THE ORIGIN OF SUPERNATURAL CONCEPTIONS

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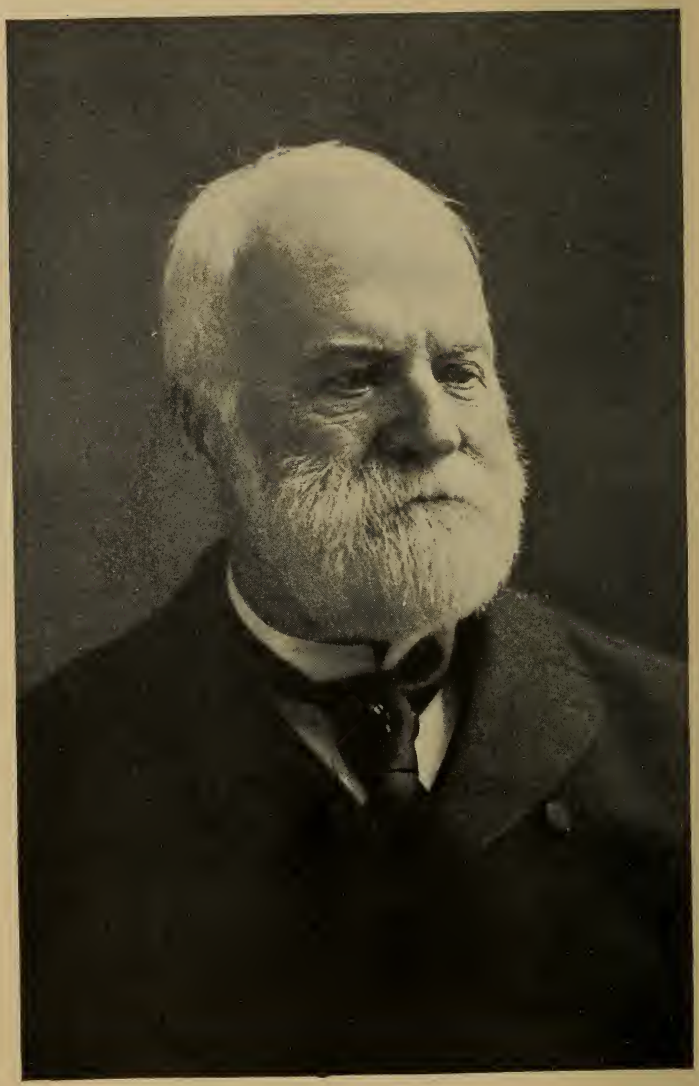
THE ORIGIN OF SUPERNATURAL CONCEPTIONS



Faithfully Yours
J. J. Greenough

THE
Origin of Supernatural Conceptions

AND

DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIONS FROM PREHISTORIC TIMES

By
JOHN JAMES GREENOUGH

Boston
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To my fellow citizens I dedicate this work, a labor of love, the result of nearly three-quarters of a century of careful investigation and thought unbiassed by any preconceived theory or dogmatic assumption. It is based entirely on the statements derived from the earliest written legends of which we have any knowledge, logically construed for the judgment of the critical and independent investigators who with the writer desire the highest good for their fellow men.

J. J. G.

Alton Place, Brookline
Jan. 19, 1904.

Abou-Ben-Adhem (may his tribe increase!)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw within the moonlight of his room,
Making it rich and like a lily in bloom,
An Angel writing in a book of gold.
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the presence in the room he said,
"What writest thou?" The vision raised its head,
And with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answered, "The names of those who love the Lord."
"And is mine one?" said Abou. "Nay, not so,"
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerily still, and said, "I pray thee, then,
Write me as one that loves his fellow men."
The angel wrote and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names whom love of God had blessed. —
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest!

— LEIGH HUNT.

Preface

THE knowledge of the advent of man and his status in the universe wherein he found himself prior to the attainment of modern science, was derived from traditionary legends evolved from the vivid imaginations of the human brain attempting to interpret the history of his creation, and the purpose of his existence. It is apparent that those legends have a fictitious origin, although they were assumed to be divine revelations. There is a tendency in the human mind to retain its early impressions with great tenacity; and it is difficult, and often impossible, to unlearn the most illogical and preposterous fallacies that men have been taught as truths in their earlier life while they seize with avidity every pretension to reveal a future life they have learned to believe in, but of which no man has any knowledge or comprehension, except from the fabulous traditions of unknown writers.

Up to a comparatively recent date no true solu-

tion of the mechanism of the universe was achieved, about which the writers of all prior histories and legends called revelations were in entire ignorance. To doubt the truth of these so-called revelations has been deemed sacrilegious, and has often been visited with drastic punishment for the alleged profanation. The present age has emerged from the thraldom of this ancient bigotry, and finds no trace in recent history of any supernatural act or communication; which naturally engenders a doubt of the truthfulness of the ancient traditions that is still further confirmed by the fundamental errors to be found in all traditional revelations.

With the above facts clearly established we may venture upon a strict investigation of the ancient writings, with no hesitation on our part in repudiating the narratives of supernatural occurrences of which modern experience has no truthful example.

In investigating the superstitions that have pervaded the thoughts of man from a period anterior to historic data, which have formed so much of the traditional and written literature with which the statement of facts has been inextricably interwoven, it is difficult to trace the true origin of the myths of unknown ages. While the supernatural events recorded in Eastern legends may be retained as illus-

trations of the creative power of the active imagination of the human mind, they have long since been discarded as realities by the world of science.

There is a firm belief still retained by a large majority of men in the truth of traditionary miracles and divine interposition, on which the dominant religions are founded. We note that in religions holding a common origin, there are numerous sects and interpreters radically opposed to each other, which in past times have produced dissensions and bloody strife, and are still a source of polemic wrangling and waring disaster.

Before attempting to investigate the origin of religion, it may be well to fix a definite meaning to that constantly employed word. We find in the modern lexicons numerous meanings ascribed to the word religion, that differ widely in their nature, and are antagonistic in their purport. If by religion is meant the healthful development of a right life, a practice of conscientious duty to our fellow men, and abstaining from all injustice, every right-minded man must give it his approval. But if by religion is meant " a system of faith in, and worship of, a divine being or beings " (entirely beyond our knowledge, except from the traditions of unknown authors of mystic legends, unconfirmed), the modern agnostic disbe-

lieves. We have generally used the word religion in the latter sense, as dogmatic, in the succeeding pages.

There are few noted scientists in modern times who would not be classed as agnostics. They are generally so entirely engrossed in the search for, and development of, truth, which is making such wonderful progress at the present day, that they have no time to devote to discussions about current beliefs in religion, nor to the petty altercations of the theologians over dogmatic interpretations and creeds, which neither their authors nor interpreters have any real knowledge of the truth of, and of which there is no proof but vague tradition.

The mission of an iconoclast is not only displeasing but perilous; in attempting to destroy the time-consecrated idols believed in for ages, he cannot expect to escape vituperation, unfair criticism, and opposition. Fortunately in these days he cannot here be assailed with imprisonment, torture, or death. Ostracism, anathema, and slander are the only weapons left the fanatical force in America, although severer penalties are still imposed elsewhere for differing from or opposing established faith.

Some fifty years or more ago, I was impelled to write upon this subject; but I then felt that, in attempting to destroy a delusion on which organized

society was founded, and for which I had no efficient substitute, I might weaken the organization of society. This caused me then to delay further action, but time has now convinced me that until the fabulous is expurgated from human reason there is no hope that any radical improvement in true culture can be attained.

The hideous crimes that have been perpetrated even in modern times, in priestridden nations, conclusively show that power alone is wanted to reënact the barbarism of the Spanish Inquisition and the prohibition of free thought. The incarceration of an innocent girl in a nunnery, recently enacted in Europe, for desiring to marry in opposition to the will of her parents, where she was walled up for twenty years in a living tomb by a brutal fiend, the superior (who was made a brutal fiend by her fanatical faith, until all the elements of humanity and true womanhood were extinguished in her), is too heartrending and revolting to be passed over in silence. It must remain as an episode of a religion of the nineteenth century.

The more recent offence of a French Jesuit was brought to light in the courts in the present century, where it was shown that a Jesuit priest called "Père Rouvirier" (his name should be execrated for his

damnable arts) so wrought upon a sensitive neophyte of wealth as to cause her to martyrize herself until she died, suffering torture, that he might reap the fruits of her wealth, which the enlightened French court happily frustrated by annulling her will. The sad history of this poor girl's sufferings in mind and body is heartrending; and when we learn that it was endured through the teachings and instigation of this human monster under the guise of divine instruction, we must condemn in the severest terms a religion that produces such fruits. But we hear the Protestants exclaim, "This is not Christianity as taught by us." Unfortunately I remember the incarceration in the last century of Robert Taylor in Protestant England, because he published his belief that the Christian religion had no indisputable foundation for claiming a higher morality or truth than any other, and the earlier persecution of the Quakers and others in England, Scotland, and America, remnants of which remain of this repression in the legal interference with natural rights still extant. It may be well for modern sectarians to investigate how far the acts of their predecessors accord with the views that have been produced in the moral code evoked by modern science at the present day.

Preface

We see superstitions still active, like those which misled the world in earlier times, engendering strange aberrations of reason and common sense in this enlightened age and country, culminating in the knowledge that such gross impostors as Ann Lee, the female Christ of the Shakers, Joseph Smith, the prophet of the Mormons, Mrs. Eddy, the Christian Scientist, and that audacious pretender, Dowie, have all gathered hosts of followers, often highly intelligent, who profess to believe in their divine mission; and there are not a few at this time who may have serious dubitancy on the subject of their teachings that are inclined to join them.

If it is assumed that any supernatural phenomenon ever occurred in this world at any time, there can be no insuperable barrier to a claim for its repetition, or a belief in its accomplishment by any pretender to divine inspiration and power.

I ask for no leniency or favor, and offer no apology, for what I have written in the following pages. If anything therein can be proved to be erroneous, I shall gladly accept and acknowledge the correction.

J. J. GREENOUGH.

BROOKLINE, Jan. 19, 1905.

Introduction

In this essay on the origin of the superstitions and dogmas of the human race, I have attempted to trace their derivation and development, through man's innate intellectual powers, which have evolved ideas of a transcendent being actuating the creation, — ideas that are deduced from the natural laws of mental evolution.

My endeavor has been to show that there never was a supernatural revelation, miracle, or other abnormal manifestation, from any spiritual entity, or other source divine; and that all legends recording phenomena of that character, with which the world's literature is filled, were derived from unexplained natural phenomena, or the human imagination, before a true knowledge of the cosmos, or psychic laws, was conceived.

I have suggested the probable origin of supernatural conceptions, from their primitive source up to

their development in historic times. A critical examination and analysis of the ancient records will clearly show their source to be the human brain; this is obviously apparent in the voluminous Indian, Egyptian, Babylonian, and Assyrian writings, and through Grecian and Roman mythology, down to the Christian era — an outcome of Alexandrian culture, the mother of sectaries.

I have only sketched concisely some of the numerous exhibitions of an early mental activity, for, tempting as the subject is, it has been fully elaborated by writers more learned and able than myself.

My first chapters are briefly introductory to an extended investigation of Judaism and Christianity, past and present, and the primitive character of the Hebrews' God as depicted in the Old Testament, upon which the Christian religion is founded.

While carefully evolving a life of Christ from the traditional narratives of his followers, as recorded in the Gospels, that were written a hundred years or more after his death by unconditional believers in his divinity, we have produced a somewhat less transcendent delineation of him who posed as the Messiah of the Hebrews in the Gospels, and declared himself " King of the Jews," for which he was

tried by the Roman governor Pilate, found guilty, and crucified.

Although all mention of Christ's belligerent acts is omitted in the Gospels, with one notable exception, — when he entered the Temple at Jerusalem with a host of followers shouting hosannas, who proclaimed him " King of the Jews," and drove out the occupants, — yet his bellicose utterances and constant movements with an army of catechumens, thousands in number, indicate unrecorded overt acts, which furnish the only rational reason for his execution.

Entering upon this task with no desire to establish any unwarranted theory, but simply to elicit a rational interpretation of a life record assumed to be divine, drawn from the fragmentary records of catechumens, that were written from tradition long after the time the events were said to have occurred, I have endeavored to reconcile and render intelligible the great contrariety of teachings and acts recorded, that led up to, and account for, the crucifixion; which under any other theory would seem to be baseless and inexplicable.

A candid examination of the teachings of the gospel with the influence of a divine afflatus eliminated, shows that the apothegms and proverbs are

mostly found in the teachings drawn from earlier sources, anticipated by uninspired men long before the birth of Christ, — notably the Hindu writings, the Golden Rule of Confucius, and the moral teachings of Pythagoras, — while some of the instructions in the Gospels seem inequitable and unpractical, if not immoral.

My purpose is to convince my fellow men that they have received at their birth all the revelation that they will ever receive, in the fundamental power to attain the knowledge they can compass by their own exertions, or from the acquirements of their compeers. On the proper use of man's mental powers will depend the best results for human advancement. This is shown in the profound intellectual and moral teaching of recent times, and the refined culture evolved by the genius and learning of modern civilization, due to scientific cultivation. Ancient truisms are often used as texts, with the assumed glamour of divine revelation, to base profound homilies upon. These could not have been achieved until modern science burst the shackles with which dogmatic religion sought to bind the free volition of man, and his freedom of thought.

We believe the world is the home and field of labor of the human race, and is governed by immutable

laws that no power of man can change. His duty is to learn their purport, and avail himself of their uses; to neglect or evade this we assume is a crime. It should be our highest aspiration to act beneficently for the race, and for ourselves; our lives are a birthright for us to exercise our intellects upon, and improve in knowledge and wisdom; by so doing we shall render the highest and holiest tribute of reverence to the genitor of our being, whose works are our lesson, to be studied for the welfare of mankind, not to be ignored or neglected for ideal creations.

The universe which is spread before us we are comparatively ignorant of. Let us seek to obtain a knowledge of the attainable before we attempt to fathom a hereafter that we can never know in our present state, or obtain a knowledge of from the crude and superstitious records of an anterior age.

In tracing the source from which the origins of the superstitions of the world are derived, and the innumerable ideal creations emanating from the fertile imagination of man, we perceive the wonderful power attained in this highly organized structure; and the more minutely it is analyzed, the more perfect seems the adaptation of means to ends, as we from time to time attain a true knowledge of them.

Introduction

It is now clearly understood that, prior to any historic record yet discovered, men were organized into communities and nations, with governments and laws restricting them to certain courses of action, deemed to be proper and correct, and that there were punishments enacted for a dereliction from established law; right and wrong were determined, not always, as we now think, equitably, but the belief was established. Under these advancing forms of civilization great cities and elaborate temples were built, and structures and implements of defence and aggression were devised, as the interests of different nations became antagonistic. The beauty and grandeur of their structures evince a cultivation and luxurious display marvellous to behold in these latter days. While much of the outward and apparent was appreciated and understood, the fundamental principles and sources of the visible universe were unknown, but as the nature of men's mental powers would not rest with unexplained phenomena, they actively sought for a solution in their imagination; the bolder and more active formed systems, that were seized upon and elaborated from age to age by credulous followers in their efforts to obtain an explanation of the unknown.

The organization of communities and nations pro-

duced, through the inequality of individuals, rulers who could dispense favors, and punish or reward as their will dictated. With this experience before them men formulated their conceptions of a power or powers that created and governed the world they lived in.

As they knew from experience that they could obtain favors from their rulers by subserviency and by the bestowal of gifts upon them, they had no doubt of their efficacy with their supernatural rulers; and the more costly and elaborate the tribute, the more acceptable would it be to the gods to whom it was given. Thus was established an adulation and worship, with the building of temples, and offering of gifts and sacrifice to propitiate the divine powers, that could in no other way be reached. This universal belief in an endless variety of forms comes from an undeviating source, the natural phenomena with which we are surrounded misinterpreted and misunderstood. From time to time, as tradition informs us, there have been men with transcendent intellects, that have caught glimpses of the true cosmos and have based theories thereon; but they were imperfect and uncertain, although often containing pertinent truths. The commencement of true knowledge, imperfect though it still is, began within the

recent centuries. If we consider antiquity and universal belief a criterion of truth, there are overwhelming descriptions of supernatural communication between a spirit world and man; but if a just perception of the elements from which the legends that chronicle the exhibition of the miraculous are obtained, it will be seen that they all emanate from a mistaken interpretation of cause and effect.

It is conceded that the Hindus were an exceedingly intellectual and profoundly metaphysical people, and elaborated a religion so transcendental as to be beyond the scope of modern thinkers. They had in their mythology numerous deities of varied powers that to the modern thinker are but the visions of the meditative Brahman; no one in Europe or America believes in the divinity of Brahma or Vishnu. So of the Egyptian cult, the concentration of the intellect of a highly intelligent and cultivated nation, with an elaborate theology, by whom, like the Hindus, stupendous and costly temples were built, more enduring than their religion, of which, or their theomancy, there are now no believers. Again the highly cultivated Greek, and the world-conquering Roman, — their systems of religion were in a high degree elaborate, ideal, and refined, the keynote being justice, honor, probity, and especially

truth. The philosophers of Greece are quoted today for their profound thoughts, — yet who believes in their theology, or their graphic and poetical legends of the gods? From almost all the ancient religions we learn there was one transcendent god with subordinate gods for the multiplicity of human attributes and wants; later these minor gods were eliminated, and in their places angels and spirits have been substituted, while in one of the modern religions three gods have been by some theological legerdemain resolved into one. We thus see that there is no innate attribute of worship in man, but simply an attempt to personify a cause beyond his knowledge, and invest it with the very human love of adulation experience has shown to be characteristic of man's earthly rulers.

There is a singular predilection in man, apparent to the careful investigator, to run in, and adhere to, grooves of thought, with a persistent ignoring of all adverse facts. This trait is intensified by early education, and is apparent in the persistent adherence to the religion in which the individual has been trained. If he was born of Hindu parents he will be a believer in Brahma. If his parents were Jews, or Mohammedans, his belief will be fixed in their faith, while if the belief of his compeers is Christian,

he will adhere tenaciously to that faith. Fortunately for the advancement of the world, some men are endowed with an unconquerable spirit of investigation that bursts the bonds of theological prohibition, and in the face of torture and death proclaim the tenets they believe founded in fact. As the world grows wiser, the barriers against knowledge are reduced, which by the Jewish legend was the unpardonable sin that all mankind were cursed for, until at the present time it is not generally penal among the most enlightened nations to declare any proposition that the propounder believes. No greater proof can be adduced to show the utter unreliability of the ancient legends relating abnormal supernatural and miraculous events, than the readiness of men and women of recent times, up to the present day, to follow after and believe in charlatans and impostors of questionable character and stupid pretence, under the guise of divine inspiration and plenary revelation. Men are so anxious to hear from the other world they have been taught to believe in, that they will run after and follow any pretended messenger that assumes to bring tidings therefrom, the truth of which these impostors know their credulous neophytes have no power to refute. It is sad to note that the fundamental belief of all the various

sectarists of the Christian Church, dominating the highest civilization, furnishes the most potent argument to sustain the pretenders to supernatural revelation; for it is clear that if any supernatural revelation, plenary inspiration, or other miraculous event or communication was ever vouchsafed to man there can be no denial that such an event is not only possible, but very probable, in a cultivated age more capable of appreciating it than in former times. One of the strongest reasons for doubting the truthfulness of all historic relations of supernatural events or revelations is their utterly unprovable existence in modern times, notwithstanding the positive assertion of innumerable witnesses that are willing to testify, and in some cases may believe in miraculous events now taking place.

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The Origin of Supernatural Conceptions

CHAPTER I.

EARLY RELIGIONS

When prehistoric man emerges from the nebulous epoch and first appears in tangible form to the modern investigator, he is found surrounded by works of elaborate art, in some particulars transcending all the works of his successors in magnitude and accomplishment. This shows a state of high cultivation, that must have required untold ages to have perfected. In critically examining these potent remains of early attainments, aided by the recorded thought of primitive culture, we note an elaborate perception and investigation of nature with which the world teemed.

Modern investigation shows that there were upon the earth hundreds of centuries ago monsters of prodigious size and hideous mien, many of which have been recently unearthed. While some of these prod-

igies may not have survived the advent of man, he, no doubt, gained his vivid pictures of the horrible and awful from the realities he saw in nature. The dragons and other apparent prodigies drawn by Eastern nations were but exaggerations pictured by imaginative minds excited by the marvels existent at the dawn of man's ingress, which may have disappeared since that time.

Ages prior to any record that we have of men congregated into communities they were governed by matured laws, and ideas of right and wrong, of good and evil, with a subserviency to ruling powers. Their laws were at that early period united with elaborate religious dogmas, upon which authority was founded; thus, the free thought of man had begun to be subordinated to creeds and traditions that have shackled and curtailed man's progress throughout historic time.

In searching for the origin of the innumerable religious beliefs of the world, which ages have formulated and consolidated into habits, and modes of thought, that have crystallized into the usages of advancing civilization with cultured people, an investigator should be sure that an antagonism to existing creeds is based on an honest and sincere desire to attain a higher civilization, and sounder

moral culture, than the present status affords. While sweeping away fictitious cults, believed in for ages, he should have in mind the attainment of the highest standard in morals, and the greatest happiness of all his fellow men. When a man attempts to change the current of thought and belief of the world he is surrounded by, with all its vested rights and interests at stake, which to-day form most potent factors in modern society, the task is of Herculean proportions. But the truth is cogent, above all other interests or assumed rights, however ancient or consolidated, built upon fictitious foundations.

In looking backward through the maze of primitive thought for a rational clue to the earlier stages in the evolution of man's mental efforts, beyond the limits of scientific proof, it may be permissible to extend our theories into the unknown, if we are guided by logical deductions from the storehouse of accumulated facts, that are attested by a strictly scientific investigation of known phenomena — with the distinct understanding, however, that every assumption may be controverted by a better theory, if it can be adduced.

It would seem from the generally received laws of evolution, that when the mental powers of man

had developed into thoughts and observations of, and deductions from, his surroundings, he would realize the fact that the numerous natural objects of his cognizance were there by no cause within his knowledge; from them he received his food and, as he progressed, his shelter; they were available to supply his wants. Could the intellect of man as now recognized long remain satisfied with a passive reception of those goods — when by their failures he suffered — without striving to find out, or account for, their origin and source? The lowest mental effort would suggest there was a power beyond his cognition.

If this interpretation of the earliest dénouement of the active brain of developed man is correct, no abnormal power is manifested in the poetical legends, and historical aberrations evolved by the imagination inherent in the human mind from a misconception or distortion of facts.

In early childhood we have examples of the constructive power of the imagination, and brave tales are evolved from fertile sources of child lore, of which nursery rhymes are but an adulterated echo. The primitive man had all the imagination of childhood, with maturer mind, unrestricted by modern culture.

As various objects appeared spontaneously, without man's effort, it was obviously natural for him to assume a being existed that produced them; and as it was natural for him to assume that they were created for his good, it seems to be indisputable that he would seek to propitiate the unknown power that made them. As these objects were so various and distinct one from another, and as his enemies were supplied with them as well as himself, it would seem impossible for him to believe they were all produced by the same Deity; therefore, his imagination readily supplied a host sufficient for the purpose. Hence we find in the earliest records the notable phenomena of nature personified and deified.

In the earliest Hindu Vedas we can trace the sublime conceptions of nature, causing, governing, and directing the objects provided, in accordance with a seemingly ungoverned will in the author that appeared capricious and anomalous. Thus were noted devastating winds, storms, thunders, earthquakes, volcanoes; to terrify man for his assumed transgressions; sometimes to avenge him against his enemies; and as menaces against the human race for its derelictions. Such were the aspects of nature to primitive man, sublime and

beneficent, or terrific and vengeful; personified by fatherly care and paternal love, or stern and unrelenting punishment, to suit the varying moods of the gods.

By the every-day experiences of life man was confirmed in the belief of an extraneous power that produced the varied results so constantly witnessed by him. This caused him to ponder and construct, in his imagination, ideal gods, of a nature and with attributes analogous to the human race.

As man's gregarious experience taught him to propitiate the most powerful — a trait common with all gregarious animals — he strove to placate the unseen deity he could not cope with, which his imagination had wrought into innumerable forms, with attributes still more innumerable; while nature's laws, acquired either by experience or innate mental reasoning, caused him to organize a world of spirits dominated by a supreme head, or God, — a belief that has assumed control over the thoughts and convictions of mankind in an endless variety of forms, in striving to delineate the unknowable, up to the present day, and which is as firmly adhered to now as it was at the beginning of historic time, with the assumed authority of supernatural revelation.

Thus at the dawn of human association the organized communities, as appears from the earliest records now extant, were striving for the unknown origin of themselves and their surroundings which caused them to build up vague theories of antecedent powers that brought forth the various objects with which they were associated, — things not made by any power known to them. Thus gods were elaborated with characteristics in accordance with human experience, observation, and imaginings, formed by the untutored minds of the authors, with attributes to suit the multiplex phenomena noted.

The earliest records of human thought describe the origin of man, whose mind not being controlled by laws or facts, wandered *ad libitum* without restraint. Thus was conceived a spirit world, whose habitat was above the *immovable* world we inhabit, devoted to the gods who made them. These gods being invisible were described and represented with minuteness. None of the legends or sacred writings that are claimed to be revelations, which give a history of the origin of the world and its inhabitants, with the heavens located above the "firmament," agree with the known facts of nature; which proves that those assumed revelations were

mere human inventions, by authors ignorant of the cosmos now undisputed.

In tracing the course of progressive thinking, from the dawn of nebulous history to the present time, the earliest recorded conceptions show a belief in the existence of a superior power by whom mankind was dominated, and rewarded as accorded with its supreme ungoverned will, or punished, if not averted by the prayers and supplications of its worshippers, who could thus modify its purpose.

At first the god seems to have been limited to the individual or the family, originating the fetishes, which were not the gods of other people. Subsequently clannishness elevated the tribal deity above those of other tribes, which was a fruitful source of many wars and much strife between contending nations, waged to determine their assumptive claims to territory and power. Finally the multiplicity of gods came to be a source of sublime incentive and art motive, with a ruling godhead over all, in accordance with established human institutions.

Thus was the household god of primitive man expanded by his creative imagination into complex mythologies, that gradually culminated in a supreme creator. Such was, apparently, the evo-

lutionary source and development of human impulse to worship.

The pertinent saying that "an honest God would be the noblest work of man" has never been accomplished; all the gods yet portrayed are manifestly the imperfect conceptions of man; they are simply the embodiment of the highest comprehension of the age in which they were delineated. The constant endeavor of man has been to formulate and materialize an originator of the world and its concomitants, who was the author of his being.

The multitudinous nations that peopled the Eastern world were fruitful in creating systems of belief in gods and religious creeds, derived generally as we have said from natural objects, and the observation of inherent phenomena, more or less etherealized, but all resting on the assumption that the earth was the stable centre of the visible universe.

The records we now have of the earliest thought are probably the Hindu Vedas. They are a refined spiritual sentimentality, not exceeded in aftertime. Their aim was to teach men to live a pure and blameless life, and by austerity and self-denial to attain perfect happiness hereafter. A God, the creator of all things, was formulated, who as-

sumed various incarnations, and there were other divinities who enacted innumerable spiritualistic parts, in aid or punishment of humanity. The civilization in which this religion culminated was dominated by a priesthood, who taught its superiority over all others, and inaugurated the doctrine of castes with which Hindustan is cursed to the present day. This religion predominated India, whose wonderful temples — the remains of which are still standing — dwarf all modern religious structures, and even now display a grandeur unapproached in modern times. The temples throughout India are as numerous as their religious dogmas, the metaphysical character of which we do not propose to discuss. Many of their legends have been plagiarized and adopted with modifications by subsequent religions down to the present day, together with their moral teachings.

Succeeding the teachings of the Vedas came the doctrine of Buddha, abolishing the castes, and in many other ways improving the religion of his followers. Buddha taught an equality of the human race, and controverted many objectionable features of Brahmanism; he taught self-abnegation, a pure life, and self-immolation, with an unnatural abstention from all natural impulses, much

of which has been practised by other religious devotees in after-times.

The Egyptian mythology was developed into a highly supernatural and metaphysical religion; evolving a strict moral code, that exalted goodness and purity in this life — a record being kept of each individual, to be brought forth at the judgment of the deceased, to determine his future reward or punishment.

The 125th chapter of the "Book of the Dead" contains the oldest code of private and public morality. The catalogue of forty-two sins for which punishment is prescribed furnishes an example of moral discrimination and high purpose quite as cogent as is found in any subsequent religions.

It is understood by eminent scholars that the Egyptian religion is monotheistic, and that the multiplicity of gods is only due to the personification of his attributes and offices. M. Emmanuel Rouge, a profound Egyptologist, says: "No one has called in question the fundamental meaning of the principal passages by the help of which we are able to establish what ancient Egypt has taught concerning God, the world, and man. I said *God*, not *Gods*, is the *Unity* most energetically expressed; God, One, Sole and Only; no others with him —

he is the only being — living in truth — thou art One and millions of beings proceed from thee — he has made everything, and he alone has not been made." "The clearest, the simplest, the most precise conception." He adds: "How reconcile the unity of God with the Egyptian polytheism. History and geography will perhaps elucidate the matter. The Egyptian religion comprehends a quantity of local worships. The Egypt which Menes brought together under his sceptre was divided into nomes, each having a capital town; each of these régimes had its principal god designated by a special name, but always the same doctrine which reappears under a different name. One idea predominates, that of a single primeval God. Everywhere and always it is one substance, self-existent, and an unapproachable God."

The drawings, inscriptions, and papyrus manuscripts of Egypt, brought to light in recent years by modern investigation, display deep research of the human mind in its inquest for truth, joined to a priestly desire for controlling the people, which all history shows to be intuitive.

The casual instances of abnormal intellect, as well as any other characteristics that have astonished the world from time to time by a display of

profound knowledge and wisdom which seemed superhuman; the creation of the demigods, prophets, and giants, exaggerated by tradition and imagination to account for the unknown, plunged in the oblivion of antiquity were fruitful agents; the outcome of this resulted in the mythologies that have been developed in every aggregation of men, however barbarous, antique, or anomalous their legends.

The Greek and Roman mythologies, in their effort to create a higher mental elevation, elaborated complex and poetical systems that raised high art and poetry to an excellence hardly yet attained in later times. The Greek sages reasoned with profound sagacity on physical truths and mental culture, with a keen perception almost prophetic. Pythagoras, some six hundred years before our era, declared God to be "neither the object of sense, nor subject to passion; invincible, who is not, as some are apt to imagine, seated above the world, but being himself all in all, he sees all beings that fill his immensity." Such was the advanced teaching of Pythagoras, who inculcated a daily investigation of our life and actions as a source of improvement, which equals the sublimest teaching of the foremost moralists.

Confucius, some six hundred years before Christ, announced the aphorism, "Do unto another that you would he should do unto you; and do not unto another what you would not should be done unto you; this is the foundation and principle of all laws."

There are many ancient maxims showing a like high attainment in morals set forth in the earliest records, the fruits of man's mental processes, that have not been excelled by any subsequent teachings. They show the spontaneous outcome of mind with its surroundings, aided by observation, contemplation, and experience. To enhance the authority of these sayings they were sometimes attributed to divine revelation, while they were often commingled with egoistic impulses and superstitions, coupled with an intolerant desire to extirpate adverse views in others, which led to barbarous acts such as no other cause ever produced, and from which men are now only partly freed through the heroic warfare of modern science, unaided by religion, which has burst the shackles of restraining theology and antagonizing dogma.

The world has teemed from earliest times with divers religions, each one asserting its claim to a divine revelation, with miracles and divine com-

mands as its origin. Most of these religions are subdivided into numerous sects, often differing widely, and as bitterly opposed to each other as to antagonistic religions. From earliest times creeds have been the cause of contention and bloody wars between rival sects, with virulent anathemas and persecutions for deviations from the current belief which have not been exceeded, if they have been equalled, by any other incentive in the world's history.

It is apparent there is no undisputed infallible proof of the truth of any religion; they are all developed from legends more or less fabulous, or of events assumed to be of supernatural origin, in which the marvellous phenomena described antagonize all the natural laws of the universe that are now clearly established by the research of modern science.

There is no axiom truer, than that every averment claiming to be a divine revelation, or the word of God, must be in accordance with and in no particular contravene the immutable laws of nature, or the invariable course of the universe, of which the ancients were entirely ignorant, but which are now within the knowledge of every schoolboy. Has there ever been a religion promulgated

that can survive that test? Is there not ample evidence that the originators of all existing religions, as well as those they have superseded, were totally ignorant of the cosmology developed by modern investigation?

A search into ancient traditions for the purpose of ascertaining the mental culture of their authors is interesting and instructive; but to adopt their legends as facts would be credulous, while to give their records of miraculous events an authoritative meaning, in the light of present knowledge, is mendacious. Modern theologians promulgate ancient religious dogmas and creeds with the assumption that they were derived from a supernatural source (as if the ancients had some fountain containing a knowledge, of which the later and better informed ages are deprived), and that these teachings by divine revelation transcend modern science, and have achieved for man what science is unable to do, proposing to impart to him an assurance of future existence, while they are shown to be totally ignorant of the status of the present one; yet men still cling to the conception of a future life, based on some crude and notably erroneous narratives on which to rest their faith, regardless of ascertained fact.

Supernatural Conceptions

The investigation of ancient legends displaying human thought, by which we can trace man's slow progress toward true knowledge (the light of which is just beginning to dawn on us), is intensely interesting; but to receive such a record as a divine revelation is fallacious. Every fact, and every legend, from whatever source it comes, should be analyzed by the light of present knowledge.

Many systems of obsolete belief have left wonderful monuments of massive grandeur that display the earnest faith of their devotees in the deity and religion they were built to perpetuate; they far exceed in magnitude, grandeur, and magnificence all the efforts of modern times.

At Ellora, in Central India, is located a marvellous group of grotto temples that well illustrate the intense religious ardor of their originators. These excavations are hewn in a chain of mountains within a circuit of six miles. There are many large temples with occasional smaller ones between them, all hewn from the solid rock, a hard red granite, with primitive tools and the patient labor of that early time. The largest of these structures is called Kailasa (Siva's Paradise). It is a hundred feet high and 142 feet long. On each side of the colonnades at the entrance are large sphinxes.

A row of enormous elephants seems to sustain the superimposed rock and produces an awe-inspiring effect. The extent and number of these excavated works can hardly be imagined, — entire pyramidal temples standing in open courts, peristyles, staircases, bridges, chapels, porticoes, obelisks, columns, tanks, and a great number of colossal statues ten and twelve feet high. At the sides of the temples there are chambers, apparently for the priests, cut out of the solid rock, enclosures surrounded by columns sustain three galleries, one above another.

There are an immense number of small grottoes seemingly intended to accommodate thousands of pilgrims. On some of the walls are Sanscrit inscriptions, and all the surfaces, including the columns, are covered with sculptures, some of which are painted in bright colors still visible. Travellers declare "the variety, richness, and skill displayed in these ornaments surpass all description." Erskine says "the first view of this desolate religious city is grand and striking, but melancholy. The number and magnificence of the subterranean temples, the extent and loftiness of some, the endlessness and diversity of sculpture in others, the variety of curious foliage, of minute tracery,

highly wrought pillars, rich mythological designs, sacred shrines, and colossal statues astonish and distract the mind. The empire whose pride they must have been has passed away, and left no other memorial behind it." This shows that advancing knowledge begins to realize the folly of attempting to perpetuate any dogmatic religion, which must be temporary and fugacious, by colossal structures. In this particular the world will grow wiser, notwithstanding the fanatical fervor of the modern idolaters who would again curse the world with theological rule.

Ponderous temples representing bygone religions are of less account than formerly; they are not needed for imposing primitive worship, with its majestic processions and mystic rites, that have lost their significance with people more advanced, who cannot be so easily duped by pompous ceremony.

The intellectual world now generally understands that in the order of creation there has been a slow but constant development in organized life, from protoplasm to man; and *pari passu* with the advancement of structure there has been a progression of intelligence. This advancement can be traced from the most feeble indication of respon-

sive sensation up to the ever varying and constantly increasing perfection of defined and correct thought attained by man. It is to be noted that this advancement follows the acquisition of a knowledge of undeviating natural laws, which produces a more perfect development of thought as structural perfection increases.

While the progress of mental expansion is thus traceable, no cataclysm is found in its history; no period is found in which any race or people has been suddenly advanced from barbarism, or a low degree of civilization, to a high perception of right and wrong, by a new religion. In the intercourse of man with his fellow man, no abrupt development has been achieved in consequence of belief in any religion or dogma taught by a supernatural guide. When any rapid change in religion has been effected, it has been done by coercion, or an unreasoning faith that shows a singular tendency in the human mind to follow the pretended seers of the unknowable. The neophytes have rarely improved their morals with their acceptance of a creed; all real advancement is a slow process of the reasoning powers, almost imperceptible, requiring mental effort and education.

New truths are received by mankind with re-

luctance, which arises from a pertinacity engendered by early training, that often takes centuries to remove after the facts have been proved by scientific investigation; while a new religion, however fantastic, that claims to be of spiritual and supernatural origin, which treats of an unknown world, with divine promises of a happy future life, is followed with eager belief by unreasoning multitudes.

This predisposition to superstition, religious and political leaders avail themselves of, by confirming the doubting, and exalting the mystical. Either from a fear of disturbing the present order of society, to the detriment of vested interests and legislative enactments, or for venal and selfish purposes, they succeed in misleading the credulous and in retaining power.

The more extensive a research into the religions elaborated by man is made, from the earliest times to the present, the clearer the certainty appears, that no comprehensible fact was ever attained by him that was not entirely within the compass of his mental reasoning powers, which required no revelation from superhuman intelligence or other abnormal source. It is apparent on critical investigation, that the world we live in, and the infinity of orbs we are surrounded by, were not de-

signed for man alone, who is but an incident in the multiplicity of living entities, — highest and most perfect on this sphere, — but not controlling the independent existences with which this world teems, and with which the universe is probably filled, that have no dependence on man's advent or status.

The preceding sketch of the advent of man clearly shows certain indubitable facts from which subsequent events can be interpreted. We learn since the development of man in his present stage of mentality that great nations were aggregated, with laws and moral codes in accordance with their views, under which they were organized. The Chinese claim an antiquity of some ten thousand years, their tradition beginning with a mythic fable of a derivation from the gods. Their subsequent development was enriched with philosophical reasoning culminating in the profound teacher Confucius, who gave to the world the golden rule of strict equity by man to his fellow man. The Chinese were a highly civilized nation when Europe was in a state of barbarism.

In the populous territory of India a sect sprang up which spread with unexampled rapidity, originating in the teachings of an ascetic, Buddha, which

was embraced by a larger number of people than any other religion extant, and at the present day, according to Prof. Max Muller, it is probably embraced by four hundred and fifty millions, or one-third of the human race. This religion, a detail of which we shall give hereafter, was promulgated more than five hundred years B. C. It was preceded by the Brahmanical faith that is still retained in India by hosts of followers. These religions were believed to have been inspired miraculously with innumerable spiritual manifestations of their founder, whose writings were believed to be inspired.

In an age of which we have no certain history, a great nation was organized in Egypt, the remains of whose temples and tombs still astonish the world by their extent and grandeur; fortunately much of their written history has been preserved, from which we learn the religion and moral teaching of that ancient people, that has become extinct in modern times, leaving only the monuments of its wonderful civilization to succeeding ages. In later times we have the Greek mythology, with its poetical anthology, and the Roman gods and goddesses with which our classical literature is filled.

The indisputable historical facts show us that the human race attained its present status and has been

indefinitely prolonged prior to historic time, which modern investigation shows us has been extended by a progression of evolution through unknown myriads of years; and that from the earliest times of which we have any trace the fully developed mind of man has been striving to find out the origin of creation, and the purpose of its existence. As these questions were unanswerable, man's creative imagination began to formulate a first cause or causes, to account for the tangible creation visible to him, which has naturally resulted in the multiplicity of dogmas that the subtle brain of man developed from his varied contact with nature; hence the multitudinous sects were elaborated with which man strove to elucidate the unknown.

We have no clearer knowledge of the *purpose* of this wonderful creation (so complete from beyond microscopic minuteness to the unfathomable countless systems of spheres) than man had at the beginning of history; nor is it probable we will ever attain an exposition of it in this world. The beginning and end of time, of space, or matter, are equally beyond man's perception. There is no term more flippantly bandied by theologians and others than *eternity*, a correct conception of which is entirely beyond the capabilities of the human mind, yet a

knowledge of its purport is claimed by most religions.

Passing over further details of the primitive aberrations of religious thought and action, with which the world's literature abounds, we will direct our succeeding investigations to the study of Jewish theology and the Christian religion now dominant in Europe and America, in which we propose to enter into greater details, as they control the religious belief of those nations in which the greatest advance has been made in a knowledge of creation, a knowledge attained by the successful war which science has achieved against religious dogma that is now struggling to reconcile itself with scientific truth to retain the prestige which its dogmatists heretofore strenuously repudiated.

CHAPTER II.

THE GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Jews were descendants of a nomadic race that finally settled in Canaan, after driving out its inhabitants, with great slaughter and cruelty toward those whom they dispossessed. This tribe assumed to have been held in servile bondage by the King of Egypt, from whom they escaped, and led an itinerant life without apparent purpose for many years. They were a turbulent race, as appears from their record, sometimes worshipping the God of Moses, and at other times repudiating him. They traversed desert countries and became a warlike people. Finally they emerged from the wilderness, and after spying out the coveted land of Canaan, they took possession of it under the dubious claim of a gift from their God to their progenitor Abraham.

They consolidated and became a kingdom; and by the theological teachings of their prophets they lauded their God above those of other nations, al-

though they did not deny the existence of them. In their traditions they were God's chosen people, especially favored by him above all other nations. Their Scriptures, as they come down to us, were compiled, or written from traditions, after their return from captivity in Babylon. They claimed descent from Abraham, who was a nomad belonging to one of the minor tribes of Asia, of which nothing is recorded showing any peculiar enlightenment, or a connection with the more civilized and prominent nations; no apparent superiority or special reason is given why Abraham should have been selected by God as his chosen favorite above all other people, whose descendants he promised to make a dominant nation. The Jews finally sublimated their God as the Creator of heaven and earth, with attributes like those described in the Babylonian legends and myths of other Eastern nations.

The Jews were never a dominant nation, and were at last conquered by the Babylonians, by whom they were held captive for many years. Their relations with their captors were intimate, with full opportunity to become familiar with their literature and sacred legends. On their return from captivity Ezra gathered the traditions of his people and compiled their history. In those annals the legends of

their captors are largely interpolated, and modified to harmonize with their own traditions.

Among the earlier conceptions of creation on record, brought to light by research in modern times, are those deciphered from Babylonian and Assyrian tablets, in which is found a description of the creation from which the accounts in Genesis were evidently drawn. These were attributed to Moses, who, as has been conclusively proved by modern investigation, was not their author. With these facts before us much light is thrown on the other books of the Old Testament, as a traditional compilation from unwritten legends. The precepts, laws, and usages set forth in them are primitive, and not above the teachings of uninspired sages in earliest times; their mundane origin is clearly proved by their dereliction from the established facts of the known universe.

In a recently published work by a learned theologian, the Rev. Elwood Worcester, D. D., entitled "The Book of Genesis in the Light of Modern Knowledge," he thus frankly writes: "As regards the Book of Genesis, the general result of a century's work is something like this: Moses is not believed to be the author of the Pentateuch; the Pentateuch is not the composition of any one man, nor of any one time. It does not, however, consist of a number

of fragments thrown together haphazard, but of three or four separate compositions, well defined and for the most part easy to detach from one another, which run through the entire Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua." He says: "They contain statements that so flatly contradict each other, that we are obliged to choose one or the other, but cannot take both." (Would it not be more rational to reject both?)

Doctor Worcester says: "The composition by one mind is unthinkable, unless the author wrote with reckless haste and cared nothing about contradicting himself half a dozen times in as many lines." But what shall be said of the compiler who publishes these contradictions as divine teachings? Doctor Worcester's version is, that they were good stories which the compiler did not wish to spoil by correction. Very well for the stories, but fatal to their claim as revelations.

In comparing Genesis to modern thought, he says of modern history: "Everything therein occurs in a perfectly natural way, and important events are happening on purely natural grounds. Such things as the immediate interference of God, immediate messages from God, prophetic dreams, *et cetera*, are never mentioned. We turn to Genesis, however, and feel this difference. There God appears to men

constantly, under one form or another. He speaks to them face to face. He makes clothes for Adam and Eve. He appears to Jacob in a dream. He curses one man and he blesses another." This clear-headed writer further says: "If a man to-day were to write a history of our late war with Spain in the style of the Genesis, it would be painful to us in the highest degree, and we should set the writer down either utterly deluded or as a daring blasphemer."

"While some may believe God has changed his methods," Doctor Worcester says, "the educated will find it less easy to believe God has changed so much, than to believe man's views have changed. What at one time seemed perfectly natural for God to do, seems not only on natural grounds improbable, but on moral grounds, for God to do to-day. We prefer," says Doctor Worcester, "to preserve our ideal untarnished by the soiling touch of Genesis." Doctor Worcester states plainly that "the stories of creation, of Paradise, the story of the fall, of Noah's flood, and the Tower of Babel, are myths, and exist in the traditions of other nations." He adds, however, "The truth does not lie in the supposed fact, but in the lessons that are drawn from it." And he asks the pertinent question, "What is the Book of Genesis?" adding, strangely, "*We all admit, I*

presume, that it is an inspired book! " — a myth, a fable, *inspired!*

Are we sane — normally perfect mentally — or is some organ of the brain possessed by Doctor Worcester wanting, or atrophied in us, that we cannot admit his conclusion logically? A mythic fable, although believed in for ages as historical and inspired, is to us an untenable proposition. The misconception of nature's laws and the known order of creation displayed in Genesis has been a fruitful subject of explanation, comment, apology, and strained interpretation by learned theologians and others, to harmonize it with the proved facts of modern scientific investigation; but the deviation of the legend from known truths is too apparent to be successfully rescued from the category of the fabulous.

This is the foundation upon which the Jewish and Christian religions are based; it is the source of Biblical theology that is referred to as divine authority in the succeeding books of the Bible. In those books are found sublime thoughts and moral maxims, like those displayed in preceding and contemporary religious records; but the attributes depicted of the Hebrew God display a primitive and barbarous character difficult to reconcile with

the idea of an omnipotent Creator of the universe.

The tradition of the origin of the Jews corresponds with the character and portrayal of their God; with whom the gods of other nations were at rivalry and war. After their captivity we note they attributed to him the creation of heaven and earth, and copied from the Babylonians their legends of creation that we have seen in the record of their literature, in which is related the *six days'* creation, so perspicuously stated that no special pleading can claim for it a Hebrew origin, although a vast amount of intellect has been expended in trying to harmonize this legend with known fact.

If we carefully analyze Genesis it begins with the creation by God. On the first day it is recorded he created from chaos the earth, in utter darkness (how chaos came to be is not told); he also created *light* (from what source is not named; it certainly was not from the sun, which was afterward created). He alternated light and darkness into day and night (the cause of which is not stated), thus marking time, and forming the evening and morning of the first day.[1] On the second day he divided the waters

[1] There has been much discussion about the word *day* in the Genesis, but the term is clearly defined in the commandments at-

that covered the earth, by means of a "firmament" which separated the waters that were raised up by it from those that rested upon the earth.[1] This firmament God called "heaven;" this was the work of the second day. On the third day the waters below were gathered into *one* place, and the dry land appeared, which God called the earth; he also created grass, herbs, and fruit-trees. On the fourth day, after he had created light, he caused two orbs to be placed in the "firmament" (on which the waters were supported that were separated from the waters

tributed to God and given to Moses, to keep the *seventh day* holy, in commemoration of the *day* on which he rested, after his *six days'* labor. That meaning of the word was never questioned by Jew or Christian, until science demonstrated its error. The seventh day was observed by the early Christians, until the Emperor Constantine substituted by an edict, A.D. 321, the holy day of the sun-worshippers for constrained worship. The edict is as follows: "Let all judges and people of the town rest, and all the various trades be suspended on the venerable day of the *sun*. Those who live in the country, however, may freely and without fault attend to the cultivation of the fields, lest, with the loss of favorable opportunity, the commodities offered by Heaven be destroyed." (Just. code, III., Tit. 12.) Constantine seems to have been more rational than our modern legislators, realizing the fact that nature ignores rest on Sunday. From that time the Christian world has kept Sunday, ignoring the seventh day.

[1] This description can only mean a *fixed* canopy, the empyrean, bounding a space above the earth, retaining waters, and sustaining heaven; this was its interpretation until science proved its fallacy and banished heaven from that location.

upon the earth); one of these orbs was to light the day, the other to light the night.[1] On this fourth day "*he made the stars also.*" Such is the divine revelation of the creation of the infinity of planets, each one immeasurably bigger than this earth, the formation of which was all accomplished on the fourth day, *after* the creation of the earth.

Five days were expended upon this little orb, and a part of one day on the rest of the creation! (Could profound ignorance deviate further from the known truth?) Great whales and all the other inhabitants of the sea "the water brought forth abundantly;" those and every winged fowl were created on the fifth day. On the sixth day God made the beasts of the earth and cattle, "and everything that creepeth upon the earth." And God said, "Let *us* make men in our image, with *dominion* over the fish of the sea, fowl of the air, cattle, and every creeping thing."

In God's image man was created, and on the

[1] To give light to the world, according to the record, was the only purpose the sun and moon were created for. The writer had no idea of their comparative magnitude with that of the earth. No mention is made of the most vitally important function of the sun as the centre of this system, or its heat-giving and vivifying power, which are wholly ignored. The sun, according to this record, was created after the earth.

seventh day God rested from all his work, and he blessed the *seventh day* because he then rested.

The legend says God made man in his image; that is, in his shape and personality; an organized, formulated being, like the gods of other nations — of Hindustan, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. God breathed the breath of life into Adam, and he became a living man, without gestation or infancy.[1]

After preparing a garden for his habitation, in which God planted two trees of forbidden fruit as a temptation, and placed Adam therein, he then said: "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make a helpmeet for him." So he caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and purloined a rib from him, of which he made a woman, and gave her to Adam (no doubt a very happy exchange for his rib, the loss of which he did not feel in his sleep). At that time they were naked, and so ignorant were they that they did not know it; but, with a natural craving for knowledge, they ate the forbidden fruit that brought death as a penalty, and were enlightened.[2]

[1] To point out the radical difference between this account of the creation and the facts of evolution, is a work of supererogation; science rejects the story as fabulous.

[2] The largest, oldest, and most active body of propagandists now in the Christian Church teach that if Adam and Eve had

The introduction of the serpent to circumvent God's command, though graphic, militates against his omnipotence, and is clearly mythical. The incomprehensible feature of the incident seems to be that God should desire to keep Adam and Eve in an ignorance which he signally failed to do. The punishment of the serpent was unique: to crawl upon his belly all the days of his life. (What the original style of his locomotion was does not appear.) If the numerous reptiles we now know that move in that way are his descendants, we have another instance of punishment for transmitted sin. This fable, as interpreted by theologians, would not be worth criticizing, but for the very serious consequences to man, still believed in, of inherited sin for Adam's transgression. "In Adam's fall we sinned all," was the doctrine taught, and is not to

not eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge there would have been no death in the world and mankind would live forever! If, however, this primitive pair had eaten of the tree of life first, they would have escaped that penalty and have lived forever! But they neglected their opportunity until God became aware of their transgression, and ordered a guard for the tree of life, driving Adam and Eve out of the garden where they came so near being co-equal with him. Whether the attributes conferred by the tree of life would have descended to Adam's progeny as his sin did (if he had had any progeny), we leave to the theologians to determine.

be doubted with safety by the elect; it is the unquestioned belief, in the majority of Christian churches. To seek for a logical reason for this irrational story, which is still taught as the motive for God's irrevocable decree of death to all mankind, and the *raison d'être* for Christ's advent, to be believed as an unquestionable truth with unquestioning faith by all true believers as a requisite for salvation would be futile.

This ancient parable has evidently been misconstrued by religionists and theologians. A rational interpretation shows that it is an attempt to allegorize the advent of generation and its consequent concomitant death — good and evil — as it is called. The parable clearly illustrates the fact that in the reproduction of life death must ensue, and that the command of God to increase and multiply, for which he had especially organized all living things, could only be continued by giving to each a limited existence. Hence, what is made in the parable a transmitted sin was in reality a necessity prepared by God's special command; while to account for death, deemed an evil and curse, the story of the transgression was fabricated, with its concomitant punishment. The unreasoning contradictions in God's purposes involved had no weight

with the author of the legend, clearly displaying its primitive character.

Passing over the crude, mythical legend of creation, with its stories of the Lord walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and making garments for Adam and Eve, that the tree of knowledge had not taught them to do; and his sons courting the daughters of men (which has since exercised the apologists in their effort to prove the narrative divine); ending in the expulsion of our disobedient ancestor, that entailed on modern theology the dogma of original sin, and its sequent a barbarous redemption by *blood*, a revolting element for purification of a primitive age, we will turn to some of the succeeding acts of God, as recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures, where the Noachian deluge, drawn from Babylonian records, is described with the episode of the bow in the clouds, first displayed by God to seal his covenant with Noah, as is claimed. To seriously criticize the fable would be an act of folly; it is sufficient to say that the deeds there recorded could never have been enacted without abrogating the immutable laws that govern the universe. Like the story of the creation, it was borrowed by the Jews from their captors, and has been elaborated in various forms

by primitive people the world over. It is simply an ignorant and erroneous interpretation of misunderstood natural phenomena.

The incomprehensible feature of these records is God's favoritism toward certain persons singled out from the rest of Noah's descendants, without apparent reason, of whom he promised to make a dominant nation *for all time*, whose God he would be to the exclusion of all other people, fighting against their adversaries. Such is the God of the Old Testament, showing Abram to be the first of these fondlings, whom he commanded to abandon his kinsfolk and go to the land he would give him.[1]

Abram took his kinsman Lot with him, from whom he afterward separated; and after numerous vicissitudes he rescued Lot and the city of Sodom, not then accursed, from their enemies. When Abram wanted a confirmation of God's promises to him, he offered a bloody sacrifice to God, and then *dreamed* a confirmation; yet Abram

[1] It should be noted that this claim to a divine right of inheritance was written after the Israelites had taken possession of the land of Canaan, and driven out its prior inhabitants, of whose possessions they robbed them. The Jewish raiders claimed God gave to their father Abraham this land, with the promise to make Abraham's seed as the dust of the earth, innumerable.

had to leave the land thus given to him, never to return, and went into Egypt. There he was guilty of deception and falsehood, which eventuated in his becoming rich. This showed characteristics that descended to his posterity in after-time.

The morals of Abram could hardly escape censure from the criminal or ethical code of modern civilization. His treatment of Hagar would not now be approved even in God's favorite; although at that time it seemed to impart immunity to the elect in the transgression of every moral law.

Of this doctrine the Scotch Covenanters availed themselves, well illustrated in "Holy Willie's Prayer." God declared Abram perfect, and called him Abraham in token thereof, binding himself by covenant to Abraham and his seed after him, giving to him and his seed the land of Canaan for an *everlasting* possession, with a promise to be *their* God, to aid them against all men. (The world can now judge how far this promise has been fulfilled.) The episode of the destruction of Sodom so emphasizes the lack of omniscience in Abraham's guest, as to stamp him quite human and very impressible to Abraham's pleading.

A more vivid picture of a barbaric age than the story of Lot can hardly be conceived; yet in very

recent times it would have been heretical and impious to advance a doubt of its truth, or that the pillar of salt representing Lot's wife was not still standing as a record of the truth of the story. Yet this man Lot, according to the legend, was an inebriate sot, who committed incest with his own daughters, from the progeny of which nations sprang. Such is the story of one of God's elect.

Isaac, a succeeding elect of the God of the Hebrews, was, from a human standpoint, far below the rule of modern equity. In his old age he was misled by the chicanery of Jacob and his mother into blessing him, to the detriment of his brother, whom Isaac thought he was blessing. It is singular that Isaac did not repudiate the fraud and stranger still that God should sanction it.

The hermeneutic theologians declare the ways of God to be inscrutable and just, though far above our comprehension; yet the omnipotent Ruler of the Universe sanctioned what we assume to be evil. Thus God was controlled by Isaac's mistake, which he refused to correct, and adopted Jacob as his next *protégé*.

Jacob's vision of a communication with heaven above by a ladder was based on the assumption that the earth was stationary, and heaven located

above it, the common idea of that age, which modern science has dispelled. Jacob practised his subtle course in his dealings with Laban, by whom he had been deceived, in which they strove to overreach each other. Jacob, as was to be expected, being the favorite of God, succeeded in outwiting Laban, aided by his wife Rachel, who stole her father's gods on leaving him. How Jacob's God condoned this is not stated.

A notable act in Jacob's career was the deceit and bad faith enacted against Hamor and his people. Hamor made a treaty with the Israelites, acting in good faith on his part, showing friendship and a desire to fraternize with them; but when the Israelites, by their deception, had rendered the Hivites noncombatant, they rushed in and murdered their allies. Such were the chosen people of the Israelites' God.

The next favorite under the special care of God was Joseph, who throughout his life had the purest record of all God's chosen ones. He passed through many trying vicissitudes with strict integrity. He was finally made ruler in Egypt, and received his father and brethren there, and gave them a home. The result of this immigration of Jacob's family, after the death of their protector

Joseph, was a reduction to servile tasks and oppression, until rescued by Moses. The story of their deliverance is one of the most contradictory and illogical narratives in the Bible.

God, seeing the affliction of the Israelites in Egypt, sent Moses to their rescue. He went reluctantly, after much coercion, encouraged by God's turning his rod into a serpent. Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and demanded the release of the Israelites; but God frankly declared that he would harden Pharaoh's heart, that he would not let them go. This seems to have been done for no apparent purpose but to afford an opportunity of displaying God's power to Pharaoh. The demand of Moses brought down severer tasks on the Israelites, with a refusal to let them go, for the Lord had hardened Pharaoh's heart that he might multiply his "signs and wonders." He tells Moses: "Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel with great judgments." When Pharaoh asked them to show a miracle, Aaron threw down his rod, as God commanded, and it became a serpent; but the magicians of Egypt threw down their rods and they became serpents, proving that the magic of that feat was known to

them; but although Aaron's rod proved the strongest, the act as a miracle was destroyed. When Moses and Aaron again demanded of Pharaoh the release of their people, on his refusal they turned the waters of Egypt into blood. This miracle the magicians readily imitated, showing it was not beyond the power of their magic to compass, and was in no way miraculous. The next attempt at miraculous skill was producing frogs. The magicians compassed that also, and produced frogs abundantly. The frogs were probably not a gastronomic delicacy then in Egypt, but a nuisance, so Pharaoh agreed to let the Israelites go; but when the frogs disappeared, Pharaoh, by God's direction, revoked his promise.

The next plague was lice and then flies infesting the land of Egypt. The art of the magicians could not descend to the production of these pestiferous vermin, so Pharaoh consented to let the Israelites go. But God had not done showing his "signs and wonders" to Pharaoh; so he made him still retain the Israelites through another series of miracles, terminating in the destruction of the first-born throughout all Egypt!

We will pause here to investigate these *stupendous miracles*. God commanded Moses to demand of

Pharaoh the release of the Israelites, while at the same time he caused Pharaoh to refuse to emancipate them, for the purpose, as he frankly avows, of displaying his might and power in a series of miracles which were transcendently low, barbarous, and vulgar; culminating in the horrible and fiendish destruction of children and animals that had in no way offended him, and were without power to control or mitigate the decree of Pharaoh, which in this case was the decree of God. If a more iniquitous act can be conceived by the most depraved imagination, or one of more wanton cruelty and injustice, we confess it is beyond our power of imagination.

When God had finished his display of wonders and had executed his vengeance against Pharaoh, whom he had caused to retain and oppress the Israelites for that purpose, according to this *veracious* revelation, he caused Pharaoh to assent to the Israelites' departure. Yet God had not finished the exhibition of his marvels, so Pharaoh was caused to remain unsubdued by all the plagues under which he and his people suffered. This gave another opportunity for a display of God's power to finish the drama, ending in the destruction of Pharaoh's host in the Red Sea. Comment

on this preposterous fable seems unnecessary. To any one who cannot see the absurdity and incredibility of the tale, reasoning is superfluous. It is significant that no mention is made in Egyptian, or other contemporary record, of any such potent event, which could hardly have been omitted if it had really occurred.

The Israelites left Egypt, it is related, after despoiling, by God's command, their confiding neighbors, the Egyptians, of their jewelry and other valuables, who inconceivably loaned them without mistrust or unfriendly feeling toward their neighbors, notwithstanding the terrible ordeal they had passed through in the Israelites' struggle for freedom. (This betrayal of their friends may have been the cause of the pursuit by the Egyptians after the Israelites had absconded with the borrowed treasure.) They wandered in the wilderness, or sparsely populated regions, until they grew strong enough for more ambitious conquests. When it finally appeared that they had certain preëmption rights in Canaan, they proceeded to assert them by making unprovoked war on the occupants of that country.

During the wanderings in the wilderness there were, according to the record, many divine interpositions, as God led them by a pillar of fire at night,

and a pillar of cloud by day. Yet, with this visible symbol of God's presence constantly before them, they were dissatisfied and turbulent, often straying after other gods, although assured that their God was jealous and vindictive, visiting the sins of the fathers upon the third and fourth generation. This declaration of vengeance beyond the offender was extended to the end of time in the descendants of Adam, which is radically different from the code of justice among enlightened people of the present day. The painful efforts of theologians to harmonize this crude dogma with modern ethics are pitiable and fallacious, as in many other Biblical statements contrary to proved facts.

The denunciations against making graven images of other gods, or worshipping them, were terrible and emphatic, and the Israelites were under the most solemn obligations to refrain from the worship of any god but Jehovah; yet when Moses went up to meet God on Mount Sinai, and received the table of stone on which the ten commandments were written, together with God's verbal instructions, as he delayed to come down, people began to wonder, and going to the high priest Aaron said: "Up, make us gods, for as for this Moses, the man that brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot

not what has become of him." Then Aaron took from them their golden jewels, without a protest against their infidelity, and, keeping on the popular side, he made them a golden calf, which they received from him as the god that had rescued them out of the land of Egypt. And he built an altar before the new god he had made, and proclaimed a feast, at which he offered burnt offerings and peace-offerings from the people, saying, "*These be thy gods, oh, Israel! which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*" This shows the value the Israelites and their high priest Aaron placed on the Jehovah, of which such wonders are related.

But their transgression was too great for Moses' God, who bid him not to interfere, and he would consume them in his wrath. But Moses, more politic, did interfere, and showed superior acumen, notwithstanding the flattering promises held out to him of becoming the founder of a nation; and he besought the Lord his God to turn from his fierce wrath, "and *repent* of this evil against thy people," telling him to remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, to whom he had sworn he would multiply their seed as the stars of heaven. "And the Lord *repented* of the evil which he thought to do unto his people." Then Moses went down and slew about three thou-

sand men obnoxious to him, as a modified revenge on the worshippers of Aaron's golden calf.

But Aaron, the head and front of the offending, and its instigator, escaped punishment. This may account for Moses allaying the wrath of God that would have jeopardized the life of his brother. Moses persuaded God to forgive the rest of the people, which included his brother Aaron. The intimacy between the Lord and Moses was phenomenal; he "spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaks unto his friend." This seems to traverse the declaration of God when urged by Moses to show him his glory. "Thou canst not see my face," said God, "for there shall no man see me and live." But he offered Moses a compromise, telling him to stand upon a rock, and while he passed by he would put him in a cleft of the rock, and cover him with his hand; "and I will take away mine hand and thou shalt see my back parts, but my face shall not be seen." When God came, in accordance with this declaration, Moses made haste and bowed his head until the Lord had passed, and he then saw God's "back parts." Moses built a tabernacle by command of his God that was furnished sumptuously, showing his unlimited control over the people and their purses.

The Israelites wandered many years, according to their legends. In following the description of their inconsistent, bloody, and barbarous acts, it is a relief to the benevolent reader to know that no mention is made in the writings of any contemporary nation of this primitive cruelty recorded in the Jewish Scriptures, where the aim seems to be to chronicle the marvellous works of their God, and exalt him above all others in might, regardless of equity or justice. The law under Moses was barbarous and rude, such as a primitive people in their condition would be likely to enact of their own uninstructed volition; while it is claimed that those laws were dictated by command of the God that Jews and Christians believe in, as the Creator of heaven and earth. How far the characteristics of this God have been copied in later times by his worshippers we leave for their investigation.

Joshua, the doughty leader of the Israelites in despoiling the Canaanites, was appointed by Moses, and became ruler over the hosts of Israel. His career, described in the Pentateuch, was as marvellous as that of his predecessor, and was filled with the supernatural. Under Joshua, the walls of Jericho were thrown down by the blowing of rams' horns, although his army compassed the city with

the magic number seven times. His next notable adventure was the defence of the Gibeonites; on which occasion he commanded the sun to stand still, "and the sun stood still in the midst of the heavens, and hastened not to go down for about a whole day," that the Israelites might slaughter their opponents. The author of Joshua can hardly extol him sufficiently, or his command over the heavenly bodies. He truly says of that prolonged day, that there was no day like it, either before or after it (which we can readily believe). And as if realizing that his story was incredible, the author adds in confirmation, "Is this not written in the book of Jasher?" Now all we know of Jasher is a similar reference to him in Samuel 2: 1, 18. Jasher seems to need a sponsor as much as the author of Joshua to establish his veracity. Although we have no knowledge of him except the use of his name as authority for this impossible story, which has been received as a fact by Jews and Christians down to the present day. Perhaps the marvellous story of the fall of Jericho came also from Jasher, as that certainly needs the proof of cumulative evidence to render it probable.

In what light would the civilized world now consider the fiendish destruction of a conquered people,

such as was accomplished by Joshua with the approval, and by the command of God? Yet we have heard his acts commended in this civilized age by theologians.

According to the record Joshua fought a war of extermination against an unoffending people, to rob them of their lands, under the delusive pretence of his God's approval. God seems to have been on the side of his chosen people, who combined religious fanaticism with long training, regardless of the equitable rights of others; but the justice and morality of the act is more than doubtful, quite beyond the dictates of civilization or the power of reason to approve.

From the utterances of Joshua in his old age, it is evident that other gods than that of Israel were recognized by him as existent, although he believed his God to be the most puissant; yet in dereliction of their prohibitive creed, the Israelites were led away to worship the gods of other nations. While the prevarication, vacillation, and inconsistencies of Israel's God pervade the books of the Old Testament, the ignorance of their authors about the world's true history precludes the assumption that they are vicariously inspired records, and proves their unreliable character as divine revelation.

These Scriptures undoubtedly contain historical facts, just precepts, and truthful maxims, with notable examples of purity and morality, like most of the earlier sacred records of other people; these are the accumulation of ages, formulated by the attrition of contact with the world in social relations; they do not exceed their antecedents, and are commingled with the grossest barbarisms.

The prophecies of Jeremiah, which were written after the events they assumed to have foretold were enacted, record the accusations of the Lord against the kings and people for their transgressions, especially for their worship of other gods, numerous as the number of their cities, and he declares a list of sins for which they deserve destruction.

God tells Jeremiah that he will bring Nebuchadnezzar to fight against the Israelites, and he declares he will fight with him, with anger, fury, and great wrath, without pity or mercy — amiable God!

Among the wrongs to be reformed we find "Woe unto him that useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work," a broad hint to modern capitalists. The prophecies of Jeremiah as the word of the Lord excel in the "horrible and awful;" they are preposterously bombastic with his "roaring" and "howling" fury. The as-

sumption that Vs. 5 and 6, Chap. 23, Chap. 31, v. 22, and Chap. 33: 15 refer to Christ, nothing but unreasoning fanaticism could compass; Israel did not dwell in safety under him.

The fact appears to be, beyond all successful contradiction, that the God depicted in the Hebrew Scriptures was a vacillating, vengeful, barbarous creation, delighting in bloody sacrifices. He not only allowed, but commanded, most horrible atrocities in exterminating war, and despoiling nations by his chosen people to get possession of their heritage and lands; murdering their defenceless women and children, and with bestial lust saving the virgins as spoils. The only pretence for this was a gift from God, whom they often neglected to worship; who never enlightened, conciliated, or protected their victims. But, strangest of all, the Israelites themselves, with all their God's miraculous favors showered upon them, and with the threat of condign punishment meted out to them by the wrath of God if they forsook him, frequently repudiated their divine benefactor, in whom they apparently placed little reliance, except under the stringent control of Moses, or some other potent ruler to coerce them. Even Aaron, the first high priest of their God and consecrated to his

service, who, as is said, had witnessed all his miracles in Egypt, where he was an actor, repudiated his worship, substituting a golden calf for the idolatrous worship of the people, who rejected their God's divinity and the legends glorifying him, to worship an idol as their deliverer from Egyptian bondage. These nomads paid very doubtful reverence to the God of Moses, and often ignored him; this would be inconceivable if the wonders told of him ever occurred.

The narrow dogma that all goodness of act and thought comes from the direct interposition of God, and all evil from a devil, or false god, which then seemed specious, we discard, and apprehend now that every thought and act of man is of his own independent volition, and produces a normal result under unvarying law. The God of Moses by his barbarity, vacillation, and impulsive acts, so frankly recorded of him by that primitive and uncultivated people engrossed in superstitions, seems to antagonize the conception of an omniscient being by any sane man not besotted with a faith that discards reason and annihilates common sense.

The wars, building of altars, and destruction of nations, recorded in the Hebrew Testament, un-

garnished by the supernatural and divine glamour, are not unnatural events, or out of the course of human effort and aspiration in an early and uncultivated age, whose highest attainment was clannish devotion. The most noted prophets were shrewd tacticians, governing by their power to utilize the superstition of their catechumens; this to the unbiassed critic is very apparent; their policy was sophistical, and, while often denunciatory, it was generally used to conciliate or incite their adherents to some valiant or desperate act, such as Moslem fatalists sometimes display. In certain cases of gross wrong they became the champions of the right; notably, when Nathan reprimanded David, which required some courage, as the mode of delivering it evinced.

The prophecies were generally written after the assumed fulfilment of the event, and were oftentimes as ambiguous as a Delphic oracle; they have been received with as great faith, and as little reason, as were the noted sayings of the priestesses of that marvellous shrine. This is not so strange when we see at the present day a belief in the fulfilment of dreams and prognostications, to the wonderment of the superstitious, who ignore the facts of science. This tendency of the human

mind is taken advantage of by charlatans and pretenders in their various callings, while many sincere people are led astray, from misreading natural phenomena: this appears in Christian Science, palmistry, reading of character, conversing with the dead, and fortune-telling, with which the world is teeming. No doubt there is much psychical and mental knowledge yet in abeyance for coming science to analyze and explain, but the theories of mystics, Gnostics, theosophists, and Mormons are the offspring of mental aberrations of the imagination or the delusion of chicanery.

If the maledictions of Ezekiel are not magnified by his mysterious, startling, and very sensational vision, the Israelites were abnormally depraved and incorrigible, far exceeding the pagan nations by which they were surrounded; and what must strike the investigator with astonishment is, that the sole purpose and interest of the Creator was centred in this contumacious nation, for whom he sought to destroy the rest of mankind, who were — if he was the Creator of all things — his offspring.

There were so many so-called prophets among the Israelites, all of whom, as the times required, uttered promises and denunciations, cunningly de-

vised to incite the people to action, this had an effect on that superstitious nation, and on succeeding generations of more enlightened people, who still believe in their inspiration. But as we grow more enlightened these prophecies are losing their force; men are not so easily duped by them; yet we have monitions now and then that men of credulous temperament are still influenced by them, although the unwavering light of science is gradually illuminating the world, and dispelling the ancient illusions.

The accumulated wisdom acquired by modern research, utilized by ratiocination, and the civilization attained through mental acquirements from earlier ages, has been improved and refined by human advancement due to natural causes, constituting the status of modern culture; while a belief in the supernatural legends of antiquity has generally retarded advancement, by stubborn faith in the fabulous chronicles on which men still place reliance.

The story of the God of the Hebrews is handed down to modern times with strained and varying interpretations, in the effort to harmonize it with advancing knowledge and to identify it with the unknown cause of the visible creation, although its

authors had no conception of the true origin of the universe. This is the God still worshipped as an entity.

The legends composing the Old Testament of the Christian Bible we have briefly, and in part only, analyzed; it contains many moral maxims, aphorisms, precepts, and prophecies, for the guidance of the Israelites in their worship and social relations, to ensure their salvation, similar to teachings found in all the ancient religions.

We have only sought to show the mythological character of the Jewish God, surrounded by hosts of angels and spirits serving him and executing his commands, which is in accord with most of the earlier religions that personify God as an entity of a defined form, living in a circumscribed heaven, at a fixed place, attended by his servitors.

When Ezra returned to Jerusalem, after the captivity in Babylon, he undertook the restoration of the ancient faith of the Israelites. He found the priests and people had married with neighboring nations, and had children by their wives; this dereliction from Mosaic law he at once made war upon, and forced them to abandon their wives and children that were not of God's chosen people, who must not be contaminated with Gentile blood.

This is the teaching of the Old Testament conservators.

In the foregoing brief epitome of the Jewish Scriptures, left by Ezra and others, we have omitted many incidents showing the mundane character of the God of Israel, as we deem a further illustration unnecessary to establish the fact that he should be placed in the category of the other mythological deities.

The story related of Samuel as judge in Israel, who with reluctance consented to appoint a king to supersede his rule; and by divine guidance he made an unpropitious choice in Saul for king, whose only preëminence seemed to have been his stature; Saul was followed by David, "a man after God's own heart," whom Saul attempted to kill. David in youth was a renowned warrior. His distinguishing characteristic, which ingratiated him with God, was an unbounded capacity for worship and adulation, exhibited by fanatical homage. Before he came to the throne he displayed many traits of a fanatical, bold, and magnanimous warrior; he forbore under strong provocation to kill Saul, because he was "the Lord's anointed;" he possessed great power for political intrigue and finesse; he killed Goliath and married the king's

daughter; he escaped from the king's wrath, and avoided killing him when he was in his power.

David as a warrior pursued a course of slaughter, as Joshua had done before him. When living with the Philistines, after flying from Judea, he added two wives to his harem, to replace the king's daughter, who had been taken from him. The story of David, like that of Joshua, might have been taken from that nebulous book of Jasher, which would account for the superhuman character of the record. David was made King of Judea by command of God, and King of Israel after Saul's death. He was devout, worshipping God fantastically, dancing naked before the Ark. He debauched Uriah's wife, and then tried to conceal his iniquity by recalling Uriah home to father his offspring; but Uriah was faithful to duty, and the nefarious attempt failed. This caused David to order his victim slain in battle. He then took the woman he had debauched, and whose husband he had slain, to wife. By her he had a son, who according to the legend was the wisest man in Biblical history. In this case God omitted to visit his father's sin upon him; he escaped the penalty through God's favoritism in condoning his father's foul iniquity; which showed that immunity may

be obtained for the most atrocious crimes by obsequious worship — a maxim that has been often followed in modern life.

Solomon, notwithstanding his iniquitous origin, prospered beyond all the other Kings of Israel, and has come down to us not only in Bible tradition, but in Arabian tales, with genii and afrites. In Bible tradition Solomon performed many notable acts; he built the Temple at Jerusalem and beautified the city. The fame of his wisdom was ideal; the proverbs attributed to him rival in magnitude his harem with its seven hundred wives — all princesses — supplemented by three hundred concubines; an even thousand in all. How insignificant our modern Mormon Saints appear beside this multitudinous polygamist, endowed with heavenly wisdom, under the special favor and approbation of the God of Israel. Among the striking instances displaying an aberration of the imagination, is the attributing to such utterances as are found in the second chapter of Isaiah an allusion to occurrences in after-ages unwarrantably distorted into a prophecy foretelling events that were for that purpose made to correspond with them, and the result of their coming. The prophecy in the fourth chapter has never been

fulfilled — perhaps it is still expected to be after a lapse of two thousand years; if any reference to the coming of Christ can by fanatical imagination be connected with the commencement of this prophecy, the conclusion precludes any reliance upon it; there has never been an abrogation of natural law, or a gathering of the Jews as predicted. It must be a vivid imagination derived from preconceived ideas that can connect a "foundation-stone in Zion" with any reference to Christ.

The rhapsodical utterances of Isaiah can hardly be accepted as a prophecy inspired, with nothing but unwarranted assumption to connect it with Christ. Isaiah was a Hebrew believing in the predominating power of the Hebrew God and a coming Messiah, who had been traditionally promised them to elevate their race to power as his chosen people, to rule over the rest of mankind; all of which subsequent history has dissipated.

Jeremiah prophesied a king to reign over his people prosperously, practising judgment, and executing justice righteously, on earth — "and in his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely." This evidently means the gathering of the Jews into an independent nation; which has not yet taken place, nor is it likely to hereafter.

When the return of the Jews from captivity was promised by God, according to the record, he declared he would build them up as at first — "In those days and at that time, will I cause the branch of righteousness to grow up unto David, and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land." This is claimed to mean Jesus, but he certainly did not fulfil the prophecy.

The Rabbi Joseph Kranskopf notes this attempted reference of Isaiah's prophecies to the Gospels. He defines prophet to mean, in Hebrew, speaker, preacher, pleader, interpreter, counsellor, admonisher, poet, rhapsodist.

Dean Stanley says that down to the seventeenth century, prophecies were used in English in the sense of preaching or speaking; "from that time they acquired the Greek meaning of foreseeing or foretelling future events." In Biblical times that meaning was foreign.

The functions of Biblical prophets were plainly those of preachers, or reformers and exhorters, and of statesmen and patriots. They were the counsellors of kings when they governed justly, and their bitterest opponents when they tyrannized the people. They were coadjutors of priests that ministered righteously, and were their foes when

they degraded their calling. The foreseeing and foretelling of future events was not a characteristic of Biblical prophets, whose foretelling related to things in the immediate future and in no case referred to remote after-times; they were often optimistic utterances of their authors to incite their people to action. There is no historical or logical right to torture the words of Isaiah into a prophecy of something to happen hundreds of years after his death. They could not possibly have applied to any other events save such as took place during, or prior to his time, or expected soon to follow as logical consequences of existing states of affairs, or as sweet dreams or fond ideals.

A proper answer to the question, as to what the events may have been referred to by Isaiah, Rabbi Kranskopf says, necessitates a knowledge of the times, and that as the Book of Isaiah has not less than two authors of different periods to which it is to be attributed, they were a century apart, — the Assyrian and Babylonian periods. Rabbi Kranskopf then shows that Isaiah, to fortify Ahaz and reassure the cowardly king, says the child soon to be born of a young woman is to be named *Immanuel* (God with us), "and the land thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings." Such is the true

explanation of the first Messianic prophecies; the Hebrew young woman being translated virgin. The cognomen Immanuel, Christ never attained. The other prophecies are clearly shown to refer to historic events of that age, having no relation to the subsequent birth of Christ, which happened hundreds of years afterward.

The rabbi clearly shows that the prophecies quoted in the New Testament from the Old, and about which so much pains was taken to perform acts to "fulfil" them, in no way relate to Jesus, and can by no possibility be connected with him. (See Luke 22: 36.)

The plain story of this nomadic people seems to be, that, after leaving Egypt (if they did really originate there), they were weak in numbers, and wandered in sparsely settled countries, and they gradally multiplied into a formidable host. As they gained strength they crowded out the inhabitants of more populous regions, until they reached Canaan, where, as we have related, by direction of their leaders, they attacked the inhabitants, and barbarously exterminated them under the assumption that God had given the land to their ancestor; and they took possession of the country under that nebulous claim upon which they subsequently

shaped their legends. After these wandering tribes settled in Canaan, they consolidated into a nation, and conquered other people. The records now called Mosaic were compiled subsequently to their "captivity" in after-times, from their own traditions and the chronicles of their captors the Babylonians, as appears from discoveries in recent years among the ruins of that city, in which is found the original legend of creation paraphrased in Genesis. A survey of the historical facts pertaining to the advent of the Hebrew nation, and its tribal relations, shows us a minor people surrounded by nations much greater and more advanced in culture and civilization; which eventually lapsed into an appendage of the Roman Empire, and owes its prominence in modern times to the advent of the Christian religion, which originated in it, and attained a marvellous power in the decadence of the Roman Empire, that has dominated the most advanced nations of the present day.

CHAPTER III.

CHRIST'S ADVENT AND MISSION

Some nineteen centuries ago we find the Jews were under the rule of a Roman governor, with a freedom to worship their God that was accorded to most of the Roman colonies subject to its domination. The Jews had previously, as we have seen, been conquered by the Babylonians, with whom they lived for many years in captivity, and had free access to their literature and records. Of these the author, collaborator, or editor of Genesis availed himself in narrating the history of the creation of the world, which so closely follows the Babylonian account as to leave no doubt that it is a plagiarism from that source, modified to suit the religious traditions of the Jewish hierarchy of five or six hundred years before.

The Pentateuch, from whatever source derived, and however compiled, is the basis upon which the New Testament rests; it is constantly referred

to in the Gospels, and was often quoted by Christ and his followers authoritatively. With this fact determined, we have examined the Gospels, from which we have endeavored to educe a rational and consistent life of Christ, consonant with the historical legend, in which all particulars of his belligerent acts that are clearly indicated are studiously omitted. We have eliminated the miraculous and supernatural incidents, of which there is no evidence except the traditional credence of his followers, recorded by authors unidentified more than a century after the events narrated had occurred.

Among the Jewish legends there was a tradition that a Messiah was to come to free them from all evils. The title of Messiah (anointed) was applied to their anointed kings; but the one that was to come was to be transcendently above the others in power and glory. The prophecies about this coming Messiah were uttered, doubtlessly, to keep up the spirits of the downtrodden people. They announced the coming of a king who would be to the Israelites salvation, freeing them from the assaults of other nations, and the troubling of the wicked within their community. The Messiah was to be of and from the Jews, and was to in-

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augurate a nation transcending all other nations. This tradition engendered several claimants from time to time, the most conspicuous of whom, so far as we know, was Jesus Christ, whose mission was by him declared to be to the Jews alone; under the title of "King of the Jews" thus appropriating all the Messianic passages in the Old Testament recognizing a Messiah as referring to him, for which he was subsequently deified by his proselytes.

All that we know of the life of Christ is contained in the New Testament; written mostly by unknown authors, whose accounts were derived from the traditions of his sectarian followers. They cannot be traced back to an earlier date than about the beginning of the second century after his death; and it is important to note here that no allusion to the life of Christ is found in any contemporaneous record, or any mention of abnormal or miraculous phenomena that took place in the vicinity of Jerusalem during his life, or at his death; and it is significant that all the adverse writings of subsequent times down to a recent period have been ruthlessly destroyed. So significant was this fact deemed to be, that, in after-time, several clumsy forgeries were perpetrated by monks of the middle ages, notably those attributed to Pliny the Younger, and Josephus;

but the frauds have been noticed and exposed by modern critics.

There is a variant relation of the advent of Christ in the different Gospels which, as we are dealing with the assumption of the supernatural, it behooves us to strictly analyze. In Matthew it is stated that after Mary was espoused to Joseph she was found with child, which caused Joseph to determine to put her away privately, not to expose her; but he had a dream in which an angel assured him the Holy Ghost was the father, and she was pure. Joseph was told to call her son Jesus, and that he would save the people from their sins. Now all this was done, the Gospel says, that the saying of a prophet might be fulfilled; in other words, this was done to fulfil a prophecy, although the prophet referred to called him Emmanuel.

In Luke we are told Gabriel the angel appeared to *Mary*, and told *her* the son she would conceive should be called Jesus. He further told *her* he should be great and called the Son of the Highest, who would give him the throne of *his father* David (evidently a temporal throne), and "he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever;" "and of his kingdom there shall be no end." (This prophecy, history shows us, has not been fulfilled.) After

this Mary assented to the proposition of the angel.

Mark and John fail to relate this miraculous conception, which closely accords with the story of the advent of Buddha and of Krishna, told ages before, as we learn from recorded history.

The Gospel of St. Matthew being probably the most authoritative version of the current legends of the history of Christ, and in nearest accord with the earliest traditions, we shall follow it generally in our exposition of his life and acts.

According to the Gospel of St. Matthew, Jesus Christ was the son of the God of the Hebrews (although he always declared himself to be "the Son of Man"). He was circumcised and educated as a Jew, and accepted Jewish traditions in the Hebrew Scriptures as a divinely instituted authority.

Christ's genealogy is traced in Matthew's Gospel from David down to Joseph (the husband of Mary, Christ's mother), through whom he derived his pedigree as "son of David," while the Gospel declares him to be the supernatural son of God, conceived by Mary while a virgin. After his birth, we are told, his life was sought by Herod, resulting in a slaughter of children to destroy him.

These incidents are an apparent plagiarism from the tradition of Buddha, written centuries before Christ's birth, and well known at that time throughout the East. Apart from the plagiarism, it is more than doubtful if a Roman ruler would have issued such a monstrous and senseless edict, of which there is no mention made in Roman or Jewish history. This shows the nebulous character of the entire record. It is obvious that the only competent human witness for the miraculous conception was Mary, from whom there is no direct testimony; but she repeatedly called Joseph Christ's father, while he invariably called himself the "Son of Man." We leave this enigma for the theologians to explain.[1]

There is nothing marvellous or unusual related in any accredited life of Christ up to his thirtieth year, during which time he seems to have lived in unrecorded obscurity This is a strange hiatus in the life of "the only begotten Son of God," sent

[1] The life of Christ, shorn of its supernatural embellishments, shows a being full of the characteristics of humanity, and many of its weaknesses, with a knowledge only commensurate with the age in which he lived. His moral teachings were, as recorded, similar to those of earlier sages, many of whose aphorisms were attributed to him, such as the Golden Rule of Confucius, uttered centuries before his birth.

into the world as the *only* Saviour of men! It was a long period of preparation compared with the time employed by him in active labors that ended his career.

Tradition says he was born during a journey of his parents, in Bethlehem, in accordance with an ancient prophecy. There was nothing abnormal in his gestation or parturition. He came into the world a helpless infant, was nursed by his mother, and grew from infancy to maturity by the slow process of human development, in which only a single episode is recorded, — that of talking with the doctors in the Temple. This was not a remarkable incident in the life of a precocious boy. On that occasion, the legend says, when his parents missed him and returned in search of him, they found him in the Temple, sitting with the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions; which it is related astonished them by his understanding and answers. As this was the first demonstration of his intellect, it would have been transcendently valuable to have a record of his sayings on that notable occasion, on which there was an opportunity to announce his vocation and divine afflatus, that would have indicated his future career as "Messiah" and "King of the Jews." He made

no announcement there of his Messianic mission or future teaching. Beyond the capacity of a precocious boy nothing appears in this incident.

When he was found by his parents, he expressed no regret for their anxiety, but asked why they sought him, saying, "Wist ye not that I must be about my father's business?" (We have no record that he was ever about it afterward until he was thirty years old.) His parents did not commend his mystical excuse, notwithstanding their assumed knowledge of his divine origin. Although this incident is made an important factor by Biblicists, in proof of his divinity, the result on that occasion was a reproof from his mother, "Son, why hast thou dealt so with us? behold, thy *father* and I have sought thee sorrowing." Mary always spoke of Joseph as the father of Christ, who was circumcised under Jewish law, and brought up with the rest of Mary's children in the family of Joseph, without any noticeable distinction. He was known in Nazareth as the son of Joseph, and it is nowhere recorded that Joseph or Mary ever announced him to be of superhuman origin during his youth, or afterward; nor does it appear that the people of Nazareth ever entertained such an idea, or knew anything of his miraculous conception, or the won-

ders related of his birth which, if they had occurred, they could not have been ignorant of. When the father and mother of Jesus found him in the Temple, and he had given a reason that they did not approve for his escapade, they took him home with them, "and he was subject unto them." Whether this means that they chastised him for the trouble and anxiety he had subjected them to, or not, must be left to conjecture, aided by a knowledge of the customs of those times. It is certain we have no account of his ever repeating the offence again, however pressing he conceived his father's business to have been.

From the historical incidents recorded in the Gospels, there seems to be no reasonable doubt that at the beginning of his public career Christ endeavored to incite the Jews into rebellion, under the guise of the traditional Messiah that was expected to emancipate them, and establish them in an independent kingdom. In this enterprise he was aided by his cousin, John the Baptist, who appeared in a unique garb, feeding on primitive food, to rouse the superstitious people into a crusade that alarmed the authorities. These relatives, Jesus and John, obviously acted in unison on a preconcerted plan, and followed out a similar line of policy; first

gathering the people together, under the assumption that John was the forerunner, to announce the advent of their expected Messiah. John gathered a multitude of people from all the country round about Jordan, baptizing those who believed the "kingdom of heaven" was to be established, with the coming Messiah as the "King of the Jews."[1] During this initiatory movement, Jesus appeared, and was baptized. At this time he had a vision, serving to confirm their neophytes in the belief that he was the Messiah that the prophecies foretold would appear to liberate them.

But the time had not come for Jesus to act, so he retired for a season, while John continued his propaganda. It is related that Christ then went into the wilderness, to be tempted by the devil, the reason for which is not apparent. It is certain the fiend proved very inadequate and short-sighted if an entity; but if a figure of speech, to indicate Christ's mental state at that time, the incident illustrates his very human proclivity, with aspirations for power and glory that may have disturbed his meditations, as he was about to assume the rôle

[1] Baptizing was evidently a mode of pledging the people to fight for Jesus to make him king.

of "King of the Jews." Either way, he had the resolution to repel the temptation, and a careful forbearance to abstain from an acrobatic leap, in the fallacious expectation of being borne up by angels.

At first the mission of these religionary-political leaders was exclusively to the Jews; and not until later and more disastrous times was there an inclusion of other people by his followers. After John and Jesus succeeded in collecting thousands of followers, Jesus admonished them to be ready to suffer all things, and lay down their lives in his cause, assuring them that they would thus secure eternal happiness, while a failure to *act* would involve them in everlasting misery.

After John the Baptist was beheaded, Christ fled away to the Sea of Galilee, avoiding Nazareth, where he might have been traced; he thus escaped a like fate. He continued organizing his proselytes, and chose twelve disciples. He then preached the "kingdom of heaven" about to be established, which he taught in the synagogues of all Galilee, "and great multitudes followed him from Galilee, Jerusalem, Judea, Decapolis, and beyond Jordan." This organized army of adherents he addressed, as we have seen, on a mountain, where they were gath-

ered into companies; and he instructed them, as is recorded in the fifth chapter of Matthew.

In his Sermon on the Mount, delivered to a host about to follow him to Jerusalem, Christ tells them it is blessed to be meek, submissive, and enduring, for his sake, for which they will be richly rewarded. He admonishes them that they must *act*, to be efficient. He denies the imputation that he has come to destroy the Mosaic law (this would be meaningless if he was not engaged in a war against the ruling powers). Knowing his followers were Jews who believed in the law, which they would not help destroy, he endeavored to amplify it, declaring, in an extravagant figure of speech, that heaven and earth should pass away before any portion of the law should pass. He exhorts his followers to be meek, humble, and obedient, living in harmony and avoiding litigation. In hyperbolic language, he enjoins non-resistance of injury, with an anomalous admonition to pluck out an eye, and cut off a hand, if it offends. No normal man of to-day believes in non-resistance of evil, or submission to injury. That injunction was evidently a temporary admonition, to keep his ignorant and unruly followers from engaging in contention, to the detriment of the cause in which they were engaged. While there are

doubtless some moral aphorisms in the Sermon on the Mount, it was evidently not intended for general application, but was addressed to a rude army about to engage in a religious war. His purpose was evidently to inculcate strict obedience and fidelity to his cause, with the fear of hell-fire for dereliction, and to prepare them for a conflict that was about to be initiated. It is addressed to an ignorant host, and is filled with advice as to their conduct in trying times, soon to take place, tempered with a little wholesome flattery, and with strenuous admonition and command, to prevent their getting into quarrels that would divert them from the main purpose of establishing his kingdom. He charges them to take no thought for the morrow, for they would be taken care of, and could supply their wants by taking the godsends. He taught them strict obedience to his commands, and encouraged them by declaring that those who *obey* and *do* will be rewarded; while those who merely say to him, "Lord! Lord!" and do not act, he will not recognize or receive into his "kingdom of heaven," to be established.

In sending out his disciples to obtain recruits, he cautions them not to go to the Gentiles, but "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The Gen-

tiles were evidently beyond the purpose of his mission as "King of the Jews." His constant injunctions of secrecy were frequent and suggestive for war; otherwise they were meaningless. To carry out his secret instructions, he says, "What I tell you in the darkness, that speak ye in the light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye on the housetops."

All mention is carefully avoided in the Gospels of any warlike deeds which were unsuccessful; but John was apprehended and cast into prison for his demonstrations, the assumed cause for which is not very rational, — a belligerent intent is more probable. It is obvious that Jesus Christ and John the Baptist were striving to establish a "kingdom of heaven," with Christ as the promised "Messiah" and "King of the Jews" which tradition foretold. From the declarations of Christ we learn that he was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and the belligerency of his mission and the uncompromising warfare in which he told his followers he was about to engage are clearly set forth by him. He says, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I am not come to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance with his father, and the daughter against her mother, and

the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes shall be those of his own household." "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." And he declares that he who stands by him "shall in no wise lose his reward." Can there be a shadow of a doubt that this is a war-like speech to an army of followers about to fight to make him "King of the Jews?" In addressing his followers on that occasion, he strenuously exhorts them to action, depicting the dangers they are to meet in the coming contest, charging them to be valorous, and threatening them with terrific penalties if they evaded their duty. He says to them, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to destroy the soul; but rather fear *him* who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." That this host was to be armed is clearly shown by Christ's injunction to sell even their garments, if necessary, to purchase a sword. (Luke 22: 36.)

He also declared (Luke 14: 26), "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever does not bear his *cross*,[1] and come

[1] It is evident that Christ did not at that time use the word *cross*, as it did not then signify the symbolical meaning given to

after me, cannot be my disciple." "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple."[1] At this time of turbulent activity, Christ had to check the aspiring bickerings and jealousies of his disciples respecting their status in the kingdom about to be inaugurated. In this he used finesse, making obedience, with humble and diligent servitude, the acme of merit. When his disciples asked what position they were to have in his kingdom, he disclaimed the power to decide upon their relative claims to promotion, which he declared was the province of his Father in heaven, — well out of their reach.

When he gave command to the host under him to move on to the invasion of Jerusalem, a disciple said to him, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury

it after his crucifixion, by the Gospel writers. The unlearned multitude he was addressing on the mountain would not have understood a metaphorical allusion. Christ's injunction, no doubt, was, to arm themselves for an entrance with him into Jerusalem and the Temple where he was about to lead them. The word *cross* was undoubtedly used in the Gospel for arms, to disguise the belligerent character of that expedition which terminated so disastrously.

[1] Much as these passages have been distorted into a spiritual meaning, they are a blunt declaration that his followers are to fight in his undertaking to make him "King of the Jews" and establish a "kingdom of heaven" in Jerusalem. His followers were too ignorant to appreciate spiritual teaching.

my father," but Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead." This most unfeeling answer could only have been made by a commander at a strenuous time for immediate action, as it would otherwise have been barbarous, senseless, and uselessly cruel if uttered in a time of peace, while it involved an absurd impossibility.

With an army of followers Christ started from Jericho for Jerusalem. They were enthusiastic in the belief that he was the promised Messiah, and that he would become the King of the Jews. As they approached the city, in order to enter it in greater state, he was mounted on an ass, on which garments of his followers were laid; and in their enthusiasm, they threw down their clothing for him to ride over, strewing branches also in the way. "And the multitudes that went before, and followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest! And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?" (Showing the raid was unexpected by the people of Jerusalem.) And his followers said, "This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth! And Jesus went [with his host] into the Temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the

Temple, and overthrew the tables."[1] When the chief priests and scribes saw this incursion of a fanatical host upon the Temple, they were alarmed and displeased; and they asked Jesus if he heard the cries, "Hosanna for the Son of David," and he answered, "Yea," and said the stones would cry out if they did not, showing his full assent to the demonstration, which was clearly a usurpation of authority by force of arms; very unlike the rôle of the Prince of Peace.

He did not remain in that dangerous position overnight, but drew off and went out to Bethany, returning the next day, at which time a miracle is introduced on the way, denoting his impetuosity of character, that was also displayed elsewhere, especially under a triumphal achievement. He went to gather figs from a tree by the wayside, but finding no fruit on it, he, being hungry, was evidently disappointed and angry, so he vented his wrath upon the unfortunate tree, condemning it to perpetual barrenness; and the tree died. The senseless character of this miracle does not seem to impress the

[1] The assumption has been that Christ alone, by his own puissance, drove out the occupants of the Temple, as is indicated in the fabulous Gospel of John, which version is evidently chimerical. He was backed by an army of followers, too strong to be resisted at that time by the authorities.

modern theologians, or to detract from the assumption of Christ's divine perfection. He assured his followers they could not only do the like, but remove mountains and cast them into the sea, *if they had faith and doubted not.*[1] What this had to do with the mission of a redeemer of men's souls, or a divine instructor, must be left to men more profound in casuistry than we pretend to be for a solution. When Jesus again took possession of the Temple, surrounded by his followers, the chief priests and elders came to him and asked by what authority he thus invaded the Temple, and who gave him authority to do so? To this, as he was backed by a formidable multitude, he refused to give an answer, which they, as custodians of the Temple, had a right to demand.

The length of time that he kept possession of the Temple is not stated, but he held forth there for some time, during which he uttered virulent philippics against the Pharisees, while he bid his followers to observe and do what they taught (well knowing that they taught the Mosaic law). He adjures them not to follow their *acts*, which were opposed to his assumptions. His warfare against the Pharisees and scribes, his strongest opponents, was very

[1] A very pertinent *if*.

bitter; as well as against the priests of the Temple, who all repudiated his claim to the Messiahship, well knowing the danger of such a rising against Roman authority.

The maledictions that he hurled at those in authority and all others that opposed him, show a vindictive spirit, hardly in accordance with a Saviour of souls preaching peace and forgiveness of enemies. We have seen that spirit indicated in the destruction of the fig-tree, and in his reprimand of Peter; it was dangerous to thwart him in anything. There is no account of the expulsion of Jesus with his followers from the Temple; but that they were driven out as soon as the authorities obtained a force sufficient to expel them, is clearly indicated in the sequel. Before he left, his lamentations were very great; he threatened doom to Jerusalem for its *bloodshed* and a destruction of the Temple. While he "would have gathered her children as a hen gathers her chickens under her wing," he tells them, "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." He said also, "Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation." While history has shown these statements to have been erro-

neous, they coincide with the character of their author.

In whatever way his retreat from the Temple, and from Jerusalem, may have been effected, we next find him hidden on the Mount of Olives and his army of followers dispersed; there his disciples came to him *privately* to learn when all the things he had told about should come to pass; what would be the sign of his coming, and the end of the world. Instead of a categorical answer, he tells them not to be deceived or troubled when they hear of wars, and nation rising against nation, as those things must come to pass; with famine, pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places; "*then* they shall deliver *you* up to be afflicted, and shall kill *you*, and *you* shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake, but he that shall endure unto the end shall be saved." "When *ye* shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains, let him in the field not turn back to take his clothes; woe to all that are not able to go, but pray *ye your*[1] flight be not in the winter; for then shall be great tribulation,

[1] The italicized pronouns show that his auditors were to witness all this while living.

such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." He warns them not to be deceived by false Christs; he tells them that on his coming "the sun and moon will be darkened, *and the stars shall fall*," etc., "and the heavens be shaken." (This clearly proves that Christ was ignorant of the organization of the universe.)

He concludes by averring, "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these times be fulfilled." "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." He tells them that no one knows when this is to happen but his Father only (this relieved him from setting a time and clearly shows his inferiority to his Father), but it would be before that generation should pass away. He cautions them to watch vigilantly, and be ready, "for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." It is evident that at this time disaster had come upon him; his followers had left him, and his disciples came to him privately to learn when the aid from heaven that he had been promising them would come. He evades the question by saying his Father in heaven alone knows, and he does not know, but it will all take place during their lifetime; and then

he expatiates on his advent in the clouds, with lightnings, and a blotting out of the sun and the moon, accompanied by a shower of stars; pyrotechnic phenomena to strike terror into the hearts of his adversaries, and display his omnipotence to his followers.

At that time he evidently saw his cause had failed, and that his life was in peril; but he still determined to keep up the illusion with his followers to the last. Unfortunately for him, while he and John had great proselyting powers, they neither of them possessed the talent or following of a Mohammed, Alexander, or Napoleon, with their able generals. While in his retreat on the Mount of Olives, he knew he would not be arrested on the Feast of the Passover, so he ventured into Jerusalem with his disciples to keep that feast, in accordance with his Jewish training. Judas, who had been bribed to aid in his arrest, was with them at the celebration of the Passover. After the supper, and their retreat into hiding, he, well knowing their place of refuge, guided an armed posse to their haunt to arrest Jesus. This shows two important facts: that he was hiding from the officers of the law, and was without sufficient force to resist them. When Christ was taken into custody, after some

attempt at resistance by his followers, he was brought before the high priest, evidently for his taking forcible possession of the Temple; but as the Jews had no power to punish him, he was turned over to the Roman authorities, on the graver charge of assuming to be the "King of the Jews," about which the account says there was much false swearing, but Jesus acknowledged the charge. For that crime, as it was deemed, he was executed; and, that there should be no misunderstanding about the reason for his punishment, Pilate caused it to be blazoned upon his cross in three languages, — Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, — "*This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.*" Thus ended the visible career of the man that his followers afterward deified, and worshipped as the Son of God, and subsequently as one of the paradoxical triune Godhead.

CHAPTER IV.

CHRIST'S CHARACTER AND PARABLES

CHRIST, who it is assumed descended from David through Joseph, the husband of his mother, whom she called his father, was, as we have seen, a circumcised Jew, and lived in his parents' family with his brothers and sisters; no notable difference was recorded of him until he was about thirty years old, and there was no rumor in Nazareth of his miraculous birth; nor did Mary or Joseph proclaim it. When he announced himself as the "Messiah" and "King of the Jews," neither his father nor mother, brothers nor sisters, joined his crusade; nor did they ever after aid him in his mission. Not only did his family disapprove of his course, and that of John the Baptist, by keeping aloof from them, but his mother and brethren sought to dissuade him at the height of his ambitious career, and were repudiated by him,[1] as we have seen.

[1] Matt. 12, v. 47, *et seq.*

There is perhaps no clearer proof against the divinity of Christ than the fact that his mother never aided him by her presence, or declared her belief in his divine mission,[1] which was clearly repudiated by his whole family; this caused him to utter the aphorism, "A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in *his own house.*"

The habits of Jesus were in strong contrast with those of his coadjutor, John the Baptist, who was an abstainer from self-indulgence like the seers of old; but Jesus was fond of good living, and was a wine-drinker; he patronized feasts, and associated with publicans, striving to make himself popular with the people; he defended his course with adroitness, as ministering to the needy. Christ's teaching was according to the spirit of the age, mostly in parables, with a certain latitude and ambiguity, and his acts were in many particulars at variance with the law, which he declared shall

[1] The story recorded in the Gospel of John, of his mother at the cross, is clearly refuted by the other three Gospels, in addition to the fact that she had a husband and children, who were better able, probably, to care for her, and more in unison with her, than a disciple of Christ. John's Gospel is clearly an excogitation from the brain of an imaginative Pauline fanatic who probably wrote that weird book called "Revelation," that is only the revelation of the author's morbid invention.

not in one jot or tittle pass away "till heaven and earth pass away." He did not hesitate to desecrate the Sabbath in the eyes of the law-abiding Jews, and justified it by referring to the act of his ancestor David, who ate the consecrated show-bread, which was not lawful. His freedom of action on the Jewish Sabbath might be imitated by modern Christians with advantage by copying the freedom of their divine master, instead of forcing unwilling people to keep holy the day of the sun-worshippers, as ordered by the Emperor Constantine in dereliction of the Jewish Sabbath.

The prophetic sayings and fabulous legends of the ancients were introduced for the instruction of the people; they were often significant and pertinent, and were frequently attributed to noted seers, to give them currency; they were sometimes made to assume a prophetic character, by declaring that they had been uttered by prophets anterior to the facts they were made to announce, or by enacting what it was assumed the prophets foretold; such sayings were innumerable, and could be appended to the traditions of any divinity, prophet, or sage to whom omination was attributed; the facility of thus enhancing the wisdom of a revered archetype, by appending a wise saying to

his traditional wisdom, was easy, and difficult of detection; in the Gospels are described acts that were frequently performed for the purpose of fulfilling a prophecy.

What portion of the parables that are attributed to Christ were really uttered by him can never be known; they are all derived from traditionary recollections, that no one pretends were written down at the time of their utterance. Such a parable as the sower and the seed was adapted to the occasion, and hardly needed an interpretation. When asked why he spoke in parables, Christ's answer was enigmatical: that his hearers should not understand; and he then uttered his most unjust aphorism, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath." What a maxim this is for the inculcation of the grossest injustice among men. The parable of the tares, and those that follow it, do not excel those of more ancient sages in moral teaching. It is asserted that Christ's utterance of parables was made to fulfil the sayings of some prophet; a reason for many other acts in the New Testament. The comparisons of the kingdom of heaven to a treasure, to the finding of

pearls, to a net, are not sufficiently striking for criticism; they indicate heaven as a circumscribed space, above the firmament, as do all Christ's sayings, and there is a significant dénouement, that *all* the sinners are to be cast into a fiery furnace, "where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth," and this to all eternity. Who can wonder that such teaching should make fiends of mankind! It is so very easy, if not equitable, to serve all grades of sinners alike.

In his own city, Nazareth, Christ's preaching made no proselytes, for his kinfolk and neighbors repudiated him; this caused him to utter the lament that a prophet had no honor in his own country and in his *own house.* (Pity, but they knew him!) Christ was very appreciative of the good opinion of others, and he resented opposition with great vehemence; when he met his disciples, as is said on one occasion, and asked, "Whom do men say that I am?" and on being informed asked, "But whom say ye that I am?" Simon Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." It evidently pleased Jesus, who said, "Blessed art thou, Simon-Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but the Father which is in heaven." He then declared, "Thou art Peter, and

upon this rock I will build my church; and I will give unto thee the keys of heaven." He also gave Peter dominion over earth and hell, so great was his satisfaction and confidence in him. But when Jesus afterward spoke of his death, and Peter, to whom these great powers were given, controverted him, it evidently excited his indignation against the disciple on whom he had bestowed such unprecedented power, and turning on him, he said, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God." What a change in the divine Saviour's views of the disciple he had so exalted when he dissented from his predictions out of extreme love for him! This was a warning lesson to the disciples not to be so indiscreet, as it was evident laudation was more agreeable to Christ than dissent. His invectives against the scribes and Pharisees who opposed his claim to Messiahship, and the cities that repudiated him, were scathing and vindictive, in which burning in hell-fire was a staple punishment.

In his teachings Christ indorses that old Babylonian fable of the flood and of Noah's ark, to illustrate the unknown time of his coming, and he charges his disciples to keep diligent watch there-

for. If it was not to happen in their time, the injunction was a gross deception on their credulity. The constant watchfulness of his followers he further emphasized by the parable of the ten virgins. It is probable that at this time, while he foresaw his impending fate, he desired to keep his disciples together for further aggression, under the illusion of his returning with heavenly forces to aid them. After his capture he boasted of his divine position before the high priest, and was sent by him to the Roman governor for trial. Before Pilate he was accused of claiming to be the "King of the Jews;" whatever evidence was adduced on that occasion we have no record of, but Christ himself acknowledged the charge on which he was condemned and executed.

The episode of Pilate's repudiating the sentence, or that Christ suffered death for his religious teachings, is disproved by the legend blazoned by Pilate on the cross. Christ's antipathy to the Jewish hierarchy, on account of their opposition to his claims as "Messiah" and "King of the Jews," descended to his followers, and pervaded their traditions; hence the Christian antipathy to the Jews down to the present day.

In reviewing the parables attributed to Christ,

they were evidently introduced to elucidate some matter under discussion, and were not intended for universal application, which the ingenuity of modern theologians have adapted them to; and unadorned, or exemplified under the light taught by modern culture, they are of no higher character than the aphorisms current at that period. There is nothing more misleading than the assumption of divine teaching in the texts used by modern theologians, educated in the high-toned equity and morality taught by neoteric science and learning, from which our highest moral teaching comes.

When Jesus had given his envoys secret instructions and commenced recruiting in the cities, the disciples of John, who was then in prison, came to him, and questioned him to know if he was the *one* who was to come, or if they should look for another; thus indicating that a movement was anticipated, the director of which they were seeking. Jesus satisfied them, and on their departure he uttered flattering encomiums on John, saying, "This is Elias, which was to come," premising, "if you will *receive* it," indicating the incredible character of the assertion, and the great strain on their credulity.

The recorded teachings ascribed to Jesus were,

as we have seen, largely by parables, a mode of teaching by fable always current in the East, used for inculcating dogmas and morals by their sages in early times; the world was full of them, ready to be attributed to any teacher as their author, who was often nebulous.

There is nothing about those ascribed to Christ more potent, as we have indicated, than those derived from other sources. He claimed to be the Jewish Messiah, and "King of the Jews," in a "kingdom of heaven" to be founded by him; this was magnified by Paul into a Saviour of mankind.

After the reception of the delegation from John, Jesus went to his own home, among his relatives and acquaintances, where he was repudiated; and "he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." It was useless to display wonders where the audience so well knew the actor; it is unquestionable that his relatives rejected his supernatural and divine claims, and did not intend to be involved in his crusade to make himself "King of the Jews." Could better evidence be adduced that his family did not believe in his supernatural advent or mission? Neither his father, mother, brothers nor sisters were among his followers; the only one of his kinfolk that joined in the con-

spiracy was his cousin, John the Baptist, his co-adjutor in the demonstration. There can be no doubt that the mother of Jesus would have been one of his most prominent and devout followers if she knew or believed that he was conceived in her virginity, through the direct interposition of divine power.

CHAPTER V.

CHRIST'S MIRACLES AND RESURRECTION

THE most important factors for belief in the divinity of Christ are the assumption of his resurrection and power to work miracles; if there was any novelty in this assumption, it might appear significant, but the history of every prior divinity conceived by man shows them to be equally gifted; therefore, it behooves us to examine into the character and proof of the miracles ascribed to him, and judge of the avowed purpose and results, as recorded in the New Testament, to determine their value.

All the miracles recorded of Jesus Christ were local and circumscribed in their purpose; they were for the personal advantage of individuals, and were only bestowed on believers; they were temporary, and seemed to have been displayed to guarantee his assumptions to control and counteract the established laws of nature; while the

great wonders and mighty power he claimed to possess, of calling hosts of angels to protect him, were never displayed, to antagonize the acts of man. He declared that he could, if he so willed, bring legions of angels to fight for, and protect him, yet in his greatest need and requirement, he received no such aid; which, apart from his personal preservation, would have gone further to convert the world than all the preaching of himself and his successors; in fact, his dogma received but little aid in its dissemination until the Emperor Constantine, in great peril, realized the advantage a body of fanatics would be to him in his contention with his enemies. This gave a standing to the sect that enabled them at a later day to dogmatize and subdue Rome, and subsequently to dominate and barbarize all Europe; which caused the terrible warfare between it and science in the contest for freedom of thought in search of truth, that has culminated in modern civilization.

The most general and often repeated miracles recorded of Christ were, the healing of the sick and decrepit of sundry complaints and infirmities, in which casting out devils was the most prominent. Most of these miracles were of a promiscuous physical character, not mental, while some

are described with detailed precision. Possession of devils has now faded out of the category of diseases under the light of modern culture, but was then believed in with unquestioning faith by Christ's Jewish followers, and by Christ, himself a Jew. Before the birth of Christ, and ever since, men have appeared who claimed to possess miraculous powers to heal diseases and to raise the dead. That hallucination has been assumed by fanatics, charlatans, and impostors, down to the present time, and is now believed in by a large number of intelligent people in this enlightened age, although the assumption is shown on investigation to be fallacious. The instances in which Christ is said to have raised the dead were inconspicuous, generally unnoticed, and of private interest; it was often performed as a reward for unquestioning belief in him.

While the stories of miracles achieved by Christ do not differ in their characteristics from those of his predecessors, some of them exhibit an apparent want of equity, malevolence, and favoritism, or as an aid to social fellowship, incongruous in a Messiah, and not prompted by his universal mission.

The miracle of the fig-tree cannot be truthfully

construed otherwise than as malevolent; no other purpose was accomplished by it. The miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead appears as an act of personal love and friendship; Lazarus, so far as Christ's recorded mission was concerned, was unimportant, and afforded no aid to the cause; so of the widow's son. The healing of the centurion's servant was a reward for obsequious faith, with no result except the chance of winning the Roman soldier to his cause. The exodus of a legion of devils from a crazy man into a herd of swine by Christ's command, with license to drown the unoffending brutes, served no other apparent purpose than to beget the hatred of the populace where the *miracle* was enacted, for which he was driven away by the incensed people. The controversy over this miracle, between the grand old statesman Gladstone, a faith-ridden fanatic, and Professor Huxley, the scientist, shows us the power of early teaching over reason and common sense in the highest intellects, giving us warning not to put faith in the *ipse dixit* of the most noted authority, unaccompanied by proof, without careful investigation.

When Jesus heard that John the Baptist was beheaded, and hastened away to a place of safety,

he was followed, as we have seen, by multitudes of men, and performed one of his two analogous miracles, the feeding a host to surfeit with inadequate provisions, with a surplus of several baskets full over a sufficiency. This miracle indicates incidentally that he had an array of thousands of followers at that time with him. The duplication of this miracle appears to weaken its probability, but it may be that those who hunger after the supernatural will not be surfeited with the second repast; the most important fact historically is the narrative showing that he had an army of men with him.

When his disciples next met him, he asked them, as before related, "Whom do men say that I am?" with his laudation and reproof of Peter.

Jesus cautioned his followers against pretenders, and gave them a graphic description of the advent of the "Son of Man," comparing it to lightning coming out of the east and shining to the west. He tells them that immediately after the tribulations he had described, "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, *and the stars shall fall from heaven*, when shall appear the sign of the 'Son of Man' coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send

his angels with great sound of trumpet to gather the elect from the four winds, from *one end* of heaven to *the other*." He tells them, "*when they see* these things, they will know the time has come." He then goes on to declare in unmistakable language, "Verily I say unto you, *this generation shall not pass, until all these things are fulfilled;* heaven and earth shall pass away, but *my words shall not pass away*." He admonishes them to "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come; for in such an hour as ye think not the 'Son of Man' cometh." In the preceding quotations the extent of Christ's knowledge in relation to the physical world, and his idea of a circumscribed heaven above it, to and from which he and the angels were to travel, as appeared in Jacob's dream, and descending on clouds to earth, clearly show his entire ignorance of the physical world. I have italicized the sentences quoted to which I would call particular attention, showing the unquestionable error of Christ's declarations.

When Christ instructed his disciples how to know him from a false Messiah, he tells them he will come with wondrous heavenly phenomena that our present knowledge shows to be an impossibility; his prognostication of the time when these

events were to happen was not verified. All this clearly demonstrates that Christ had no knowledge beyond that of his compeers about the universe; there can be no doubt he believed this earth to be a stable, immovable body, and that there was a habitable place above the "firmament," where heaven was supposed to be, in which "God the Father" resided enthroned in glory. He distinctly names *the ends* of heaven, and he declares his purpose to fit up mansions there for the saints, thus materializing and circumscribing, not only heaven, but God, who resided therein; whom he learned from Genesis had the configuration of man, who was made in his image, and consequently he was a personality. Christ's view of heaven, and its place in nature, is established by his declaration that the *stars would fall;* those little scintillating sparks in the firmament created in one day, as is told in Genesis, that were to fall without disturbing the immutable earth, on the coming of the "Son of Man" to judge this little world, to him the stable centre of creation. There can be no doubt that he thought the fall of the stars to the earth would enhance the sublimity of the advent. We need not trace the legend further to establish the fact that Christ was ignorant of the true cosmos.

We have seen that Christ assured his disciples they "will see" the destruction of the universe during their lives; and he admonishes them to watch, as they did not know when this would happen. He says, "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here that shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." He thus commits himself in the clearest and most unmistakable language, that neither theology nor sophistry can torture into a metaphysical or spiritual meaning of the statement modifying the plain declaration. Time has clearly proved that none of the phenomena described by Christ as about to take place materialized in that generation, nor has it since then, for nineteen hundred years. The old legal maxim, *falsus in uno falsus in omnibus*, may be here applied with significant force.

It is obvious from the story told in all the Gospels that there were persistent feuds and warfare between Christ and the Jewish authorities, the priests, Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes, against all of whom he hurled anathemas for opposing him.

When his first recorded belligerent act occurred, on his notable entrance into Jerusalem triumphantly seated on an ass, a host of thousands of followers paid him divine and kingly honors, calling

him "King of the Jews" as he entered the Temple and took possession with his army and drove out its occupants; all the events immediately following this act of usurped sovereignty are not recorded, but he then had a sufficient following at his command to temporarily overthrow the legal authorities; while the legends of his varied fortunes are enveloped in a cloud of miracles, such as have been attributed to all of the ancient deities, his expulsion from the Temple is not described.

Before and after the decapitation of John the Baptist, Christ was aggressive; subsequently, after he had taken possession of the Temple and had been ejected therefrom, his later discourses shadow forth monitions of his coming fate. True to Jewish customs and traditions, he prepared to keep the Passover with his disciples at a supper which proved to be his last; at this feast, after he had offered them the wine-cup to drink, he is reported to have said, "This is my blood shed for the redemption of sins." Here is the first announcement of his adherence to the old levitical law of a bloody sacrifice to an inexorable God. It was uttered when all hope of becoming king had vanished; and he then declared he would not taste wine again until he drank it anew with his disciples in his Father's

kingdom, an illusion he still kept up, giving them to understand that when they were in his Father's kingdom, they would be amply supplied with a solace of the wine-cup.

After the supper, as before related, he and his disciples went out to his retreat on the Mount of Olives, to escape observation; but Christ was evidently apprehensive, for Judas, whom he suspected, was not with them. Judas knew their place of refuge, and the characteristics and purposes of Christ's disciples; consequently, he invaded their retreat with a strong force of armed men to arrest him, with a preconcerted signal to ensure his capture. Christ's followers at first made belligerent demonstration, but Jesus, probably seeing the futility of it as is told, forbade them. He was then taken into custody and carried before the high priest. All his adherents dispersed except Peter, who had the boldness to follow his master in disguise before the tribunal of elders, where the chief priest adjured Jesus, saying, "By the living God, tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." He answered affirmatively, and boasted that they should see him hereafter, "sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the *clouds* of heaven;" this the high priest deemed blasphemy.

He was then taken before the Roman governor, Pilate, before whom he was tried and condemned to death, not for the assumption of divinity, but for the attempt to enforce his claim to be the "King of the Jews." As no detail is given of the evidence against him, we cannot judge of its character; but we are informed that he confessed to Pilate that he claimed to be "King of the Jews," and offered no evidence to deny the charge of his usurpation, which under Roman law incurred the penalty of death. The story that the witnesses were false, and that they proved no infringement of the law, — that Pilate found no cause for the sentence, and that he declared, washing his hands, that Christ was innocent and a just person, — is so entirely unlike what we know of the universal course and policy of Roman rulers, as well as of Roman law, that the statement appears wholly incredible, especially as it is founded on the nebulous traditions of Christ's catechumens and apologists orally acquired through several generations of vague legendary lore. Such a vacillating, wayward administration of justice found no place under Roman rule. The offence for which Christ was crucified was unmistakably blazoned by Pilate upon his cross.

In the foregoing account of the trial and the exe-

cution of Christ we have followed the first three Gospels as the most unbiassed authority; the fourth Gospel is evidently the work of a mystical, fanatical Paulist, in which statements are made regardless of fact, and clearly deviating from the other accounts in a way that renders it more than doubtful; notably, the account that the mother of Jesus was near his cross, a thing which would not have been permitted by the executioners, and which controverts the other accounts of the crucifixion, wherein particular mention is made of the Marys who were present "afar off," but do not allude to Christ's mother as being there, an incredible omission if she was present. This story in the Gospel of John was evidently a figment of the writer's brain, who thus deduced the homily attributed to Christ at the last supper. The inscrutable writer evidently drew upon his imagination to sustain his theology, as in his fabulous opening chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

THE Sermon on the Mount was evidently, as we have seen, a homily addressed by Christ to his untrained, ignorant followers about to engage in perilous undertakings, exhorting them to be patient and content under the great privations and difficulties they were about to encounter. It gave them assurance of ample reward in the untold future, interspersed with judicious praise, with an injunction to *act*. "Ye are the light of the world; ye are the salt of the earth." He taught a code of non-resistance, and used an exaggeration of speech which, but for a belief in his divinity, would be deemed absurd, advising them if their eyes or hands offended (whatever that may mean), to destroy them, — not to control or guide them, but to "cut them off," to prevent their whole body from being "cast into hell."

After this exaggerated utterance, he charges them not to resist evil, thus teaching a code of non-resist-

ance that would serve to prevent his followers from contest detrimental to his cause. This, although not then a new doctrine, has never been practised by any cultivated people. Such an act would now be considered imbecile, if not criminal. Again, we read in this sermon his exhortations to his followers to take no thought what they should eat, drink, or wear; which, if intended for the exigencies of his army, may have been politic, but if intended for a guide in ordinary life, is contrary to a sound theory of human economy. A thoughtful care for the future is the soul of virtue and prosperity in the individual and in the nation. These aphorisms seem to have been the utterances of fanaticism, or to have grown out of the exigencies of his situation, and have been the unfortunate source of much mistaken piety in sects that have sprung up under their influence. It may be said of these specimens of Christ's exhortations, that what is true and good had long before been inculcated, and what is new and exceptional is neither good nor true. The parables are like the fables of earlier origin uttered to illustrate moral truths. Whether they are correctly attributed to Christ or not is a matter hardly worth discussing. They elucidate no new truths, but their introduction as teachings was a great temptation

for a subsequent narrator to insert them into the legend.

No argument would suffice to controvert the miracles with one who believes in their credibility; while the assumption that they were possible, or had any existence in fact, cannot be proved by any admissible evidence.

In the abnormal acts related of Christ we can only mark the character of the phenomena and the events that caused them. The first miracle recorded of him, that we note, is the blasting of a fig-tree, obviously in revenge for his disappointment. In this advanced age it seems wayward and unreasoning, yet theologians try to palliate the act; and good, just, intellectual thinkers, desirous that truth should prevail, are so handicapped by their belief in Christ's divinity that they allow their reason to be held in abeyance, because they have had the dogma instilled into their minds from infancy, and dare not doubt it. So far many of the conscientious and good acolytes of all the ancient faiths would have sacrificed their lives in defence of their religion and in the adulation of their gods, while men who have cast off the glamour of superstition see the errors and defects of all the gods described by man, from whose imperfect mint they have been coined.

The next miracle, which requires much greater credulity to believe, is the story of the casting out devils from a crazy man living among the tombs, and causing them to enter a herd of swine. Fortunately this malady of the bedevilment of men to deprive them of their senses has totally disappeared in these enlightened days, and the potency of its introduction has become obsolete. The grossness of this story would seem to carry its own refutation with it, but one of the most conspicuous statesmen in England has in recent days, as we have seen, attempted to champion it against the destructive assaults of a far more able foeman than myself. As I feel assured that he has failed to maintain the reality of the fabulous account that Professor Huxley has so clearly annihilated and consigned to the realms of fiction, where it belongs, I need add nothing further to refute it.

Another miracle, the turning of water into wine, was an act performed at a wedding-feast, simply in furtherance of a social festival. This appears to have been a prostitution of divine power, on a mission, as is claimed, for the salvation of mankind, frittered away in dereliction of his vicarious appointment as Messiah and Redeemer of the world. This miracle, and his declaration that he would

drink wine in heaven thereafter, *are* sore *thorns* in the sides of the overzealous temperance advocates, showing that Christ was unquestionably a drinker of wine and bon-vivant.

He manifestly feared the influence of other aspirants for the Messiahship on his followers; and when his disciples asked him what was to be the sign of his coming and the end of the world (which, he assured them, and they evidently believed, would be in their time), without answering their questions he dilated on the manner of his coming, picturing a most marvellous display of wonders, with a sounding of trumpets by angels, and a general destruction of the universe to proclaim his advent. In this, as in all his other declarations, he is made to call himself "the Son of Man,"—not the Son of God (thus declaring he had an earthly father), which is certainly significant, showing he avoided making that claim. He declared, as we have seen, that all the wonders he had described were to happen during the lifetime of that generation. Such a description would be deemed farcical if it were not believed to be the utterance of Deity, yet wise, learned, and good people have faith in his hereafter coming.

On this rhapsodically dramatic second coming, with a blast of trumpets, accompanied by angels

and a fall of stars, he was to judge all mankind and divide them into two groups, the sheep and the goats, — the saints and the sinners, — between which he was to draw a sharp line, and, on the principle of his parable of the laborers in the vineyard, he would reward the sheep of all degrees of goodness equally; and the goats he would hurl indiscriminately "into everlasting punishment prepared for the devil and his angels," — described elsewhere as everlasting fire. Such is the picture of the dispenser of Christian justice given by his biographer, who as well as himself lived in a primitive, ignorant, and superstitious age, above which their ideas did not rise.

To explain the failure to make good the assertion that he would appear, as he said he would, has exercised many profound and brilliant intellects; and when such authorities were received on their own *ipse dixit*, their dictum was sufficient. But modern science repudiates all dogmatisms unsupported by facts, discarding their theories, sophistic reasonings, and subterfuges employed to reconcile the known fact with the false declaration.

Christ had achieved his popularity with the lower strata of the populace, and had obtained a following, which seems never to have attained proportions

sufficiently formidable to endanger the government. But the story culminates in a record of miracles, healing of the sick, raising of the dead, and casting out devils, all of which was common in prior Eastern mythologies.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION — JOHN'S GOSPEL

HAVING briefly set forth some of the salient features in the life of Christ and his teachings, drawn from the meagre record in the Gospels, in which mysticism pervades the story, that shows an evident evasion of his belligerent acts and their failure, by a suppression of facts, it is interesting to analyze the religion based upon it, premising that the histories of the world record the establishment of innumerable religious dogmas, which are often based upon seeming trifles. Such grand and wide-spread religions as are based on the Hindu, Buddhist, Egyptian, Grecian, and Roman mythologies were the outcome of generating incidents, facts, and suggestions drawn from the phenomena of nature, or the events of social relations, that impressed themselves upon the primitive mind, events materialized in the imagination and developed from nuclei apparently inconsequent and

frivolous. From such an origin was the Mohammedan religious faith developed in later times, that spread further and embraced a larger number of proselytes than the Christian religion has done, and in less time.

In our country sectarian dogmas have sprung up with wonderful vitality in the midst of an enlightened community; witness the sect of Shakers, believing in the second advent of Christ in the person of a female (Ann Lee), and the more recent Mormon faith, with a host of earnest believers, ready to peril life and comfort for the cause, which originated in the most absurd pretensions that could well be elaborated. Yet they resulted in sects which a few years earlier would have developed a new nation. And now, that barefaced fraud Dowie pockets millions of dollars while deluding a multitude of followers.

We thus see that no bounds can be anticipated for human credulity and fanaticism. We may note, however, that the records of abnormal and supernatural appearances have become less frequent as the world gets more enlightened; although many learned men of to-day, as well as a vast majority of the people in the most advanced countries, believe in supernatural occurrences that

tradition relates happened centuries ago. No number of witnesses would cause the world of science to believe in their occurrence at the present day. A man who should pretend now to have a divine mission would attain as much appreciation by the ignorant as Christ, the son of a Nazarene carpenter, did in Judea, with as many followers as tradition gives him. The most absurd pretender still has followers; and so it will ever be until men learn that *there never was any revelation or abnormal miraculous phenomenon imparted to man at any time from any source.*

In carefully reading the record of Christ's teachings, we are impressed with the fact that, while there is no indication that he knew anything of the true cosmology of the universe, there are many passages that show his entire ignorance of it. It is clear that he pictured heaven as a determinate place above the "firmament" which surmounted the world; that the sun and moon could be darkened as a readily achievable act; and that the stars (the little spangles that dotted the great arch over us) could *fall.* Wonderful destruction of the universe was to take place in consequence of the coming of the "Son of Man" to judge mankind in this little planet. To him the earth was immovable,

and that he and hosts of angels would descend upon it from the great arch over it, where heaven was located, *on clouds;* that heaven, though circumscribed, was big enough to hold all the saints.

Christ's idea of the universe was that of the age in which he lived; and if the Revelation of St. John was inspired by the same authority, we know what Christ had in his mind when he was made to speak of the mansions that he was going to prepare for his disciples and the saints, in that heavenly abode. It would be a work of supererogation to further illustrate Christ's total ignorance of the universe. When he talked of the *stars falling*, how little did he know about those ponderous orbs that sink this little world into insignificant dimensions in the creation. Can there be stronger proof of the fabulous character of these narratives?

It is clear that the warfare between Christ and the sect of Pharisees and all others in authority was very bitter; but the details of the controversy, or any overt acts arising therefrom, are, as we have before said, carefully suppressed. Of Christ's trial, there is too meagre an account to justify us in the formation of any judgment as to the equity of the sentence that culminated in his execution. We learn incidentally he so offended the Jewish

authorities that they deemed him more criminal than a robber; in their eyes he had desecrated the Temple. If his offence was only a dereliction from the established religion, here are innumerable recent examples under Christian dispensation of executions for a like offence.

Christ was tried before a Roman tribunal, that would not have condemned him for a religious offence against the Jewish authority if nothing else was brought against him. Christian tradition declares that the witnesses against him were false, although little is recorded of what was proved, but they do admit that there was no rebutting evidence offered, and that Christ acknowledged to Pilate that he had claimed to be "the King of the Jews." For this offence alone he was executed, so far as the record shows. By what "cantrip sleight" his followers could build up the theory that he died for the salvation of man, especially for men in after-ages, with which the event had no logical connection, is cause for amazement, while the dogma involves the barbaric tenet of human sacrifice, such as was practised in the Mexican religion when that country was discovered.

Founded on this legend of human sacrifice, — however perpetuated, — this sect sprang up and

gained strength in that chaos of political evolutions and theological isms, during the later Roman Empire. It flourished under the patronage of Hadrian, coupled with the adhesive fanaticism of its followers; and finally attracted the notice of Constantine, who was at that time in a controversy with the dominant priesthood. He took this rising sect under his protection, for political reasons, and established its power. The controversy about Constantine's conversion is unfortunate for Christianity, as his infamous character added but little prestige to it in a moral point of view. His policy in establishing the power of this sect was the curse of Europe throughout the dark age of its history, up to the time when knowledge and science — of which it was the pronounced and active foe — gained a partial victory over it through many martyrs.[1] Fortunately, liberty of thought has gained an independence and right, not due to any teaching of Christianity, but to the triumph of the veritable truths of science, and the promulgation of the right to investigate all subjects, and announce the facts about them, against any taboo of the theologians.

[1] Of this we have a full account from the laborious researches of that learned historian, the Hon. Andrew D. White.

As dogmatic power was acquired, doctrines were formulated by rival factions in the Christian Church; all clamoring for the right to regulate belief in accordance with the interpretations of their several sects, which arose even in the first century. This produced acrimonious feuds, each sect striving for ascendency in the warfare that finally culminated in the domination of the Roman Church, — Providence being, as usual, on the side of the dominant faction. That Church governed all Europe for centuries with a beastly fanaticism, till at last nature displayed to the unsuppressible mind of men truths that dogmatism could not refute, although their first announcement brought implacable punishment upon the audacious offenders.

Singularly enough, one of the most virulent feuds in the Church was about the status of Christ. One sect believed him to be a divinely inspired son of man, as he invariably declared himself to be, and that he was secondary to God the Father, being subject to his will, as he said he was. The adverse sect claimed that he was equal, coëxistent, and very God, from the beginning of time, as is asserted in St. John's Gospel.

The mystical sayings of the Gospel of St. John (whoever that writer may have been) are the source

of innumerable interpretations, which they have received from learned theologians and fervent laymen without number, each interpreting to suit his own creed. The fact would seem to be that the Gospel was concocted by a mystic, filled with the errant traditions of Christ, who wrote out his own metaphysical interpretations, with nebulous historical accounts for a basis. The whole atmosphere of that Gospel is so radically different from the other Gospels, and so full of metaphysical rhapsodies, as to show a rescript of the author's cogitations rather than a statement of facts. The interpretation of this book has been a rich working mine for theologians; it gives them scope *ad libitum* to develop sectarianisms of adverse character, all established by some weird sayings, the author of which is unknown.

The Gospel according to St. John was evidently written to sustain the dogma first announced by St. Paul, who antagonized St. Peter and most of the disciples of Christ. Paul expanded the Jewish Messiah into a deity embracing the whole human race. He abnegated the rite of circumcision that every believing Jew held to be indispensable, and without which Christ could not have obtained a following.

This Gospel begins with a mystical appellation to designate Christ. The author goes on to claim for him attributes and powers that Christ himself never claimed, making him, instead of God the Father, the creator of all things; centring life even in him. This unwarranted elevation of Christ is the foundation of the subsequent enigmatical doctrine of the Trinity, and is not confirmed by any recorded expression of Christ.

The generation of Jesus related in Matthew is ignored in John; the subject was evidently too mundane to receive the notice of this rhapsodically metaphysical writer, who introduces him as the Word through John, whose name is appended to the Gospel.

John's unique garb is not alluded to, but he is made to announce the advent of Christ, as infinitely superior to him. The appellation of Messiah is ignored in this statement, but he makes John exclaim, on seeing Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." No such expression is found in any of the other Gospels. It is the theology of Paul, not of Jesus.

The advent of the apostles is made to commence at this time, quite differently from the other accounts, when Nathaniel is made to say, "Thou art the Son

of God; thou art the King of Israel." Jesus tells him he shall see greater things than the fig-tree; that, "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." [1]

The introduction of the episode of the marriage in Cana of Galilee was evidently interjected to bring Jesus into contact with his mother, no mention of which is made elsewhere. Apart from the puerile and inconsequent character of the miracle, there is abundant evidence that his mother did not believe in his divinity. The statement that his mother and brethren went with him to Capernaum is either a creation of the author, or an unreliable tradition. The rejection by Christ of his mother and brethren is omitted, and the collection of a large host of the followers of Jesus, who went with him to Jerusalem, where the writer describes him as alone driving out of the Temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: "When he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the Temple, and the sheep and the oxen; and poured out the changers'

[1] As these boasts, put into the sayings of Jesus, never culuminated, they have been given a spiritually metaphysical interpretation by theologians.

money, and overthrew the tables." We have quoted this passage at length as a remarkable example of *suppressio veri*, no mention being made of the host with him, clearly with the design of exalting his hero into a god. There can be no better proof of the total unreliability of the author. It is not surprising that when, as recorded, Jesus boasted that if the Temple in which they were was destroyed, he would raise it up in three days, the writer, in accordance with a subsequent tradition, attributed the saying to allusion by Christ to the resurrection of his body; but that record was written long after Christ's death, an afterthought.

In recording what is assumed to be Christ's sayings, we can easily see they were written after the consummation of the life of Jesus, such as the lifting up of the serpent by Moses compared with his execution. Most of the sayings in the third chapter of John are but the lucubrations of the writer, or vague tradition, of no value as history.

In the narrative of the Samaritan woman at the well, the Jewish proclivity of Jesus comes fully out, in which the national prejudice is apparent. When he was teaching among his neighbors, they said, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it

then that he saith I came down from heaven?" This was said by those who knew him, and his father and mother; if they had ever heard of his miraculous conception, they would not have thus spoken.

We will not comment on the cannibalistic picture in the sixth chapter; it may be construed to suit the faith of those who believe in the divinity of the record. He sometimes alienated his followers by his sayings. When he told them, "No man can come unto me except it were given unto him of my Father," many of his followers went back and walked no more with him. He asks his disciples if they will go away, but they stood by him. At that time he kept out of Judea in Galilee, fearing the Jews would kill him. The seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth chapters of John are filled with sayings, altercations, bickerings, and boastings, but no word of teaching, the point being, that all that believed that he was divine were good, all others were sinners; while on the part of the Jews his pretension to be the son of God was blasphemy. It is more than doubtful if the declaration of the Son of Man means, even in John, that he was the son of God, any more than all good men are; only that as he was assumed to be most perfect, he was

more emphatically entitled to the cognomen. But we are here trenching on ground we would avoid; we do not intend to engage in the war of the theologians; the author of John was evidently on the side of Christ's divinity, although he records a number of sayings that refute it.

The entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, seated on an ass, as related in John, differs in time, and radically in manner, from the other Gospels, showing the dubious character of the legend; but it displays him in the rôle of "King of the Jews." The attempt of the writer to weaken that demonstration by ignoring the army of invaders with Jesus, in recording the supernatural, is not successful. Jesus, accompanied by a host of followers, invaded Jerusalem and the Temple, to the surprise of the priests and the people. This is toned down by John into a casual meeting of the people gathered for another purpose, who incidentally heard of his coming, and flocked out to meet him; but this version is traversed by the other Gospels. The separating his entry into Jerusalem from his host of followers and his driving out the occupants of the Temple alone was evidently for the purpose of magnifying his puissance by the statement that he alone drove them out.

The dictum attributed to Christ in the twenty-fourth verse of the twelfth chapter would not be accepted as truth by modern agriculturists; it is an error of speech uttered to illustrate self-abnegation. If a belief in Jesus was essential to salvation it was unfortunate that the fulfilment of the saying of Esaias was a bar to the belief of those who were present with him; but the pains taken to fulfil ancient prophecies throughout the New Testament is a proof that it was considered important.

No attribute is more strongly declared in this Gospel than that all who believe undoubtingly on Christ shall have the power to work miracles. He himself is made to declare it in repeated sayings; yet no one pretends that any such power exists in modern times, except a few unprincipled charlatans, that in every age are found deceiving the credulous, aided by a very universal belief in the existence of miracles in past ages.

Throughout the whole Gospel of John the sayings are self-laudatory, and are intended to bind the followers of Jesus to his personality rather than to any specific line of morals, to follow his example; while but little is recorded of his acts except his miracles, benefiting certain individuals with whom he chanced to come in contact, of whom noth-

ing is subsequently related. He certainly did not originate any great work to benefit mankind. The great purpose seems to have been his proselyting, as well as that of his followers. We hear of no marked change in civilization of his followers over their compeers. The whole body of the Gospels' theology is comprised in the third verse of the seventeenth chapter, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Jesus is made in John to say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." What work did he accomplish? At his death he left a few poor, ignorant fishermen, whose neophytes numbered but a small fraction of the Jewish people. Until the conversion of Paul, — that happened after Christ's death, — there was no attempt by Christ's disciples to disseminate his doctrine among Gentile people. The churches beyond Judea were all circumcised Jews, but Paul seeing the deleterious effect of such a limited restriction, after some contention with the original adherents of Christ, succeeded in establishing a new dogma that Christ died for all mankind who believed him to be divine. This version of Christ's mission the writer of John's Gospel has attempted to sustain by his weird defining of

Christ, in language only to be interpreted by learned metaphysicians, and assigning to him what he evidently never dreamed of, — the creation of the universe. Such preposterous sayings we can hardly attribute to Christ; they are evidently the morbid lucubrations of their fanatical author.

When Jesus had finished his acts of self-laudation in the Temple that so offended the Jews, he was expelled therefrom; as the writer mildly expresses it, "he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where there was a garden, into which he entered." That this was a place of hiding to which he escaped is made manifest by the statement that "Judas, who betrayed him, knew of this place," and went there accompanied by a band of men and officers, with lanterns, torches, and weapons, showing it was by night, when, as Judas knew, he would not be strongly guarded; notwithstanding the weakness of his guard, they did attempt resistance, which Judas evidently expected, as he brought an armed force with him. The band had a captain and officers, who took Jesus and bound him and led him away.

After a somewhat minute relation of incidents before the high priest, and the episode of Peter, who had been given the keys of heaven, denying

any knowledge of him, there is but a meagre account of the trial of Jesus before the high priest and Pilate, — the most important crisis in Christian history, — leaving the event in a nebulous state best adapted to the imaginative construction of subsequent believers.

Jesus had evidently in the eyes of the Jews desecrated the Temple with his host of followers that the authorities were for a time unable to resist. This was deemed by them a heinous crime which they had no power to punish; so he was turned over to the Roman governor upon the charge of trying to make himself King of the Jews in dereliction of Roman law. What the proof was that established the charge is not made more clear in this than in the preceding Gospels; and while Pilate might not have thought the insurrection formidable, he evidently considered it worthy of death, especially as under Jewish law he would have been executed for taking possession of the Temple. But Pilate meant to have it clearly understood that Jesus was not executed for any infringement of Jewish law, but for an infraction of the Roman law, by assuming to be King of the Jews. This he emphasized by a legend in three languages displayed on the cross, that all might understand.

The author of this Gospel introduces an episode which, if there were no other proof, would clearly show the total unreliability of this record; he states that the mother of Jesus and his disciple stood by the cross with two other Marys, and Jesus conversed with them, while the other Gospels omit all mention of his mother at the execution, but they distinctly mention the three Marys, of whom his mother was not one, that "stood afar off," evidently too far to speak with him; and we know that under Roman rule his relatives would not have been allowed to approach him; and further, the husband of Mary and her children living were probably better able and more likely to care for her than any disciple of Christ would be.

The Roman Church inculcates the dogma that "the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God," and yet there are not three Gods, but only one God. This mystic triune God is still adopted by a majority of the Christian sects, and although common sense repels the contradiction, faith unreasoning accepts it and theologians teach it. This inconceivable dogma was combated by some of the earliest Christians, but the weight of power was against them; and after fearful martyrdom they were silenced. That was established in

an age when fire and fagots were more potent arguments than reason. In later days the *heresy* that Christ was subordinate and the emissary of God is now allowed a place unmolested through the ameliorating influence of modern civilization that an earlier Christian age would not have tolerated. The struggle to make three persons, each a very God, one God, was a fearful strain on common sense controlled by faith, which appears to the unbiassed onlooker like credulity and superstition.

While the rôle of iconoclast is undesirable, and an offence to worshippers, never inuring beneficially or happily to an earnest and sincere destroyer of the idols of those for whose benefit and welfare he is seeking, he receives for his reward vituperation and slander. But if the present civilized world is in this new country to make a distinguished advance in science and the elevating morals of high culture, it must abandon the fetish of the Hebrew God and the superstitious worship of his immaculate Son; and with them the fables of supernatural appearances, miracles, and revelations, that have all originated in the fertile human brain, bewildered by multiplex supernatural phenomena that have been, and still are, promulgated.

Waiving further details of the anomalous tradi-

tional record of the life of Christ found in the Bible, that has for so many centuries dominated the belief of the most advanced nations, unsupported by any collateral or contemporary evidence, which still maintains a place in the educated world due to the aberration of early education (a formidable antagonist to independent thought and investigation); aided by a reluctance to disturb the established order of things that for centuries has been controlling the thoughts and acts of men; and the fear that it might create disorganization in the social world by destroying the current interests, established privileges, and prerogatives of individual, national, and preëminently the theological organizations.

So far has persistent iteration and reiteration claimed the Christian religion as a synonym for goodness and virtue, and the guardian of morality, that it is generally believed in by Christians, while the converse is asserted to be immorality and abomination. An examination of this claim by unbiassed and disinterested investigation will show that a belief in the divinity of Christ has no relation to morals, as has been fully shown in the annals of the dark ages of European history. The corrupt Popish supremacy — the horrors of the Inquisition — and the prolonged struggle of knowledge and truth for a

place in the world, with the antagonism and acts of the churches against liberalism, have proved perilous to the champions of free thought.

If Christianity now appears in the rôle of morality and philanthropy, it derives its true status of modern goodness, not from its teachings displayed when it had full power, but from modern science declaring independence for thought. It has now changed its tactics, that required submission to its dogmas by force of implacable punishment, and is compelled to content itself with ostracism and moral suasion generally, for its opponents in this country, thanks to the foresight of the founders of our independence. But even here there are restless bigots that are covertly striving to drag the government into a recognition of their dogmas for a national religion, against which the founders of the Republic carefully guarded the Constitution. The sinister attacks of Christian dogmatists heretofore on the policy of nations have been the cause of many, if not most, of the wars that have disturbed the peace of the world.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE AND RULE

It is interesting to inquire what the fundamental doctrines are that form the basis of the varied Christian beliefs. We are met here with an endless confusion of dogmas, that have most of them passed through the fire of persecution, vituperation, chastisement, and anathema from fellow Christians, for believing, or not believing, certain creeds or tenets deemed essential to salvation. As the times for penalties to life and limb for adverse opinions have gone out of fashion, and fines and imprisonment have nearly disappeared for transgressing canonical laws, we may venture to look a little into the present Christian cults, well knowing that we may be criticized by the numerous sectarians, each of whose several creeds is assumed to be the true one.

Christianity has no *raison d'être* if the story in

Genesis is not true, wherein Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the forbidden tree in search of knowledge of good and evil, that God especially desired they should not acquire. If there had been no original sin, a Redeemer would have been unnecessary. Why this temptation should have been put in the way of the beings God had made in his own image, if he intended to keep them in ignorance, is an enigma, but, stranger still, why he should desire to keep them in ignorance of good and evil is a problem quite too deep for us to solve. We leave it to the theologians, knowing that it is a dogma strictly adhered to at least by the Roman Church, followed by Protestants generally, with facile casuistry when uncomfortable truths antagonize their doctrines. The tenet of original sin through Adam's disobedience is a fundamental proposition upon which the religion of Christianity is founded; hence, the necessity for a Redeemer, a Saviour.

The Jews' tradition that a Messiah would appear to redeem them from the thraldom of a foreign ruler was not a redemption from God's wrath, but from the power of men. Christ assumed, as the record shows, to be the promised Messiah, and was hailed as such by his followers; "a great multitude" shouting, and announcing him as "King of

the Jews." With regal status he entered the Temple with an army of followers, and drove out its occupants, as we have seen, much to the horror of the priests and others in authority. He declared that he came for the salvation of the Jews alone, and grudgingly performed a miracle for an outsider.

He believed the Babylonian account of the creation copied in the Jewish Scriptures was true, as well as the wondrous tales of the prophets and kings. While he announced himself to be the " Son of Man," he in no case claimed a miraculous progenitor. If he was a descendant of David, as it is claimed he was, he must have been Joseph's son, as he was declared to be by his mother, and was understood to be by others. He began his public career as " king " in Jerusalem, and his mission was on Jewish territory during his short active life. The meagre record tells but little except his preaching and his miracles, although crowds are reported as following him. All overt acts committed by them under his sanction were failures, and are carefully omitted. We only know incidentally from his own lips that he came for war, not peace, indicating a fierce civil contest, and his subsequent acts were deemed sufficiently criminal to merit death, which was awarded him by the Roman governor. The

character given of his offence, which was blazoned upon his cross, shows that he tried to inaugurate a kingdom. His utterances after his cause was lost, if correctly reported, avail nothing in explanation or expiation of his guilt. The healings and resurrections recorded of him are more numerous than those of modern Christian Scientists, — even Mrs. Eddy herself and the numerous herd of uneducated healers that have beguiled the credulous in modern times have not exceeded him.

After Christ had been some time dead, a sect of Nazarenes sprang up under the leadership of Paul that began to deify him, and in that superstitious age they magnified him into a god. The dogma was propounded that as all the world had sinned through Adam, to the great offending of God, Christ came to redeem it, and reconcile the offended Father with his offending people, after innumerable nations had come and gone. Strange as this dogma is, they went still further and, in accordance with the doctrine of the Jews and other barbarous nations, they attributed a sacrifice of blood necessary for salvation, to account for Christ's execution, and claimed that he laid down his life to save sinners; while their acknowledged and received tradition showed that he laid down his life for assuming to be " King of

the Jews," and had taken active means to make himself so.

The theory that Jesus died for sinners is made a fundamental doctrine; and prayers and supplications go up to-day to "the Saviour who died for our sins." In order to glorify him, much spiritual and metaphysical glamour has been made to surround a very plain tale; and the intellectual ability of many of the highest, purest, and most transcendent minds has been exhausted in aggrandizing him. The unaccountable phases of human hallucination frequently cause surprise to those who approach the mental problem from distinctly different points of view. We often hear the highest expositions of morals and culture, from men whose learning and clear perception of the best achievements of man have been acquired from profound personal observation, preached from inconsequent Bible texts, under the hallucination that the inspiration came from the divine words of an unknown author, whose knowledge and ability were as far below the modern teacher as is the distance in time between them.[1]

[1] I once saw an exposition of this in a sermon, written to prove the fallibility of inspiration from Biblical texts, which was developed from the old nursery rhyme, "Jack and Jill." This text

Supernatural Conceptions

There is not a person in these times, having a knowledge of the admitted facts of science, who does not know that the account of the creation in Genesis, and especially so much of it as relates to the creation of man, is fabulous, as it does not agree with the known truths of the world's history. All efforts to reconcile it with fact, such as the puerile attempt to construe the *day* of Genesis into an indefinite period of time, are too preposterous for argument. So of the "sons of God" cohabiting with the daughters of men, to produce an abnormal race that never existed. That old fable was rife in legends antecedent to the Hebrew account thousands of years. With such evidence as every schoolboy possesses, the fabulous character of Genesis is shown. Yet the Christian world clings to the God there depicted, with the

was very closely adhered to, but expanded into a symbolic presentation of human life, its aspirations and failures. The present civilization attained by modern culture is not, and never could have been, developed from Christianity. It is the outcome of independent thought bursting through the trammels of religion's bigotry, from which the present advance in a knowledge of nature and the universe produces a higher standard of humanity that is now developing. Of the real creator, or first cause, we know nothing beyond its visible works, — it certainly was not the God of the Jews, nor was it possessed of any of the mutable or vacillating attributes ascribed to that God.

steadfastness of a Hindu Brahman; for upon it rests the whole foundation for the assumption of the divinity of Christ, and his conjectured mission.

No wise man objects to any teaching of goodness that may be found in the Bible. It is the false God, stained with crimes and wickedness, that disfigures it with myths of supernatural, mystical, and barbarously fanatical events, that are the crude figments of the brains of uncultivated men, which should be eliminated from belief, stultifying as they do the noblest efforts to enfranchise the human mind.

The strange and illogical doctrine that one man can sin for another, coupled with the equally absurd conception that one man by his crucifixion, for what his judges and his executioners believed to be his crimes, could thereby free men from their sins, seems to the unbiassed mind of common sense to be so preposterous as to require no argument to refute it. But the superstition still lingers, that the "word of God," as the Bible is called, is of divine origin and is infallibly true; and for that reason must be believed, however much common sense rebels against it. This is strenuously controverted, but "reason is fallible," say the theologians, and we are thus encountered by the para-

doxical problem of a seemingly false and absurd tradition, handed down to us through ages of primitive *fallible* men with an authority not to be questioned by an enlightened era of *fallible* men, whose knowledge of the universe is transcendently greater than the authors or propagators of the nebulous record. A keen observer of anthropological phenomena remarks that one of the most singular things in a museum devoted to that science is the wonderful tendency of the human mind, when once it has got into a groove, to stick there; the object of scientific investigation is to run counter to that tendency.

The deluge of healings, miracles, resurrections, and other wonders brought in to embellish the history of "God's chosen people" were of such common, every-day repetition in ancient times as to lose their improbability in uncultivated minds before the era of Christ's life, and ceased to be doubtful phenomena to the crowd of believers who it is assumed witnessed them. The epidemic of devils, which is happily extinguished as a disease in modern times, was then so fearfully prevalent as to enable Christ to perform his most strikingly characteristic miracles.

This strange and illogical religion was intro-

duced and perpetuated by the strong arm of power, crushing out every vestige of opposition, adverse proof, and criticism attempted; until the bursting forth of scientific discovery ultimately severed the bonds that confined the human mind within the shackles of authority, under penalty of death. Now, through the persistent force of accumulated acknowledge and demonstrated facts, we are enabled to investigate unmolested, except by ostracism and vituperation, every problem and fact discovered by emancipated research, so long anathematized as sacrilegious.

We have seen in man's earliest contact with nature, that his endowment of ratiocination prompted him to inquire into the cause of the visible phenomena by which he was surrounded, and to search for the cause of the various objects, good and bad, with which he came in contact. This prompted him to picture in his imagination a superior being invisible to him, of vast powers, capable of producing works so much beyond his comprehension. In the course of time numerous strange and unaccountable appearances produced in him a belief in the supernatural, that assisted his imagination through the phenomena of dreams, which materialized in his brain into real entities

that took shape as gods and devils, in accordance with the originator's power of thought; thus developing hallucinations of miracles, revelations, and other wonders with which such beings were assumed to be endowed. It is a significant fact that no such phenomena have ever taken place within the personal knowledge of any unbiassed, enlightened, intelligent, and truthful individual now living; they never happen at the present day in the face of impartial investigation, but only in the traditionary past.

There is no authoritative record of Christ known of earlier date than the second century after his death; certainly none of the copies of the Gospels extant were written before that time. They are chronicles named for, and claimed to be *according to*, certain disciples, by unknown authors.

There is a persistent effort to connect the Christian dogma with all the modern acts of philanthropy, charity, and *education* (to which we have seen it was an early foe), together with all the amenities of modern culture, that are the fruits of neoteric advancement in science, dominating all branches that are connected with social economy. Many noble men and women are firm believers in Christian doctrine, and are desirous to glorify it by their

self-sacrificing and benevolent acts; but the true impulse comes from their own refined natures, aided by the experience they have attained from the spread of true knowledge and science, that shows them their just relations to the world, and their place in it, imparting to them a clearer insight into the real claims, duties, and rights of mankind toward their fellow men, which they unwittingly attribute to Christianity.

In all ages, and in every known religion, there have been enthusiasts and martyrs. Innumerable devotees have yielded up their lives rather than abjure the dogmas they believed to be true; while their executioners, quite as fanatical, thought they served God by destroying them. We are still cursed with the residuum retained by religion that pervades many sects. Some men have immolated themselves without regard to the logical consequences, or the good or evil to the rest of the world, all to glorify God; as if their acts could do so. In this particular the Hindus, and many savage tribes, exceed the Christians; but the horrors of martyrdom inflicted by the Christian Church have equalled, if they have not surpassed, all other religions. Such persecutions continued down to the days of the evolution of modern science, that

included with its battle for the cosmology of the universe a war for the freedom of thought.

The contest for the emancipation of mankind is not over yet. The fanatical religionists are still persistent here, urging the Congress and State legislatures to pass ecclesiastical and sumptuary laws; which they have succeeded in doing in Sabbatarian and other like legislation, in direct contravention of the Constitution of the United States and the Declaration of Independence. The framers of the Constitution took care to keep out of it a declaration that this was a Christian nation, or that we had any national religion. They declared that every one should have the right to worship as his conscience dictated, whatever his religion might be. But this right has been ruthlessly trampled on in most of the States, and by Congress. By enacting Sunday restrictions, for which they have not the plea of their God's command: by such legislation they outrage the rights of seventh-day Christians, Jews, and all other religionists who keep other days of the week holy, and who believe they have God's command to work on Sunday. The law compelling them to observe the Christian Sunday under penalty for its transgression clearly violates their rights. But this is

not all: the fanatics, not content with freedom to worship their God, unmolested, as their conscience dictates, are striving, not openly but covertly, to bind the nation to the adoption of their religion, and bring the government under their domination. When that is accomplished can any one doubt, if either of the Christian sects gains ascendency (the Roman Catholic, for instance), that it will expunge all the others if it has the power, as it has done in former times?

Our forefathers had the wisdom to see that religious controversy was a fruitful source of most of the wars and contentions of the world; and they determined to eliminate that cause from this land of liberty. They consequently ignored it in the Constitution, and cut off the right to legislate on that subject. This paved the way to real liberty, and with it real peace. But we see a constant creeping in of seemingly harmless innovations. As God is not named in the Constitution, a legend has been put upon our coin, "In God we trust." From a Christian point of view this should be sacrilegious; from an agnostic point of view it is silly and unmeaning. To place the legend upon medals is a question of æsthetic taste, but to blazon upon "filthy lucre" the *hallowed*

name of God, to be bandied about by the most depraved, whose motto would be, "In grog we trust," to be passed over barroom counters by inebriate ruffians for their drinks, is more than questionable. This same *holy* legend is also made the purveyor that secures a welcome in bawdy houses and gambling dens; and is nowhere more fervently worshipped than by burglars and pickpockets, to say nothing of its power to lure innocence from virtue. It may well be asked what good this legend is expected to effect by being placed upon the coin of the realm. The conspirators did not expect any, *per se*, but hoped to enter the thin point of a wedge into legislation, by which they could drive home the whole body of sectarianism, and finally to be strong enough to enforce religious legislation upon the people, which is expressly prohibited by the Constitution. The world has had a dire experience under ecclesiastical rule, and should guard against the peril of a repetition of it. Such sinister chicanery is characteristic of religious dogmatists, against whom all liberty-lovers should keep careful guard in future legislation.

The curse of all nations has been theologic rule. The attempt to govern the thoughts and acts of men by creeds and dogmas, enacting laws in ac-

cordance with the particular creed of the majority, and forcing others to comply with their narrow tenets, is the outcome of bigotry, constantly attempted, and should be carefully guarded against. In former times any dereliction from the prescribed rule was visited with penalties of the most rancorous type; often inflicted on persons of the purest character, whose consciences would not permit them to comply with the laws of their ecclesiastical oppressors. In a city under the rule of the Scottish Kirk (that has been called the wickedest city in the world), beadles searched the streets on Sunday during religious services to arrest all persons found out in the thoroughfares, and compelled them to attend religious services. Penalties have been enacted against all secular employment on Sunday in modern states under Christian domination, in imitation of the old Levitical law regarding the Sabbath (Saturday), which most Christians disobey. For this there is no pretence of divine command, such as the Jews claim for their Sabbath. All interference with the rights of man is demoralizing; and being religious legislation, it is forbidden by the Constitution. This is of no avail, however, against the rulings of a sectarian court. The attempt to make men good

by legislative act is abortive. Goodness has its seat in the intellect, and does not consist in acts of worship, or the observance of a holy day fictitiously appointed by a politician. Until the intellect is reached, no reform is possible; and all constraining and restraining laws, except those that prevent men from harming their fellow men, are reprehensible.

It is said that the Emperor Napoleon declared that France would become either republican or Cossack. It can be said with equal certainty that the United States will free itself from Christian domination, or it will be governed by the Roman Church under the rule of a Roman Pope, as is now boastfully asserted by Romish priests. That will end the constitutional liberty of the people.

While showing in this incomplete sketch, upon which volumes might be written, that the evolution of the human mind is based upon and directed by the observation of its natural surroundings, evolved from man's powers of ratiocination, there is no admissible evidence that he ever received any extraneous aid from a supernatural source. History is full of wise, just, and profound sayings, uttered in the earliest stages of man's escape from barbarism; brilliant flashes of intellect emanated

from dull clouds of popular concepts. These shining meteors of ancient thought were comprehensible by men without divine interpretation, and served to advance them on their way to correct knowledge. Many of the authors of these teachings were worshipped for the assumption of divine revelations.

Buddha, an epithet meaning the Wise or Enlightened One, whose advent is variously estimated from 1100 to 600 B. C., was a teacher whose doctrines still control the belief of a larger body of sectarians than does any other religion of the present day. There is a remarkable coincidence between the history of this great teacher and Christ's advent, which has been clearly told by Dr. Felix S. Oswald, whose version I shall follow, noting that this religion was established long before the era of Christ, and was in his day well known throughout the East.

Buddha, like Christ, was of royal lineage; he was born of a mother who, though married, was still a virgin. The birth of a future Saviour (Buddha) was announced by a heavenly messenger. An apparition which Maya (Buddha's mother) sees in a dream informs her, " Thou shalt be filled with highest joy. Behold thou shalt bring forth

a son bearing the mystic signs of Buddha, who shall become a sacrifice for the dwellers of the earth, a Saviour who to all men shall give joy and glorious fruits of immortality" (Rgya. Cherrol-pan., 61, 62). At the request of Maya, King Sudodhana renounced his connubial rights till she had brought forth her first son (Rgya., 69, 82).

The immortals of the Tushita-Heaven decide that Buddha shall be born when the "flower star" makes its first appearance in the east (Lefmann, 21, 124). A host of angelic messengers descend and announce tidings of great joy. "A hero, glorious and incomparable, has been born, a Saviour unto all nations of the earth! A deliverer has brought joy and peace to earth and heaven" (Lotus, 102, 114; Rgya., 89, 97). Princes and wise Brahmans appear with gifts and worship the child Buddha (Rgya., 97, 113). The Brahman Asita, to whom the spirit has revealed the advent of Buddha, descends from his hermitage on the Himalaya to see the new-born child. He predicts the coming of the kingdom of heaven, and Buddha's mission to save and enlighten the world (Sutta Nipatha, iiill). The Allinish Kramana Sutra relates that the King of Magada instructed one of his ministers to institute an inquiry whether any

inhabitant of his kingdom could possibly become powerful enough to endanger the safety of his throne. Two spies are sent out; one of them ascertains the birth of Buddha, and advises the king to take steps for the extermination of his tribe. The princes of the Sacya tribe urge the king to present his son in a public assembly of nobles and priests. Spirits accompany the march of the procession; inspired prophets extol the future glory of the Messiah. Buddha's parents miss the boy one day, and after a long search for him find him in an assembly of holy Rishis, who listen to his discourse and marvel at his understanding (Buddhist Birth Stories, 64). Buddha, before entering on his mission, meets the Brahman Rudraka, a mighty preacher, who, however, offers to become his disciple.

Some of Rudraka's followers secede to Buddha, but leave him when they find that he does not observe the fasts. Buddha retires to the solitude of Usuvilva, and fasts and prays in the desert until hunger forces him to leave his retreat (Rgya., 364; Oldenburg's Mahavagga, 116). After finishing his fast, Buddha takes a bath in the river Nairanjana; when he leaves the water, purified, the devas open the gates of heaven and cover him

with a shower of fragrant flowers (Rgya., 259). During Buddha's fast in the desert, Mara, the prince of darkness, approaches him and tempts him with promises of wealth and earthly glory. Buddha rejects this offer by quoting passages of the Vedas, and the tempter flees, and angels descend and salute Buddha (Dhammwadam, vii., 33). There are numerous other parallels between the two accounts equally striking, such as Judas among his disciples, the woman at the well, and the tremblings of the earth at his death.

This brief synopsis of the legend of Buddha needs no comment, but is significant when compared with the Christian legend written six hundred years afterward. If it had been written six hundred years after Christ, we should unhesitatingly pronounce it a plagiarism on the Bible account. The inexorable fact cuts off that argument.

Confucius was a moralist of high attainments, born some six hundred years before our era. His teachings served to concentrate and perpetuate the oldest civilization in the world, that has continued to the present day; numbering more inhabitants under one government than any other nation. Confucius taught, according to his writ-

ings, obedience to the sovereign power; and in the relation of children to parents, and the young to their elders, deference and obedience was taught as a cardinal virtue. This is more strictly enjoined and practised in China than in Christian lands, extending to a devotion to the memory of their hallowed ancestors as a national usage.

The Mohammedan religion, that arose in the fifth century of our era, lays claim, as did all its predecessors, to a divine origin. In the revelations recorded in the Koran a high morality was taught, in accordance with the civilization of the times and attendant usages. The conception of the deity was less complex and ambiguous than that of the Christians. God is defined in the shortest chapter of the Koran (chap. cxii.): "Say, *God* is one God, the eternal God; he begetteth not, neither is he begotten; and there is not any one like him." This emphasizes the marked dissent of the Mohammedans from the Christian "Son of God." This faith, coming nearly six hundred years after Christ, attained a much more extended and rapid dissemination, with quite as pronounced and fervent worshippers. Mohammedanism spread eastward among a mystic and warlike people, unprogressive in domestic arts, but highly impressiona-

ble; while the western course of the Christian dogma was also spread, by force of dominant power, through settled populations, active, industrious and progressive, with a spirit irrepressible and inventive; a people that would eventually burst the bonds of fanaticism, which hampered thought and action. The result was the investigation of nature that the persistent efforts of religion could not suppress, which demonstrated the errors of the *infallible* Church, that soon split into many sects warring against each other, and against all scientific investigators that were seeking to expose the error of trying to restrict human knowledge attained by a careful study of nature, which their religion forbade; suppressing all efforts for the acquirement of knowledge untrammelled by tradition or supernatural agency. The warfare for knowledge slowly but surely advanced the European world in the enfranchisement of free investigation, and a disillusion as to the power of the Church to dominate and control men's thoughts.

The war of science upon the vested rights of theology has achieved an advancement in civilization and correct knowledge, with a fading away of the superstition and intolerance that disfigured Christianity down to recent times. This elevated

Europe and America above the older nations of the world. The merit for it is now claimed by theologians as due to Christianity, that fought so hard to repress it, by martyrizing its scientific opponents and forbidding research into the laws of nature. This charge may be brought against most of the Christian sects, of whose persecutions and intolerance we may name the iron grip of the Roman Church in the height of its power through the dark ages of the history of Europe, with its Inquisition, auto da fé, *et cetera*, to which other sects played a good second. This should warn people against the chance of their repetition; the imprisonment for conscience' sake, with fines, hanging, drowning, scourging of Quakers, and ostracism by the English Church (much of which was repeated in this country); the Calvinistic barbarisms of Geneva and the Scottish Kirk, that taught, "The master of a family may, and ought to, deny an act of humanity or hospitality to strangers that are false teachers. The Holy Ghost forbiddeth the master of every Christian family to own a heretic as a guest. We hold that toleration of all religions is not far from blasphemy."[1]

[1] Rutherford's Disputation against pretended liberty of conscience.

When the Scottish Kirk was at the height of its power, we may search history in vain for any institution that exceeded it in fanatical barbarity, except the Spanish Inquisition. All this shows how little Christianity had to do with modern culture. Toleration and the highest benevolence and morality were unknown to them.

History shows us that since the establishment of Christianity there was no special enlightenment of the human race where it predominated, till the victories of science over it, about the seventeenth century, above nations having other faiths. The Mohammedans of Cordova in Spain were far above their Christian contemporaries in civilization, learning, and refinement; through them a new era of advancement pervaded Europe in learning and the arts of civil culture, that taught the Christian nations a higher civilization.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHRISTIAN DOGMAS

With the foregoing statement of facts before us, we will briefly examine the sectarian dogmas that have developed from this strange enigmatical religion. Without going into the long and complex theological warfare that distracted the Christians in the early centuries of its predominance, it is sufficient for our purpose to note that the Roman Church succeeded in gaining the mastery in western Europe, while the Greek Church prevailed in the east. The dogmas elaborated by the fathers of the religion are often contradictory and illogical.

The belief of the Roman Church is declared authoritatively at the present day to be this: "There is but one God, a pure spirit without a body, consisting of three persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, neither of which is *older* or greater than the others; all are *equal;* the Son became man.

God created angels — each one of us has a guardian angel; some of the angels sinned, and were changed into devils, and were condemned to hell forever, where all go who die in mortal sin. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, committed sin by eating in the garden of Paradise the fruit which God had forbidden that they might show their love and obedience to him — the devil tempted them. They *confessed* their sin, *repented*, and were forgiven. God did not let them stay in Paradise — they had to do penance on earth, which God cursed; on account of this curse the earth brings forth thorns and weeds. They died in consequence of that sin (*if they had not sinned no one would have to die*). They went into limbo, and were taken into heaven by Jesus Christ our Saviour." " Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the son of the blessed Virgin Mary. He was born on Christmas Day, in a stable at Bethlehem. He lived over thirty years, and died on Good Friday, to save us. His soul descended into limbo — where the saints who died before him were that did not go to heaven after death, as it was closed against all men on account of the sin of our first parents" (some four thousand years before). " He rose on Easter Sunday, never more to die; and

ascended into heaven forty days thereafter on Ascension Thursday, and is there now in the blessed sacrament of the altar. He will come on the last day to judge all men — for they shall rise again *in their bodies.* He appointed twelve apostles, and chose St. Peter to be the head of the twelve. Christ said, 'Thou art Peter — the rock — and on this rock I will build my Church.'[1] The Bishop of Rome, our holy Father, the Pope, now takes his place. Our Lord established only one Church, the Holy Catholic Church, and made its head *infallible, incapable of teaching falsehood.*[2]

"No one can be saved out of the Church — out of which there is no salvation. Sins are of two kinds, mortal and venal; a mortal sin is the wilful breaking of the law of God in an important point, because it kills the grace of God out of the soul. A venal sin is a breaking of law in some less important point. Those who die in mortal sin go to hell for all eternity — those who die in venal sin, or have not satisfied God's justice for *mortal sins forgiven,* go to purgatory, where souls can be helped by prayer, penance, *alms* and other good

[1] See Matthew, Chap. 16, v. 23.

[2] See Galileo's suppression for teaching what the infallible Pope had declared as false, the rotation of the world.

works, by indulgence, and especially by holy mass.[1] To leave the true Church is a mortal or deadly sin, and to omit going to mass. Sunday is kept holy by the law of the Catholic Church. Sabbath is Saturday, kept holy in the old law. *Jesus empowered the Catholic Church to change the day of rest from Saturday to Sunday.*[2] He empowered his Church to make laws binding in conscience. The Catholic Church abolished not only the Sabbath, but all the Jewish festivals, and appointed others in their place."

"The holy eucharist, or blessed sacrament, is the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ offered up under the appearance of bread and wine"—appearances are what we can see, taste, and touch. "*The priest changes the bread and wine during holy mass.* Mass is the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ offered up under the appearance of bread and wine." "At the offertory the priest offers bread and wine to God. At the consecration *he*

[1] All the rest of mankind go to hell, of course! What a rich source of profit for the priests!

[2] This change was made by the Emperor Constantine. For three hundred years after Christ, Christians kept the Sabbath under Jewish law, until Constantine, the infamous Roman emperor, changed it; that Christ empowered the change is utterly untrue.

changes the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. At the communion he receives the body and blood of Christ."

"The most wonderful powers possessed by the priest are the power to change bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, and the power to forgive sins. Jesus gave this power to the apostles and their successors in the priesthood." (New Mission Book, 1896. St. Louis.)

I have given an extended quotation, taken from an authorized source, of the religion formulated from the Hebrew and Christian Testaments by the oldest and most numerous Christian sect now extant. It was evidently systematized to awe and frighten its catechumens into submission to its authority and dogmas, which are never criticized by those who have been taught to uphold faith above reason; hence we see the radically illogical statement that contradictory language cannot exceed, of three persons all equal in origin and functions, each person being very and entire God, and yet but one God; not a Godhead composed of three persons, — that could be comprehended, — but the Trinity is a mystery involving three in one, in which reason must be cast aside to enable faith to attain belief. Faith has another assumed fact to encounter in this

connection, that the Son is as old as the Father, no less an unintelligible enigma than the other, and both undoubtedly devised to evade the ancient conception of a multiplicity of gods, while elevating the Son to a perfect equality with the Father, which in the Gospels he strenuously denies.

Another enigma appears in this record. After Adam and Eve sinned, they confessed in true Roman Catholic style and were forgiven; they submitted to the penance imposed on them, were forgiven, and died. This it would seem should justly end the matter, but the avowed result did not confirm that assumption. Their progeny were involved and had to incur the penalty of *death;* which but for that sin of our first parents, with which we had nothing to do, we would be *exempt from.* Thus, it is declared, this original sin has to be expiated by beings born thousands of years after the original sinners had their faults condoned, and on their part pardoned. This inheritance of the sin of our first parents, for which they had received pardon, incurred the necessity of a redeemer. This office was volunteered by one of the persons of the indivisible God, who came down from heaven and was *incarnated,* suffering great agony, that another person of the indivisible God might be placated; for which act this

indivisible person of the Godhead has been worshipped and glorified more than the Father himself, with lasting glory and honor from all true believers of the human race, not one-tenth part of whom has ever heard of him, and cannot therefore do him reverence, while of those who have heard his name, and believe in him as their Saviour, only a fraction can, according to the Roman Church, ever enter into the abode of eternal happiness. It would be a nice ethnogenic and theologic question whether death is a punishment or a blessing, apart from the fact that death was a law of nature before Adam was born, and that it was undoubtedly essential to permit a continuance of new creations. Much as we revere the ancient sages and wise men, we must realize that they would be a great bore, very much in the way, and would retard rather than advance modern thought and civilization if still living; while the accumulation of human life would distract a modern Malthusian. But it is useless to point out to its neophytes the illogical vagaries of a still active belief. It may be well to note the truly theological priestcraft and elaborated organization, controlled by ages of experience in adapting this creed to the credulity of men, for the benefit of the clergy, and the aggrandizement of priests, bishops,

and Pope in one consolidated hierarchy. The scheme is inimitable. Under the cloak of goodness, self-abnegation, and assumption of patriarchal care of men's souls, that is made to appear so disinterested it bars with iron will all investigation, by threats of eternal punishment, terrifying the believer, but unsubstantial as ambient air. Until men can be divested of a belief in the fabulous idea of a supernatural power, miracles, revelations from God, and all other unnatural aids, logical argument will fail with them.

The Protestant English Church, an offspring of the Roman, differs from it by pruning off some of its crudest features of superstition, but retaining the mystical doctrine of the Trinity in a somewhat modified form. It declares, " There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without *body*, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, goodness; the maker and preserver of all things. In unity of this Godhead there be three persons of one *substance*, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Son is the Word of the Father from everlasting by the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one *substance* with the Father; took man's nature of the Blessed Virgin, of her *substance;* so that the two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the God-

head and manhood, were joined together in one person, *never to be divided*, whereof is one Christ, very God, and very man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried *to reconcile his Father* to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men. As Christ died and was buried, so also it is believed he went down into hell, and did truly rise again, and *took his body*, with *flesh*, *bones*, and *all* things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth, until he return to judge all men at the last day." "The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with them, very and eternal God." [1]

The doctrine of original sin differs from the Romanists', but is essentially the same. Of free-will it is asserted that "Man since the fall of Adam cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works, without the grace of God by faith in the merit of Christ, and not for our own works and deservings — *good works cannot put*

[1] What the difference is between *body* and *substance* must be left for the theologians to explain. The definition of the Son is taken from the rhapsodical Gospel of St. John — very doubtful authority, unsustained by the other Gospels.

away sins; if they are done before the grace of Christ and his inspiration is attained they *are not pleasant to God*, as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, and as they are not done as God commanded we doubt not but *they have the nature of sin.*" (So much for unbelievers' good works.) "No man can be saved by following the laws of nature or of an adverse sect; there is *no salvation* but in the name of Jesus Christ." (Bad for those who never heard of him.)

The churches of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, and Rome are criticized in their living ceremonies, and their matters of faith — transubstantiation and purgatory of the Romanists are condemned as errors.

In this summary of the English Church we note quite as much mystery about the Godhead as in the Roman; a striving to elevate the Son to a position coeval with the Father; and developing contradictions of the most glaring character, that defy common sense and reason. One person of the Godhead offers himself as a sacrifice to reconcile another person of the Godhead, and placate his wrath against mankind, clearly establishing the fact that they were not of one mind. (The Father's motive for vengeance seems to have been imitated by Saw-

ney, who " beat Neddy the donkey because Neddy's father kicked I.") As the English Church repudiates purgatory, or limbo, it had to send Christ to the real hell, and on his resurrection he took to heaven with him the *flesh* and *bones* in which he was clad on earth, thus developing certain facts that seem to be repudiated in other parts of the creed, wherein God is declared to be " without form or parts," which would seem to our degenerate senses to indicate Christ's retention of properties quite inapposite in heaven; such an act of supererogation must have seemed cumbersome among pure spirits, and to have so individualized him as to apparently jeopardize the unity of the Godhead. This episode, however, gives a foundation for the impossible dogma of the resurrection of the bodies of men at the judgment day, and was useful in forming the creed.

When Luther broke from the Roman Church in the beginning of the sixteenth century, and Henry VIII. repudiated it in England about the same time, the doctrine of the Trinity was retained by them with all its contradictions, reminding one of the dictum of Tertullian, A. D. 200): " I maintain that the 'Son of God' was born; why am not I ashamed of maintaining such a thing? Why! but

because it is in itself a shameful thing. I maintain that the Son of God died; well, that is wholly credible, because it is monstrously absurd. I maintain that after having been buried he rose again; and that I take to be true because it is manifestly impossible." (Taylor's Sintagma, p. 106.)

All the Christian sects believing in the dogma of the Trinity adhere to the same anomalous impossibility. There are other sects who, perceiving that the impossible metaphysical dogma is contrary to human reason, have substituted a more plausible and rational interpretation, retaining the fundamental belief in Christ the "Son of Man" as Teacher, Redeemer, and Saviour. It was remarked by Blanco White that few people would be attracted to the Christian faith by the history, or life of Christ and his doings.

It is the nebulous spiritualism, that can be expanded and contracted to suit the time and occasion, the hopes and fears of reward and punishment in the cloudy future of eternity, utterly beyond knowledge, proof, or refutation, that looms up dark and portentous or bright with sunburst illumination, luring men on with strange imaginings, without apprehending their illusive and evanescent character. The unimpeachable axiom

that no being with human attributes ever received a revelation from a supernatural intelligence, or ever did, or can, originate, perform or cause any superhuman act beyond the normal powers of men in their highest cultivation, is unassailable by any admissible proof from man's experience since the era of his scientific investigation.

CHAPTER X.

CHRISTIANITY COMPARED

From the foregoing outline of the development of human thought before the Christian era, and the creeds and dogmas evolved from its teachings, many of the rich details of philosophic acquirement and the high moral aims of man in his advancement toward correct knowledge have been necessarily omitted in the compass prescribed in this exposition. This is less to be regretted as each stage of ancient culture and thought has been elaborated by more learned and able chroniclers. My object has been to show that the Christian dogma has no greater claim to a divine origin than its predecessors. We may therefore venture to investigate its assumption of greater morality and higher spiritualism.

To any one who is cognizant of the acts of immolation and self-abnegation of the Hindus and other Eastern sects, in the development of their

faiths, and before which the Christian religion is dwarfed, in immolation as a proof of divine origin, the changes wrought in the nations embracing Confucian teaching and Buddhist proselyting are more marked, successful, and of longer duration than anything effected by Christianity. They embrace greater numbers, with a stricter observance of their doctrines. This also applies to Mohammedanism. The Moslem is much more strict in the daily observance of the requirements of his faith, which has extended to more people, and in a shorter time than Christianity can claim.

If a comparison of piety and spiritualism is made we find the followers of Confucius displaying a profound respect for parents and seniors, such as we look for in vain among Christians, and a reverence for ancestors that Christian missionaries construe into worship; displaying a profoundly filial veneration that forms a part of their religion. The nation embracing these religious faiths is the oldest extant in the world, and it contains the greatest number of homogeneous people under a single government. Through its influence this densely populated nation maintained order, and sustained a civilization and love of letters, until the Christian invasion that disturbed its peace and

culture, to which the Western world was a stranger up to the fifteenth century.

The nations of Europe opposed each other with rival creeds, the outcome of antagonistic Christian dogmas, and in the attrition of war they became stalwart and individually bellicose. Antagonism begot a diversity of ideas, and men began to inquire into the secrets of nature, forbidden by their religion; while science commenced, feebly at first, to attain its rights, which the Church labored to suppress. At that time European civilization was in no way advanced beyond the Orient, then slumbering in peaceful seclusion, oblivious to the turmoils of the outside barbarians, as it designated the Europeans; and we must confess not without reason.

The battles between Science and the Christian Churches — graphically told by the Hon. A. D. White — developed thought with unprecedented rapidity; the dawn of the rights of mankind glimmered with faint light above the horizon, that the clouds of superstition strove to blot out; but the light of scientific truth pierced through them, and although they are not yet wholly dispersed, they have failed to obliterate its pure effulgence.

From the great influence of this awakening the

arts and commerce began to flourish; the rights of man began to be recognized; and the European world advanced toward a higher civilization — not yet wholly attained owing to the still potent retardation of religious superstition. Free thought and equity having been advanced by the advent of scientific culture, and a more correct knowledge of the universe, in which we live and form a part; a better understanding of the laws that govern it has also been partly attained, on which a higher erudition has been founded.

Theologians are contending for the Christian dogma as the originator of modern civilization, while history shows it to have been its bitterest enemy, and most violent opponent. Now, when the truths of science are established, they cap the climax of stupendous assumption by claiming that science and Christian dogma are in accord, science being construed in a way to adapt it to the *modern* interpretations of Christianity made to accord with proved facts, to establish their harmony. Now that science with well-founded knowledge and freedom of thought has emancipated men from the thraldom and shackles of the middle ages, and advanced the European nations beyond the Eastern, the Christians are empow-

ered by the knowledge thus attained to dictate and control their intercourse with them. This has unfortunately given to Christian missionaries an opportunity to impertinently obtrude themselves into a civilization they are too ignorant to understand, with assumptions as offensive as they are unwarranted.

The result is, as it always has been since historic time, religious dogma brings bloodshed and war, in which the European, with more bellicose training, is likely to come off the victor; while the devout missionary, propagating contention, gives thanks to his God for his kindly protecting arm that shields him against the infidel.

The missionaries proclaim themselves followers of the "Prince of Peace," and that the barbarous acts of the middle ages, and the dark deeds of the Christian Church, were not the fruits of Christ's teaching; but Christ told his disciples plainly that he came not to bring peace but a sword; and to set relatives against each other, sons against fathers, daughters against mothers, and a man's enemies should be those of his own household, — a doctrine very different from that of Confucius or Buddha. This may explain the differ-

ence between the pugnacious qualities of their followers.[1]

So long as men believe that miracles and supernatural occurrences ever existed, they will be debarred from asserting that they do not now occur. It is preposterous to assume that such things were possible in a more primitive age of the world, and that they are not now achievable, when men are so much better qualified to judge of and comprehend their significance. A miracle or abnormal physical result, accomplished by any other than natural means, does not agree with our present knowledge acquired by scientific investigation. Is the proof of those wonders described in ancient writ commensurate with their exceptional character? The innumerable delusions into which many good, earnest, wise, and learned men versed in the culture attainable in the past centuries fall, and the credulity of the unlearned population who believe in visions, magic, and witchcraft,

[1] Jesus said (Matt. x, 34 *et seq.*): "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace but a sword," evidently meaning that in claiming to be the Messiah of the Jews and striving to make himself king, in a "Kingdom of Heaven," to be inaugurated in Judea, he would stir up war and contention, the division of families and destruction of natural ties in religious and political dissension which would be very bitter.

with the erroneous interpretations of natural phenomena derived from former ages, shown to be fallacious before the light of modern science, clearly prove that no reliance can be placed on them. We trace the source of modern superstitions in the current belief in ancient miracles, and supernatural demonstrations rife in Biblical lore, that are still retained in present theologies; thus furnishing a basis for all the wild vagaries in modern interpretations of mental phenomena, of which we yet have imperfect knowledge.

There is no more proof of the verity of the Christian Scriptures than there is for the recorded myths of earlier religious legends. The Gospels were probably composed from the oral traditions of credulous men, written many years after their assumed occurrence; they rest upon their own averment alone, substantiated by no contemporary authority. They have been established in human belief a much shorter time than most of the Eastern religions; and fewer people are now under their influence, after earnest proselyting and stringent enforcement, for nearly two thousand years, under the assumption of divine authority.

These Scriptures are replete with crude mysticisms and errant statements of impossibilities

(as science can now demonstrate), cataclysms in nature displayed for ephemeral purposes, or for the simple exaltation of their God, who is portrayed as a vacillating being, dissuaded from his purpose by the calmer wisdom of man, and violating all we know of immutable law.

A most remarkable naïveté is shown in the New Testament by the frequent declaration that several acts were performed for the special purpose that the prophesies in the Old Testament might be fulfilled! On turning to the prophecies referred to it would often take an interpreter more profound than a priestess of Delphian oracle to decipher their connection with the subsequent events assumed to be their fulfilment; notwithstanding the pains taken to fulfil them by purposely enacting what they were construed to mean, ages after they were assumed to have been uttered.

However vivid its fond imaginings of heaven or terrifying its pictures of hell may be, they are the mere phantoms of primitive conceit. The familiar appellation of father so exultantly claimed by Christians is a natural cognomen used in all religions to indicate the near relationship to man of the power, or cause, that originated the universe; of which in imaginative phrase we are the

children. This *cause*, however, as God, Jehovah, Jove, or Lord, or by whatever other name designated, is entirely beyond the capacity of the human brain, or any human vocabulary, to define, —

> " Extending far up above our realms of thought
> And deep below our micrographic art," —

displaying to us a transcendent impersonality that dwarfs *all* the gods of feeble human invention, with their heavens, demigods, angels, and demons, into insignificant phantasms.

The elevating contemplation of all the wonders that we know and are now striving to intelligently comprehend, with the consciousness that we possess mental power in excess of all other created beings around us, should be incentive enough to avail ourselves of all the intellect we possess in forwarding the world's knowledge, for the advancement, amelioration, and happiness of ourselves and our fellow men. But few persons are so stolid that they will not respond to a new discovery that benefits them physically and mentally. Every such discovery is an incentive to new exertions, instead of waiting on " divine Providence." No fable of the ancients is more pregnant with sound philosophy than that of Hercules and the Wagoner — " put your own shoulder to the wheel "

instead of calling upon God, who has given you all the aid he ever will, in the intellect with which you are endowed. Be grateful if you will for your present status; but to expect special aid by praying for it is a waste of time in idolatry.

Good and evil come by the immutable laws of cause and effect, which may be directed and controlled in some particulars by man's own energies in comprehending them; but never by inducing their originator to modify or subvert them.

In the psychological study of human experience and traditions by the light of modern scientific methods, the wonders of ancient legends of the supernatural and miraculous "divine revelations" are easily accounted for. We need only to trace the course in modern times of the fading out of a belief in ghosts, hobgoblins, fairies, — signs and wonders in which our forefathers placed implicit reliance, now generally decided to be mere fancies of the brain retained only by the credulous ignorant, which a better knowledge has shown the impossibility of.

While in the present age a belief in the supernatural is weakening, being entirely repudiated by learned scientists, yet it still maintains a controlling influence and authority in what are called Chris-

tian nations, so potent as to retard the free avowal of adverse views by a large number of those who deny the truth of the dogmas on which so much time, money, and legislation are expended, which often begets a passive assent from those who — whatever the reason may be — prefer to avoid a collision with the organized powers and vested legal organizations in control of political legislation.

It has been remarked by a learned professor of psychology that "everywhere there is a yearning for the mysterious, which seems at different epochs to flare up and spread into true epidemics, utterly consuming all the foundations of logic and common sense in the white heat of emotional fervor with which they advance. It seems not to matter how trivial, how absurd, how vulgar, how ignorant, or how improbable the manifestations may be, the passion for belief in their mysterious origin sets all reason aside." Such a state of mental hallucination is only rendered possible by the teachings and belief in a spirit world that is invisible to mortal eyes, in conjunction with the tangible in this world, as inculcated by present theological dogmas, of which there is no proof except that which is derived from legendary myths, and

the mind's eye of fanaticism, that are not subject to logical reasoning with those who believe in the existence of a sphere of heavenly spirits.

In ancient times there was — and unfortunately there now is — a belief that God is placated by prayer, and modifies or changes the course of nature by the supplications of his worshippers. We are still painfully astounded by the spectacle of a nation offering up prayers for rain in time of drought, for relief from suffering in time of grievous pestilence and famines — and the antagonizing prayers on both sides of belligerent nations. We would fain counsel the supplicants like Hercules in the fable, "Put your own shoulder to the work," instead of praying for supernatural aid that will not by praying be given you. If man cannot counteract or ameliorate the wants and deficiencies occasioned by nature's course, he must suffer the consequences, for he will never be aided by prayer to cause a change in the undeviating laws that govern the universe. If instead of wasting time in vain supplications men would study the laws that govern their being, and learn the cause of adverse phenomena, which can often be counteracted by such knowledge, disaster would be avoided; while by passive suppli-

cation they may ignorantly aggravate the evil they seek to avert.

Scientific acquirement will better serve the purposes of amelioration in diminishing the wants of humanity than a lifetime of prayer, in ministering to the requirements of man's fellow beings, and in aiding the advancement of the world we live in, which is the only true devotion.

If Christianity was simply a plenary code of morals, giving instruction in the duties of man to his fellow man, indicating how to lead a pure and upright life, — of which its theology formed no part, — no antagonism would occur; but to require a belief in the divinity of its strange origin derived from a would-be "King of the Jews," subsequently transformed by tradition from the assumed rôle of the Jewish Messiah into a Redeemer and universal Saviour of men, induces friction; unfortunately the dogma goes much further, and introduces a vengeful element, chaining men down by their fears of perdition for unbelief, to the Juggernaut car of its diabolic traditions, with terrifying pictures of fiendish judgments, that have served to make men the cruel persecutors of their fellow men down to a recent day.

The metaphysics and mysticism of St. John's Gospel, so unlike the other biographers of Christ, and that atrocious book called "Revelation," attributed to the same author, have been the source from which fanatics and sensational preachers draw the material for their fiendish descriptions and pictures, intended to agonize faith-ridden men and God-fearing women; while it only excited the derision of the thoughtless and the disgust of sensible thinkers. It has produced more doubt, trepidation, death-bed suffering, crazing, and suicide than could be compensated for by all the joy and comfort it promises the so-called elect. The Revelation of St. John, Milton's "Paradise Lost," and the "Inferno" of Dante have been the cause of great wretchedness and suffering, by misleading unbalanced and susceptible people into believing the descriptions from the imaginative and poetic fancies of the surcharged minds of the authors to be real divine revelations.

CHAPTER XI.

"REVELATIONS"

THE Revelation of St. John, as it is entitled, is probably the dream of a fanatical adherent of Paul, if he himself was not its author. It was evidently written by the person who wrote the Gospel attributed to the same origin, which depicts in mystical language Christ under the cognomen of "The Word," which description of Jesus has no warrant for it, and is at variance with the other Gospels. Paul attempted to elevate Jesus into the Godhead, and made him a universal Redeemer for all men, instead of a Messiah of the Jews, as he declared himself to be; and his disciples who were with him universally believed he was.

Paul, who never saw Jesus, in attempting to gain followers from the outside world, perceived the necessity of enlisting recruits from the other nations, even though they were uncircumcised, which

was at variance with St. Peter's doctrine, and created a breach in the Church. But the absolute necessity of bringing into the fold Gentiles, if the religion was to survive (for the Jewish nation would not receive it), overcame all objections; so Paul succeeded in introducing his newly constructed Christian faith, that has dominated all Christendom to the present day.

The Revelation is addressed to the seven churches in Asia and intended to strengthen their faith, with the author's purpose to exalt himself in their estimation. There is a subtlety in its adaptation to the faith and prejudices of the churches which he was addressing; interposing therewith certain messages of peace direct from Christ, and seven spirits (just their number) before the throne. He relates what he saw in the spirit — notably in a dream — which Alpha and Omega ordered him to write in a book and send them. He then goes on to describe what he was charged to write; followed by a description of heaven as he conceived it, in which there was a throne, with *One* sitting on it. To enhance the weird mystery, the author avoids naming personages frankly, but speaks of Alpha and Omega, meaning Christ, and One, meaning God the Father, or rather trying to convey

something more sublime than anything words can express, by uttering the meagre cognomen of One, thus attempting, by undefined phrasing, to enhance the sublimity of the narrative.

We have elsewhere observed that there is an unvarying and absolute truth, proving with certainty the rule; that no religion or dogma is entitled to credence or belief, of divine origin or authority, which in any particular antagonizes or contradicts the ascertained laws of nature — the cosmos as now verified. With this unerring guide we will investigate this last book of the Christian Bible, which is accepted by most Christian believers, and declared to be a divine revelation from God, that the author was commanded to write.

It is needless to discuss the authorship, and its date is unimportant. While it has sometimes been repudiated, it still holds a place in the canonical Scriptures of the present day in the Christian churches. It is used, as we have said, by ignorant sensational preachers, to terrify their credulous auditors; and has been the source of most of the fanatical doctrines that have destroyed the happiness and useful life of thousands of the human race, for which reason alone we here give it extended notice. It is the very key-note of superstition, emanating

from a morbid imagination, dealing with the most crude and bestial figures; with no high or noble aspiration. It does not attain the poetical sublimity or grandeur of the Eastern tales of genii and afrites, of the sumptuousness of which the author of "Revelation" had no conception. Its dreariness, paucity of action, and motive remind us of the dilemma of an intelligent lady, who said that when a child she believed she must be irredeemably wicked, as she was sure if she went to heaven she would tire, and be surfeited with the hallelujahs and the eternal playing on harps, which seemed to her to involve no intellectuality in it.

The writer of this so-called "Revelation" shows considerable secular wisdom in his messages to the churches and the Jews, in his denunciations of Babylon, where they were taken in captivity; a grievance that occupied so large a share of the time of the enthroned One, and his host of satellites, to the exclusion of all the rest of mankind. The crucial test of the utter groundlessness of this rhapsody of a bigoted author is the indisputable fact that he pictures heaven as a fixed place, above the *stable* earth, accessible by *ascent* to it, and, plagiarizing from Christ, that the stars — those little sparks of light — would fall to the earth; a mere incident

in the grand pyrotechnics displaying Almighty power. The writer's utter ignorance of the universe as it is, and the radically false description of it, would render the fiction beneath critical notice, or the penning a line on so stupid a fable, but for the strange hold it still has at the present day on the religious belief of intelligent people. It is not exaggeration to say that this erratic extravaganza has done more harm, led to more persecution — unsettled more ill-balanced minds, and been the source of more idiosyncrasies in religious tenets — than any other writing extant; not from its literary merits, but from its reception as a revelation from God, that forbids human criticism.

In the attempt of the author of "Revelation" to draw an imposing picture of the grandeur and sublimity of heaven he totally fails, by using conventional human settings, with unartistic grouping of men mingled with low, distorted images of beasts with horns, having multitudinous eyes, diabolical imaginings of natural forms into more heathenish shapes than Eastern idols; while the only occupation he can find for his saints, angels, or beasts, consists in genuflections with hallelujahs to the *One* on the throne, accompanied with minstrelsy of harps; without an ennobling thought, or moral suggestion;

simply a fulsome worship, accompanied by pyrotechnic thunders and lightnings. The whole phantasmagoria seemed to be engaged in vengeance and destruction. Among other terrors, a being on a red horse is sent to destroy the peace of the world (amiable mission!), with many other *heavenly* acts, interspersed with worship and adulation. Such is "John's" picture of heaven, unrelieved by a single elevating action, with no word of knowledge or peace.

It is amazing that place should be given to this crude, puerile excogitation of an unbalanced intellect, in the religious curriculum of an enlightened age. It is stranger yet that men of brains will waste their valuable energies in labored disquisitions on the mystic significance of those cabalistic utterances, as if they had any real value in religious culture or the advancement of knowledge.

The evidence is multifarious that the whole course of advancement of the human race has been obscured and retarded by continuous aberrations and mysticisms, engendered by a strife to placate the divine origin of our being. From age to age the fertile brain of man was teeming with myths and legends, concocted from incidents, often misinterpreted, in the phenomena of nature; which, by their

acceptance as truths, misled men into the moral and religious vagaries that have afflicted the human race, and produced the ever-erring and inefficient religions of the world.

This "Revelation" is notoriously the *ne plus ultra* not only of mysticism, but of absurdity, with no redeeming characteristics of morals or philosophy, displaying a primitive ignorance that would disgrace a tyro of the present day. What a strange thing is a normal human mind that can be warped by education into a belief in such unmitigated nonsense, in which the writer displays his desire to rule the ignorant and fanatical churches he addresses, by a claim of authority from God.

CHAPTER XII.

MIRACLES

While no attempt is made in this essay to detail with minuteness, historically or otherwise, the progress of development of the innumerable religions that enacted an important part in the progress of civilization, or their aid in the advancement of the races to their present standing, they were a potent factor in the aggregation of men into exclusive communities, and in estranging them from their fellow men. They have been the direct cause of the bitterest feuds, wars, and barbarous persecutions that have disgraced the human race, far more potent than any other incentive.

We can assume, without fear or contradiction, that the delineation of a perfect God, in accord with the ascertained laws of creation, is beyond the mental powers of man. Hence, as we have seen, all the attempts heretofore made to portray the originator of the universe, and the advent of man,

have been signal failures. The most refined theological efforts of the latest Christian civilization are but inadequate endeavors to spiritualize the personal and humanized God of the Jewish Scriptures, who is so indissolubly connected with Jesus Christ, the " Saviour " of the Christian sect, that they must stand or fall together.

The legends of the Old Testament, embodied in the Christian Bible, were written by men totally ignorant of the cosmology of the universe, and man's relation to it; yet the record is claimed to be divinely inspired, and the legend was accepted as true by Christ. Hence true, loving, earnest, intelligent Christians believe in its divine inspiration, and have striven to warp the ambiguous story that admits of but one rational interpretation (originally believed in by Jews and Christians alike), to *harmonize* it with ascertained facts. Since the wonderful truths of nature began to be interpreted by scientific investigation, the theologians have either denied their truth, or striven to interpret the plain declarations of the Biblical text into mystical meanings consonant with the truth.

The God described in Genesis was a personality, and walked on the earth like a man, who was made in his image; but, say the theologians, the making

"man in his image" meant a spiritual likeness, not a physical one. This is gratuitous, and without warrant; it does not accord with his walking in the garden of Eden. So again, the clear, unambiguous statement of the creation in six *days*, too positive and precise to admit of question, and confirmed in the "God written" commandments (which now ornament the walls of Christian churches), that indicate *day*, beyond all question, as the diurnal light and darkness caused by the earth's revolution, and preclude the assumption that by *day* an indefinite period of time of illimitable length was meant. The explanation is sophistical, and is absolutely refuted by the commandments. The statement, as it stands in Genesis, we know to be unqualifiedly erroneous, disproved by well-known facts.

While the writings of the ancients are filled with records of miracles and supernatural manifestations, that are vanishing before the light of science, an investigation into their causes would be interesting. There is no unambiguous proof that miracles were ever materialized; while the negative assertion that they never happened cannot be demonstrated or disproved by evidence, as negative proof is unattainable. The denial of their having

occurred is based upon our experience of the natural order constantly prevailing in modern times, under fixed and undeviating rules so far as they have been ascertained, in which no digression is known to science.

By the rules of evidence a phenomenon so utterly abnormal as a miracle requires the most unquestionable and positive proof, which is now unattainable in regard to ancient legends. The fact is indisputable that the traditions in early writings, which have been preserved, are filled with anomalous incidents: spiritual appearances, gods, demons, and miracles, to suit the story of each religion, such as we know do not appear in modern times. The appearances recorded were more or less frequent in proportion to the primitive character of the record, which intensifies the doubt of their truth.

In examining the probability of the miracles described in the New Testament, we shall be greatly aided by carefully investigating the occasions on which they were manifested; their nature and appositeness in the advancement of the mission which the "Redeemer" came to fulfil. It is hardly conceivable that a divine Saviour of mankind would display miracles *ad libitum* only to exhibit his power or credentials from God. If we find any of the

exhibitions of his miraculous power were apparently only employed for revenge, as in the miracle of the fig-tree, or for social conviviality, as in the turning water into wine, the reason for doubt is greatly enhanced.

As we have before written, there is no confirmatory evidence of the miraculous details stated in the Bible, and except the Babylonian account of the creation, all prior and contemporary historians are silent on the subject of the wonders it treats of. The style of many of the books, which attempt to describe the beginning of history, are of much later date than some records now extant, and are less primitive in their diction.

In our exposition of the absolutely baseless foundation of the Christian dogma, which arose many thousands of years after the aggregation of men into nations, that were vastly greater than the Jews, with religions, laws, and a civilization at least equal to theirs, we note that its advent occurred in a conquered and insignificant nation, whence it could not be readily disseminated, and it was limited in its influence for three centuries, until patronized by the Emperor Constantine.

Its propagation was slowly effected by legends orally transmitted during the first centuries after

Christ's death, by ignorant fishermen and others of their class. Christ's boast was that his doctrines were not believed in by the wise and prudent, but were revealed to babes, meaning the ignorant, which shows the source from which the Gospels were derived. Their promulgation was due to the Emperors Hadrian and Constantine, for political reasons.

The result of its enforcement upon Europe culminated in a dark and backward age, that was only dispelled by the advent of science, which the conservators of this religion opposed with great acrimony.

From this era doubts arose, expanding into agnosticism; uncertain at first, but gradually consolidating into the truths of the present day, which do not interfere with or question the freedom or right to a belief in any dogma of a future state of reward and punishment, or the recognition of friends in a region of happiness after death. The thought is poetical and sublime; and if it is a source of comfort to the living, we would offer no contention against the pictures of Paradise or heaven, drawn by the most imaginative minds; nor an idealization, attempting to define God's purposes. Our protest would only be directed

against the assumption that they are plenary revelations from God, instead of being, as they are, the emanation of man's imagination; embracing the denunciatory character of the fiendish, barbarous, and vengeful punishments inculcated, without a redeemable feature, by ignorant men.

To us, the indescribably transcendent power that brought into existence this vast creation, illimitable to human knowledge, elaborated with a minuteness man has not yet reached, with beauties in sight and sound we can marvel at but never equal; dispensing joy and happiness within our grasp that man's perverted and ignorant reaching after the impossible prevents him from attaining: this imparts to us unbounded confidence that the future will develop a greater good than our limited powers can now compass. We feel a certainty that we can acquire no present knowledge of the details, and we rest confidently in the belief that the future will be determined with greater perfection than man can now formulate. This shows us that the proper occupation of man is to study the open book of nature before which he is placed, for his true relation to his surroundings, by which he may attain the utmost good for himself and his fellow beings, aided by cultivating

his truthfulness and benevolence, together with kindly social relations, in accordance with the laws of his being. Our aim should be to make *this world* better, happier, and more perfect, — for it is our present home, — by which we can attain greater happiness. The profoundest rule for action in relation to our intercourse with others is contained in the maxim of that sapient philosopher, Confucius, " Treat your fellow man as you would be treated." Selfishness is the fundamental cause of wickedness.

The strange hallucination that the Omnipotent First Cause could be gratified, or placated, or induced by adulation or worship, with formulated prayers and genuflections, into indulgences, or plenary forgiveness of sins committed, while it has advantages for the depraved, cannot accord with sound justice; or annul the fact that a dereliction can only be condoned by correcting the wrong, without calling upon supernatural aid, that will never be given from any extraneous source, but must be righted from our own consciousness.

The world has had many thousands of years' experience in ineffective theological experiment in making men good through fear of punishment, diverted by subservient worship in imploring su-

pernatural aid rather than through a fear of doing wrong and seeking the right. Too often it has been taught that a strict adherence to church formula, prayer, and *pecuniary gifts* placated and condoned unrequited wrong. A scientific demonstration of right and wrong banishes all such fallacious reasoning. When men can be convinced that unselfishness, truth, and justice, with full liberty to act independently of the control of others, so far as it does not interfere with their inherent rights, and when actions are made to comport with a due regard to these axioms, the greatest happiness will be attained, and man's highest perfection be achieved. To this end all legislation should be limited, with no grant of exclusive or exceptional privileges to any.

The question that most concerns the advance of American liberty and civilization is the exclusion guaranteed by the Constitution, of all ascendency by law of any religion over the citizen, be he Christian, Mohammedan, Buddhist, Confucian, deist, or agnostic. In the Constitution all control over religion was carefully excluded. Notwithstanding this precaution of the framers of the instrument made to guard our liberties, its intent has been ignored and trampled on by

Christian legislators, who have enacted penal laws that curtail the rights of men in their religious belief and legitimate acts, which in no way encroach upon the rights of others, or their freedom to enjoy like privileges. This encroachment Christian sectarians have perpetrated, and they are still actively engaged in the subversion of the rights of their fellow citizens by the enforcement of Christian Sunday laws, and religious tests, subversive of the Constitution.

CHAPTER XIII.

OUR PRESENT KNOWLEDGE

HAVING traced in the preceding pages man's incentive to worship, developed by his multitudinous ideas of the originator of the universe described in the various stages of his advancement, in which he has created from his fruitful imaginings deities, supernatural phenomena, spirit worlds, and other anomalous and abnormal things which modern thought should consign to oblivion, and that science has proved to be fallacious, yet there still lingers in religious dogmas a primitive adherence that is commingled with the highest codes of morals.

We have endeavored to eliminate the fabulous from the true, the useful, and the good, which man has educed from his unaided mind, reasoning on the acts and deeds of himself and his fellow men, while rejecting the fabulous source to which they were attributed. To establish the fact that man's intellect alone is the origin from which

the highest good is achieved, we must carefully examine the most advanced civilization, and the source from which it emanated. We have shown the frail foundations on which superstition is based, and the crudities with which it is filled. While we assume this earth is existent, and that some power caused its being, we have no conceivable idea of the creation or extinction of matter, the beginning or end of time, or the beginning and end of space; yet these problems must be solved before we can have an intelligent knowledge of God, or fathom the purpose of creation.

The dogma that Christ was an emanation from heaven to Judea, as a Saviour and Redeemer of mankind, involves so many enigmas and contradictions as to render it a theological maze. To decipher this, it has been assumed that the normal condition of man, as created, tends to evil; that he, knowing the right, prefers to do wrong; and that, after untold centuries of wrong-doing, multitudes of nations, cultivated in arts, with profound laws governing large communities age upon age, apparently much more cultivated, and with greater acquirements than the Jews ever attained, were left to their own teachings, until a divine Redeemer never before commissioned was sent to

the Jews, not to teach them a higher moral code, which he never did, but to expiate the sins of the world. And what renders the enigma more profound, he was sent to a conquered people, under the rule of a great nation, with no power to disseminate his mission. Why this long delay to redeem mankind was deemed essential, and why it did not extend, except to a few individual communities, for hundreds of years, must be left to theologians to solve.

When the Christian religion became dominant it was enveloped in feuds and warfare that caused persecution and bloodshed; with the final ascendency of the Roman Church, the relentless rule of which led to the retrograde age of darkness, as it was called, entirely at variance with common sense and our knowledge of right, which lasted until the victorious warfare of science emancipated thought, and redeemed the world from much of its barbarism. It is beyond the power of man to conceive God to be impersonal; the attempt to disguise this fact by calling him a spirit is futile. How does a spirit differ from an entity? The aphorism that God is everywhere, in everything, as Pythagoras defines him, does not eliminate his personality. The creeds of Christians

declare Christ to be a personality of the Godhead, the Trinity of personalities.

While it is natural and logical for man to personify an originator, or first cause of the universe, and to clothe that power with transcendent attributes divine, unquestionable proof is necessary to establish a rational belief that any verbal communication was ever made from that source. The only admissible proof would be, imparting information transcending anything known to, or attainable by, the unaided intellect of man.

In the teachings attributed to Christ there is no ethnologic truth or maxim announced that was not taught ages before his advent; while some of his teachings, undefined by modern Biblicists, display doubtful ethics. The assumption that Christ came into the world as the Saviour of men, teaching a transcendent moral code and religious dogma; that he performed miracles, such as healing diseases, raising the dead, and countervailing nature's laws, is believed by his catechumens. These miracles, resting on tradition alone, did not convert the learned that it is claimed saw them; they were enacted for the benefit of individuals, or for present purposes. In no instance did they teach intellectual advancement. They seemed

only to have been enacted to impress the belief of those who witnessed them with the supernatural power of him who was afterward declared to be the *sole* redeemer and saviour of men from future punishment in another sphere; a salvation to be achieved only by a belief that he died to redeem the human race. It seems difficult for an uninitiated investigator to understand any analogy between the death of Christ, who was executed for assuming to be the "King of the Jews," and the salvation of men; a dogma that could be entertained by those only whose preconceived faith controlled their reason.

If credence in a future life and the recognition of departed friends is a source of comfort to those who entertain it, no demonstration has been offered to disprove it; therefore it may be indisputably entertained and without proof adhered to. But if the belief is founded on the authority of ancient legends, they are but the creations of men far more ignorant than ourselves, and without proof that they ever had any more knowledge about the future than we possess.

If a belief in a hereafter diverts men from a laudable endeavor to make the world better, more beautiful and happier, it is detrimental to man's

highest mission. Our present service is due for the improvement of this world, mankind, and ourselves. If we perform our task faithfully here, we shall be better fitted to do so in a future existence, if we attain it; which will be very monotonous if worship is to be our only occupation, as the Revelation of John pictures it, producing no advancing result. The laws that govern this universe are inexorable; to ignore or attempt to change them is reprehensible. By diligently studying the phenomena of uncontrolled nature, and their causes, we may direct and counteract many of their detrimental effects, and use them for our good; but to beseech an unseen power to change or modify them, with the supposition that they can be thereby changed, is demoralizing and superstitious.

All that is taught in the churches, and elsewhere, of unselfish acts, moral and fraternal, in social and national brotherhood, and comity in the family of nations, must receive the responsive approbation of every right-minded man. It should be clearly understood, however, that our whole duty is not accomplished when a sporadic charity is bestowed out of the gains we have accumulated from the hard labor of the recipients; nor should

charity, justice, or morality be shackled with religious creeds or dogmas.

One of the most valuable benefactions to the coming age would be a clear exposition of the just and equitable limits of legislators, in the enactment of laws determining and restricting the volition of persons in their unrestrained liberty of action; and abolishing the power to grant special or exclusive privileges to any man, or association of men, from which others may be excluded. And when men's rights are determined, and clearly understood, there should be a constitutional bar placed upon legislation, to prevent its trespassing upon the rights of all to acquire equal privileges, and guard all against adverse combinations. I can conceive of no more important subject for which a very large reward could be advantageously offered, than the best essay giving a clear exposition of this theme.

CHAPTER XIV.

OUR PRESENT STATUS

In this dissertation we have described the source of man's belief in a Creator, and the cause of his speculations in the embodiment of a God. We have suggested his derivation of supernatural occurrences from misunderstood phenomena, and a prolific imagination that has created and woven into myths and legends very common events, as well as unusual experiences. In the earliest records there is a constant tendency to personify natural phenomena, and a poetical fancy to endow objects, animate and inanimate, with superhuman attributes. The earliest gods were derived almost entirely from that source.

In later times mental endowments were recognized as elements of divinity, and systems more elaborate and transcendental were formulated, with concomitant gods whose lives and acts were emphasized and adorned with miracles, and other

supernatural attributes. In tracing these abnormal characteristics, we note a repetition of the acts attributed to the earlier gods, ascribed to later divinities, in characteristics that leave but little doubt of plagiarism.

An era of god-making culminated in deifying the Jewish Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth; who was executed, as related in the Bible narrative, for attempting to make himself "King of the Jews." Later tradition clothed him with many of the historical incidents related of Crishna's and Buddha's advents. A belief in his divinity has been retained in some of the most advanced nations, who claim for it all the brilliant acquirements in high-toned morals, justice, and equity attained by man's experience from earliest ages, and the scientific teaching and learning of modern times.

Modern civilization is the fruit of modern culture, derived from the free investigation of every question in the light of science, unhampered by any dictum from ancient law, but with a clear discernment of every truth in science and philosophy, having the crudities of theological superstition eliminated.

While the twentieth century begins with the human mind free to become emancipated from

the compulsory shackles of theologic rule, it is still clogged by the traditions of former tyranny, and the lingering dread of eternal punishment with which it has so long been held in abeyance.

With such questions as the ultimate purposes of creation, or the *modus operandi* of a future state, science as yet has nothing to do; it simply leaves the speculative mind free to believe or repudiate any proposition relative to the unknowable it may choose to embrace. The only protest it would interpose is against the assumption that any dictum coming down from a more primitive age should be used as authority for belief, or a control over the acts and thoughts of men; an assumption that has been the cause of much oppression and bloodshed. It may be assumed, without fear of veracious contradiction, that no man ever lived who knew more of the future than we do; for there is no theology extant, whatever its pretensions to divine inspiration may be, that displays any knowledge of the true history of the world's advent; while on the contrary all, without exception, are based on what we know to be false conceptions of it. Is it within the scope of common sense or logical reason to claim for an ignorant age, or a legendary individual, greater

knowledge of mental phenomena, or the personal attributes of man and his destiny in the future order of events, than the most profound learning of the present day can compass? Is it within the legitimate range of human reason to assume that an omniscient incarnation of deity should not display a knowledge of the true cosmology of the universe? Is it not true that if any teaching be found in the utterances of an assumed deity inconsistent with the known facts of science, it is fatal to all claims of divine knowledge? All this the sayings of Christ show. To parry the plain common sense of the text with metaphysical disquisitions or paraphrase may display great skill in mental legerdemain, but the necessity for its manifestation, to define God's direct communication with man, throws an infallible doubt upon the divinity of the assumed revelation.

We need not stay to discuss the fabulous character of the obsolete religions of the world; they serve only to emphasize the mental activity of human thought and the wonderful power of man to build up systems of theology from his fertile imagination.

The religion that at the present time engrosses so much of the attention and energy of the most

advanced nations claims our attention at present. We believe that human benevolence, charity, love, equity, and justice would have a much more permanent foundation based on man's inner consciousness of right, with the cultivation of a firm conviction that a strict integrity on his part would result in the greatest amount of happiness not only to the whole community, but consequently to himself individually; and that the incentive of his own native power and volition for right living would be a much greater inducement than any promise of post mortuary reward or punishment, or the placation of the ruler of the universe by prayer or conventional ceremonies. Seeking for exterior aid, instead of being self-reliant, is demoralizing.

We have no Utopian aspirations regarding men's perfection, or their mental or physical equality; but we would indicate strict equity and justice to all. Much of the crime, and dereliction from law and order, arises from a prevalent feeling that the laws of society are inequitable; that the rich are reaping undue advantages of the needy, and that the laws are made for their greater protection. The need for reform is really more important with the high and rich than with the lower

orders. Crime will be shorn of its greatest incentive when the most prosperous become the most equitable. But all reform must be attained by a consciousness of each one's power to do right; not because it will please or placate a superior being, but because it will better subserve the purposes of our creation and inure to each one's happiness in this world, which would be the greatest guarantee for it hereafter.

The confusing and demoralizing doctrine that any form of theology is necessary to attain an enjoyment of a future state, of which man's imagination alone gives him any idea, is found by thousands of years of experience to be of no avail in aid of criminal reformation. It will be found that where the most strict and tyrannical theological discipline prevails, the people are lowest and most depraved.

If history teaches any one thing more prominently than another, it is that a knowledge of the world we live in, and a realization of the mental powers and functions of man in combating adverse natural phenomena, while availing himself of the advantages presented by a careful study of its capabilities, will best subserve the purpose of his being, and elevate him to the highest moral and intel-

lectual standard, without reference to any other aiding than his own powers, which are all that have been or will ever be bestowed upon him.

Man needs to waste no time in telling how devoted he is to his Creator's service, who must know every purpose of his being, if he is omniscient; or to expend inordinate means and energies in building temples or churches to worship in. The best and only proper worship is, at all times to do right, and deal justly with our fellow men, — thus aid in making the world wiser and happier, — while consigning all mystic theologies to the archives of a past age, as types of man's efforts for progress toward true knowledge, to be placed with the prehistoric remains of a primitive creation.

CHAPTER XV.

RECAPITULATION

In elaborating from the Christian Bible a life of Christ and its uselessness in advancing civilization, we will here give our impression of the religion evolved therefrom; premising that we do not pretend to have any knowledge or proof that there is, or is not, to be a future life hereafter. Nor do we know or believe that any human being has, or ever had, any knowledge of the *purpose* of this creation, the history of its origin, or its final destiny.

We have no knowledge or conception, as we have said, of the fundamental principle of matter, or the beginning and end of space, time, or force; we have a conviction that amounts to a certainty with us that no human being does now, or ever did have any knowledge of them. We have endeavored to give a rational explanation of

the motive for the legends and supernatural appearances with which the earliest histories are filled, together with the familiar intercourse between gods and men; most frequent in the earliest records.

At the present day we are surrounded by a nation that worships a godhead the principal entity of which is Jesus Christ, whose real life we have endeavored to elaborate from the meagre history and mythical biographical sketches found in the Gospels.

We have learned from the several sectarian creeds of those who worship this God their belief that at the creation, or beginning of this world, a man and woman were created, from whom all the subsequent races of the earth sprang (which is in radical opposition to the facts of known science); that this man and woman were forbidden to eat of the fruit of a tree in the garden they were placed in, which would impart to them a knowledge of good and evil; that, in their eagerness for information, they transgressed the command, and attained the knowledge God had forbidden, showing that God had not control over his own creation; that this dereliction caused them to be expelled from the Garden of Eden, and condemned

the man to work for his living, and the woman to suffer in childbirth; that this sentence was not only carried out in the case of the transgressors, but the curse descended to all their progeny.

In due course of time mankind became so wicked that God swept the whole race from the face of the earth by a flood, and, for some unexplained reason, included "every living thing" except one man and his family, with a pair or more of "every living creature," which he caused to be preserved in an ark, floating upon the waters that covered the *whole earth*. Thus a new era began with a holy man selected by God to repeople the world. We find the descendants of this favorite of God, Noah, as corrupt apparently as the preceding population; inheriting the corrupt nature and penalties inflicted on Adam and Eve, as they spread over the world, peopling it with all the races that exist at the present day.[1]

Among the several nations of men, many of whom arrived at a high degree of civilization, it is assumed that God selected a nomadic wanderer, Abram, whom he promised to care for above all other men and nations, declaring that his seed

[1] This is a Babylonian legend, plagiarized by the Jews after their return from captivity, not a revelation to them.

should become a great nation, dominating all others. God, the legend declares, also promised Abram a country then inhabited by Canaanites in undisputed possession, but he did not gain possession of it. In time the migratory descendants of Abram found themselves in slavery to one of the most advanced and cultivated nations on earth. From their servitude they say God released them in a singularly miraculous way; and they wandered about forty years, apparently without purpose, — during which time many died, — until they finally came to Canaan, which their leaders told them God had given to their ancestor. This country they found themselves strong enough to occupy, by driving out the owners, under the sanction of God. After various vicissitudes, they flourished and became a nation, although never a dominant one. Subsequently they were conquered and led captive to Babylon, where they remained many years, enjoying much freedom and a study of Babylonian culture. They were finally restored to Jerusalem by their captors, and Ezra, their high priest, who was well versed in Babylonian lore, on coming to rule in Jerusalem, assumed to inaugurate the old Mosaic laws, and compiled, or collected, the tradi-

tions that have come down to us in the Old Testament. After many mutations, in none of which did the nation attain preponderance, they came under the Roman yoke as a Roman province.

Recent discoveries have developed the fact that the legend of the creation in the book of Genesis, attributed to Moses, was derived from Babylonian writings by the Jews during their captivity, and was adapted by them to the God of Abraham, who was constituted the God of the Israelites. The monotheism of the Jews in imitation of earlier cults is simply an assumption that their God was superior to the gods of all other people; but they sometimes worshipped alien gods, contrary to the commands of their own deity. As a proof that they did not adhere to one God, their chief priest, Aaron, furnished them with a new one when he and they thought Moses had deserted them with his God. Their idea of a *national God* had often been announced by other nations before the time of Moses, and was adopted by the multitude of the Jews; it found expression in Babylonian lore, as well as in that of other nations. Whether the God of Abraham and Moses was the only true God or not, they often worshipped those of other people. His covenant to

aid and protect the Israelites, regardless of all others, history shows has proved as bootless as the rest of the legend.

The Jews always had numerous prophets, as their literature abundantly shows, and among their prophecies a Messiah was promised, who would raise them up to be a great and independent nation, ruling them with just laws for all time. This was the universal belief of the Jews, although they were then reduced to a subserviency to Rome.

At this time there was born in Judea a child of Jewish parentage, who eventually claimed to be the promised Messiah. The accounts of him state that he was miraculously conceived by a virgin, to which her betrothed husband assented; although in no instance thereafter is it recorded they ever proclaimed his miraculous conception, or countenanced his teaching as Messiah. We have his own declaration that he was not honored as supernatural in his own house or among his own people; and he repulsed his mother and brethren when they went to meet him, while he was surrounded in the height of his popularity by a host of followers (showing they were not in accord), and he then disowned them. This man

Jesus had a peculiar career that we have attempted to deduce from the Gospels, which finally ended in his execution by the Roman governor Pilate, who published the cause of his execution on the cross in three languages, that all might understand it.

After his death, his followers and their converts formed themselves into small congregations, governed by the twelve disciples at Jerusalem, subsequently declaring him to be the son of God, and claiming they had seen him alive after his execution, which no one else did. We do not propose to follow the contrariety of ideas about his relation to "God the Father" that now exist and have antagonized the Christian sects from the beginning. It is sufficient to note that Christians believe in original sin inherited from Adam, and that man is prone to be wicked; which dogma we have no doubt is a potent cause of much of the evil in Christendom. The creed being established that man is wicked naturally, the Christian declares that after thousands of years of this continuous sinning, during which time legions of human beings had been born and died, built temples and worshipped, taught morals and justice, forbearance and self-sacrifice, to the best of their

knowledge, up to that time God had permitted all the world to live on in ignorance of his will until some nineteen hundred years ago, at which time an incomprehensible son was incarnated through a Jewish mother, in the Roman province of Judea, by whom and her spouse Joseph he was reared in the Jewish faith.

Christ, after his birth, spent the first thirty years of his life, as the story goes, in maturing, without any recorded attempt at teaching. About that time "John the Baptist," his cousin, began announcing him as the Messiah the prophecies had promised the Jews. John became popular and had numerous followers. He gathered hosts of proselytes, at which time Christ was baptized by him.

Jesus declared his mission to be, as we have seen, to the Jews exclusively; and after some two years of action in gathering a host of followers, and taking possession of the Temple, in which he was announced "King of the Jews," he was apprehended, tried by the Roman governor Pilate, found guilty, and executed. Thus, out of more than thirty years in life, he spent two or three at most in a mission that brought him to an ignominious death under Roman law.

Christ's disciples, after choosing a substitute for Judas, consorted in Jerusalem, and supervised the work of their coadjutors, the believing Jews. Subsequently Paul, antagonizing Peter, extended the benefits promised the Jews to Gentiles, other than the circumcised Jewish nation, on which alone it had before been conferred by Christ. The Saviour, or Redeemer, was assumed by Paul to be sent from God, or to have come of his own volition, to redeem *mankind* from their sins, and to effect a reconciliation between man and God. For this purpose, it is claimed, it became necessary that he should die, that his blood should be shed for the remission of man's sins, and the curse inherited from Adam. This wholly unintelligible problem is still adhered to by Christians.

It is inconceivable, on any logical theory, that the death of a supernatural teacher could advance the cause it is claimed he came to expound. It is certain that not all who heard him believed in his divine mission, which, if true, could have been best exemplified by his continuous personal teaching and example. His death has caused a great diversity of opinion among his followers to this day.

The Christian doctrine is that the first require-

ment in order to attain the benefit of this great sacrifice is, first, to believe in Christ as the Saviour through whom *alone* man can be saved from eternal punishment. Secondly, that he should lead an exemplary life void of sin. With many Christian sects the latter requisite is useless and unavailing without the first, and all the virtue and goodness of unbelievers is futile; while dereliction of the most flagrant character will be forgiven by repentance, coupled with a firm belief in salvation through Christ.

The dogma of this incarnate God, or Saviour, slowly spread, through the fanatical exertions of the disciples who still believed in him; in which belief they were confirmed by reported visions and supernatural occurrences such as often appear to ardent followers of assumed divinities. The original disciples, following Christ, supposed his mission was to the Jews; but Paul, although he believed in the superiority of the Jews, saw the importance of spreading the doctrine among the Gentiles, which has done more to popularize him than his clear-headed lawyer-like tact in defence.

After a precarious and struggling existence, through the opposition and indifference of the Jewish and Roman powers, the sect increased

under the mild rule of Hadrian; and when Constantine was strengthening himself against his opponents he saw the importance of securing this potent ally that would be bound to his cause for mutual support. Thus commenced the establishment of the new religion as a dominant power, that was afterward to become the ruler of Rome and the rest of the Western world, binding men's consciences in iron grip under penalty of torture and death. Such was the birth and growth of this religion, founded on the tradition of an aspirant for the Jewish Messiahship and rule of the Jewish people as their king, in which he failed, and was executed for the attempt.

While this religion has not yet attained the age of the older ones that have spread over many nations and a larger number of people, it chanced to be propagated in the rapidly advancing Western communities, mentally and physically active. These have, in defiance of its stultifying influence, burst the bonds of its enthralment, and declared the truths of nature in spite of its antagonism. And now, attaining through the power of modern science a higher standard unaided by religion, it strives to avail itself of the results it has so strenuously opposed, to dominate and proselyte those

nations where modern science is still in its infancy, availing itself of the power attained by it to obtain control over nations less enlightened by science which it opposed.

At the present day we are met with a formidable array of popular beliefs and the long-enduring assent of intellectual thinkers to the truth of the Christian religion; and we are asked if we presume to oppose our views to the great world of religious belief by which we are surrounded. The answer to this is very simple, without arrogating to ourselves any superior knowledge or acumen. The majority of the human race do not now believe the Christian dogma, and the fact is patent to every reader of the history of the Christian world that nearly, if not quite up to our own times, investigation has been suppressed by penal laws, ostracism, and contumely, against any one who dared to offer a doubt, even, of the divinity of Christ and his assumed mission; while children have been taught from earliest infancy that it was criminally wicked to doubt the theological dogmas instilled into their minds by those to whom they looked for guidance. Thus a foregone conclusion has been interposed as a barrier to free investigation, not only by dogmatic suasion, but

by statute law, against all liberty of thought and inquiry into the authority and truth of a religion assumed to be divinely revealed by God as established in Christian lands.

With such a fearful enthralment, coupled with penalties, those who doubted were silenced, and forced to outwardly submit, while the shackles were riveted tighter by the pretence that all goodness was indissolubly coupled with Christian doctrine, which, although being thus enforced upon the human mind from childhood, can have but little weight in the search for truth.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GENESIS OF CHRISTIANITY

THE story of the genesis of Christianity, on which the illogical dogma is founded, describes its originator to have been born after the ordinary course of gestation, in a Jewish family, but that he was miraculously conceived while his mother was a virgin. In contravention of this he is declared to be a descendant of David, which could not be true if his mother's husband was not his father, as he inherited his descent from David through him. His mother always called Joseph, her husband, his father, as we have seen, and he declared himself to be "the Son of Man." No important incident is related of him after his infancy, up to his thirtieth year, except his inconsequent meeting with the doctors in the Temple at Jerusalem. We have no account of what was said on that occasion, but it was evidently not a declaration of his Messianic mis-

sion, and his father and mother disapproved his action at that time, and took him home with them, without signifying a belief in any abnormal power vested in him; "and he was subject unto them," which implies that he was punished for his dereliction, that was never afterward repeated. It is a significant fact that a similar story was related of the birth of Buddha, hundreds of years before Christ's birth, and well known all over the Eastern world when the Gospels were written.

We find that, about thirty years after the birth of Christ, and his relative, John the Baptist, John appeared uniquely clothed in camel's hair, with a leather girdle about his loins, and, to make his advent more striking, he fed on locusts and wild honey, evidently to attract notoriety and make a sensation. He taught in the wilderness of Judea, and gathered multitudes about him from all the region round him. His cry was, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" saying of himself, "This is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight," thus enacting a preconcerted part.

John anathematized the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to hear him, well knowing they

would not join in the crusade he was inaugurating; a curse afterward emphasized by Christ.

Christ was baptized by John, to confirm his mission, and connect him with the movement. He then retreated to await John's development of the demonstration, during which time it is related the episode of the temptation occurred, in which Christ circumvented the devil.

It is evident that John's bold crusade was at last noticed by the authorities, and he was imprisoned, at which Christ, becoming alarmed, fled into Galilee, and avoided his home, Nazareth, where he might have been traced. He went to Capernaum by the sea, where escape was easy, and by it he also connected himself with a prophecy wherein those places were named, without the remotest reference, however, to him.

John having been imprisoned, and afterward beheaded, the whole business of collecting an array of followers, and organizing the force that was to make him "King of the Jews," fell upon Jesus, who evidently had but little military knowledge. He began by choosing twelve coadjutants, mostly among the fishermen of Galilee, a hardy race, enthusiastic and credulous. In this choice he made one mistake, that afterward proved disastrous. At

that time he was active in getting his forces organized, and the occasion was so strenuous that he appeared almost brutal in refusing to let one of his followers go to bury his father, saying, "Let the dead bury their dead," a random utterance, without meaning. In these active times he repudiated his mother and brothers, as he commanded his followers to do in this perilous time of action. He exhorted his coadjutors to leave every tie to follow his cause, and to practise every conceivable act of abnegation to serve him, promising them ample reward for faithful service, which he frankly told them would be dangerous; while he threatened them with hell-fire if they were derelict, telling them to fear not those that can kill the body, but rather fear *him* who could destroy body and soul in hell-fire. He charged them to take no thought for their life; and if they had not a sword, to sell their garment to buy one.

The Sermon on the Mount was addressed to thousands of his ignorant followers gathered to do his bidding. It was evidently delivered to incite them to serve him with self-abnegation obediently and with reckless bravery in action. It is Jewish in character and sentiment, and addressed exclusively to Jews who were about to attempt to make him

their king, and establish " a kingdom of heaven " in Jerusalem; for which purpose they marched up to that city, a formidable host, and took possession of the Temple under his command (as we have seen), and drove out the occupants, shouting hosannas, and proclaiming him " Son of David," and " King of the Jews." This belligerent act was objected to by the priests, the rulers of the Temple, to whom he refused to give any account for his acts. He left Jerusalem that night and retreated to safer quarters at Bethany. He returned in the morning, and on his way back exhibited his miraculous powers to his followers by killing a fig-tree, a feat, however effected, well calculated to give his followers admonition in the coming contest; with the assurance that they could do the like and remove mountains *if* they had sufficient faith.

After his entering Jerusalem, he dictated in the Temple until he was expelled, after refusing to tell its guardians by what authority he acted. The account of his expulsion is wholly omitted, as it was evidently a defeat; but that he was expelled is certain, as we read that he roundly cursed his opponents, lamenting that Jerusalem would not come under his rule, and prophesying its destruction, which clearly shows the depth of his disappoint-

ment, and the vengeful nature of his character. From that time he clearly saw that his cause as "King of the Jews" was ended, and he retired to the Mount of Olives. At this period of his disaster his disciples went to him *privately* to learn in what way he proposed to establish the kingdom he had promised them. His answer is characteristic of his assumption of divinity by an equivocal evasion: he had evidently not then given up the fight. After describing the tribulations and horrors *they* were to witness, and the miraculous escapes *they* were to undergo, *they* would see him coming in the clouds with great power and glory, with angels, and a great sound of trumpets, to call the elect together from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Could there be conceived a more thoroughly mundane picture of ideal angels, and other properties of a theatrical phantasmagoria, to bewilder the brains of his credulous acolytes? But he knew the extent of their infatuation, and availed himself of it to extricate himself from the consequences of his failure to become king at that time.

After he was driven from the Temple his army of followers seem to have deserted him, probably after a bloody fight, if his lamentations about the blood of the righteous is an indication. This was evi-

dently the termination of his active career on earth. He was soon after taken, through the treachery of one of his disciples who knew his retreat, and judged from the bellicose character of his followers that resistance was to be expected. Judas went with a strongly armed force to overcome resistance and arrested him. He was first taken before the Jewish high priest, who could only try him for desecration of the Temple, not a capital offence under Roman law. So he was transferred to the Roman governor Pilate, under the graver charge of attempting to make himself "King of the Jews," of which there was ample proof, and Christ seems to have acknowledged it. For that offence he was executed, having the indictment blazoned upon his cross in three languages. This shows that he did not suffer death for any sacrificial or sectarian purpose, or any act against Jewish law; but for attempting to rebel against Roman law, by essaying to establish a kingdom in dereliction of Roman sovereignty, — a capital offence that Pilate took especial care to announce at his execution.

On the delusive basis founded on this episode, there has grown up a religion dominating the Western world. After three hundred years of precarious existence, founded on legends singularly inter-

woven with earlier traditions of more ancient people of an incarnate God and Saviour, this religious sect, which in time had gained strength in numbers, imbued with fanaticism, and persistent through antagonism and persecution, came to the notice of the Roman emperor Constantine, who was seeking support from any quarter; and he, perceiving the strength he could secure from such an ally, took them under his patronage and protection, modifying, governing, and controlling them to suit his purposes, notably, in the change of their holy day from the Jewish Sabbath (always before kept by them under the belief that it was the command of God) to Sunday, the holy day of the sun-worshippers, who were also favored and patronized by the emperor. The Gentile Christians more readily assented to this change on account of their enmity to the Jews, with whom their religion originated, wholly disregarding the declaration of Christ that the law should not be changed "one jot or tittle." Such was the elasticity of the Christian religion that the emperor's reverence for another faith overrode the command of the Christians' God.

From the time of Constantine, about A. D. 300, Christianity has dominated the Roman world, owing to his patronage of the Roman bishop, and it

has pervaded all Europe and America. Under Christian rule were the feuds of the early churches enacted, with their dissensions and acrimony; then the dominance and intolerance of the Roman hierarchy prevailed, with its fearful atrocities and barbarous suppression of free thought, with death penalties for declaring an enlightening truth. This intolerance was kept up by the bigoted Protestant sects, until science gradually enforced its right to investigate nature and utter the truth about it, which antagonized the false traditions of their theology.

The present age still retains the lingering remnant of a theological control in legislation, although forbidden in the American Constitution, which appears in Sabbatarian laws, and an inequitable interference with personal rights and liberty of action. All this has been, and is now done, under the guise of Christian belief; teaching an abnormal supernatural and exclusive dogma, favoring none of the human race but the believers in its mythical legends. We find it now making strenuous efforts to force the world to adopt the many-sided enigmas and contradictions, that are as illogical and unphilosophical as can be conceived, with all its stultifying of common sense and reason.

The Christian dogma is the result of a belief that a person executed over nineteen hundred years ago, for trying to become " King of the Jews," knew more about a future life than we do; although it is evident that he knew nothing about the structure and cosmology of the universe, and the world he lived in.

A teaching in early youth of the grossest fallacies is a fearful impediment to the mental freedom of most minds; even with the strongest intellectually, it is a problem if the poison can be eradicated. It is much harder to unlearn than to learn; it is much harder to analyze a belief than to believe.

The title of Christian Nation is false as applied to the United States; it is in contravention of the Constitution, and rests only on the assumption that a majority of its inhabitants are Christians. The founders of this republic were wise enough to see the danger to freedom in the dogmatic rule of any religion, and so framed their Constitution under the Declaration of Independence as to admit, with equal rights, all religions, of whatever name or nature, that did not interfere with the equal rights of other religions.

The Constitution declares that all have an equal

right to enjoy full liberty of conscience in act and deed, without molestation or interference. This was the first dawn of real liberty, which the Christian sects are now striving to smother. First force the nation to declare itself Christian, and then the strongest sect will rule.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE STATUS OF HUMAN ATTAINMENT

If in the preceding chapters we have shown that there is no foundation but the traditional legends of unknown authors, based on the creative intellect of primitive people, for the supernatural religions of the world, and that the stories of spiritual acts, miracles, and especially the direct personal communication between men and a god or gods, angels, spirits, afrites, or devils, are simply the work of the human imagination, we are compelled to turn to their mental powers for the legitimate source of human knowledge and the fountain of truth by man attainable.

In the evolution of human intelligence and thought, the active mind of man has shown an erratic series of random lines, in striving to ascertain the true course of legitimate knowledge. The free flight of the imagination into regions unknown naturally followed the course of least

resistance, and expanded into innumerable pictures of the supernatural, that consolidated into a multiplicity of religions, with which the world's literature is filled. It is evident from the result that so far these wanderings have only tended by their dogmas to produce aberrance from the true purpose of man's being. The only legitimate knowledge obtainable by man must be derived from facts, and not from the emotions, which tend to good or evil as they are directed by human impulse. Man is constituted to discern good from evil, right from wrong, and the attainment of them so far as his knowledge extends. His errors invariably arise from misapprehension of the laws governing the universe, a correct knowledge of which is not yet fully attained by investigation untrammelled by preconceived ideas.

From the advent of the earliest religions to the present time righteousness and sin have been formulated, with multitudinous interpretations of what constituted right and wrong. In the majority of cases the rules that determined these questions were entirely artificial, and often led to acts wantonly barbarous, arbitrarily governing and directing men, contrary to their convictions, a result which has ever accompanied formulated religions, while their

teachings have sometimes led to self-sacrifice and torture. Most of the religious teachings of the world picture the supreme controller of creation as having placed imperfect erring beings on this earth, as it would seem for the purpose of vengefully punishing all who did not live up to the artificial rules established by authority. The horrid and fiendish idea of eternal punishment for past sins, which has nothing to do with reformation, is a cardinal Christian dogma, and is the active agent in terrorizing, and rendering the lives of thousands unhappy, while it is a source of large profit to priests, bishops, and other organized teachers, who claim to have authority not vouchsafed to ordinary men. Such a dogma, if true, would show the purpose of the originator of man's being to be more malicious and vengeful than the human fiends who concocted the malevolent interpretation of the phenomena of which they were entirely ignorant.

So far as the Christian dogma of vengeful punishment is concerned, it is confirmed by Christ himself, who displayed a most virulent attitude toward all who opposed his establishing a "kingdom of heaven" in Jerusalem with himself as "King of the Jews." As the scribes and Phari-

sees, together with all the educated Jews, opposed him, he hurled curses and anathemas at them, together with hell-fire, — a very potent threat to awe his followers, but which proved quite harmless to those against whom it was directed, who were potential authorities, respected by the nation. This element of exterminating vengeance often appears in Christ's accredited sayings.

When men appreciate generally "the golden rule," taught as early as Confucius, unaccompanied by dogmatic and arbitrary theology, they will make more rapid progress in equitable laws and customs toward the higher civilization.

From a series of ages beyond historic date nations have existed; civilization and refinement have advanced, and profound thought has been displayed; men have labored to eliminate truth, justice, and right from error and wrong in their natures. From age to age profound thinkers have uttered grand and axiomatic truths that all mankind could understand and appreciate. Many of these axioms have been incorporated into all religions, and form a part of their teachings down to the present day. Some of these profound thoughts have been attributed to divine revelation; others to inspired prophets, saints, and sages. Often

later maxims have been attributed to philosophers of earlier times, to enhance their authority. It is notably the case that such utterances have been ascribed to revelation in religious dogmas, that have come into existence since the historic period, in which the earlier episodes and apothegms are introduced and attributed to more modern religions, in which they are ascribed to their deities as original revelations.

The assumption that the originator of this universe would permit mankind to wander on in errors fatal to their good through century after century, during which legions of human beings lived and died, possessing all the natural attributes of modern humanity, and at the end of that time he would awaken to the necessity of enlightening and redeeming them from eternal misery by a new plenary revelation, is too unqualifiedly irrational to be accepted by any man who has an intelligent conception of a just and equitable Creator.

We have seen from the nebulous histories of prejudiced narrators the course of religious beliefs from prehistoric times. It is desirable that, out of the chaos of fabled legends and imaginings of man untutored in science, there should be evolved

a fixed criterion of truth as a guide to future investigations, irrespective of prior opinions.

We have endeavored to show that man in his uncultivated state, after the powers of ratiocination and observation, of cause and effect had been developed, believed that a being or beings existed capable of producing the creation he was surrounded by, and believing the earth to be an immovable, stable body, he pictured the "firmament" above him as the dwelling-place of this invisible being, or host, from which it all originated. This is dispelled by a correct knowledge of the universe.

The organization of gregarious animals into communities results generally in certain restrictions of individual action necessary to their association; this appears in the most pronounced forms in the *genus homo*. The rudest barbarian tribes have their chiefs and rulers. As they grow more refined laws and regulations are adopted that serve to give the rulers a defined and established power, more and more circumscribed as man advances in modern acquirement.

With the known attributes of earliest association, and the usages of earthly rulers, chiefs who could be influenced and placated by presents and adulations, men approached the invisible power that tran-

scended all earthly authority by the same methods. These powers they felt assured existed from the thunderings and lightnings that often proved disastrous, sometimes striking them dead, against which they could offer no resistance, while the copious showers from the reservoirs above the firmament, filled with water, must be actuated by some being invisible to them, and they prayed to be supplied by the conservators from that vast storage in time of need.

Men believed from the assurance of their senses that the earth they lived on was firm and immovable, with a dome over it visible to the eyes, spacious enough to contain a host of gods, demigods, and angels, or other spirits with which their imaginations peopled them sufficient to execute the commands of their superiors.

It was then inconceivable that the multitudinous phenomena observed could be produced otherwise than by innumerable hands. As these observations matured, aided by dreams and unaccountable phenomena, the fertile imagination of men gradually formulated mythical communities of deities and supernatural events, generally picturesque and often sublime, with exaggerations of virtues, sufferings, dangers, and escapes, commensurate with the au-

thor's conception of deity. On investigation it will be perceived that all these mythic religions are but the fictions of man's errant thought, sometimes based upon or attributed to a wise teacher or suffering martyr; enveloped in miracles, revelations, supernatural birth, and the like; in later times these occult phenomena were borrowed from earlier legends.

Moral aphorisms, maxims, proverbs, axioms, and truisms pervade all the religious teachings, from earliest records, often subtile and profound, sometimes attaining the highest ethical standard. The symbolical representations of the gods and their attributes have often been mistaken for idols by ignorant and dogmatical observers, as have the sacred animals, that have been construed to mean the deity they symbolized, a purport never dreamed of by their originators.

The varied constructions put upon the ancient religions are only equalled by the multiplicity and contrariety of definitions of modern religions. The endless literature of the Hindus, the Brahmanical expositions of the Vedas with subtile interpretations of the sublimated text, quite equal the modern body of doctrines promulgated by Christian authors. The Christian and Mohammedan sects have

written libraries of works defending their varying and antagonistic creeds, with no warrant for the truth of any of their authors' teachings.

If in the preceding pages we have been able to call attention to the persistent aberration of the human mind, in following the chimeras evolved by primitive people in attempting to solve the purpose of creation, in which every pretender to superhuman attainments is eagerly believed to possess knowledge as an expounder of a future existence, about which man in his present state knows nothing, it may be that we shall have given some small aid in directing human thought into a legitimate course of discovery to attain a more perfect knowledge of the highest physical, moral, and intellectual capabilities of the human race, that no dogma about a hereafter will ever accomplish; if so, we shall have succeeded in our purpose, and shall submit with equanimity to all the adverse criticism with which we may be favored.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MAN'S PRESENT STATUS

Among the most prominent questions that have engaged the philosophers of the ancient world and the scientists of modern times is the anthropogenic creation, man. Speculations innumerable and endless theories have been formulated, evolving religions more or less ideal, with claims of revealed truths that modern culture shows to be wholly fictitious, but always with the fundamental theory that this universe was created for the single purpose of elaborating the human race, and developing its status in a future existence for which this life is a temporary preparation. Such ideas were very natural when it was assumed that this world was a stationary central body, a *terra firma* around which the heavenly bodies revolved, and over which a firmament, a solid dome, was superposed, from which was poured out water to irrigate the dry land, and from which came the voices of the

spirit-world in thunders and evidences of wrath in winds and lightnings, tempests and droughts, inconceivable unless the heavens above were peopled by invisible beings who produced those tangible results, apparently for the sole benefit of man.

But modern research has obliterated these fictions, and shown mankind the true place occupied by this planet in the universe, and that man is a minute creation in the immensity, inconceivably engrossing the principal care and attention of the originator, as his egotism has caused him to believe.

The realization of the fact that man in common with all living things was predestined to die, caused him to originate an exception for himself in a subsequent existence, that infinite theories have formulated into innumerable religions, which have been believed in from the beginning of recorded society. The modern scientist holds all these imaginary attempts at their true value, as the mere fabrications of idealism, while he is met with the profound but unanswerable question, — What is the purpose of this immeasurably wonderful creation? For what is it destined?

No fact can be more certain than that all the attempts at a solution of these questions heretofore essayed have been inadequate and speculative.

The enigma is as profound now as it ever was, and all the religious dogmas that have ever been elaborated have not only thrown no light upon the question, but have served to distract men's attention from the pursuit of real knowledge.

We have attained a knowledge of the fact that there are on earth existences in various stages of mental capacity, from a very low appreciation of being, only sufficient to continue their existence, up to a capacity for warring, strategy, and defence, in contact with other activities; and we note that while man displays a more perfect knowledge than any of the other entities by which he is surrounded, he is in some particulars physically, if not mentally, inferior to other animated beings. In searching for the cause of these phenomena we perceive that the actuating source of all thought and action is the centre of the nervous system, the brain, which anatomically widely differs in the different species of the animal creation, increasing in complexity as a more perfect intelligence is developed. This points to a conclusion that the more elaborate that organ is, the more perfect will be the intellect. But further, the powers of the brain are multiplex, and while the human brain is vastly superior to any other, in some functions the inferior brains of other

animals exceed ours. We have a further confirmation of the connection of the brain with the power of thought in human beings where the brain is atrophied, undeveloped, or otherwise diseased, showing a defective intellect. From this we deduce the fact that the amount of intellect is in exact accordance with the perfection of the brain construction, as a musical instrument responds to an impulse given it in exact accordance with its formation. We thus have a resultant from a physical entity that is intelligible to our powers of reasoning, and we know that this entity has a limited power and existence, is born, performs the offices that its structure indicates, and dies; the elements composing it assuming other forms in endless succession.

But there is another element in this wonderful problem, the vivifying force that can only actuate this entity in exact accordance with its structure, to which its powers are limited, and which it can in no wise exceed. Just here the tangible facts become speculative, and the ratiocination, imagination, and observation of man are brought into play to eliminate the impelling cause that actuates and controls the ego, which cannot exceed the limits of its organization. Finding him-

self thus limited, resort is had to imaginings of artificial creation, expanding out into dreams, and assumption of revelation, which has culminated in traditions, of marvels that have taken the place of historic facts, which have been augmented by impostors who have availed themselves of the credulity of men in their desire to probe the unknown, by a pretence of knowledge beyond its limits, that deceived the wisest in times past.

All the religions that have ever existed in the world, as we have said, are based on the supposition that this earth was stationary and central, around which the sun, moon, and stars revolved, and that there was a spirit land in the firmament inhabited by spirits, or supernatural beings. We now know that the theory of a stationary world is false, and that no religion based upon it can be a revelation from a superior intelligence.

We also know that the laws governing this creation, so far as they have been discovered, are immutable, and that any pretence to the contrary is fabulous. There is a generally accepted axiom that every effect has a cause; if this be true there must have been some force, power, will, or intelligence, by whatever name called, that originated this universe, if it ever had an origin, transcendently

wise and powerful. Of its origin we can have no conception, nor of its termination. It is inconceivable that this immensity of creation should have been made for no purpose; and it is equally inconceivable that it has culminated in man, an infinitesimal part of creation. It seems impossible to doubt that there is a final or a constantly advancing *purpose* in this ever moving universe, but to attempt to solve it, with our present knowledge, or to claim that it has been revealed to any one, is idle.

We have no just conception of the author of this existence; we but just begin to correctly understand the phenomena by which we are surrounded, and that only imperfectly. We are but now beginning to learn the uses of the goods we are so lavishly surrounded by, and the ameliorations we are capable of for the benefit of mankind. We have been so busy with the unseen, and profitless search for the unknowable, which we are not to attain in our present state, that we have neglected the attainable. The wise will only seek the knowledge they can compass.

Many religionists seem unconscious of the gross traducement they perpetrate in declaring this to be "a world of sin and misery," "a vale of tears,"

a preparatory school for a *future better* world of bliss, in which, if they do not follow the prescribed rules of their peculiar theological creed, they will not be allowed to participate. This world is a *home*, made with inconceivable perfection, in which we are placed with mental and physical powers, to acquire a knowledge of it.

Nothing extraneous to this ever was, or ever will be, given to us by gods, angels, or demons. We are here to perfect our relations with this home, that is our present habitat; we have not yet achieved a knowledge of "the goods the gods have given us," while idling our time away upon speculations about a future life in another sphere, where we shall not have to earn our own living. Nothing can be clearer than the fact that the book of nature is here before us, in which we may study and achieve our greatest temporal good; and the higher we rise in the scale of worldly perfection, the more clearly shall we see that the advancement of our fellow men in knowledge, bodily comfort, and equitable rights in the goods we have attained to, the happier we shall be individually.

Of what value would be billions of coin to the refined gentleman, scholar, or scientist, in the midst of an unappreciative, ignorant, and uncul-

tivated people? Religionists *per se* are so intent on propagating their faith, that social science is lost sight of, and but for the intervention of modern science, which, happily, in recent times has curtailed theological dictums within a more reasonable sphere, we should be still fluttering our unfledged wings in aspiring to fly into spiritual worlds unknown.

Appendix

Like Confucius, we may say, if right principles ruled, there would be no necessity for us to try to change the status. Confucius did not profess to be an originator, but a conservator of truth and morals previously taught, showing at that early period that high virtue and morality were attributed to a still earlier time, and had been conceived and taught ages before. The constitution and nature of man show the foundation of all subsequent reasoning in the slow discovery of truth, that is still but partly and fragmentarily understood. Confucius taught, by the force of example, that it needed virtue in the higher positions of life to secure it in the lower.

A belief in a future life existed before Confucius, but he made no pretence to any knowledge of it, saying, "While you do not know life, what can you know about death?" The speculations of modern investigators into the unknown have been varied and contradictory; based as they are

upon the unknowable, they are simple types of imaginative intellect, and are of no real scientific value. Schopenhauer's pessimistic view is, that human life is a useless disturbance of the exquisite tranquillity of nothingness. "If birth implies an origin from nothingness, then death must be complete annihilation." Consciousness ceases at death, but the cause that produced that consciousness persists; life comes to an end, but not the principle which became manifest by life.

The idea of Hartman that the joys of youth are short and will terminate in melancholy old age is flatly contradicted by my happy old age of ninety-four.

The Jews at one time embraced the doctrine of transmigration; the Jewish Bible, it is asserted by some, develops no idea of future life. Bushner ("Force et Matière") declares that Buddhism, the most wide-spread and among the most ancient religions, ignores the immortality of the soul. Haeckel also confirms this. Buddha avoids the statement of this matter. The Jewish Talmud, depicting life beyond the grave, says, "There is neither eating nor drinking; the good sit there with crowns on their heads and see God in bliss." The early Chinese religion was ancestor worship. Con-

fucius does not change this; his followers and the Taoists believe in a future life.

Metchnikoff largely expounds what are called by him the "disharmonies" of human life.

The early savage buries with the dead weapons and other belongings, and sometimes slaves, wives, etc., to serve him in another world; food is often buried with the dead, and is subsequently placed upon the grave from time to time.

Religion has concerned itself with human natural functions, especially with those of procreation, generally to thwart all natural proclivities, never for the purpose of properly controlling them by reason; but to antagonize and abolish them. Holding the body in contempt is the acme of holiness; hence all the torture of self and others, to appease God.

Metchnikoff says: "A future life has no single argument to support it, and the non-existence of life after death is in consonance with human knowledge."

To follow the train of thought upon the subject of death, and the speculations of saints and sages upon the subsequent results, would be an endless task. Among the thinkers there be those who believe in a future state of existence; of these latter

the varieties are innumerable, and often founded upon the assumption of a revelation from a spiritual authority. These of course gain the greater number of adherents; their credulous followers, in their desire to attain impossible knowledge, overlook the credible, and accept the fallacies of charlatans or fanatics.

Marcus Aurelius assumed that death, like birth, is one of nature's mysteries, and he taught that man must live in conformity with the laws of his nature, — that "nothing can happen to you that is not in accordance with nature's universal law." The limbs can only perform the functions for which they were intended, and man only defies nature's laws when he attempts to nullify the purposes his organization was created for. The functions of his reason are not to antagonize his nature, but to harmonize it with the world in which he lives. He is not to starve himself because indulgence is sinful; but to control his appetite properly ensures his health and comfort, and is consequently commendable and legitimate; so of the other instincts and organizations over which intellect has control. The function of procreation not only influences our being, but is connected with that of others, and consequently requires the control-

ling influence of human intellect, replacing the temporary instinct of the lower grades of animate nature; but the ignoring of any of the attributes with which we are gifted is a crime against nature. This applies with equal force to our mental powers that are not intended to antagonize our physical instincts, but are designed to properly direct them and to pioneer our course in ascertaining the full extent of the heritage to which we have fallen heirs and of which, much as we have learned, we are still largely ignorant.

Instead of studying how to perfect our home in this world, and secure the greatest amount of happiness to ourselves and our fellow men, the majority of the religious world is intent on reaching out into the fabulous unknown to secure "mansions in the skies," about which they know nothing and only have received vague reports from persons whose credentials are as nebulous as their revelations.

The incomprehensible idea that superimposes all others is the *purpose* of creation. We have ascertained that there is not only this solar system, of whose movements we have acquired a wonderful amount of knowledge within very recent days, but there are innumerable other planets, infinitely

larger than this world, probably belonging to other systems of which as yet we know nothing. While we have obtained a knowledge of the fact that we live on a revolving orb that moves in a determined orbit around the sun, and that there are numerous other planets, also coursing around this central attraction, some larger and some smaller than our earth, we have not ascertained if they are inhabited by any living entities. With this profound ignorance of the character of the inhabitants of other planets, including even our small satellite, the moon, we know nothing of the other systems of which we have no indication but the resplendent orbs with which the heavens are spangled. We have ascertained that the sun around which we revolve is a million times bigger than the earth. We are surrounded by living entities, animal and vegetable, so innumerable that we have not acquired a knowledge of them all yet, or their structure or properties, but we do know that life pervades all this known creation down to a microscopic minuteness not yet mastered by our utmost ingenuity.

As we mature in scientific knowledge, we learn with absolute certainty that all the wonderful creations upon this little planet, so minute a por-

tion of what we know creation to be, were not made to subserve the wants and purposes of man alone; legions of them never had any contact with or relation to his being; we know, further, that many of them are detrimental to it. Thus it is apparent that man is only one among many creations on this little world, a satellite to one a million times bigger, and companion to several larger ones revolving around the same centre.

There is no doubt that we justly realize that we are the most perfect of the creations on this planet; but we know that some of the creatures we are surrounded by have certain senses more perfect than ours; notably, sight, scent, and hearing, and very many are stronger. It is natural for us to assume that we, whose intellects are so far above all the others, are the favorites of the originator; but were all these inferior beings, created with such wonderful skill, accuracy, and beauty, with such diversified accomplishments, arts, and adornments, many of which we have but just discovered, and some of which we are yet ignorant of, created simply for pastime, with no ulterior purpose but their evanescent lives wholly unconnected with man; while we who are formed on the same

general plan, and are almost the counterpart of some of them, have a radically different destination?

The egotism of man has elevated him into the most important position in creation, which analogy does not warrant. It is not conceivable that all this multiplex and infinitely expanded creation was devised solely for the conservation of man, who is an infinitesimal part of it, placed upon a minor satellite of a solar system that is probably not the most preponderating of the systems of visible stars. We realize that certain laws govern the continuity of creation as far as we are cognizant of it, and that when they are followed by us the result is beneficial; and whenever they are deviated from, more or less of disaster follows. We are conscious that our knowledge of those laws is still limited, but that any infraction of them results adversely. We know that innumerable ills have arisen from ignorance of them, and that no explanation of them has ever been vouchsafed to man save by his own labors and investigations. If this is true in regard to physical phenomena, it is rational to assume that it holds true regarding mental phenomena; hence the only legitimate source upon which we can depend for our knowl-

edge of existence is our own laborious investigation of ascertained facts.

The undeviating course of creation æons of ages before the advent of man produced on this planet monstrous, and to us unmeaning, living beings that have become extinct, which we are now unearthing, like the more recent records of forgotten civilization. The *purpose* of this is beyond human knowledge or conjecture; it certainly had no relation to the well-being of man in his present state or future destiny, although it occupied many more times of the earth's course than the career of man upon it. We see that nature will not deviate from its appointed laws, for the convenience or will of man; but we know that as we learn more and more of those laws they can be employed for our good, or avoided when harmful.

The acts of man in his intercourse with his fellow man are an epitome of life. By nature he is gregarious, and in the incipient stages of association his rights and acts were undefined, he was governed alone by impulse and will, and the strongest controlled the weakest regardless of justice. When this became unbearable combinations were formed to regulate and suppress the tyranny. This has engaged the energies of man

down to the present day, without arriving at an equilibrium, owing to the selfish interests of individuals in formulating laws by which they could gain advantage over their compeers.

In this race of the most cunning to gain ascendency over their less appreciative fellow men, the incipient stages of discontent, envy, and crime were engendered, and it is to this stage of human civilization that we should look for the incitement of the criminal classes.

In the progress of organized society the most potent factor controlling it has been the theological or religious element growing out of man's wonderment at the inexplicable creation by which he was surrounded. This afforded an opportunity for designing men to formulate theories of a supreme power, giving themselves authority over their fellow men to rule them by divine right, which crystallized into autocratic and monarchical rule, generally dominated by priestly control, which was made to strengthen the kingly ruler. This combination of church and state has descended to modern times, and forms the basis of all monarchical governments, emphasized by a kingly ruler of the universe.

This shows the source of modern speculations,

and endless philosophical theories, in which the world has often been charged with chaotic wrong, instead of being recognized as a thoroughly organized immensity under immutable law, that cannot be antagonized in its minutest particular with impunity. From an ignorance or disregard of natural laws all the ills of life that men complain of arise.

Undoubtedly the source of unhappiness in human life is ignorance; active search for, and attainment of knowledge, the discovery of new facts and their application to the wants, comfort, and happiness of the race is an ever increasing source of joy to the earnest observer. The idea of inactive happiness is inconceivable, as is an immovable world; progress is the fundamental source of happiness, and the attainment of all knowledge — not likely to curse the inhabitants of this world — would produce a real nirvana. Perfect happiness is not possible, say the pessimists; is it desirable? Is there a stronger inducement in the pursuit of knowledge than the attainment of greater happiness, greater comfort, which if perfectly attained would cause a cessation of energy? The incitement to action, the prompting to do, is the mainspring of mental activity, and consequently the perfecting of our existence.

Appendix

It is a trite saying, "Man was born to die," but is that a cause of sorrow to the philosopher? Do we not see that through this dispensation life is given to an infinitely greater number of beings than could be otherwise possible? There is a universal law dominant on this planet, that matter is persistent but constantly changing, and that where any stagnation appears an active agent sets the inert matter in motion. Even the rocks and mountains are disintegrated, but the elements remain.

Man is no exception to the law of dissolution, but that is no reason why he should not actively employ to their utmost capacity all the functions with which he is endowed for his well-being, and enjoy the advantages by which he is surrounded for his present good. Is it the part of wisdom to refuse to be made happy by present joys because we are uncertain whether or not we shall possess them another year? Our business is with the present, which includes effort for the continuance of our prosperity for the future so far as our knowledge extends. A beautiful trait implanted in us gives us happiness in providing for our offspring so necessary to perpetuate the race, which is enjoyed also by the lower animate beings.

Appendix

A study of the cause and origin of the innumerable legends and detailed histories of supernatural phenomena and miraculous events, including interviews between gods and men, with which the literature of the world is permeated, displays a primitive misconception of the universe and the mundane creation prior to the attainment of a knowledge of the laws that control the phenomena producing the visible world as it is now known.

The complex structure of the human mind has been a fruitful source of speculative research in psychological, metaphysical, and philosophical problems, commencing long anterior to recorded history.

Records of actual events have been interspersed with fables about gods and demons that have interfered in the affairs of men as the source of good and evil, while the fecund efflorescence of thought striving with the unknown has led men astray in abstruse speculations.

The intercourse depicted between gods and men has become more restricted in the present age, and doubts are entertained of its truthfulness in recent times — if familiarity with the devil has been more frequent, and continued longer,

it shows a penchant for the "horrible and awful," difficult to account for.

In the glimmering dawn of historic times, as we have seen, tradition extends far back into anterior ages, so that all account of a beginning is lost in nebulous fable. There were many sources from which issued accounts of man's origin, all of them more or less filled with the marvellous, but all assuming a derivation from the gods. Of those early legends we need only allude to the Hindustan, Babylonian, Egyptian, and Chinese, as those cults illustrate the progress of recorded mental thought.

In the East are found the earliest traces of the human race; in Hindustan there are prehistoric works massive and wonderful, wrought by the hand of man; of the origin of these works we have no knowledge, but they emphasize the religious fervor of their originators. In that land of fruitful legend we discover traces of early culture that show a high degree of refinement, and knowledge of the apparent universe; there are no records extant that show a depth of thought not exceeded in modern times; from their traditions we learn they claimed to be the first inhabitants of the world, that had existed æons of ages. Their

sacred records are written in a language that has ceased to be spoken since historic time, and no tradition remains of its origin, or when it was in use.

The Hindus record four ages. The first was an age of purity, in which men were giants, and lived to an immense age. They were innocent and unselfish, living in a state of nature. This age was terminated by a deluge that obliterated everything. In the second age men deteriorated physically and mentally, and their god Brahma placed over them a ruler. In the third age men grew still less virtuous. In the fourth or present age, man's life was limited to a hundred years; it was commenced about five thousand years ago; man's stature was diminished, and he is growing smaller and more wicked. Goodness, purity, unselfishness, and justice were recognized in the most ancient times of which we have any record, and were the virtues most commended. Such is an outline of the knowledge taught in primitive ages in the earliest records of human effort.

The Chinese trace back their nation to an age of god-begotten ancestry full of the higher virtues, among which was a devotion to ancestry and a profound respect for parents. The high moral

teaching and civilization inculcated in this nation's advancement culminated in the maxims and aphorisms attributed to Confucius, among which is the golden rule unsurpassed by any subsequent teaching from any source. "Do unto others that which you would have them do unto you; and do not unto others that you would not they should do unto you; this is all of the law." In what other maxim attributed to gods or men has there been embodied so much of wisdom and virtue? This aphorism in varied forms has been plagiarized by other religionists and attributed to their gods as a divine revelation emanating from them.

The Egyptian cult dating back beyond historic time is filled with precepts for a holy life, in which the highest virtues are extolled. In the Book of the Dead, the soul of the departed is weighed and examined to determine the recompense or punishment it is to receive in a future state.

The Babylonians and Assyrians had a voluminous literature stored in the palaces of their kings, fortunately in unimperishable material, that has descended to us, like the Egyptian records, uncorrupted by ages of expositors; their legends are full of ancient traditions, precepts, and morals,

with an accountability to a supreme being, and with an apprehension of right and wrong; among their records is found a history of creation which was evidently plagiarized by the Jews after their return from captivity, and incorporated into their book of Genesis. In that legend there is a curious fable illustrating the phenomenon of procreation and its concomitant, death. A man and a woman were created by God, who announced to them that so long as they remained in a state of ignorance (of their physical powers) they should live, but when they transcended that state, "ate of the fruit of knowledge," they should surely die; the corollary was obvious, a multiplication of the species involved the penalty of death; as the race has continued to perpetrate the sin of procreation, the penalty of death continues to afflict mankind. This legend is doubtless the origin of the unnatural and absurd dogma that celibacy is holy and commendable, which has pervaded numerous religions down to the present day.

One fact is conspicuous in the history of nations: they all personify a supreme being or national God that originated themselves and the creation by which they are surrounded, whose

habitation was generally over the apparent "firmament" above, invisible to human eyes. What was the source of this pervading belief? Was it a vicarious revelation from God to man without which he would be ignorant of the fact, or was it a natural deduction derived from his view of the objects by which he was surrounded and of whose origin he was ignorant?

Since the maturity of the human intellect as it now appears, men have been striving to ascertain the originator of the creation by which they are surrounded. This universal craving has begotten innumerable theories and dogmatic legends coined from the fertile brains of successive generations in contact with nature, from which imagination drew pictures of other regions inhabited by superhuman beings with unlimited powers. To enhance and confirm the superhuman theories, it was asserted that the authors had held converse with the supreme powers who revealed the sublime truths they announced. Such revelations were received with unquestioning faith by the credulous multitude and congealed into religions, to which changes, modifications, and additions were from time to time made to suit the advance of subsequent knowledge.

Appendix

The exuberant fancy of the East has permeated all religions down to modern times, in which the supernatural is still believed in.

We have attempted to briefly show that instead of the stultifying and degrading doctrine that the inclination of man is evil, he has aspired from earliest times to become good and virtuous to the extent of his knowledge. His great struggle has been with ignorance, and the misleading teachings of uneducated pretenders who have formulated from their own fertile brains legends innumerable to illustrate their conception of man's duties.

In these chapters we have advanced no theory of a future existence; every one must determine that question for himself. We have shown that man has never had any revelation except from the coinage of his own fertile brain, as his fancy dictated. No one has adduced any fact to prove annihilation at death, and it is equally true that we have no knowledge of a future existence except the excogitations of men with no more, if as much, knowledge as ourselves; no one is barred from either belief by any attainable fact yet discovered; the point that every rational being should realize is, that the whole question is beyond the possibility of solution with our present attainments.

Appendix

The whole category of mental phenomena now attracting the attention of the thinking world is obstructed and retarded by the aberrations arising from preconceived errors and assumptions.

Great progress has been made in analyzing the powers of the human mind in influencing and being influenced by others; the phenomena of psychology, hypnotism, and analogous sciences, now in embryo, are as yet without a fundamental basis of undisputed fact, hence they come under the cognomen of spiritual emanations. With a better knowledge of the brain's attributes in nature will come fewer mysteries.

If in the preceding pages I have in the smallest degree aided in ridding the world of the fictitious and fiendish theologies, with their cumbersome and artificial laws and rules (often opposing the laws of nature) with which the human mind has in all historical ages been engulfed, and shown that the true source of all knowledge acquired by man is due to his own wonderful powers of ratiocination and observation with which he was endowed at birth, unaided by any supernatural revelation or other aid beyond his natural surroundings, I shall have achieved my purpose of directing his atten-

tion and energies from the fabulous and unreal to the true purposes of his existence, with a correct understanding of his relations in this world to nature and his fellow men.

THE END.

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