a separate person or entity, not to be confounded with the other two persons of the Trinity, when he prayed, "Father let this cup pass," was he not praying to himself? When he cried, "My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?" was he not asking himself why he had forsaken himself? When he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," was he not commending his spirit into his own hands? These and many other statements attributed to him would seem to prove beyond cavil that Jesus, the Second Person of the orthodox God-head or Trinity, was a separate person or entity in the common, every-day meaning of the word; a separate person not to be confounded with the other persons of the Trinity. That Jesus was considered a separate and distinct person is apparently clearly shown by the account of the martyrdom of Stephen. The Acts VII:56 says, Stephen looked up into heaven and saw "Jesus standing on the right hand of God."

If Jesus, one of these three persons or some-



things of the Trinity, was a separate person or entity in the ordinary meaning of the word, and if all three of these somethings or persons are equal, then are not all three of them separate entities or persons in the ordinary meaning of the word? If we have three separate entities or persons in the God-head, have we not three separate Gods? Or does it take three separate persons to make one God? It would appear that the orthodox God-head or Trinity is a corporation of three Gods, and that instead of one God, Trinitarians really have three of them; yet they protest vehemently against any such implication.

That there are three *somethings* in the Trinity, all Trinitarians are agreed. They are also agreed that these three somethings are all one. They affirm that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost are all one God. If these three are all one, then it would seem that three Gods make one God, and one God makes three Gods. Three times one is one, and once three is one,—a mathematical and logical absurdity that we are expected to believe. Continuing, the creeds say that these three persons or somethings which are all one, are all co-equal, and all co-eternal. That is, I take it, that being co-equal, no one of these three is either greater or less than the other two; and that being co-eternal, no one of these three existed be-

fore the other two, for there was never a time when all three did not exist. Now the mystery deepens; for we are told that God the Son, one of these three eternal somethings which are all equal and have always existed, was conceived of one of the other two, God the Holy Ghost, and thereby became the Son of the third eternal something, God the Father, and of a virgin woman named Mary. If these three somethings are all co-equal and all co-eternal, how could one of them be conceived of one of the other two, and thereby become the son of the third eternal something? Yet this is what we are asked to believe.

If Jesus, or God the Son, one of these three persons or somethings of the Trinity, was conceived by one of the three, and these three are all one, then was not Jesus conceived of himself and of the other two also? And was not each one of these three persons conceived of the other two and of himself as well? Furthermore, if these three somethings are all one of which we must not divide the substance, and if one of these three was born of a virgin, were not all three of them born of this virgin? If not, why not? Furthermore, if one of these three persons or somethings was conceived by one of the other two somethings of the Trinity, were there then but two persons or somethings in the God-head before this third something

was conceived? If God and the God-head are one, was there then no God before this conception took place?

But the mystery becomes even more incomprehensible. The creeds further tell us that that person or something of the God-head which was born of a woman and lived as a man was crucified, dead, and buried. If these three persons or somethings of the Trinity were all one of an undividable substance, and if one of them suffered and died, did not all three of them suffer and die also? If one of them was dead and buried, were not all three of them dead and buried? and was there then no God for the three days during which they were dead?

The above outline of sequence and conclusions, which are logical deductions from the premises, are given not to ridicule anyone's religious belief, but to show the absurdity of attempting to formulate any dogma about the unknown and the unknowable; to show the folly of attempting to make this or any other dogma a fundamental of religion or a requisite of fellowship; to show the injustice of attempting to promote its acceptance by threat of Hell or hope of Paradise.

This mathematical and logical absurdity of trying to make one God into three separate persons or Gods and still have only one God has ever been a glory to the faithful, a stum-

bling-block to the doubter, and a joke to the disbeliever. The attempts made to explain this paradoxical conundrum have resulted in some of the most fickle fancies, some of the queerest quibbling, and some of the most subtle sophistry that has ever muddled the mind of mortal man. Yet around this dogma have grown the creeds of Christendom. It is considered the boundary line between orthodoxy and unorthodoxy, between Christianity and infidelity. Belief in this dogma is required by the orthodox for fellowship with them, and is held by them as essential to salvation. That this dogma of the trinity of God and the deity of Jesus is still the theological center of orthodox Christianity is well demonstrated by the fact that at the general convention of Christian denominations held in New York in 1905 A. D. the delegates of the Unitarian Church were denied admission on account of their disbelief in this dogma. At that recent date, American orthodoxy placed itself on record before the world as holding that belief in the trinity of God and the deity of Jesus is essential to salvation and Christian fellowship.

If belief in this or any other dogma is considered by the majority as a test for Christian fellowship and a passport to happiness hereafter, it behooves us who are weak in the faith to look well to the foundations of our dis-

belief, ere we exclude ourselves from their fellowship in this world and perchance from salvation in a world to come. Each one of us must decide this question for himself. Not as a philosopher, nor as a theologian, but as a layman must each one of us determine whether he will, or rather, whether he can, believe. Let us, therefore, without bias or prejudice, weigh the theories and evidence offered in support of this mysterious doctrine and see if they are sufficient to justify us, as rational beings, in making this dogma a part of our faith.

The claim that God, or the Supreme, exists as a trinity is a purely speculative assumption that can neither be proved nor disproved any more than could a similar assumption that God exists as a duality or a quadrinity. The existence or condition of the existence of a god or gods does not come within the realm of human experience or consciousness, and so can not be a matter of knowledge to us, at least in our present stage of evolution. However, when it is claimed that one of the three persons of the Trinity was a human being like unto other men, we are then no longer in the realm of abstract speculation, but we are confronted with concrete facts, facts which come within the realm of human experience and can and should be judged accordingly. In considering the evidence offered in support of the dogma of the

Trinity, we will therefore devote our attention in particular to that person of the God-head alleged to have been Jesus the Jew, for of that part, and that alone, can we know aught.

Realizing the unusual, unnatural, and irrational nature of the claim that the Supreme God of the universe was for years a simple fatherless Jew, its advocates have tried to explain this extraordinary assertion by falling back on the asserted omnipotence of their God. They affirm that an all-powerful and all-wise Creator could send his Son, who is himself, into the world to be born of a virgin woman without the aid of a human father, to live and die after the manner of men, if he saw fit to do so. Such a statement is a mere assertion incapable of either verification or refutation, and is entirely foreign to the subject. The question for us to decide is not, "Could an Almighty God do this unusual thing?" but, "Have we any reliable evidence that He has ever done so?" Superstition in all ages has answered this question in the affirmative. Stories of gods miraculously born of virgin women are among the most common of all religious traditions. History records more than half a hundred woman-born gods, most of whom were born of virgin mothers and without human fathers. Chief among these were Krishna, Buddha, Zoroaster, and Jesus. With the advancement of learning

we have one by one discarded these old superstitions until now we have repudiated all save that concerning Jesus the Jew, and his superhuman origin and character is now being more widely questioned than ever before.

Those who believe in the miraculous birth, deity, and mission of Jesus base their faith on a few passages found in certain ancient writings of unknown authorship and uncertain date, called The Bible. All the Bible passages that can in any way be said to refer to the trinity of God and the deity of Jesus are to be found in the New Testament. The Old Testament is monotheistic throughout. The Jews, who gave us the Old Testament, were believers in one God only, and are so to this day. They have always disputed the trinity of God, and have always denied the miraculous birth and deity of Jesus.

While there are certain so-called prophecies in the Old Testament which are reputed to have foretold the miraculous birth and deity of Jesus, a careful reading of them and their context will show that they had no reference to Jesus and were not fulfilled by his birth. Modern orthodox Bible scholars now concede as much.

Of what value could any passages from the Bible, or any other book, be as evidence of the asserted superhuman conception and character of Jesus? A moment's reflection should con-

vince any thinking person that no one but the mother of Jesus could possibly have known whether her child did or did not have a human father. The testimony of all others relative to this matter must of necessity be purely conjecture and hearsay. The beliefs of her family, the opinions of her neighbors, or the testimony of the Apostles on this subject can be of no possible value. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is the only one who could possibly give us any light on this subject, and she has not done so. While the evidence of all others relative to this matter is worthless, the testimony of those who presume to speak for Mary is eminently so, because, as we shall show, they contradict each other.

The first two chapters of the Gospel according to Matthew, and the first two chapters of the Gospel according to Luke, are the only places in the Bible that proclaim the wonderful news that the man Jesus had no human father, but was of supernatural origin. Even those who believe that Matthew and Luke wrote these gospels which bear their names must admit that neither of them could possibly have had any direct knowledge as to who was or was not the father of Jesus. The most they could have done was to record what they had heard or what they believed. But when we learn that the authors of these books are abso-



lutely unknown, and that they do not even claim to have seen Jesus; and when we find that these gospels were not written till late in the first century, and possibly not until about the middle of the second century, then the worthlessness of their testimony on this subject becomes more and more apparent.

Let us examine the testimony offered by these and other Bible writers, and see what they tell us as to this matter. The question naturally arises, "Did Mary, the mother of Jesus, believe her child to be of supernatural origin, and without a human father?" If we accept as true the birth-stories told by Matthew and Luke, we must conclude that the wonderful origin of Jesus would be indelibly impressed upon his mother's memory. Had not an angel appeared unto her and told her of her good fortune; had not Joseph, her husband, been told in a dream that his wife's unborn child was conceived of the Holy Ghost; had not a host of angels made music when the child was born; and had not a star pointed out to certain wise men from the east the birth-place of Mary's first-born, that they might worship him? Could the mother of Jesus forget all these things? Yet in the second chapter of Luke we read how, only a short time after these wonderful events had taken place, his parents took Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem; and there one Simeon took

the child Jesus in his arms and blessed him and prophesied wonderful things concerning him. And Luke says that Mary and Joseph marveled at the wonderful things Simeon said concerning the child. Again, when Jesus was twelve years old, his parents found him in the Temple at Jerusalem sitting in the midst of the doctors whom he had confounded by his wisdom. And Mary and Joseph were astonished, and chided him for wandering away from them. Mary said unto Jesus, "Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing," and Jesus said, "How is it that ye sought me? Know ye not that I must be in my father's house?" and they understood not the sayings which he spake unto them. The angelic messenger who foretold this miraculous birth; the heavenly choir that made glad the night when this god was born; the traveling star that guided the wise men to his manger-cot that they might bow down before him, are all forgotten; and his parents marvel when an old man prophesies wonderful things about their child; they are amazed when they find him showing unusual intelligence with the doctors; and they do not understand him when he refers to the temple as his father's house. All, all the wonderful past is forgotten, and Mary, a simple Jewish matron, presumes to chide Jesus, the Almighty God, for wandering away from them.

Later, when Jesus began to proclaim his wonderful teachings, which have since made his name immortal, Matthew (XIII:55) records how the neighbors asked, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" Luke (IV:22) says they asked, "Is not this Joseph's son?" According to John (VI:42) they said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph?" Even his brethren, says John (VII:5), did not believe in him; and Mark (III:21) tells that his friends thought him insane. Evidently his brethren and his friends knew nothing of his miraculous birth and his god-ship, or if they had ever heard of it they did not believe it. If they who knew Jesus and his mother had never heard or did not believe these wonderful birth-stories, what excuse have we for accepting them on no other testimony than that of two unknown writers who could not possibly have known that what they wrote was true.

Did Jesus believe himself to be a virgin-born God, and one of the orthodox Trinity? If he did, would he not have referred to this fact, more especially if our believing in it is essential to our salvation? Nowhere in all his declarations did Jesus refer to himself as being born of a virgin. Nowhere does he claim to be God or equal to God. When the rich young man called him "good master," Jesus said, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but

one, that is God." In Gethsemane he prayed, "Father, let this cup pass." On Calvary he cried, "My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?" True, he called God his father, but he also taught that God is the father of us all. He said to his disciples, "Call no man your father upon earth, for one is your father which is in Heaven" (Matt. XXIII:9). Before his ascension, he said unto them, "I ascend unto my father and to your father, to my God and your God" (John, XX:17). He taught his disciples to pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven." These words of Jesus would certainly imply that he was not God, and that others might bear the same relation to God that he bore. His great fundamental teaching was the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. He said, "For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, my sister, and my mother" (Mark III:35).

While Jesus nowhere claims to be God or of virgin birth, among his sayings are many which imply some mysterious relationship between himself and his Heavenly Father. He speaks of being one with God, and he prays that his disciples may also be one even as he and the Father are (John XVII:11). Jesus' declaration that he was one with the Father did not imply that they were numerically one and the same; on the contrary, he distinctly affirmed, "The

Father is greater than I" (John XIV :28). Jesus' proclamation concerning himself was that he was the expected Messiah, the "Son of Man" of Jewish hopes. The Messiah expected by the Jews was not to be a god or a half-god, but a man-born human being who would restore the Jewish people to their former political greatness. When the people, inspired by his teachings, declared Jesus to be the expected Messiah, or Savior, he accepted the title, but gave the word a new significance by explaining that his was to be a spiritual kingdom, one not of this world. But enough, in no words of Jesus of which we have record is there anything to imply that he was a god born of a virgin.

Nor can we say that the Apostles believed or taught that Jesus was a god of virgin birth. According to the Acts, he was "a man approved of God", "God's holy servant", "a prophet", "the annointed one", "exalted by God to be a prince and a savior." True, Peter once said unto him, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God"; but Peter, like the other disciples, had been taught and believed that all men may become sons of God.

Paul's epistles are conceded by practically all Bible scholars to be the oldest writings of the New Testament, and the only ones of whose authorship we are at all certain. These Epistles are, therefore, of particular value in

trying to determine the early beliefs concerning Jesus. Nowhere does Paul say or imply that Jesus was God or of virgin birth. In his letter to the Romans (I:3-4), he speaks of Jesus as one who "was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was declared to be the son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness." Paul here recognizes some mysterious relationship, some mystic tie by which Jesus became a son of God, but that relationship was spiritual and not according to the flesh. In that same epistle (VIII:14), Paul further says, "For as many as are led of the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." Again Paul says, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ" (Rom.VIII:16-17.) Again, "For ye are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal. III:26). Again he says, "My little children of whom I am again in travail until Christ is formed in you." From this it would appear that Paul believed we may all become sons of God, even as Jesus was a son of God; not by being born of a virgin, but by some mystic spiritual birth. He seems to believe that we may all become Christs, or Saviors of men, by having Christ formed in us.

There is but one passage in the Bible which

explicitly teaches a God-head of three persons which are all one. In the first Epistle of John (V:7), we read, "For there are three that bear record in Heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." This passage, which is admitted by practically all Bible students to be a forgery, has wisely been omitted from the text of the Revised Version.

There are certain Bible passages which might be interpreted to imply that Jesus was more than human, though such passages may also usually be interpreted otherwise. As before stated, the only passages in the Bible which explicitly teach that Jesus was of superhuman origin and character are those first two chapters of Matthew and the first two chapters of Luke. These four chapters alone tell the wonderful story of the miraculous birth of Jesus. Even these chapters do not say or imply that he was God or one of the God-head. They merely tell that he was supernaturally born. There is nothing in these two books to indicate that they were written by those disciples whose names they bear. On the contrary, Bible critics generally are agreed that the authors of these books are unknown. There is also good authority for believing that these early chapters of Matthew and of Luke are of later date than the main text and by different authors.

There are many reasons why we cannot ac-

cept these chapters as reliable records of historical events. First, the events they record are contrary to reason and to universal human experience, and they are not corroborated by any other evidence. Neither the Gospel according to Mark, which is probably the oldest Gospel, nor the Gospel according to John, nor any of the Epistles in any way refer to such unusual events as the immaculate conception and miraculous birth of Jesus. It is hardly reasonable to suppose that all these who wrote of Jesus and his teachings would fail to mention such important events, these proofs of his god-ship, had they known of them; more especially if, as the orthodox claims, our soul's salvation depends on our believing these things. Nor can we excuse them by saying that others had recorded these events, for the books that do record them are conceded to be of later date than the Epistles of Paul and most of the other books of the New Testament. The failure of these early writers to mention the virgin-birth and god-ship of Jesus lead but to one of two conclusions: either the earlier Christian writers did not know of these wonderful birth stories, or they did not consider them of sufficient importance to mention. If none of the early New Testament writers knew of these things, then they can hardly be true. If they did know of them but did not think them worth speaking



about, then the churches of today might do well to follow their example.

Not only do all the other writers, either by declaration or implication, refute these legends recorded by Matthew and Luke, but these two writers do not agree between themselves. Matthew says Jesus was born while Herod was king. Herod died four years before the beginning of the Christian era; so, according to Matthew, Jesus must have been born earlier than 4 B. C. Luke says Jesus was born when Quirenius was governor of Syria. Quirenius did not become governor of Syria until six years after the beginning of the Christian era; so, according to Luke, Jesus was not born earlier than 6 A. D. Thus we see these two biographers of Jesus differ more than ten years as to the date of his birth.

Both of these writers make Jesus born in Bethlehem, and both declare him to be a descendant of David. Matthew implies that Bethlehem was the home of his parents; Luke says they were from Nazareth, and only went to Bethlehem to be enrolled for taxation. Matthew says certain wise men from the east followed a star to his birthplace and there worshiped him. Luke says that certain shepherds of that same country were told by an angel of the event and went to see the child. Matthew says that Herod, the king, conspired to slay the child, and,

in order to accomplish his purpose, killed all the children under two years of age in Bethlehem and the coast thereof. Jesus was saved by his parents fleeing with him to Egypt, where they tarried until the death of Herod. Luke says after the child was born they stayed in Bethlehem until the days of Mary's purification were over, when they went quietly to Jerusalem and from there to Nazareth, whence they went every year to Jerusalem to the feast of the Passover. No wise men from the east in Luke, no traveling star; no flight to Egypt, no cruel king who kills all the children.

The story of the wholesale slaughter of innocent children is sufficient in itself to show the historical inaccuracy and the mythical character of the whole narrative. This dastardly crime is recognized by historians generally as pure fiction. None of the writers of that day, though giving in detail the events of their times, even so much as mention this crime, which, if true, would be the most cowardly act in the history of the world and one which no historian would fail to record.

Again, both Matthew and Luke trace the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph to David to show that he was of the royal line, yet they do not agree as to his ancestors. Matthew names twenty-eight generations from David to Joseph, while Luke names forty-three. Aside

from Joseph and David, only three other names in these two lists agree. Not very reliable records are these. But even if they did agree, how could that make Jesus of the line of David if Joseph was not his father, but only his step-father?

But John VII:42-43 records an incident which clearly contradicts the whole Bethlehem story. Some people who had heard Jesus thought he must be a prophet; others said he was the Christ, the Messiah; but some said, "Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said that Christ cometh out of the seed of David and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division among the people because of him." This passage clearly implies that Jesus was not from Bethlehem, but from Galilee; that he was not of the seed of David, so could not be the Messiah. Neither Jesus, nor John, nor any of his disciples who were present disputed this statement, though by not doing so some refused to accept Jesus as the Christ.

Before we can believe that a god came to earth and inhabited a human body which was born of a virgin mother without the aid of a human father; before we can deny the known laws of nature, contradict human experience, and violate human reason, I submit that we should have more reliable evidence than that

of two unknown writers who disagree as to the ancestors of this wonderful being, as well as to the date of his birth and most of the other details of his early life. But even if the Bible testimony on this subject were not contradictory and unreliable, we still could not accept this wonderful story. If we admit that a human being was once born without a human father, we cannot logically deny that the same thing may have happened before, and may happen again. If we accept as true the miraculous birth of Jesus, we should also accept that of all the others in the long list of semi-gods and immortals in the pantheon of mythology. One is just as possible, just as probable, just as reasonable as the other.

Neither can the miracles attributed to Jesus be offered as evidence that he was God. According to the Scriptures, the Apostles also worked miracles, and yet they were but ordinary mortals.

From the indefinite and contradictory Bible statements concerning him, we must conclude that we have no reliable evidence that Jesus, his parents, his family, or his Apostles ever believed or taught that he was a virgin-born god, one of that wonderful triple deity, the orthodox Trinity.

Whence, then, came this belief? Reason and history must answer. After the wonderful life

and tragic death of Jesus, time and tradition deified him, made him a god, as they had done with Krishna, Buddha, Zoroaster, and other divinely human men before. Among the Jews, servants of God were called sons of God. Among the Greeks, their great men were often deified after death. There were many Jews and Greeks in the early Church. While the belief in the deity of Jesus was growing, the books of the New Testament were in the process of formation. In the latter half of the first century, the Epistles of Paul were being written, as were most of the other Epistles, and also the Gospel according to Mark. All of these wrote of Jesus as they knew him, as a human being born in the ordinary manner, but one who by the spirit of holiness had become a son of God. The books of Matthew and Luke came a little later, and, not content with making Jesus a son of God according to the spirit of holiness, they recorded the growing traditions of their day, and by a miraculous physical birth made him a son of God according to the flesh also.

Nor is it surprising that the early Christians took readily to the idea that Jesus was a god. Both the Jews and the heathen referred constantly to the humble origin and ignominious death of Jesus as a reproach to Christianity. Other religions borrowed luster from the names of their founders; but this new superstition,

as it was called, was derived from an obscure individual who died as a criminal with every mark of infamy.

But this material conception of Jesus and his Christ-hood, or son-ship to God, was by no means universal in the early Church. The Gospel according to John presents an entirely different conception of the Great Teacher. This book, which was written later than the other Gospels, probably not before the middle of the second century, so surely not by the Apostle John, is of a very mystical tone. It tells us that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John then tells us how the Word later became flesh in the person of Jesus. These mystical passages in John are more readily understood when viewed in the light of the doctrine of the Logos. The Logos doctrine was a philosophical conception of God and the universe that was quite prevalent during the time of Jesus, having become widespread among the Greeks by the teachings of Plato. Philo, the great Jewish philosopher who lived during the first century, had done much to popularize it among the educated Jews. The Logos or Word, which was also spoken of as *the Son* or the *only begotten Son*, was a spiritual manifestation of God the Father, and was the creative power by which all things were made. John tells us

that this Word, or Logos, or Christos, was made flesh in the person of Jesus; but he makes no reference to a miraculous physical birth. Now we must not confound the man Jesus with the Word, or the Christ, which was made flesh in him. Jesus was the man, the human being. The Word, or Christ, was that creative principle of the Deity which, the author of the Gospel of John tells us, was especially manifest through the man Jesus whereby he became a Christ. Paul seemed to have recognized the Christ-birth in Jesus and in humanity in general when he says, "My little children of whom I am again in travail until Christ is formed in you" (Gal. IV :19).

While the author of the Gospel according to John seems to regard Jesus as a human being, one through whom the Logos or Christ was especially manifest or made flesh, we must not forget that there were many who did not believe in a physical Jesus Christ. In the first Epistle of John (IV :2-3), we read that everyone who "confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." As clearly implied in this passage, at that date there were some who denied that Jesus Christ had a physical body. The belief that Christ existed in appearances only was quite common among the early Christians.

Aside from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, whose authors and dates are unknown, the first reference we have in all history to the deity of Jesus appears in a letter said to have been written by Pliny the Younger to the Emperor Trajan, 112 A.D., or at least one hundred-seventeen years after the Great Teacher was born. In this letter, the genuineness of which is questionable, Pliny says the Christians were accustomed to meet before the break of day and sing a responsive hymn to "Christ as a God." This is the first record we have of his followers singing to, or in any way worshiping Jesus, if indeed this can be regarded as such. Even the disciples of Jesus paid him no such homage.

Some of the Apostolic Fathers, who lived about this time, are reputed to be the authors of certain writings that have come down to us which refer to Jesus and his teachings. These writings are so full of interpolations and forgeries that critics are by no means agreed as to the genuineness of any of them. But even if we accept these records as authentic, there is little in them to show the prevailing belief concerning Jesus. All these writings breathe a spirit of piety, but they make no attempt to formulate any definite theological dogmas.

They sometimes refer to Jesus as "one called of God," as a "high priest of God," and as the "son of God." Nowhere do they say he is an



eternal being equal to God, or a part of God. Only one of them, Ignatius, refers to Jesus as being of miraculous birth. He says: "There was concealed from the rulers of this world the virginity of Mary and the birth of our Lord, and the three renowned mysteries which were done in the tranquility of God from the stars." If this epistle of Ignatius is genuine, which many able critics do not believe, it was written about 115 A. D., and is the first time in all history that the virgin-birth of Jesus is even so much as mentioned, unless the first chapters of Matthew and Luke are of earlier date, but which were probably written later.

The virgin birth of Jesus next appears more than a quarter of a century later, or about the middle of the second century, in the writings of Justin Martyr. Justin was a student and a believer in Platonic and Philonic philosophy before he became a Christian; consequently, he was versed in the Logos doctrine of those schools. As we have seen, the Gospel according to John seems to teach that the Logos was especially manifest through Jesus. When Justin Martyr accepted Christianity, he went still further and declared that Jesus was that Logos. But he never taught that Jesus the Logos, or Son of God, was God, or one with God, or equal to God. He believed Jesus to be a separate and subordinate being. This identifica-

tion of the man Jesus with the Logos, which was the beginning of the deification of the Son of Man and of the orthodox Trinity, was just what we should have expected of Justin Martyr. He had a wonderful liking for the mysterious and the miraculous, and his writings are so full of angels and demons and wonders and superstition as to make the author of the Arabian Nights look like an amateur.

Other writings appear about this time which show a growing tendency to deify Jesus, but none of these make him co-equal or co-eternal with God. He is always a separate and subordinate person. So the first shadowy outlines of the miraculous birth and the deity of Jesus and the first semblance of the doctrine of the trinity of God began to appear in the Christian religion during the first half of the second century. Toward the close of that century this doctrine became more prominent and persistent. Its advocates even then seemed to have no definite idea concerning the subject; they merely believed that Jesus Christ was in some way the Son of God and a subordinate person of the Triune God. The first detailed doctrine of the Trinity was not worked out till more than a century later. This was an age of spontaneous growth rather than of critical investigation; so among the early Christians there were many sects with many different beliefs.

One of these sects, the Gnostics, was very numerous in the early Church. They taught that Jesus was a highly evolved spiritual entity who had a special mission here on earth to perform. Among them were many who did not believe that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh, but that he existed in appearance only. The teachings of the Gnostics were very mystical and embodied much that is now known as Theosophy. They did not agree among themselves on every point, but they were all agreed that Jesus was not God.

The Ebonites, another sect, arose about this time. They believed that Jesus was a prophet, the last of the Jewish prophets, and that Christianity was but a new form of Judaism. Some of the Ebonites believed that Jesus was a mere man; others believed him to be an angel or an archangel; but none of them believed he was God.

Then came Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement, and Origen, four distinguished fathers in the early Church, whose ministry extended from about 175 A. D. to 250 A. D. Clement and Origen were probably more famous for their writings and theology than any other Christians of the first two centuries. Like Justin Martyr, they were devotees of Greek and Alexandrian philosophy before becoming Christians; and like him, they combined in a measure their philosophic

belief and their religious faith. They taught that there is one supreme, one uncreated God. They taught one Logos, or Son of God, who was a creature created by God and subordinate to Him, and who was incarnated in Jesus. They taught one Holy Ghost, who was subordinate to Jesus Christ. Thus the doctrine of the Trinity was growing, though as late as the middle of the third century the orthodox Trinity—one God of three separate persons, all equal in glory, power and majesty—was unknown. More than a hundred years must yet pass before this doctrine is born, and more than three hundred years before it is adopted by the Church.

Then came one Sabellus who lived and taught about two hundred years after the beginning of the Christian era. He and his followers argued that if God the Father and God the Son were one God, then the Father must have suffered and died with the Son. To avoid this predicament, they taught that God was one undivided essence, only one, but that he unfolds or manifests himself in human history as three, or as a Trinity. God, the Supreme Unity, appearing in the works of nature, is God the Father; God manifesting in Jesus Christ to redeem men from their sin is God the Son; God manifesting in the hearts of his believers is God the Holy Ghost. Thus, according to Sabellus, the Trinity

is not a God-head of three separate persons, but is merely three separate activities or manifestations of the one supreme God.

Pope Callistus had a different notion concerning God and the Trinity, so he excommunicated Sabellus for presuming to think for himself. This conception of the Trinity, which was called Sabellianism or Monarchianism, spread rapidly, and its advocates were very numerous around Rome and in Mesopotamia during the first four centuries.

A modified form of Monarchianism was taught by Theodotus the Tanner. While he accepted the doctrine of Sabellus that the three persons of the Trinity were but three manifestations of the one supreme God, he taught that Jesus was a man like unto other men and that he became a Son of God by adoption. This adoption of Jesus took place at his baptism, when the spirit is said to have descended on him like a dove, and a voice said, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." Pope Victor I. soon relegated Theodotus outside the pales of the Church for having ideas of his own. The Monarchian doctrine of the Trinity still has advocates among those who would reconcile this dogma with reason. However, Monarchianism is essentially Unitarianism, with just enough Trinitarian flavoring to disguise it.

Regardless of the many sects and beliefs in

the early Church, Christianity as a whole grew rapidly and threatened to supplant the ancient religion of Rome. Then Constantine, the Roman Emperor, during a lull in his bloody wars, declared himself a Christian, and by royal decree proclaimed Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire. Henceforth Constantine and his warlike legions made war in the name of Jesus, the Man of Peace. The historian Hodgkin says, "Constantine was half convinced of the truth of Christianity, and wholly convinced of the policy of embracing it." Constantine himself said he desired to establish throughout his domain one definite and complete form of religion

About this time, Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, and Arius, a presbyter, disagreed as to whether the Son of God had always existed or was created by the Father, and as to whether the Father and the Son were of the same substance or only of a similar substance. Alexander, the bishop, did not like to have his expert testimony as to God and the Trinity questioned by a presbyter, so he called a council of one hundred bishops and condemned and deposed Arius. Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, reinstated Arius, thereby starting a merry theological war that lasted more than a century. Arius gained a large following, and the question of whether the Father and the Son were

of the same substance or only of a similar substance bade fair to disrupt the Christian Church. So fierce became the conflict that even the pagans were scandalized, and their theaters resounded with ridicule of the Christians.

To settle this question, Constantine called together the first general council of the Church. This council met in the little town of Nicaea in Asia Minor, 325 A. D. There were gathered there from Europe, Asia, and Africa some three hundred bishops, besides numerous presbyters and other churchmen. There in the arena met two great theological gladiators, Arius, who started the trouble, and Athanasius, the spokesman for Alexander, the bishop. Arius and his followers contended for one God, alone unoriginated, alone without birth, alone everlasting. They contended for one "only-begotten Son of God, God's own perfect creature, created from nothing by the will of the Father, born before eternal periods, before the beginning of time." They contended that if Jesus Christ was really the Son of God and begotten by the Father, there must have been a time when the Son was not; so the Son could not have been of the same substance as the Father, for the substance of the Father had always existed.

Opposed to this doctrine was Athanasius, who contended that the Son and the Father were of

one substance; that there never was a time when the Son was not; for he was eternally begotten of the Father, and, therefore, had always existed. This theory that the Son was eternally begotten by the Father was a subterfuge used by Athanasius to avoid the conclusions of Arius that if the Son were really a Son he must have been created, so could not be eternal with the Father, or of the same substance. Both sides agreed, as did all the early writers, that the Son was subordinate to the Father. The difference was as to whether the Son was really created from nothing by the Father, and, therefore, had not always existed, and so was not of the same substance as the Father, as claimed by Arius; or whether the Son had always existed with the Father, being eternally begotten by Him and so of the same substance, as claimed by Athanasius. "Same substance" as here used did not mean numerical unity, or that the Son and the Father were one. The idea of the oneness of the Trinity was a later conception.

At first, it seemed that Arius and his followers would receive the sanction of the council. But Constantine, in his royal robes and from his golden throne, carried the council by the pressure of his imperial influence against the judgment and inclination of the majority. Athanasius and his followers won, and they tore the



creed of Arius to shreds and hurled anathemas at him and his teachings. Arius and his followers were banished and his writings were burned. Thus was settled by a vote of human beings a question concerning which neither of the contending parties knew anything. Thus was settled what you and what I must believe if we are to reach Heaven by the orthodox route, for the creed adopted at the Council of Nicaea is the basis of the Christian dogma of the trinity of God. Here this dogma was officially adopted and christened by the Christian Church.

The creed as adopted at Nicaea is in part as follows: "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things both visible and invisible; and in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God; begotten of the Father, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, of whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, made man, suffered and rose again on the third day, went up into the Heavens, and is to come again to judge the quick and the dead; and (we believe) in the Holy Ghost."

To this was appended a terrible curse against any who say that the Son is not of the same substance as the Father, or that there was a time when he was not. The adoption of this

creed was the first official attempt by the Christian Church to dictate to its members what they should believe. Before the Council of Nicaea the followers of Jesus were in a measure free to follow the dictates of their reason, but that council put a penalty on reason and made the Christian a slave to creed and dogma, a slavery that exists unto this day.

But this council which presumed to settle the relations of the Father to the Son did not tell the whole truth. Later the venerable creed-makers learned more about God and the Trinity. So another council was called, which met in Constantinople 381 A. D., and the creed was brought up to date. Whereas, concerning the Third Person of the Trinity, the Council of Nicaea had merely said, "We believe in the Holy Ghost," at the second general council all the latest discoveries about the Holy Ghost were added, so that that part of the creed was made to read, "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the lord and giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son are worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets; and I believe in one Catholic and Apostolic Church; acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come."

So the Trinity evolved, the creeds grew, and

the things one must believe to be officially admitted into Heaven became more and more numerous. Later the Council of Constantinople appended these words, "The creed of the three hundred-eighteen bishops assembled at Nicaea shall not be made void, but shall remain forever." The third general council, which met at Ephesus, added these words: "No person shall be allowed to bring forward, or to write, or to compose any other creed besides that which was settled by the Holy Fathers which were assembled in Nicaea."

But in spite of this, the Trinity continued to evolve. As yet the Holy Ghost was not fully developed. So much time had been spent on the Father and the Son that the Holy Ghost had been somewhat neglected. The Council of Nicaea had been content merely to require a belief in the Holy Ghost. The Council of Constantinople had elaborated on the subject, and declared that the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father, and it so proceeded for the next two hundred years. In the meantime, Augustine, the great Latin theologian of the early Church, had been teaching that the Father and the Son were co-equal and co-eternal. His doctrine gradually gained ground in the Western Church until the Council of Toledo, 589 A. D., when the equality of the Father and the Son was approved by the Church, and the Holy

Ghost was made to proceed from both the Father and the Son.

Now, as might have been suspected, there were some who objected to this. The Eastern or Greek Church said that this double procession or parentage of the Holy Ghost degraded the Trinity. So after long years of disputing and theologizing and much un-Christian like conduct on both sides, Pope Leo IX. settled the question by excommunicating the whole Eastern Church; thus the Greek Church was born—born by expulsion. The Nicene Creed, with the Holy Ghost proceeding only from the Father, is the Creed of the Greek Church unto this day.

But while this Nicene Creed in its present form has existed for the last fifteen hundred years, the Trinity itself has continued to evolve. When the Council of Toledo affirmed that the Holy Ghost proceeded from both the Father and the Son, that was the first step taken by the Church toward accepting the Son as in any way equal to the Father. With this equality once accepted, further evolution to the point of complete equality of all three persons was merely a matter of time. So by about the beginning of the sixth century, we find the doctrine of the Trinity fully developed and expounded in the Athanasian Creed. This Creed, though called Athanasian, has no connection

with Athanasius, whose theology was sanctioned by the Council of Nicaea. It was named for him, but was not written by him. This creed reads: "We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance, for there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost; but the Godhead of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal." Then follows another terrible curse upon all who do not believe this creed. In the Athanasian Creed the Christian Church reaches its highest point of theological theorizing; in it is found its most incomprehensible doctrine of the Trinity.

So we have traced the evolution of the Trinity from the lowly Nazarene, a servant or Son of God. In the first century, we behold him a godly man; in the second century, he is a demigod, born of a virgin; in the third century, he is identified with the Logos, or Son of God, of pagan philosophy; in the fourth century, he becomes co-eternal with the Father, though still a separate creature and subordinate to him; in the fifth century, he is co-equal with the Father in the generation of the Holy Ghost; in the sixth century, he is one of three separate persons, all co-equal, all co-eternal, and yet all one God, of whom we must not confound the persons nor

divide the substance. From the sixth century until the present time the Trinity has evolved but little. Through the Dark Ages it passed unchanged. With the reformation it was embodied, either in the same or in different language, in the Protestant creeds, where it still remains a fundamental teaching of their faith. With the rise of the critical, historical, and scientific spirit of the last few decades, there has again appeared among some of the more advanced Trinitarians a tendency to consider the three so-called persons of the Trinity as merely three manifestations of one Supreme God, and not as three separate persons. But as yet this doctrine has received no official endorsement from the churches. Thus the doctrine of the Trinity has evolved in a circle, and we are again back to near the starting point, back to the Trinity as accepted by Sabellus and others in the early Church, and as believed and taught by other great religions and by the pagan philosophers. Of course this conception of the Trinity must needs make of Jesus a human being; for if God is but one person instead of three, then there can be no Son of God in the orthodox meaning of the word. So Trinitarianism is evolving back to the old Unitarianism.

During the long centuries while the Church Fathers were evolving the doctrines of the Trinity and quarreling about the nature of God and

the origin of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit, the spirit of holiness found no lodgement in their hearts, and for a thousand years the Cimmerian gloom of the Dark Ages settled over those who should have been following the living example of him who wrote no creed. Truly has it been said, "Where there is the most theology, there is usually the least religion," and the first eighteen hundred years of the Christian era well demonstrated the truth of that statement. Instead of the beatitudes of Jesus, this period gave us the anathemas of the Church. Instead of "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," the Church said, "Cursed are they who believe not in the Trinity, for they shall never see God." Instead of "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven," the Church said, "Cursed are the poor in faith, for theirs is the Kingdom of Hell." Instead of "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled," the Church said, "Cursed are they who hunger and thirst after the truth, if that truth agrees not with our creed."

But a new era is at hand. The dawn of religious freedom is breaking and already we can see the glad light of a better and more liberal day. In the last hundred years the Church is beginning to place facts above fancy, works above words, and character above creed; but

this new reformation has only just begun. The creeds which Christianity has inherited from the Dark Ages must go. No dogmatic belief about the unknown can be a permanent part of any permanent religion. No more can blind belief in curious creeds suffice for Christ-like character. No more is a god the ideal toward which man must strive in vain; the new ideal is a godly man, one to which we may all attain. With this as a basis of belief, this as a foundation of faith, inspired by the divinely human life and teachings of Jesus, that divinely human man, we, too, may some day hope to attain divine humanity.

But methinks I hear some one say, "This destroys our God; this wrecks our faith; this takes away our Lord and leaves us only a godly man." Well, what matters it if somewhere in the great unknown there is one less god, if in his stead we have among the known one perfect man. What the world needs is not more gods, but better men; not more believers in the deity of Jesus, but more followers of his divine example. The world needs men who realize the soul alone is the real self and who will not sacrifice that self for selfishness.

Such a man was Jesus. Born of a captive race in an age of ignorance and selfishness, he was yet true to himself. By his great love and spotless life he drew the people unto him. In-



spired by the beauty of his teachings, they declared him to be the expected Messiah, the coming king, who would deliver them from the bondage of the flesh. He heard his country's call. A dying nation was appealing to him. The groans of a servile race resounded in his ears. Memories of the departed glories of his people inspired him. The voice of patriotism bade him be up and doing. The hour to strike for Jewish freedom was at hand, and he was the man of the hour. The multitudes were with him; he had but to conciliate the priests and a united nation would rise against the pagan masters and restore the Chosen People. Visions of empire opened up before him. A kingdom was within his grasp. With the blood of his kind he could purchase temporal power. Over the bodies of the fallen foe he could march to an ancient throne, and above the groans of the dead and dying an ancient race would proclaim him *Jesus, King of the Jews*. The day was big with possibility. His disciples urged him on. But from the top of Calvary, outlined against a black and angry sky, the cold and cheerless arms of a cross beckoned him to a martyr's death that you and I might behold in him the divinely human ideal of a perfect man; and he turned his back on the throne of David and of Solomon and said, "My kingdom is *not* of *this* world!"

## CHAPTER V.

# The Gods That Are No More

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## A Study in the Evolution of Religion

The people of this world are of two ever antagonistic and opposing classes, the majority and the minority. From the unstoried days of a forgotten past, through all the long ages to the ever-present now, these two classes have ever been and doubtless ever will be. In the affairs of everyday life, the majority is called the wise, and the minority, the foolish. In politics, the majority is usually called the conservative, and the minority, the radical. In religion, the majority is called the orthodox, and the minority, the unorthodox, heretics, free-thinkers, infidels. In the last analysis, orthodoxy means majority, nothing more; unorthodoxy or infidelity means minority, nothing else.

The majority, the conservative, the orthodox are those who uphold or defend the existing order of things. They maintain that our present system of government is the best one; that our modern conception of science is the correct one; that our present belief in religion is the

true one. With this class the only hope of progress lies in conforming more closely to their present ideals. The minority, the unorthodox, the freethinkers, the infidels are those who believe that our present system of government, our present conception of science, and our present beliefs in religion are not the best that can or will be. It is the constant endeavor of this class to make our institutions conform to our ever-growing ideals. The laws, customs, beliefs, and religions of his ancestors the unorthodox may accept as good for them and their day, but he refuses to be bound by them, hoping by the lessons they have taught that he may build more grandly for the future. The essence of unorthodoxy is that we prove all things and hold fast only that which is true.

There are varying degrees of unorthodoxy. There are those who tell us confidentially that their party platform is not as good as it should be; that our government is not just what it might be; that the creed of their church they cannot altogether accept; but, they add, they are willing to let the existing order of things prevail, willing to let the old majority rule, rather than to disturb the confidence of the people in their party, their government, or their religion. Such people are of little value to the world; at best they are but brakes on the wheels of progress. The brakes may at times

be of service but they never moved a load or turned a wheel.

Then there is another class of unorthodoxy. They have outgrown the old beliefs, but still cling to the old institutions and vainly try to reinterpret the old creeds and doctrines to conform to modern truths. These are they who would put the new wine in the old bottles. These are they who would build the new temple of truth on the ancient foundation of superstition. Such people constitute a large and growing part of the professedly orthodox. Could they only throw off their allegiance to the past, they would be of much service in building this temple. As it is, they cannot build; they can only remodel and repair the old and tottering structure.

Then there is a class of unorthodox who emphatically differ from the majority. They think they see the glorious ideals of better things ahead, and they boldly proclaim it from the house top. They are filled with a burning desire to point out the way to the unprogressive and unthinking majority. This class furnishes the world with its prophets, its philosophers, its reformers, its heroes, and its martyrs.

Whether the unorthodox be mild or radical, whether they still cherish the old faiths or have discarded the ancient forms, they are all tending in the same general direction—away from

the authority of the past. By different routes and at different rates of speed, they are all sailing upon the rough sea of progress, while the orthodox majority float serenely in the shallow and placid waters of antiquity. Orthodoxy means stagnation; unorthodoxy means progress. Orthodoxy is a call from the past, a voice from the grave, bidding us stand still. Orthodoxy is always dying. Unorthodoxy is a voice from the future, a call from the infinite, bidding us onward. Unorthodoxy is an eternal birth.

All history is but the record of the successes and failures of the unorthodox. Every advancement that has been made in the world has started with the minority, with the infidel. Every man who has risen above his fellowmen has done so by virtue of his heresy. Nor could it be otherwise; for only those who are dissatisfied with the present can improve the future; only those who differ from the majority can command attention; only those who are ahead of the procession can lead the procession.

In considering the work of the unorthodox, we must remember that that which is orthodox in one country may be very unorthodox in another. Christianity is orthodoxy in America, but in Turkey the Christian is a dog of an infidel. Catholicism is orthodoxy in Spain, and there the Protestant is a heretic. We must also re-

member that that which is unorthodox in one age may be orthodox in another. A century ago to doubt that God so loved the world that he would ultimately burn the majority of its inhabitants in a hell of eternal fire was to forfeit one's right to be called a Christian. Today such doubt does not of itself make one an infidel. Nor must we forget that one may be very orthodox in one line of thought and yet very unorthodox in another. Columbus may have been orthodox on the Fall of Man and the Atonement, but he was very unorthodox concerning the teachings of the Church as to the contour of the earth. It was in the line of his unorthodoxy that he was of value to the world. Copernicus and Galileo may have been orthodox concerning God and the Trinity, but they were very unorthodox about Genesis and astronomy. It was their unorthodoxy, their infidelity, that made their names immortal.

In religion, as in other fields of thought, there never has been, and never will be, any advancement that has not come through the heretics. Every creed that has been changed, every dogma that is dead, every religion that has passed away, every god that is no more has received its death blow from the hands of infidels. Sometimes the infidels have been in the Church and sometimes they have been out of it; sometimes they have been mild and

sometimes they have been radical; but one and all, the prophets of progress have been unorthodox.

Orthodoxy in religion first appeared in the world when the untutored savage builded an altar on the banks of the River Time and paid homage to the gods of his ancestors. Unorthodoxy first appeared upon the scene when the first worshiper began to think, and to doubt the realities and powers of these ancient gods. With doubts of the old faith came desires for a new and a better one, and thus the evolution of religion had its beginning in infidelity. Doubt and infidelity are the first steps toward progress. Growth necessitates change; ancient creeds must pass away; old gods must go, that better may come. The history of religious evolution is writ in the stories of the gods that are no more.

Long years ago, in the childhood of history, when the Chosen People were a race of slaves in a foreign land, their masters, the Egyptians, were the decadent remnant of a once glorious civilization. This ancient people builded and wrought so wonderfully in architecture, science, and religion that, after a lapse of more than forty centuries, we contemplate the ruins of their mighty works with wonder and admiration. Upon their pyramids and monuments the Egyptians have left for us the records of their

hopes and fears, their doubts and faiths. From these we learn of their religion and their triune deity. We learn that they worshiped Osiris, the father, Isis, the mother, and Horus, the virgin-born son. Isis, the virgin mother—mother of god—is represented as bearing the infant Horus in her arms, while beside them is the cross, mysterious emblem of life and religion. The birthday of Horus, the son, was celebrated on the 25th of December. The Egyptians believed in the immortality of the soul and in a judgment after death. They believed that in about a thousand years the spirit of the dead would come again to claim the body which once was his; hence they embalmed the corpse as best they could, that the departed spirit, his millennium of wandering over, might not return and be left desolate.

Great was ancient Egypt; great were her gods and her religion. Then came the unorthodox and, despite the protests of the priests, the ancient faith is now no more in all the land. Osiris, the god of gods, has passed away; Isis, the holy mother, is forgotten; Horus, the virgin-born of god, is but a memory. Infidelity has laid its heavy hand upon them and they are not. Thrice a thousand years has passed and yet no disembodied spirit of the ancient dead has come again to claim the body which once was his. The gods of Egypt are no more, and their far-famed temples are in ruins.



When the Children of Israel were a band of roving barbarians, tending their flocks and herds in Asia Minor, their neighbors, the Persians, were an ancient and mighty people, whose birth was in the night of time. Like unto their fathers, this people worshiped Ormuzd, god of light, father of all. In the fulness of time Ormuzd, the god of gods, sent his son Mithras, the mediator, to take upon himself the form of man. As Tammuz, he was born of a virgin woman, and they celebrated his birthday on the 25th of December. Zoroaster, the law-giver of Persia, the great prophet of Ormuzd, a mighty son of god, was conceived by a ray of the divine reason and he, too, was born of a virgin woman. To these mighty gods the Persians erected temples of purest marble, resplendent in beauty and wonderful in architecture. Upon their golden altars burned eternally the sacred fires. Here Cyrus the Great paid homage to the gods; here Darius and Xerxes offered sacrifice. All now is changed. The unorthodox, the infidel, has come and gone, and with him have gone these gods of yore. Ormuzd, the god of light, is dying; Mithras, the mediator, is passing; dead and dying are these ancient gods, and the tireless winds heap the desert sands around the crumbling ruins of their sacred temples,—solemn tombs of mighty gods that are no more.

In India the people of the long ago worshiped the Hindu trinity—Brahma, Vishnu, Siva—three gods in one. As Krishna, Vishnu was born of a virgin woman, and heavenly hosts and traveling stars proclaimed his coming. To him the sons of India raised their voices in adoration. Of his wisdom, powers, and goodness their poets sang. Long years this ancient orthodoxy held its sway; then the infidel cried aloud, and the doubter questioned the faith of his fathers. Came then Buddha, the heretic, he that was born of a virgin woman, and he taught a new religion; yet a little while and unorthodoxy waxed strong, and Buddhism became orthodoxy for a season. But now again the infidel infests the land, and the gods of ancient India are on the wane. Krishna and Buddha, the virgin-born, have lost their heavenly parentage; their sacred temples are crumbling into dust; and alien gods and strange religions now pervade the holy places.

No gods were more revered or real than those of classic Greece; on top of Mt. Olympus they lived, and from that serene height they ruled the destinies of the world. Curious mixtures of human and divine were they; some were born of stately matrons and some of virgin mothers. For the glory of their gods the Greeks erected wondrous temples, enriched with finest sculpture and bedecked with richest

art. Of them her poets wrote their sweetest songs. The gods of Greece were mighty gods until the voice of the infidel was heard in the land. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and other heretics forsook the ancient faith. Despite the opposition of the people and the protests of the priests, with ruthless hands they tore the veil of beauty from the form of superstition, and to the vulgar multitude exposed the gods in all their nakedness. Strange gods and new religions now profane their sacred temples. The deities that were once the glory of the Greeks, the gods immortalized in art and song, now serve but to point a moral or adorn a passing tale. Gone, all gone, are these ancient deities, and Mt. Olympus' holy heights are desolate and godless.

A similar fate has befallen the gods of mighty Rome. They who once led her martial hosts to victory and blessed her days of peace with plenty are now forsaken by all the sons of men. In the days of her prosperity, religious toleration prevailed in Rome, and to the Eternal City, each bringing their gods with them, came the people of every nation and the votaries of every faith. What a variety of religions! What a galaxy of gods in Rome! Where all gods are tolerated, no god can long survive. Man-made gods are jealous gods; only by monopoly can they live and thrive. So one by one the gods of

Rome and of all the pagan world jostled each other from their heavenly thrones. Fallen and forsaken now are they; and none are so lowly as to do them reverence.

But man will have his gods, and the Greeks and Romans were not left godless. From the east, the home of supernatural religion, came the followers of Jehovah, bringing their god with them. This Jehovah, which at first was but one of many gods, had grown to be the chief, and later the only god of the Chosen People. Like that of all the other gods, his birth was in the childhood of the race and is shrouded in impenetrable mystery. From the early Hebrew Scriptures we learn that in his early day this Jehovah was a cruel, jealous, deceitful creature like unto his followers. He delighted in the sufferings and misfortunes of his enemies, but could be appeased by burnt offerings and bribed by bloody sacrifices. Even human sacrifice to Jehovah was not unknown. His followers built a box, called an ark, in which this god was supposed to abide. So sacred was this box that none dared look into it or so much as touch it. Uzzah was struck dead for laying his hand upon it; and because they dared to peep beneath the lid, this god slew more than fifty thousand of the Chosen People. Strange how orthodox gods do hate the investigator!

As the Jews became more civilized they outgrew their childish beliefs. A god in a box was no longer adequate to the dignity and demands of a growing nation; so Jehovah became less crude, less material, and within the ark the priests placed two slabs of stone, upon which, tradition says, Jehovah with his finger wrote the Ten Commandments. They erected a tent, called a tabernacle, in which was an inner room, or Holy of Holies, for Jehovah and for the box, and none save the priests might enter there. Thus have the gods ever concealed themselves from the vulgar gaze of the multitude; thus have the priests ever surrounded religion with mystery. As the Jews evolved, Jehovah lost many of his ungodly qualities, and his ark and slabs of stone disappeared from history, and no man knoweth their hiding place unto this day. The Jews became a great people, Jehovah a great god, and Judaism a great religion. For the people the priests offered sacrifices to Jehovah, and for Jehovah they transmitted messages to the people. The priests were a sort of go-between for god and man.

From time to time heretics and infidels appeared among the followers of Jehovah, and despite the protests of the priests they condemned the old formalism, rejected the old faith, and proclaimed a better one. Micah, the prophet, condemned the ancient liturgies and

bloody sacrifices. He cried, "What doth Jehovah require of thee but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy god?" The writer of Proverbs said, "To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable than sacrifice." What heresy in these old prophets to discredit the ancient institutions; what infidelity in them to disregard creed and dogma, and make religion only a matter of justice, mercy, and humility! Rank infidels were these old prophets. John the Baptist outgrew the old faith and, condemning the orthodox as a generation of vipers, he called them to repentance.

Then came Jesus, the great heretic, the great arch-infidel, and he called the hosts of orthodoxy liars, thieves, and robbers. He condemned the old faith and offered a better one. He said unto them, "It was said by them of olden times, Thou shalt do this and do this; but I say unto you do that and do that." Some there were who gave heed unto him, but the majority, the orthodox, said he was crazy, was possessed of a devil; and they abused him and accursed him of infidelity. With cries of "Crucify him, crucify him," they dragged him to the judgment hall and to the martyr's death. But the truth cannot be crucified. In the martyr's grave of Jesus, the heretic, was born a new faith; in the tomb of Jesus, the infidel, was laid the foundation of a new religion. The little band

of unorthodox who followed Jesus despite ridicule and persecution grew until they became numerous, until they came into power and became orthodox. As ever, with power and authority came intolerance to those of opposing beliefs; and the orthodox followers of the unorthodox Jesus builded a wonderfully incomprehensible creed and demanded that all men believe it.

Came then, as of old, the unorthodox; came then Wiclif and Luther and Calvin and Knox and other heretics; and they disputed the claims of the majority; they denied the authority of the past. As of old, the priests anathematized and the faithful persecuted the heretic for the glory of God and for the good of religion. But the minority, the infidel, grew and multiplied, and laid the foundation of a new belief, and Protestantism waxed strong and became orthodoxy. With numbers came power and intolerance toward those of opposing beliefs; and the Protestants builded themselves wonderfully incomprehensible creeds, and demanded that all men believe them on pain of eternal damnation.

Came then again the infidel; came then again the unorthodox, the Unitarian, the Universalist, and the freethinker; as of old, they protested against the tyranny of the majority, against the authority of the past. As of old, ridi-

cule and persecution have been their lot; but they have won the day against the hosts of orthodoxy. Through their efforts, religious freedom is now well nigh universal; free-thought flourishes in the land; heresy pervades the churches; and the changing creeds foretell the passing of the ancient faith. "So fleet the works of man; back to the earth again, ancient and holy things fade like a dream."

Yes, the Christian religion, like all else in nature, is constantly changing. The God of modern orthodoxy is no more like the ancient Jehovah than modern Christianity is like that of the Dark Ages. The original Jehovah, who was a cruel, jealous creature made in the image of man, has greatly changed. The creeds now tell us that God is "without body parts or passions." That Jehovah who walked in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day and talked with Adam, the Jehovah whom Jacob saw face to face,—that god is dead; no man hath heard his voice, nor seen his face for lo these many years. That cruel, angry Jehovah who commanded the Israelites to kill the captive women and children and despoil the maidens is now so full of loving kindness and tender mercies that he even notes the sparrow's fall. That heathen deity who once delighted in bloody sacrifices has lost his taste for gore, and the incense of burning flesh no more can bribe his



blessing nor appease his anger. That capricious ruler who, at the command of Joshua, stayed the sun in his eternal rounds of night and day will not now suspend one law of nature for all the prayers of all the saints in Christendom. That inhumane and unjust king who once was said to burn in a hell of eternal fire the majority of his subjects is now ever kind and loving; his mercy endureth for ever and ever to the prodigal; and the fires of hell are burning low. The god who once had a chosen people is now the father of us all. Even Jesus, the erstwhile virgin-born of God, is becoming human, like unto you and me. Truly gods born of women are of few days and doomed to pass away.

Jehovah the unchangeable has changed much. The old god and the old religion have made way for better ones; but the end is not yet. Evolution has not reached finality; progress has not attained perfection. Just as the unorthodoxy of the past is the orthodoxy of today, so will the unorthodoxy of today be the orthodoxy of tomorrow, and then a new unorthodoxy, a new infidelity, will rise and blaze the trail of progress through the forest of the future toward the eternal ideal. The religions of the past have not survived because, weighted down by ancient traditions, fettered by superhuman authority, they could not evolve as rapidly as their adherents; so one by one these ancient

faiths have served their turn and passed away. Only a growing, changing, evolving religion can long endure. Man's ideals are his gods; his aspirations are his religion. As he evolves, his ideals must advance; his gods must change or die; his religion must improve or pass away. Modern Joshuas may command the sun of progress to stand still in the intellectual heavens that the day of their god and their religion may be prolonged, but that sun will heed them not. Evolution is universal; progress is eternal. Gods come and go; sects rise and fall; creeds take their turn—for these are but the steps by which we rise from a lowly past to heights sublime. But the spirit of religion, the struggle of the soul for truth and light, goes ever on and on through all the changing forms and faiths.

Religion is an evolution, not a revelation; true religion is a life, not a belief; righteousness is independent of church or creed. A skeptic may be very religious; an infidel may be a great saint. When we realize that one who has broken from the authority of the past in other lines is apt to disregard that authority in religion also, we can then understand why so many of the great and good have been unorthodox in matters of faith. We can then understand why some who have become unorthodox in creed have also become unorthodox in conduct and morals. We can then understand why

those who are the conservators of the past, the priest and the Church, have so often been arrayed against science and progress.

Even in these later days, when the Christian Church has discarded many of her outgrown dogmas, revised her ancient creeds, and remodeled her antique god along more modern lines, we yet find that many of the grandest souls and greatest minds still disregard or reject those doctrines which orthodoxy now holds as fundamental; we yet find most of the apostles of progress are unorthodox in religion. By way of illustration, I might recall how Mazzini, a Unitarian, and Garibaldi, an atheist, gave hope and freedom to modern Italy; how Danton and Mirabeau, two atheists, strove to save France alike from the injustices of the past and from the bloody excesses of the Revolution; how Gambetta and Victor Hugo, two infidels, were the guiding stars at the birth of the Third Republic; how Frederick the Great, an atheist, gave the world a united Germany; how Louis Kossuth, a Unitarian, was the inspiration of Hungary's freedom; how Charles Bradlaugh, an atheist, struck the death blow to religious intolerance in England. These and many more we might cite from foreign lands to show how the unorthodox have held the banners of progress to the breeze; but we need not cross the briny deep to see their noble work.

Of the American colonies, none gave greater liberty and justice to its people than that founded by William Penn, the Unitarian Quaker, he who was imprisoned for denying the Trinity. When the heel of the oppressor was upon the neck of the Colonies, when foreign soldiers were quartered in American homes to compel submission to the royal tyrants, there came to us from across the seas one who said: "Where liberty is not, there is my country." This alien was the infidel Thomas Paine. He wrote a book called "Common Sense," in which he condemned the traditions and the governments of the past before the bar of reason and justice. This book, says Dr. Rush, "burst from the press with an effect that has rarely been produced by type and paper in any age or country." The wild dream of freedom which emanated from the brain of this heretic became an epidemic that swept the land. Only a few months and our fathers called together the Continental Congress which adopted that immortal document, the Declaration of Independence, penned by the master hand of Thomas Jefferson, an infidel. But famous books and immortal documents will not alone wrest freedom from the hands of tyranny, nor strike the fetters from the feet of slavery. Leaders were necessary to control and direct the fires of patriotism which Paine had done so much to kin-

dle, so George Washington, another unorthodox, was selected as commander of the army of freedom.

Writ in our country's reddest blood are the cruel records of the struggles and sufferings of patriotism while laboring to give birth to a new nation. Hallowed by age and sacred memories are the nightmare tales of Valley Forge, when despair in vain sat brooding over the smouldering fires of hope, and the cold, dark night of disappointment settled like a pall o'er the sons of liberty. Just when the night was darkest, the infidel Paine again brought hope and cheer in his book, "The Crisis," whose opening words, "These are the times that try men's souls," are known to every school boy. Then from far-off France came Lafayette, an alien and an infidel, to fight for freedom and humanity. In that dark hour, Benjamin Franklin, the American Socrates, an infidel, a deist, prevailed upon the Court of France to send the aid that made our freedom possible.

When the long dark night was over and the morn of liberty's day began to break, our fathers gathered together to formulate a plan of government. After due deliberation these great men adopted our far-famed Constitution, as it came from the hand of Gouverneur Morris, an infidel. From this sacred document they purposely omitted all reference to a god, de-

creeing that religion and government should forever be separate, that you and I might be free indeed.

It was most fitting that the immortal Washington, a freethinker in religion, one unbiased by dogma and unbound by creed, should have been the first President of these United States, a country dedicated to freedom. It was also befitting that John Adams, an unorthodox Christian, a Unitarian, should have been the second head of our great nation; and that Thomas Jefferson, an infidel, a deist, should have succeeded him.

I am not unaware that there are those who would use the prestige of Washington's fair name to add luster to orthodoxy. However, such claims can not be substantiated. Bishop White and Dr. Abercrombie, who were the rectors of the church which Washington attended for nearly a quarter of a century, tell us that the Father of his Country was not a Christian, but was a deist. If we need further evidence, we have it in the testimony of Gouverneur Morris and from the pen of Thomas Jefferson.

Just as the men who were first in laying the foundation of our country were freethinkers, so also were they who were first in preserving the Union. When the question of the superiority of the state to that of the nation was threatening to disrupt the Republic, it was Daniel Web-

ster, the unorthodox, the Unitarian, whose famous words, "Union and liberty, now and forever, one and inseparable," echoed and re-echoed from coast to coast.

When the dark cloud of slavery began to lower and break along the horizon, and when orthodox churches and conferences were condoning or defending slavery on the authority of the Scriptures, William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, Theodore Parker, and other freethinkers were denying the authority of the Bible and condemning slavery as wrong. When the fast-gathering clouds bespoke the breaking of the coming storm, Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas, two freethinkers, contended for the privilege of directing the Ship of State through the troubled waters of the approaching tempest. To Lincoln, the unorthodox, the deist, fell the great burden and the undying glory. When the storm broke in all its tempestuous fury and the fierce southern winds beat heavily upon her and threatened destruction, when captain and crew had dark forebodings of impending disaster, it was the master hand of Grant, the unorthodox, the infidel, who safely guided the ship to a haven of peace.

In this country, dedicated to freedom, all are not yet free. Despite her protests, woman is still denied the rights of citizenship. She has not been without her champions, and foremost

among them have been the unorthodox. The first great advocate of woman's rights in this country was Margaret Fuller, a Unitarian; and the four great leaders of her cause, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Julia Ward Howe, and Mary A. Livermore, were all unorthodox.

It is not alone in public life and activities that the unorthodox in religion have taken the initiative. In the world of science we might recall how Sir Isaac Newton was an Arian; how Agassiz, Priestly, Lyell, Draper, and Fiske were Unitarians; how Humboldt, Tyndall, Darwin, Lamarck, Huxley, Haeckel, and most of the other great scientists have been skeptics.

Nearly all of the great philosophers have been unorthodox. Of these we might mention Averroes, Mimonides, Bruno, Des Cartes, Spinoza, Hobbes, Comte, Bacon, Lock, Kant, Fichte, Schopenhauer, Hume, Buchner, Mills, and Spencer.

Among the great historians we might tell how Gibbon was a skeptic; how Bancroft, Motley, Prescott, Parkman, Palfrey, Sparks, Parton, Lea, and Hildreth were Unitarians; how Draper, Buckle, Grote, Renan, Froude, and Lecky were unorthodox; and how a strong undercurrent of freethought flows through all modern history.

But it is in the realm of general literature that we see the great and overwhelming influ-



ence of freethought. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Thoreau, Bayard Taylor, Margaret Fuller, Bret Harte, Louisa M. Alcott, and Edward Everett Hale were Unitarians. Victor Hugo, Honore de Balzac, Voltaire, Rousseau, Emile Zola, George Sands, George Eliot, Ibsen, Tolstoi, John Ruskin, Richard Carlisle, William Morris, Harriet Martineau, Mrs. Humphrey Ward, Nathaniel Hawthorne, John Burroughs, Horace Greely, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Mark Twain were all unorthodox.

Of the great poets John Milton was an Arian; William Cullen Bryant, James Russell Lowell, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes were Unitarians; John Greenleaf Whittier was a Unitarian Quaker; Edgar Allan Poe was a non-Christian theist; Goethe was a pantheist; Schiller was a deist; Byron and Shelley were atheists. Heinrich Heine, Robert Browning, Arthur Hough Clough, Robert Burns, John Keats, Alfred Tennyson, Rudyard Kipling, Algernon Swinburne, and Walt Whitman are all unorthodox. The religion of the incomparable Shakespeare is unknown.

These are but few of the great souls that shine in the glorious galaxy of the unorthodox. These are but few compared with the great and growing number of those who nominally profess the old faith, but who at heart are disbelievers. Paradoxical as it may seem, the greater

number of the unorthodox of today are to be found in the ranks of the Church itself. The so-called higher criticism, which is but infidelity under a new name and in a more palatable form, is rapidly receiving recognition. In Germany, Holland, England and America the higher critics are in control of most of the theological seminaries, and are gradually replacing the more orthodox in the pulpits. This can mean but one thing; the next generation of preachers will be higher critics, and the second generation in the pews will accept the new teachings, then the old orthodoxy will be no more. Freethought will again have triumphed, and the infidel of today will tomorrow be enrolled among the saints.

Thus hath it ever been; the doubter is the apostle of advancement, the infidel is the prophet of progress. Yet we still sometimes hear the faithful murmur in their sleep, "What have the unorthodox ever done for the world?" What have they not done for the world? But for the unorthodox, civilized man would still be in the savage state; but for the doubter, science would still be superstition; but for the heretic, we would yet be worshipping the deities of our ancestors and offering sacrifices to ancient idols; but for the infidels who have gone before, you and I would today be wooing the favor of the gods with the blood of bulls and goats.

If you would know what the unorthodox have done, follow the long and weary course of religious evolution from the lowest superstition of the past to the highest spirituality of today; observe the outgrown beliefs and discarded faiths; reflect upon the fleeting forms and changing creeds; see the fallen idols that lie along the path; behold the ancient deities that are dead; and gaze upon the rifled ruins of their sacred shrines. Would you know what the infidel has done, compare the *gods that are* with the *gods that are no more*.

## CHAPTER VI.

# Evolved Religion

or

## How Shall We Live?

An analysis of religion in its various phases shows it to be composed of two elements, mixed in various proportions, each separate and distinct, each capable of existing by itself, yet each acting and reacting upon the other so as to determine the character of the whole. These two component parts of religion are *theology* and *ethics*.

Theology consists of theories about man and his relation to the unknown and the unknowable. Ethics consists of data about man and his relations to his fellow men. Theology tells us about gods and how to please them. Ethics teaches about man and how to improve him. Theology is a thing of the stars; ethics, a thing of the streets.

Theology and speculative philosophy deal with the same subjects, the unknown and the unknowable, but they differ in their claims and characters. Philosophy offers hypotheses based on the authority of human understanding. Philosophy dogmatizes not, is tolerant, and favors progress. Theology offers affirmations based

on alleged superhuman revelations. Theology is dogmatic, is intolerant to conflicting doctrines, and is opposed to progress. Theology is revealed or supernatural religion. Much that is now called natural or rational theology is in reality speculative philosophy.

Ethics, though often associated with or sanctioned by theology, is independent of it. Ethics is founded, not on superhuman revelation, but on the human authority of human reason and experience. Ethics is elastic, ever changing, ever improving with the progress of human evolution. Elevating ethics is not peculiar to any theology or religion. It is found among Trinitarians and Unitarians, Christians and pagans, Jews and gentiles, theists and atheists. Ethics is natural or evolved religion.

In the name of religion theology has strewn her roughest rocks along the path of progress. In the name of religion she has crowned with sharpest thorns the brow of innocents. She has burned with fire her dogmas into the minds of men, and writ her creeds with blood wrung warm from human hearts. She has turned brother against brother and caused tears of bitterness to flow in anguish from weeping eyes. Theology has discredited, disgraced, degraded religion till many have cast it from them as a thing of evil.

In the name of religion ethics has strewn

her rarest roses upon the road of righteousness. In the name of religion she has crowned with garlands green all saintly souls. She has engraven in words of love her precepts upon the human heart and writ with reason her moral maxims in the minds of men. She has made all men brothers and caused tears of joy to flow in ecstasy from happy eyes. Ethics has made religion a thing of beauty and of gladness, and millions have raised their voices to call it blessed.

We who have discarded the old faiths are not fighting good ethics, but bad theology. We would not discredit religion, but would show its true origin and purpose. Those who do not distinguish between theology and ethics have failed to grasp the nature and possibilities of religion. Religion is man's search for truth and light, his longing for the ideal. It is his response to the call of the infinite, his struggle for unison with the universe. True religion is limited to no time or place, peculiar to no people or party, confined to no church or creed. Whenever men yearn for truth, wherever they aspire to the ideal, then and there the spirit of true religion is found. The form, the outer garment of religion, is temporal but the essence, the spirit, is eternal.

He who would realize the ideal must first idealize the real; he who would attain that har-

mony, that unison, with the infinite must first seek harmony with the finite. He who would become one with God must first be one with all mankind, both high and low. Religious evolution begins with the known, not with the unknown; holiness is works, not words; salvation comes through service, peace through progress. There are no cross-cuts, no royal roads to righteousness. But a way there is, a path so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. He who would promote the powers that make for progress needs no ancient revelation to guide him. He who would follow the road of righteousness needs no superhuman authority to point out the way. Reason will tell him that that which is best for most is best for all. Experience will teach him that *that must be right which is for the greatest good of the greatest number*. Utility is the basis of morality, the foundation of ethics, the essence of religion. The effort of the individual to promote the interests of the majority is the road to righteousness, the only path to perfect peace.

Sin, which is placing the desires of the self, of the minority, above the interests of the majority, is a result of ignorance and deserves not damnation but compassion. Wrong doing is a result of wrong thinking and can only be overcome by education. Moral depravity is intellectual infancy and only yields to evolution.

Suffering is nature's warning to learn and obey her immutable laws. Reason is the only redeemer. Science is the only savior.

Vain is the talk of a Plan of Salvation whereby man may hope to reap what he has not sown; idle is the tale of a Vicarious Atonement whereby he may escape the consequences of his conduct; hopeless the desire for Remission of Sins that will cancel his moral indebtedness; worthless the pattering prayers and solemn sacraments of prating priests. The reign of caprice has vanished with the night, and law, enthroned upon the universe, now rules the day. Absolute justice must be meted out to all, from the largest constellation to the smallest atom. If this be not done then universal law is a universal lie, the world is a fraud, and Deity is a devil.

If law is universal, if there are no effects without causes, no causes without effects, then nothing ever happens; what man sows he will reap, and what he reaps he has sown. If matter is indestructible, is it not also uncreatable? If no thing really ever ceases to exist, then did any thing really ever have a beginning? And has not the "I" in some form ever lived, and shall it ever cease to be? May not the harvest *It* reaps today, all forgotten, have been sown in some dead yesterday; and the seed *It* sows today, may it not ripen for the harvest in some unborn



tomorrow? Who can say that the seed-time *was not*, and that the harvest *will not be*?

If the world is ruled by universal law, if causes beget effects and effects are born of causes, then in some way, at some time, and in some place every debt must be paid, every struggle must be rewarded. Law, universal and unchangeable; justice, inevitable and impartial; time, endless and eternal; progress, perpetually toward perfection; hope, here and hereafter,—can desire ask more, can despair fear less, can revelation offer a fairer faith, a more promising prospect, a grander goal? This is evolved religion, the religion of evolution.

If the way at times seem hard and the day seem long; if the goal elude thy search; and if, like a mirage, the ideal lead thee ever on across a desert drear; if, as thy sun descends, the vision fade to nothingness and twilight darkening into night leave thee upon life's trackless sands disconsolate, let not hope despair, for on the morrow thou mayest yet reach that reality whose reflection led thee on through all thy day.



*“ When they saw the light some preferred it to  
the darkness.”*















