

# SUNDAY MORNING TALKS

BY

GEORGE H. CHRISTY



Class BR 125

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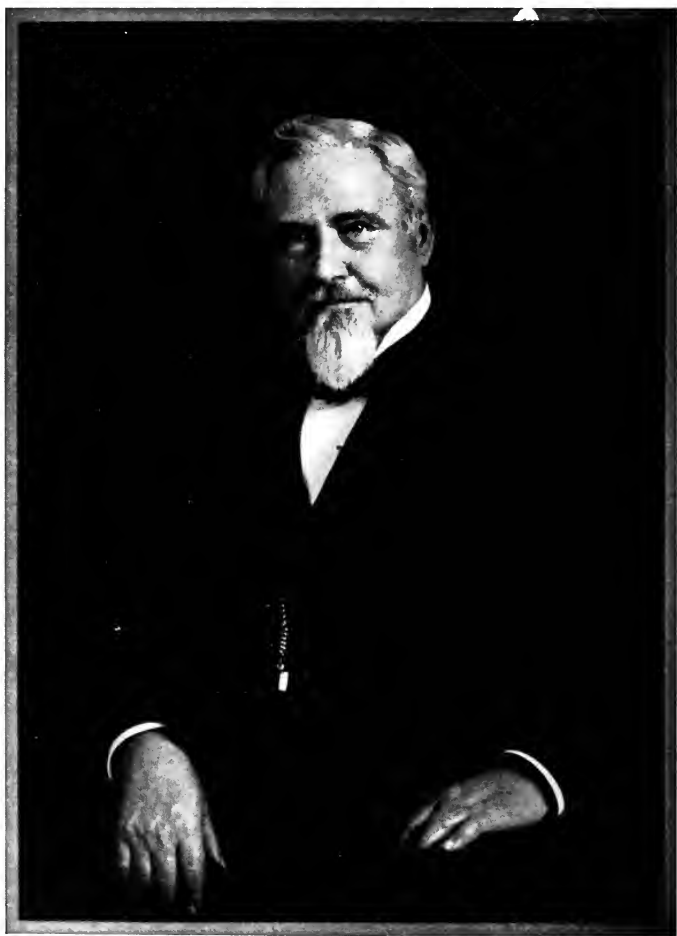












George H. Christy



# Sunday Morning Talks

Prepared for

Bible Class No. 20

of the

Presbyterian Congregation

of

Sewickley, Pennsylvania

By

George H. Christy

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## FOREWORD

THE following lessons were prepared by my husband some time before his death, with the intention of publishing them. But for reasons that seemed good to himself this was not done during his lifetime.

I now print them and send them to the members of Bible Class No. 20, and to other friends of my husband who valued the results of his study, as a memorial of one who truly "opened up the Scriptures" for others.

May these pages bring him again before us, refresh in our minds his long and earnest labors in the faith that he so firmly held, and incline us all more faithfully to heed his teachings. May we follow him in so far as he followed "the Master" whom he loved and served.

S. H. C.



## INTRODUCTORY

It is not a mere platitude nor a glittering generality to say that no book in the world will better repay careful, continuous, and devout study than the Bible. This is as true as that two and two make four.

No book was ever published before or since, which gives or contains any one of the following specifications:

1. More original and authentic history.
2. As many and as truthful biographies of the men (and women too) who have made history.
3. As much original information concerning the beginnings of things.
4. An equal delineation of the origin and growth of nations and civilization.
5. A larger or finer collection of the folk-lore of a remote antiquity.
6. As much clean, pure, and elegant prose literature.
7. An equal amount and variety of highly sublime poetry—dramatic, epic, and lyric, including a wide range of old songs and ballads.
8. A better system of law.
9. A better code of morals.

10. More incentives to clean thoughts, honest lives, and upright business dealings.

11. A better exposition of the equal rights of all men.

12. A better system of religion.

13. A better plan by which to make saints out of sinners, and good citizens out of all men.

14. A better knowledge of eternal life and how to attain it.

15. A better scheme for the regeneration of the world and the redemption of humanity.

16. More original research that would withstand reasonable, intelligent, and scholarly criticism.

While the Bible is not, and does not profess to be, a scientific book, its science is quite as correct as much that was taught in the schools of Christendom when the writer was a boy, and perhaps as correct as a good deal that is taught yet.

But the Bible has its defects; namely: (1) It says very little about theology; (2) less about church organization and government; (3) less yet about church ritual and forms of worship; (4) still less about creeds. Probably the writers of the Bible did not regard these as matters of much importance.

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
JESUS OF NAZARETH, I . . . . .	I
JESUS OF NAZARETH, II . . . . .	15
THE WRITINGS OF PAUL . . . . .	28
PAUL'S GOSPEL . . . . .	45
A JAPHETIC GOSPEL . . . . .	59
PAUL AND THE EMPIRE . . . . .	69
ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, I . . . . .	80
ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, II . . . . .	95
JOHN'S GOSPEL . . . . .	116
PETER . . . . .	130
THE RESURRECTION; THE FUTURE STATE; MESSIANIC PROPHECY . . . . .	143
PROTESTANTISM . . . . .	157
LOST BELIEFS . . . . .	173
REVELATION. . . . .	190
A FUTURE LIFE . . . . .	215

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---

	PAGE
SATAN . . . . .	231
SIN . . . . .	240
THREE ANCIENT TRADITIONS . . . . .	247
SOME PENALTIES AND A PROMISE . . . . .	262
THE STORY OF THE CREATION . . . . .	269
BIBLICAL REVISION . . . . .	278
INDEX . . . . .	289



## Sunday Morning Talks



# Sunday Morning Talks

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## JESUS OF NAZARETH

### I

THE divinity of our Saviour is a subject I would not undertake to discuss. I accept it as a matter of faith, and accordingly believe it, but I do not understand it. How it could be "manifested in the flesh," was a "great mystery" even to a man of the giant intellect and high spirituality of Paul (I. Tim. iii., 16). He made no effort to explain it. Neither does John who simply records it as a fact (John i., 14). What neither Paul nor John could explain, the rest of us may as well pass by.

But I think I can, at least in a feeble sort of way, understand His human side or element: what He was as a man among men; living and talking with them in daily unrestrained intercourse; healing their sick whenever opportunity offered; sympathizing in their troubles; feeding them when out of reach of a normal supply of food; undergoing their privations; poor in purse as the poorest of them,

more homeless than any of them; friendless Himself except as He made friends—and these, gathered from the poor and the illiterate, were largely composed of the outcasts of society, the publicans of one sex and the harlots of the other; and all considered as unfit to be numbered with humanity (John vii., 49)—hated, reviled, and hounded to death by the orthodox clergy of the church of which He was a sincere and consistent member, even while He was teaching by word and illustrating in His life a holy and perfect standard of living and doing; and finally put to death at their instance on a criminal charge which they knew to be false, and, as his sole reward, meeting death in its most painful and ignominious form. I think I can, at least partially, understand a life of that kind. To a limited extent, I can also understand His resurrection. To my apprehension, the restoration of life is no more of a mystery than its original beginning—in fact, less of a mystery under our present system of psychology, which, however, may be all wrong. The number and amount of the things that we think we know but do not know cannot be reckoned.

Though born of royal blood, Jesus-ben-Mary was brought up in comparative poverty, and, so far as is known, with only such a limited education as was then within the reach of every Jewish boy of the peasant class (verse 15). The place of His reputed nativity was obscure (John i., 46). His home province, Galilee, only hung on the ragged

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edge of respectability (John vii., 52); and his occupation, while not disreputable, barred Him from admission to the inner circle of either social or church life (Matt. xiii., 55). Though it is occasionally alluded to, it seems that no consideration was ever paid to His royal descent, nor does He ever speak of it as constituting any support for his claims. Up to the age of thirty years, He was apparently as obscure an individual—that is, in respect of public fame or notoriety—as could have been found in the ranks of the Jewish peasantry “from Dan to Beersheba.” The episode of Luke ii., 41–51, had during the intervening eighteen years evidently been forgotten by everybody except Himself and His mother, and even she did not understand its significance. To the aged and venerable rabbis of the temple He was nothing but a precocious youth whom, in His absence, they would soon forget, much as the present generation has forgotten the “Boy Preacher,” or “Blind Tom,” the musician of thirty years ago.

The news of the great revival inaugurated by his remote cousin, John the Baptist, down in the Jordan valley, reached His ears in the out-of-the-way village of Nazareth. John’s revival methods corresponded somewhat closely with those of the modern camp-meeting. Whether Jesus, when He joined the crowds that flocked to John’s baptism, was actuated by any other motives than those which dominated them, or by the same motives as lead modern believers to the excitements and

experiences of camp-meeting life, can only be a matter of surmise.

That John was personally acquainted with Jesus is at least highly probable, if not positively certain. John was fully satisfied of his own incapacity to carry on his revival work to perfect results; and he at once announced Jesus as his divinely appointed successor, and as one who could do and would do what it was useless for him, John, to attempt (Luke iii., 16, 17). By a ceremony of his own, not wholly unknown in Judaism, but in John's hands invested with a new meaning, he called Jesus out of the obscurity which had characterized His life as the son of a village carpenter, and ordained and consecrated Him as not only the leader of our sinful humanity through all the after ages, but also as the active and, as we are taught and believe, the successful agent in its final redemption.

That Jesus heard and heeded this call, was no more than we should expect. The idea of the fatherhood of God and the sonship of His people, though never up to that time made prominent, was not entirely new to Jewish thought (Ex. iv., 22, 23; Ps. ii., 7), and this idea had been apprehended by Him in a practical sense quite early in life (Luke ii., 49). But with this call, and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him (Luke iii., 22), there seems to have been born in His inmost consciousness the apprehension that He was now the Son of God in a sense never yet experienced

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by any son of Adam—and so uniquely and pre-eminently a Son of the Most High that He was thereby fitted and qualified to undertake and accomplish the work which, though it had then been in progress for some two or three thousand years, yet had produced comparatively little result—the work of saving our lost humanity from the results of the fall. That He thought it out in this particular form, cannot of course be affirmed, for He says but little as to His own claims.

Modesty is always a characteristic of genuine greatness; and Jesus of Nazareth was the most modest of our race. Accordingly, He rarely speaks of His past, and we are left to infer His original plans and purposes largely from His life and its results. Whether at His first call He was conscious of His own Messiahship, nowhere appears, for He makes no such claim until near the end of His life. "My works," He says, "bear witness of me" (John x., 25). Thus He followed the same rule that He laid down for us: "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. vii., 20).

But if He was to save the race, how should He acquire that supreme, or at least dominant, control over men which would enable Him to do it? It was the most natural thing in the world that before answering this question, even to Himself, He should take a little time in seclusion, away from the haunts of men, to consider it (Mark i., 13). It took Paul three years (Gal. i., 17, 18) and Moses

forty years (Acts vii., 30) to solve a somewhat similar problem. Should He do it by proclaiming Himself the son of David, by gathering an army, by war and conquest, by restoring the glories of the old Davidic kingdom, by dazzling the nations with the wealth and magnificence of the court of Solomon (Luke iv., 5-8)?

Such a course would have been in strict accord with Old Testament prophecy as then generally understood in the higher circles of Judaism, and probably He had been so taught in His youth. The scheme looked plausible and seductive on its face. It would appeal strongly to the political pride and religious fanaticism of the entire Jewish people, and it *seemed* to have the divine promises back of it. But it was promptly rejected. The race will never be saved by the gospel of force or the gospel of wealth—a fact which it would be well for the present generation to learn, and learn thoroughly.

Or, should He astound, dazzle, and overawe the concourse of worshippers in the holy temple by suddenly and unexpectedly soaring down to them as if from heaven, and as if borne upon the wings of a host of invisible angels, and thus demand recognition and acceptance as a messenger direct from the presence of the great Jehovah their king (Luke iv., 9, 10)? The scriptures which He and the people alike believed, furnished ample authority for such a course. But a spectacular display was then, and still is, a poor basis for



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a permanent moral or religious reformation. This plan also was rejected.

But if He must pursue a course wherein every means of violence, either offensive or defensive, was denied Him; a course in which the use of personal wealth and luxury as moral and reformatory agents was prohibited; a career that should be marked by an utter absence of those spectacular shows which produce a feeling of awe and lead captive the imagination; might He not still use His miraculous power at least to supply His necessary wants, and to strengthen and recuperate His exhausted energies, while laboring assiduously in the self-denying work that lay before Him (Luke iv., 2-4)?

But in that case, we "miserable sinners" would have said: "Oh, yes, it is easy enough for *Him* to be good; give *us* the power to work miracles to satisfy our wants and relieve our sufferings, and we too, will be good." The race is not to be redeemed in that way. The author of Hebrews ii., 10, understood the point perfectly.

But—and it must be admitted with deep regret—the Holy Catholic Church has yielded to the temptations which its great Leader thus resisted and overcame. The Christian nations of the present day deem it no dishonor, but rather the reverse, to extend a Christian civilization by the barbarities of war, and also, by the same means, to open up new avenues for the spread of the gospel of the Prince of Peace. Gorgeous cathe-

dials and ornate rituals are employed to overawe the imagination and dazzle the senses. The best of our laymen practise, and many of them publicly advocate, the gospel of wealth and luxury. We all would work miracles if we could, to relieve our lazy bodies from the necessity of healthy labor. And, what is perhaps worse yet (Luke xxiii., 31), the highest and holiest of our clergy are eager in their violation of one of the clearest of our Saviour's commands (Matt. xxiii., 7, 8), so that they may be called Doctors (D.D.) of a Divinity which few of them understand, and Doctors (LL.D.) of Laws which fewer yet know anything about (Luke xviii., 8).

The earthly life of our Saviour, as I understand it, involved three great crises: first, the temptation; second, the crucifixion; and third, the resurrection. But for the first and its results, His work would have been directed in wrong channels, and would have resulted in practical failure; but for the second, it would not have been completed; and but for the third, His claim to be divine could not have been vindicated. No man could assuredly save the race until it was demonstrated that he possessed or carried with him a power superior to that of agencies working for its destruction. When this was done, as it was done by His resurrection, in that it was a triumph over death, then and thereby the salvation of humanity, though its completion might be distant, was at last made certain.

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By the results of the temptation, the road was marked out along which He was to travel in doing His appointed work. It was to Him a lonesome road, for the homes thereon that made Him genuinely welcome were few and far apart. One was at Capernaum in Galilee (Matt. viii., 14); another was at Bethany, a few miles from Jerusalem (John xii., 1). If there were any others, the record does not mention them (Luke ix., 58). The open and avowed friends He usually met with on that road were not of the kind that you or I would readily select or highly prize. They were, for the most part, the social outcasts of Judaism, like publicans and harlots; the impure and miserable victims of vice and disease, such as lepers and maniacs; men in the agonies of epilepsy, or in the helplessness of locomotor ataxia; men that were blind and men that were deformed. Write a list of human diseases—the diseases of vice as well as those of misfortune—catalogue their victims as found in Palestine A.D. 30–33, and you will include nearly all those on whose friendship He could count during His public ministry. Only two men of rank in the entire nation ever conceived for Him even a friendly regard, Nicodemus the rabbi, and Joseph of Arimathæa, a wealthy member of the Sanhedrin (John xix., 38, 39). But their friendship was secret, and practically did Him no good. He would have been as well off without it.

With these two exceptions, He had to face the

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active hostility of the entire Jewish hierarchy—a hostility which was deep-seated, implacable, and deadly. While Pharisee and Sadducee cordially hated each other, they united with equal cordiality in a vindictive hatred of Him. Every agency that the leaders of the church and the leaders of society could devise was put into operation to undermine His authority with the common people and destroy His influence. They maligned Him, and His Mother also, by the implied charge that He was a bastard (John viii., 41). They caused the report to go out that He was an emissary of Beelzebub, the supposed “prince of the devils” and author of demoniacal possession, and therefore to be shunned as our New England ancestors shunned a witch (Matt. xii., 24). When, to save sinners who were in dire need of salvation, He sought to win them to Himself, the leaders of religious thought stood aloof and pointed the finger of scorn—called Him a glutton in appetite, a toper in drink, and willingly intimate with those with whom no reputable Jew would allow himself to associate (Matt. xi., 19). Under treacherous professions of high regard, they submitted the much-disputed question: Could they, consistently with their religious duty, willingly pay taxes to a heathen government (Matt. xxii., 17)? If He said “Yes,” He would, in popular apprehension, be disloyal to Judaism and a traitor to the true interests of the nation; if He said “No,” He would be guilty of treason to the emperor. With like

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malignant skill and equal hypocrisy, they asked Him: Should the Mosaic law of death by stoning (which had long before passed into disuse) be now enforced against this woman, taken in the act (John viii., 3-5)? If He said "Yes," public opinion, long accustomed to look with complacency on such derelictions, would call Him cruel; if He said "No," He would be controverting a law of Moses—a crime only slightly less heinous in their estimation than that of blasphemy.

So virulent was this hostility, that early in His ministry He was driven out of Judæa, and thereafter His visits to Jerusalem were few and short. Even in Jerusalem He was safe from violence only because, as He retained the confidence of the common people, His persecutors feared that His arrest would lead to a riot (Matt. xxvi., 5; Luke xxii., 2); and with a garrison of Roman soldiers close at hand, riots were dangerous. Retiring to Galilee, He gathered about Him a little group of disciples (learners), and for some time carried on His work with marvelous success (Matt. iv., 23-25). The news reached Jerusalem, and His enemies were again on His trail (Mark iii., 22; vii., 1). Leaving then the immediate locality where the influences of orthodox Judaism were dominant, He thereafter spent the greater portion of His life in the border-lands of heathenism—in Gaulanitis, to the eastward of the Sea of Galilee (Mark v., 1; viii., 10); in the borders of Tyre and

Sidon (Mark vii., 24) and Cæsarea Philippi (Mark viii., 27) away to the north; and in Peræa, east of the Jordan (John x., 40); but making a tour now and then among the villages of Galilee (Matt. ix., 35; Mark ix., 30; Luke ix., 6), and also attending the passover feasts at Jerusalem, as the Mosaic law required. But whenever He appeared in Jerusalem the old persecution was renewed. It was finally determined that He must be put to death (John vii., 1), for in no other way could they silence Him or stop the progress of His work. No secrecy was preserved as to their plans (verse 25). Officers were sent to arrest Him while He taught in the temple (verse 45), but they were completely overawed by the sublimity with which He spoke (verse 46). The treachery of Judas finally enabled them to accomplish their purpose, and within a few hours the Roman soldiers were nailing Him to the cross.

Whether Jesus, at the end of the temptation, when He saw marked out for Him (or when He marked out for Himself) the road He must travel in order to save our fallen race—whether He then saw the accursed cross at the farther end of the road, is not stated. But for John iii., 14, 15, I should infer that He did not—that is, unless Omniscience aided His human vision. According to the first three Gospels, the first clear intimation He gives that He foresaw His tragic fate was made at or near Cæsarea Philippi (Matt. xvi., 21), after He had been driven out of Galilee, and not far

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from the middle of His public ministry. So startling was the revelation to His disciples that all three of the synoptists put it down (Matt. xvi., 21; Mark viii., 31; Luke ix., 22). Certainly then, if not earlier, He knew His journey's end, for the logic of events pointed to His death as the only possible outcome. To his vision it was clear as the noonday, and He so predicted. But the grandeur and sublimity of His character, and, I might add, His divinity as well, are amply attested by the fact that neither then nor thereafter did He hesitate a step in His appointed journey, or seek a less dangerous pathway. At the end of the temptation, He put his hand to the plow, and thereafter He never looked back (Luke ix., 62). Herein rests our assurance of ultimate salvation. Once only, near the end of the journey, when the awful cup was pressed upon Him, and in the immediate realization of the terrible sufferings it involved, He expressed the wish that it might be otherwise (Matt. xxvi., 39); but it was only a transitory wish wrung from Him in the hour of His deep agony, and has no significance except as it enables us faintly to measure the weight of the load of grief He then had to carry—and He carried it to the final end.

“Surely He hath borne our griefs,  
And carried our sorrows;  
He was wounded for our transgressions,  
He was bruised for our iniquities:

The chastisement of our peace was upon Him;  
And with His stripes we are healed.  
And Jehovah hath laid on Him the iniquity of us  
all."



## JESUS OF NAZARETH

### II

“Whence hath this man this wisdom?”—MATT. xiii., 54.

THE Messianic hope or expectation, at the beginning of the Christian era, existed in various forms. More commonly it was expected that the Messiah would be born, not of an obscure and distant offshoot of the Davidic line, but of some branch of recognized pedigree, good rank, and high standing; that he would reoccupy the throne of David, making Jerusalem his capital; that as a temporal king he would recruit and remuster the armies of Israel, expel the hated Romans, and by military conquest subjugate the Gentiles even unto the ends of the earth; that as a spiritual king he would convert to the true and eternal religion of Jehovah such of them as would yield to the power of His word; and that all others He would destroy by “the sword of his mouth.”

This form of the Messianic expectation is embodied in the song of the annunciation (Luke i., 32, 33), as well as in the song of Zacharias (verses 67-75). It was also the basis of one of the temptations presented to Jesus before He entered

on His public ministry (Matt. iv., 8, 9). So dominant was it in Jewish thought that the populace were once on the point of putting it into execution (John vi., 15). Nearly a century later the same idea so permeated the mind of the writer of the Apocalypse that in one of his visions he delineated the Son of man as a mounted and crowned warrior-king leading the armies of heaven, invested with a rod of iron wherewith to rule the nations and with the sword of his mouth for vengeance (Rev. xix., 11-16).

Another form or embodiment of the Messianic expectation was based on the promise of Mal. iv., 5, 6, which, being literally construed, was thought to predict the personal reappearance of the prophet Elijah. This idea figures prominently in the Gospels, as in John i., 21; Luke ix., 8, 19; Matt. xvii., 11. And under a third form, as noted in some of the same passages, it was expected that some person, usually designated as "a prophet," but whose name was not certainly known, would appear to make good the ancient prediction of Deut. xviii., 15.

But Jesus, during His public ministry, never made any effort to conform to any of these expectations. As has been frequently remarked, He was an enigma to His own generation. He did not, at least until late in His ministry, announce Himself as being anybody in particular—just the "Son of man" which phrase, whatever it may mean now, was at that time merely an impressive

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individual designation as in Ezek. ii., 1, 3; iii., 1, 3, 4, etc. Instead of declaring Himself to be this or that (as humbugs do) He simply *talked and did*, resting His claims solely on His works. Consequently everybody was nonplussed as to what to make of Him. But one thing was clear; He possessed a surprising wealth of knowledge, and in the use of that knowledge He taught as one who held authority from Heaven to proclaim the verities of life and immortality, and not as the scribes taught, by retailing the barren puerilities of Talmudic casuistry (Matt. vii., 29). As He was a man without education (John vii., 15), that is, had not attended any of the rabbinic schools, or as we should say to-day, was not a graduate of any college or theological seminary, the common people or peasantry who listened to the wonderful and exhaustless outflow of His intellectual and spiritual wealth, very naturally asked where it all came from, where He, "the carpenter's son," of the obscure village of Nazareth, could have learned it all.

One of the most prominent of His characteristics—and one of the most charming as well—was His love of Nature in all her varied moods. He was a close observer, and the abundance of His observation gave Him a marvelous wealth of illustration. When he told how "the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew," and on the hillsides of Galilee washed away the house of one peasant and left another standing

(Matt. vii., 24-27), He only described what He had seen. To enforce a moral, He reminded His hearers that men do not "gather grapes of thorns nor figs of thistles" (Matt. vii., 16). While giving an outdoor talk, He taught them the loving care of the Father by pointing to the birds flying about overhead: "they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them" (Matt. vi., 26).

Again, "the lilies of the field," probably growing near where He stood, illustrated another lesson, of profit to them and equally so to us (verse 28). He had watched, too, the sower who "went forth to sow" (Matt. xiii., 3-8), and had noted how the birds picked up some of the seeds scattered "by the wayside"; how the semitropical sun scorched and withered some of the growing shoots of grain on a thin surface-soil; how the thorns choked the growth of others; and how such seeds as fell on fertile soil grew and ripened into an abundant harvest. The foxes in their burrows and the birds in their nests illustrated by contrast His own homelessness (Matt. viii., 20). The wolf, in His thought, typified "man's inhumanity to man," and among such, His followers should be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt. x., 16). A gift to one of them, of "a cup of cold water," would receive its reward (verse 42).

He drew lessons of profit from the swaying in the wind of the tall rushes that grew in the marshes down by the Jordan (Matt. xi., 7); from the single

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sheep that constituted the little wealth of a peasant, and which fell into a pit (Matt. xii., 11); and from the single sheep that strayed away from the flock and was lost (Matt. xviii., 12). He had known of some vindictive enemy who had maliciously spoiled the growing crop of a thrifty neighbor (Matt. xiii., 25), and the outcome illustrated the leading events of the final judgment. The sky of to-day told what the weather of to-morrow would be (Matt. xvi., 2, 3); and the budding of the fig-tree betokened that the summer was near (Mark xiii., 28). The evening breeze, unknown as to "whence it cometh, and whither it goeth," was utilized to teach to Nicodemus the lesson of the new birth (John iii., 8); and Jacob's well gave Him a text for a lesson on immortality in His talk with the woman of Samaria (John iv., 13, 14). A field of ripened grain suggested a harvest "unto life eternal" (verses 35, 36)—a harvest in which "the reapers are the angels" (Matt. xiii., 39).

In the realm of nature He knew all that there was to be known; and He was equally familiar with the usages and laws of business and government. The owner of real estate was the lawful owner of lost or concealed plunder found therein (verse 44). He knew the pearl-trade as well as the pearl-traders themselves (verses 45, 46); and He understood the fisherman's occupation as if it were His own (verses 47, 48), and a shepherd's life equally well (John x., 1-14). The parable

of the talents (Matt. xxv., 14-30) indicates his familiarity with the banking business of His day. The employment of laborers and payment of wages (Matt. xx., 1-16), the renting of land and payment in kind, as well as the dishonest transactions sometimes incident thereto (Luke xvi., 1-8), were all as familiar to Him as if He had been the wealthiest landlord in all Galilee.

The law as to the division of estates by inheritance underlay the parable of the prodigal son (Luke xv., 11-32); while the general corruption of the magistrates of his day—and we have some of that kind yet—is briefly but graphically sketched in that parable of the unjust judge (Luke xviii., 1-5). Without experience, or even observation, of the usages of royal courts or the laws of war, He discoursed of both with no display of ignorance (Matt. xxii., 1-14; Luke vii., 25; xiv., 31, 32; xix., 11-27). He was apparently well versed in the political relations of the nation, and in the laws of taxation, both of the church and the state (Matt. xvii., 24-27; xxii., 17-21). He had observed the usual methods of litigation in the petty courts of the provinces (Matt. v., 25, 26); knew of the barbarous penology of His time (Matt. xviii., 34); and showed at His trial that He was as well informed in the rules and practice of Jewish criminal law as were His chief judges, Annas and Caiaphas of the high priesthood.

Proofs of His perfect familiarity with the Jewish scriptures, with the past history of the

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nation, with its kings and priests and prophets, with its religion and its lack of religion as well, with its decayed morals, its degenerate formalism, its bigoted hypocrisy and almost total corruption, are found on nearly every page of the Gospel records. He not only knew it all, but He knew it better than anybody else, for He gave to most of it a meaning never thought of before, and so simple and obvious a meaning that His statement on any subject went for a demonstration. He rarely made any effort to prove the truth of what He said, for it was so obviously true that no one could question or deny it. The best-trained and most skilful casuists of His day could do nothing with Him (Matt. xxii., 15-40); and hostile attacks by the learned rabbis of the temple were equally barren of anticipated results (Mark xi., 27-33).

It will be noted that I am now dealing only with those elements or incidents of Jesus' life that illustrate the wealth and extent of His knowledge in respect to strictly mundane affairs. For my present purpose, I leave out of consideration that part of His life and career by which He brought salvation to our race. Regarding Him strictly as a man among men, His supremacy stands out perhaps most markedly in His intuitive knowledge of men. Here, with possibly a single exception, He never made a mistake. His quick and accurate discernment of human character, especially noted in John ii., 23-25, is one of the most striking features of His entire life.

Even at the beginning of His ministry, when the Pharisaic branch of the Jewish church, through Nicodemus, its leading "teacher," sought to inveigle the young and rising rabbi into their camp, He saw through the scheme in an instant, and dexterously held Himself aloof (John iii., 1-15). Though often hypocritically approached with words of apparently extravagant praise, as in Matthew xxii., 16, or, as once happened, for private and selfish ends, as in Luke xii., 13, never in any such case did He fail to "size up" the person or to fathom his secret purpose. No man ever caught Him off guard or used Him or His influence for improper ends. On the other hand, no honest and worthy appeal was ever refused through a suspected doubt of the honesty of the applicant. No masking of hypocrisy ever withstood His scrutiny; nor did a modest garb ever obscure to His vision the genuineness of the honesty that lay behind.

In intimating as above that Jesus was once possibly deceived in His estimate of men, I had in mind His selection of Judas Iscariot as one of his intimate and trusted friends. Whether He was really deceived is a question that I cannot answer. According to John, He was not, but knew from the first what kind of man Judas was (John vi., 64). But Jesus' own first denunciation of Judas (verse 70) reads to me much as if He then spoke with a feeling of anger or else of disappointment, or possibly both; as though He had found out, either



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then or quite recently, how seriously and sadly He had previously overestimated the man. No commentator, with whose work I am familiar, gives a satisfactory explanation of this discrepancy. Some try to do it, and, though believing that they succeed, actually fail; others try, and give it up; still others pass it by and say nothing about it.

Jesus was also singularly happy in the framing and speaking of short, crisp, pithy sayings of the kind that we call proverbs. The Gospels are full of them. For example:

“Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

“No man can serve two masters.”

“By their fruits ye shall know them.”

“The workman is worthy of his meat.”

“Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

“If the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted?”

“A city set on a hill cannot be hid.”

“Let the dead bury their dead.”

“They that are whole have no need of a physician.”

“A disciple is not above his master, nor a servant above his lord.”

“If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.”

“Many are called, but few chosen.”

“Strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.”

“Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”

“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

“The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

These are only a few of a multitude of like kind; and I have refrained from citing any of the more numerous class which relate to His work of bringing “life and immortality to light.” That in them all He fully justified the popular verdict (John vii., 46), cannot be gainsaid. But where or how did He learn or acquire it all? “Whence hath this man this wisdom?”

I was brought up in the belief that His superiority, even in the matters thus enumerated, was a product of the divinity that dwelt in Him; and such, I believe, is the generally accepted view among His Trinitarian followers. But this view has no Biblical support, unless it be in the passage from John already quoted (vi., 64); while from what Luke says (ii., 52) I should infer that he was of the opposite opinion. As to the relationship of His divine nature to His human mentality and spirituality—that is, as to how far or in what way the two were united or blended and coworked—we have no information whatever. He tells us nothing about it Himself; and Paul, who knew more of Him than anybody else, admits that he knew nothing—the “mystery” was too great even for His comprehension (I. Tim. iii., 16). And if Paul did not understand it, I prefer to regard Jesus of Nazareth not only as the manifestation of the Father’s glory (Heb. i., 3), but also as be-

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ing the very perfection of humanity, physically, mentally, and spiritually, and as showing to all the members of humanity what it was possible for them to become.

Direct divine intervention in human affairs, either by miracles or otherwise, is not to be presumed where it is not revealed, and where the facts do not require it. So far as I can see, there is no reason why we should feel compelled to assume that when Jesus was dealing with strictly mundane affairs He must have exercised or called to His aid any trait, faculty, or knowledge that did not belong to Him as a man. That He possessed transcendent genius, superior powers of observation, marvelous aptitude in the acquisition of knowledge, both of men and things, and equally marvelous aptitude in clearness, brevity, force, and originality of expression, may safely be affirmed. That in all these respects He excelled every other man that ever lived, may be regarded as equally clear. Why, then, must we argue or conclude that, in respect of gifts that belong to humanity at large (though, of course, in a less degree), His divinity must have been called into exercise at all? Possibly it was, but what is our authority for making it an article of faith? We call Shakespeare a genius; and notwithstanding his humble birth, his lack of education, and his somewhat ignoble employment, we are astonished at the extent of his knowledge, and his originality and grace of expression. But does Shakespeare

mark the utmost limit of possible human attainment? Must we say of Jesus of Nazareth that He excelled Shakespeare only because He was divine, and called on His divinity to eke out the supposed deficiencies of His humanity? I do not so read the Gospels, nor do I so understand the facts.

If "it behooved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren" (Heb. ii., 17), I do not see how we can avoid the conclusion that in respect to the traits I have above sketched, He was like unto us (except in degree), and enjoyed divine aid as, and only as, every other son of Adam may enjoy the same aid. And herein, as it seems to me, lies the assurance of the final redemption of our race. A man is more helpful than an angel; or, at least, in an emergency in which I need help, I would prefer the aid of a brother man. Angels may be very good and very useful in their place, but I do not understand them. A man, I do understand; and it is the manhood, or, if you prefer, the humanity, of the "man, Jesus Christ" (Rom. v., 15) that appeals especially to me as one of the very cogent factors in the work that He came to do. And if that manhood, or humanity, is as large, as manifold, as all-embracing, and as sympathetic as the Gospels appear to indicate, may not His devout followers rest confidently in the assurance that, humbly and faithfully following Him day by day, they will, through His grace, ultimately come to "be like Him"—when they "shall see Him even as He is"? (I. John iii., 2).

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So far as my reading has gone, Paul appears to be the original author of the above-quoted phrase, the "man, Jesus Christ." To all appearances, he used it advisedly and with a purpose; and the argument of Romans v. is based on its correctness. Of course, Paul's orthodoxy in what he thus says cannot be called in question; but if any Trinitarian scholar of the last fifteen hundred years had said it, and if Paul had *not* said it, a fairly good-sized door would have been opened for a charge of heresy. Our church in its maintenance of the deity of Christ has failed to emphasize adequately His human personality and manhood as efficient factors in the regeneration of the race. This "ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Luke xi., 42).

## THE WRITINGS OF PAUL

It is undoubtedly a fact that, take it by and large, the average lay member of the church gets comparatively little direct spiritual benefit from the writings of Paul, although as a matter of duty, he may read them now and then in a perfunctory sort of way. By *direct* benefit I mean that which comes or ought to come from the perusal or study of the writings themselves, as distinguished from what we hear from the pulpit or read in the commentaries. And by *spiritual* benefit I mean that peculiar benefit which edifies, which builds up a holy character, as a house is built from crude materials into a structure perfectly adapted for its purposes, and which makes men and women better to-day than they were yesterday, better this year than last year. This is what "edify" means—to build up into an *edifice*; and edification is the process of building up. Preaching or Biblical study that does not result in edification, the building up of character, the making of perfect and pure lives, fails of its chief purpose.

And it is equally true that Paul intended to write for the edification of his readers. He undoubtedly knew what he was writing about;

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and his natural ability, his training, and the spiritual power that rested in him, were amply sufficient to qualify him for doing what he thus intended, and for doing it well. In his own particular field he was a master workman.

Why is it, then, that Paul's writings are unpopular with laymen for general devotional reading? We go to them freely for purposes of theological controversy; but with the exception of a few passages such as that on the Lord's Supper (I. Cor. xi., 23-28), or that on charity (I. Cor. xiii.), or that on the resurrection (I. Cor. xv., 35-57), we are likely in our devotional reading to give Paul the go-by and turn preferably to the Gospels or the Psalms. Why is this?

In the first place, we have learned to think of Paul chiefly as a theologian, and this has led us to approach the study or perusal of his writings from a wrong point of view. Paul cared nothing for theology *as theology*. If he had been asked whether he was a Calvinist or an Arminian, he probably would have replied that he *did n't know*; or perhaps that he was *both*; or possibly that, in view of his anxiety to carry the Gospel of salvation to the Gentiles, he did not care even to consider the question: I. Corinthians iii. reads very much that way. When he says (Phil. ii., 12, 13), "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," he talks much like an Arminian; but when he immediately adds "for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for His good

pleasure," he clearly occupies Calvinistic ground.

In order to get a clear and correct understanding of what Paul meant, we must learn to look at and construe his writings *from his own particular point of view*. He took facts as he found them, and put down or narrated the facts as he saw them. From the standpoint of a pioneer in the work of Christian missions, he looked out over the great fields of heathenism, which then included (except Palestine) the entire known world; took knowledge of the seeds of vice, impurity, and corruption which were almost universally sown thereon, and also observed the morally rotten harvests that followed. He tells us of those harvests and of what they consisted (Gal. v., 19-21). Is it any wonder that in describing the world of heathenism as he saw it, and particularly when he contrasted its moral vileness with the fruits of a Christian life (verse 22), he should have used words and terms that smack strongly of what we now call "total depravity"? You or I in his position would have done the same, for truth required it. The heathen world as a mass was at that time totally depraved, and a truthful description of the extent and depth of its depravity exhausted the capacity in that direction of the language in which he wrote. True, certain of the more cultured leaders of Greek and Roman thought had elaborated and given to the world systems or codes of morals, some of which closely approximated that of Jesus of Nazareth. But they rested for their



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binding force or obligation, not, as in Christianity, on any law of self-denying love, but only on a non-obvious self-interest, or at the best on an asserted public good—considerations that took hold of only an individual here and there, and not of the great majority. Consequently society at large remained and continued to be as vile and corrupt as if a code of morals had been an unknown thing. Paul so observed it and so described it.

Now, from Paul's description of ancient heathendom we have deduced the theological dogma of "total depravity," applying it to modern Christendom. What he declared to be true of Gentile life and society as they existed in his day, we, by our creeds, have declared to be true as applied to our modern life—to our next-door neighbor, whose "walk and conversation" are as unexceptionable as our own. Nor am I denying now the truth of our creed. It may be that this next-door neighbor, that our nearest and dearest relative, and even we ourselves are totally depraved; but we do injustice to Paul when we set his writings to prove that fact. For Paul was not writing with any reference to such a condition as that of the very largely Christianized civilization of the present day, but rather was describing the almost universally prevalent heathenism of his own day. In other words, he was not stating a dogmatic theory, but narrating a practical fact, or a series of such facts, as they then existed.

And why did he thus narrate them? Simply to

lead His readers away from the vile usages of heathenism, and to persuade them to the practice of certain other things which were "true" and "honorable" and "just" and "pure" and "lovely" and "of good report" (Phil. iv., 8). To make men of this kind out of the poor and ignorant converts from the slums of heathenism (Rom. i., 28-32) was his purpose and his only purpose. The formulation of a system of theology nowhere appears in his writings to have been any part of his plan.

We go equally astray in assuming that Paul meant to formulate and teach any doctrine of election and foreordination when he reminded these same converts that God in His kindness to *them*, and as an expression of His gracious love, has made them the especial recipients of His saving mercy—and this to the end that, being sanctified "in spirit and soul and body," *they* might be ready for the expected coming of the Son in His glory (I. Thess. v., 23). "Election," as Paul taught it, went no further than this. Generally he represented it, not as a dogma of theology, but as a fact of Christian experience in the lives of his readers (I. Thess. i., 4, 5), involving the assurance of their acceptance in the sight or presence of God. Universally he used his theology simply as an aid or stimulus to holy living. In all his writings this is his point of view. If any theological truth or fact could be used to aid him in making saints out of sinners, he so

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used it; otherwise he had no use for it. And having developed it so far as might be necessary for this purpose, he dropped it.

Hence, in reading Paul we need to acquire first a new point of view, one that involves, not his supposed greatness as a theologian, but his greatness as a teacher to ignorant converts just born out of heathenism—a teacher of practical every-day righteousness, of a religion to live by and die by, a religion that produces or results in pure lives, holy living. And this above all things was what they needed to know. Nor is there much doubt that we also need to know it.

Probably to a greater extent than any other man who ever tried to express his ideas in writing, Paul was embarrassed and hampered by the defects and limitations of the language in which he wrote. While, being a Jew, he probably thought in Hebrew, he had to write in Greek; and the Greek language had no words for the expression of many Christian ideas. The Chinese vocabulary has no word for "God," simply because the Chinese people have no idea or conception of God. Scarcely any of the languages of barbarism have words for the expression of holiness, purity, sin, sanctification, atonement, etc., for the reason that the ideas which these words represent have never become a part of the thought of barbarous peoples. The English language, also, being originally a language of heathenism, is at some points equally deficient. For the expression of the idea of *love*,

whether it be the self-gratifying love that a man has for his dog or his dinner, or the self-denying love that he entertains, or ought to entertain, for his fellow-man, as well as for his Maker and Redeemer, the English language has practically but a single word—the word “love.” Such few synonyms as we have express variations in the *intensity* of the love, but not in its *kind*. Hence the impossibility which confronted our translators, of expressing in English what Paul tried to say in I. Corinthians xiii., about that particular *kind* of love which is a necessary element of Christian faith and a Christian life.

The consequence of the limitation referred to was that Paul often had to use old words with new meanings and trust to the context to make his own meaning clear, as in his use of the word “charity” (I. Cor. xiii., A. V.); or he sometimes added a clause of explanation, as in reference to the resurrection-body (I. Cor. xv., 44), or resorted to the use of an awkward and almost meaningless circumlocution, as “the mind of the flesh” (Rom. viii., 7), or “the body of this death” (Rom. vii., 24). Thus the unsuitableness of the language in which he wrote—that is, for the clear expression of Christian ideas—has much to do with the difficulty the average reader has in understanding him.

It is an unfortunate fact, and has much to do with Paul’s lack of popularity as a writer, that our English translation, if not actually bad, is at least exceedingly imperfect and defective; for it is

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approximately a *literal* translation, and such a translation of a book intended for general reading frequently fails to reproduce with clearness and accuracy the particular thought or shade of thought expressed in the original. And this is especially true of writings such as Paul's, wherein accuracy of thought and exactness and brevity of expression are, so far as defects of language would permit, united or combined. Books of exact science are usually so translated, as are also books especially intended for the use of the student and scholar; but translations made for general reading by "all sorts and conditions of men" are, as a rule, made on different lines. The Bible is the only exception in our whole range of literature that I now recall. A large part of the difficulty the average reader has in understanding many of its passages arises from the fact that Hebrew thoughts and ideas, though embodied in English words, are still expressed in forms or idioms of speech peculiar to the Greek and Hebrew tongues—idioms, too, that are well understood only by trained scholars. A translation of Paul's writings that any devout reader can understand as readily as he understands the Gospels is a desideratum for which we must look to the indefinite future; and in the meantime, we must stumble along with the aid of commentaries as best we can. *The Twentieth Century New Testament* (Revell Co.), while it has its defects, is a move in the right direction.

So far as we can now ascertain, Paul never

imagined that he was writing for the distant future, for posterity, or for the instruction of the church through all the centuries of its coming history. He confidently expected the return of the Master at a very early date—in fact, sometime during the life-period of the generation then living (I. Thess. iv., 15, 17). The Master's authority, when He should come, would supersede that of His servant. Hence, Paul expected that his letters to the churches would be short-lived, and he had no occasion to deal with any except then-existing problems and conditions. Probably no busier man ever lived. His letters show that they were written in haste. Like letters generally they were written discursively and without much regard to system. They were letters from a pastor to his own people—letters suggested for the most part by their then-existing wants, necessities, errors, and surroundings, or prompted by his interest or anxiety in their behalf. Writing in haste, he often omitted explanations that, if added, would throw light on some things now obscure. Also, some things obscure to us were perfectly intelligible to his readers, for he had already given them the necessary oral explanations, as is indicated by his frequent use of the phrase "For ye know, brethren." But, passing by what is obscure, enough remains for our "instruction in righteousness," and more than that we do not need.

Another feature of Paul's writings which the

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general reader often fails to take into account arises from the fact that he was a man of many and widely divergent moods. Sometimes he wrote in great sorrow of mind, or under great mental depression (I. Cor. ii., 3); sometimes with the most tender affection (I. Thess. ii., 7); sometimes in deep anger (Gal. iii., 1), and with good cause; sometimes he is strictly didactic, as much so as a modern school-teacher (Rom. xii., 9 *et seq.*); sometimes closely argumentative (Rom. iii.); at times violently denunciatory (I. Cor. vi.); sometimes he writes as if he were soliloquizing, or talking to himself (Rom. vii., 7-25); sometimes he is triumphantly grand (II. Tim. iv., 6-8), and grandly sublime (I. Cor. xv., 35-50); but always he is terribly in earnest. Other illustrations of all these diverse moods or states of mind will be met with as we progress; and a fairly accurate knowledge of them will greatly enhance the interest of the devout reader in what Paul has to say.

I have just spoken of Paul as a man who was always terribly in earnest. No man was ever more so; and his terrible earnestness was always directed to one point—the salvation of the Gentiles. Everything that he had ever learned, seen, thought, or done; every fact, argument, and consideration he could think of; every element of personal influence or persuasive appeal that he could use to reach the human mind and exercise control over human conduct, he utilized freely for the attainment of this result. He regarded the Gen-

tiles (including everybody except the Jews) somewhat as a diligent farmer in harvest-time regards his crops when a storm is impending. They must be saved at all hazards. In Paul's spiritual vision, a storm of divine wrath was impending over humanity—a terrible storm, a storm of vengeance (Rom. i., 18; ii., 5-8). The time was short (I. Cor. vii., 29). The storm would soon break loose. Christ the Lord would soon reappear—so Paul thought—in a few years at most (I. Thess. iv., 17). The Gentiles must be gathered in out of the storm, and made ready for His appearing. So thinking, it is no wonder that Paul was always in earnest, and that his earnestness was something almost superhuman.

Paul was a skilled logician (according to the logical method of his day), but he used his logic just as he did his theology—as an aid in illustrating, applying, and enforcing his gospel of salvation. If logic and theology answered this purpose, well and good. If they failed for that purpose, he threw them both away. A striking illustration of this will be found in Romans v., 12, 13. The logic and the theology of this celebrated passage failed to establish the conclusions that Paul had then in mind. His argument appears to me about thus, and I quote his exact words as they appear in our Revised Version:

“Through one man sin entered into the world:

“And death through sin:

“And so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned.”



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I should imagine that he stopped a moment to think. Was this correct? Yes; and he resumes:

“For until the law sin was in the world.”

Apparently it then occurred to him that:

“*Sin is not imputed where there is no law.*”

In view of this additional fact, Paul seems to have been confronted with the question: If prior to Moses the law *did not exist*, and if “sin is not imputed where there is *no law*,” how could it be said that from Adam to Moses “*all sinned*”?

At this point his argument broke down.

But he made no effort to extricate himself from his own logical dilemma. Apparently he cared nothing for the theology or the logic involved in his argument. They simply failed to illustrate the facts he had in mind and wished to make clear. But as these *facts* were *true*, and for his purposes were infinitely more important than the argument, he threw away or discarded the argument, seeming to care so little for it that he would not, or at least *did not*, take the trouble to erase it.

“Nevertheless,” he proceeds—that is, no matter about the fallacy of the argument just made (Rom. v., 12, 13), the fact remains that:

“Death reigned from Adam until Moses,” etc. (verse 14).

Nobody could dispute this as a fact.

And with this he is enabled to emphasize the further fact or conclusion, which was the point he was chiefly after, that the “free gift” of grace and salvation through Jesus Christ is larger, greater,

and more abundant than "the trespass" through Adam (verses 15-21).

Herein consisted one of the chief elements of his gospel message of salvation.

Paul here, as elsewhere, in presenting this gospel, brushes aside everything which comes his way. Apparently he has no time nor thought for anything else. Everything within the range of his knowledge, thought, and experience that will aid him in elucidating the subject of personal salvation through a crucified Christ effectively, persuasively, and convincingly, he uses freely; everything else is discarded.

Some modern theologians kindly help Paul out of the dilemma of verses 12, 13 by saying of Adam's first sin, that the entire human race then "sinned *in* him," and that therefore "all sinned"—in this way making involuntary sinners of all those who lived before the giving of the law by Moses. Perhaps this is a correct explanation, but Paul is not its author. He himself gives a better one in Rom. i., 20. *Natural* law, he says, *always* existed. When men violated that law, they became sinners. As they all violated it, of course they "all sinned." Paul, as I have said, sometimes wrote as if he were soliloquizing—talking to himself. A notable illustration of this occurs in Rom. vii., 7-25. How was the presence of sinful tendencies in the heart after conversion to be accounted for, so that the untrained and uneducated converts of the church at Rome, recently born out of heathenism, could

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understand it? They were mentally incapable of understanding the doctrine of "total depravity."

"Original sin" would be to them a meaningless phrase. Satan was somebody they knew nothing about.

Paul, by an imaginary line of reasoning, argued the question out *with himself*, and thus showed *them* how, by a similar mental argument of their own, they could reach the same conclusions for themselves, which he reached for himself. These conclusions are stated in chapter viii. I doubt if Paul cared much for the argument, except as it guided the minds of his readers to the desired conclusions. According to our modern teachings, his view of indwelling sin, instead of a personal Satan, as the impelling agency to sin, is theologically unsound. But that apparently was a matter of no importance to him. The facts of practical religion was what he was after. These he made convincingly, overwhelmingly clear.

Occasionally in Paul's reasoning there is an element of almost childlike simplicity that is really charming. Take, for example, Rom. v., 7. To illustrate with impressive emphasis the exceptional greatness of divine love, in "*that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (verse 8), he begins (verse 7): "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die."

Just then it appears to have occurred to him that this was perhaps rather too broad a statement; that it was at least conceivable that some

one might attain to such height of genuine goodness; that out of respect, love, or veneration, somebody might be willing to take his place in a deadly peril. But instead of modifying his statement by erasure or amendment, as a modern writer would have done, he added an expression of doubt as to its correctness, "peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die"—and having thus set himself right, he proceeded in verse 8, with its application.

Paul probably wrote many letters or epistles besides those which are still preserved. In his "anxiety for all the churches" (II. Cor. xi., 28), it could hardly have been otherwise. According to I. Cor. v., 9, he had already written to the Corinthians once before. If so, he wrote at least three letters to the church at Corinth. A now lost letter to the Laodiceans appears to be referred to in Colossians iv., 16, and another in Ephesians iii., 3. And it is a significant fact that in the second of the two earliest letters now extant, when adding a postscript in his peculiar handwriting (Gal. vi., 11), he says that this is "the token in every epistle" (II. Thess. iii., 17), thus implying that the writing of such letters was not uncommon with him even at that early date, and that in all of them he thus wrote the conclusion with his own hand as a means of identification, and also as a protection against forgery. For from II. Thessalonians ii., 2, it may fairly be inferred that Paul's enemies in the church were not

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above the use of forged epistles for the purpose of alienating and misleading his converts.

It must be admitted, however, that Paul is not a graceful writer; that is, his style of composition lacks for the most part that easy, graceful flow of words and consecutive expression of related ideas which are found in the Gospels and in Acts; or, at least, it so appears in our translation. In fact, as a writer his style is often (though not always) as erratic, abrupt, and rugged as that of Thomas Carlyle, who as a thinker somewhat resembles him. Consequently his writings, like those of Carlyle, are not what in our mental laziness we call easy reading; but his richness and originality of thought in the setting forth of the vital matters of life and immortality are such that the diligent and devout student will find therein a rich reward. Sometimes he apparently errs on the side of conciseness, heaping up a host of great ideas in a single brief sentence, as, for example, in Romans iii., 24, 25, in which are included justification, divine grace, human redemption, sacrificial propitiation, saving faith, atoning blood, righteousness, sin, and forgiveness, besides half a dozen collateral ideas, and all in a paragraph of only forty-four words. Sometimes language seems to fail him, or, so to speak, to *break down*, as in II. Corinthians iv., 17, where he tells us that the "afflictions" of this life, though "light" (as regards our capacity to endure), and which last but "for the moment" (as compared with eternity)

still work out for us not only a future "glory" but a "weight" or mass of glory, and a "weight of glory" which will be "eternal," and this working will go on during eternity "*more and more,*" that is, continually increasing in its energy, and with a degree of increase "*exceedingly*" beyond anything he can describe. Language failed him to express adequately what was in his mind.

One of the unexpected things in Paul's writings is his use of the phrase "my gospel"—not once, but repeatedly.

## THE GOSPEL OF PAUL

PAUL, in his letters, occasionally speaks of something which he calls "my gospel." Three times he uses this specific phrase (Rom. ii., 16; xvi., 25; II. Tim. ii., 8).

In four other cases he seems to have the same idea in mind, for he refers to the gospel *as he preached it* (II. Cor. xi., 4; Gal. i., 6, 11; ii., 2).

Three other times, as though, in thought, joining his colaborers with himself, he uses the phrase "our gospel" (II. Cor. iv., 3; I. Thess. i., 5; II. Thess. ii., 14).

In Galatians ii., 7, he draws a marked distinction between his own Gentile gospel and Peter's Jewish gospel.

What did he mean by these expressions? Why did he use them? Evidently not in antagonism to "the gospel of Christ"; his frequent and reverent use of this phrase precludes any such conclusion. The purpose of both was the same—the salvation of a sinful race; the means was the same—righteousness of life through faith in Jesus of Nazareth as the Saviour and Redeemer of men. Both came from the same source; both pervaded the same time and the same humanity; both

finally merge into the same eternity. So far, the gospel preached by Paul and that preached by the Twelve were at one.

But there was a difference somewhere, and a difference worth talking about, or we may be sure that Paul would not so have spoken. And if he formulated and preached a gospel for the Gentiles, it may be important to us to know what it is; for we all belong in that class.

1. So far as existing records show, the preaching of the Twelve, at least during the period of Paul's missionary life, was confined mainly, if not entirely, to the Jews, that is, to efforts on the part of the Twelve to convert their fellow-citizens of that obstinate and bigoted race (Acts xi., 19). To this end, the best line of argument they could pursue, and in fact almost the only arguments they could advance with any persuasive effect, were based on the idea that Jesus of Nazareth was the fulfilment of the Messianic prophecies (Acts ii., 16-36), in the truth of which they already believed; for if He was *not* their predicted Messiah, then the Jews could have no further interest in Him. Their Sanhedrin, the court which, by divine appointment, as they were taught and believed, was the final arbiter in all matters of religion, had decided that He was an impostor. That was the end of the argument with the orthodox Jew, unless it could be shown, and shown conclusively, that the Sanhedrin had misjudged the case. This latter proposition was an essential part of the



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argument, or of the gospel which was preached by the Twelve (Acts iii., 14-26). Paul made use of the same argument from prophecy on the few occasions when he is reported as addressing a Jewish audience (Acts xiii., 22-41).

But by far the larger part of Paul's labors was in efforts to Christianize, not the Jews, but the Gentiles, or, as we now express it, the heathen; for at that day all Gentiles came within our modern definition of heathen. Universally they worshiped false gods, or no gods at all.

But the Messianic argument had no force with the Gentiles. They were totally ignorant of the Jewish prophecies, and cared nothing for them—no more than we care for the Koran of Mohammed or the mythical gold plates of Joseph Smith. Suppose the prophecies were true—what was that to them? These prophecies were all distinctively Jewish and, following their exact language, they were to find their anticipated consummation in the glory and prosperity of the Jewish people. In those matters the Gentiles had no interest whatever. The argument from Jewish prophecy would have no more persuasive effect on Gentile minds than a strictly Mormon argument now has on ours.

Consequently Paul, in respect of the gospel that he purposed to preach to the Gentiles, was compelled to work out or formulate an entirely different line of argument, the argument from prophecy being of no force whatever.

2. Besides this, he had not only an entirely

different class of people to deal with, but a different class of minds, and especially a different system of religious thought. In the Gentile beliefs of that day, morality constituted no part of religion or of religious obligation. If a man rendered to his chosen deity or deities the required formal acts of sacrifice, observed the regular feast-days, repeated the prescribed formulas of prayer or invocation in the specified ways and forms, abstained from desecrations of the temples, etc., he might be as immoral in actual life as he pleased, without giving offense to his deity. Wrong-doing might be an offense as against a neighbor, or might involve a violation of the laws of the empire, and in either case might meet with proper punishment at the hands of the civil magistrate; or, in localities where the standard of morals was unusually high, it might affect one's standing in good society; but no element of religious duty or obligation would be affected by it. The gods of heathenism were not generally understood as caring aught for the morals of their worshipers; for as a rule they were immoral themselves.

Now, in Judaism, good morals constituted a part of religion, and always had. Hence, in the gospel of the Twelve, as preached to a Jewish audience, this was not one of the truths necessary to be inculcated as an essential preliminary to conversion. It was believed already.

But the gospel for a Gentile audience must

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include this as an essential rule both of faith and practice. The Gentiles had to be taught up to the point of conviction (and this took a long time) what they did not at first believe and never had believed, that good morals, pure lives, and holy living were essential elements of religion.

Consequently Paul, as the leader and pioneer in the work of converting the Gentiles, had to formulate and preach a gospel which was, in this respect at least, different from that preached by the Twelve to the Jews. But it must be a gospel that would *include* the Jews, for otherwise it could not be universal. So far as existing records show, Paul was the first to formulate such a gospel, that is, the gospel of universal religion, good for Jew and Gentile alike, and for "all sorts and conditions of men" of each class.

3. One, and perhaps the chief, difference between Paul's gospel, and that which was not his (Gal. i., 6, 7) was that the former involved and included a repudiation of the Mosaic law as then understood and taught by the Jewish church. An aggressive and influential section of the mother church of Jerusalem insisted that compliance with the Mosaic law, especially as regards the odious rite of circumcision, was an essential prerequisite to membership in the Christian church; and a vigorous effort was made to impose the unendurable burdens of that law (Acts xv., 10) on the consciences of Paul's Gentile converts. This movement, if successful, would have made

Christianity a mere adjunct or sect of Judaism, and the effort to found a church of the Gentiles—the church to which we belong—would have been a total failure. To defeat this movement, and to free the churches of his planting from a fatal bondage to Judaism, Paul practically repudiated (see Galatians; Rom. iii., 20; Col. ii., 16 *et seq.*) the whole Mosaic system, though of course not in its code of morals; for good morals are more essentially a part of Christianity than of any other religion that ever was known. But when Paul did this, he established a very important and in fact a vital difference between the gospel which he preached, and that of his Judaic opponents.

And the difference consisted in this: that while *their* gospel was *only* for the Jews and such occasional proselytes from the Gentiles as could be picked up here and there, Paul's gospel was for *all humanity*. Paul was the first man who ever preached a gospel of that kind in such a way as to secure general acceptance. When this was done, and not before, the salvation of the race from the effects of the fall became possible.

4. While I am not sure that such is the case, I am strongly inclined to think that the Epistle to the Hebrews contains a special adaptation of Paul's gospel to Jewish minds or Jewish modes of thinking. Clearly Paul was not its author (*cf.* Gal. i., 12, Heb. ii., 3), but it plainly was written by an educated Jewish convert of high spiritual attainments and great mental ability. Apollos

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answers best to its requirements (Acts xviii., 24-28). Some critics of high rank give Barnabas the credit. But whoever wrote it, it was written solely for Jewish readers. The wants and interests of the Gentiles did not come at all within the writer's field of view. With or for them he shows no concern whatever. The Christian system, as he thus presents it from a Christo-Judaic standpoint, differs from Paul's delineation of it chiefly (1) in respect of faith, and (2) in respect of Christ as a sacrifice.

(1) As to the first difference, the faith in Christ sketched in Hebrews is the same *in kind* as that which the Jew had always been taught to exercise in Jehovah his king—that is, the faith of confident trust and reliance in the truth of promises made, and a faith followed by corresponding acts or deeds. But faith as Paul sets it forth is of a *much higher kind* in that it is perfected or fully attained only when Christ *dwells* in the hearts of His people and they  *dwell in Him*, so producing *oneness of life* in and through Him, whereby they become sons of God. This latter conception of faith is scarcely found in Hebrews at all, but it probably constituted one of the distinctive features of Paul's gospel.

(2) As to the other difference, it is clear that the writer of Hebrews carried forward into the Christian atonement, the *propitiatory* idea which lay at the basis of the old Mosaic system of sacrifice—the idea that God was a Being who *had* to be

propitiated; that is, His anger must be placated or His favor secured; or, in other words, that *He* had to be reconciled to *us*; and that this was effected in and by the sacrifice on Calvary. But Paul's view is directly the reverse—that Christ's atoning work was to reconcile *us* to *Him*; that God was already reconciled and always had been; that men, humanity, had become alienated by sin, and must be brought back to a state or condition of reconciliation with God, so that through faith and righteousness they might be remade or made over, and thereby become acceptable to Him, and fit, as it were, to come into His presence, and eventually grow up into sons of God. In this view of the atonement, Paul's gospel appears to have been distinctively his own.

From these considerations it appears that the writer of Hebrews regarded Christianity as the outgrowth and perfected development of a still existing Judaism; whereas, according to Paul, Christianity superseded Judaism—abolished it and took its place.

Whether these two views of Christianity are, for our purposes, irreconcilably at variance is a question for separate consideration. In my opinion, they are not; but if they are, then I feel bound to follow Paul: he wrote for the Gentiles, and we come in that class. The writer of Hebrews wrote for the Jews, who come in another class.

It is true that after Paul's death (about A.D. 67 or 68), and after the destruction of Jerusalem

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(A.D. 70)—with which event the mother church was largely shorn of its power and influence—the gospel of Paul came to be generally accepted in and by the church at large. Peter a few years later (as indicated in his epistles to the Jews of the dispersion) had come to adopt most of Paul's ideas and some of his peculiar phrases as well. That he had read some of Paul's epistles, clearly appears from II. Pet. iii., 15, 16. That he found therein some things "hard to be understood," need be no matter of surprise. I doubt if the man has yet been born who can take in, apprehend, and comprehend to its full extent, Paul's conception of Christianity. Nor does it count to the discredit of Peter that he sometimes found it difficult to fathom the depth of Paul's meaning. He possessed neither Paul's natural abilities nor his education and mental training, and in respect of spiritual power he doubtless was Paul's inferior. For while it was no small honor to be allowed to witness, as Peter did, the theophany of the transfiguration (Luke ix., 28-36), it was a far higher honor to be accorded, as Paul was, a view of the celestial glories of the third heaven (II. Cor. xii., 1-4.) And if, as seems highly probable, the beatific honor thus conferred on each be a divinely indicated measure of the spiritual attainments of each, then Paul, spiritually, outranked Peter by far, and is without a peer among men; and his competence to formulate a gospel of his own for the evangelization of the Gentiles cannot be called in question.

5. When Paul, as he said in his first letter to the Corinthians, "determined not to know anything among" them "save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (I. Cor. ii., 2), he apparently then adopted some new rule or practice in at least the particular order in which he would present to them the essential truths of the new Christian faith. At this time he had been engaged in his ministry to the Gentiles for nearly twenty years. Doubtless he had learned something by practical experience as to the best way in which to bring the Gospel to bear effectively on the minds and lives of those who, like the Gentiles of that day, had been trained in the debased and debasing religions of heathenism. It is, I think, fairly inferable that to the Galatian churches he had been preaching the gospel of faith (Gal. iii.); and to the Thessalonians the gospel of the second advent (I. Thess. iv., 13 *et seq.*). For some reason or reasons which we can only surmise, he appears, on opening his Gentile work at Corinth, to have relegated these elements of the new religion to a subordinate position, or to have left them somewhat in the background. John the Baptist had preached the gospel of repentance (Matt. iii., 1, 2); Jesus of Nazareth had done the same (Matt. iv., 17); so had Peter and the Twelve after the resurrection (Acts ii., 38); but all this was to Jewish hearers.

Possibly Paul had now found by experience that the doctrines of repentance and faith—both involving spiritual experiences and activities—were



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too difficult of apprehension on the part of his unspiritual Gentile hearers. It is not easy for us to understand them even yet. Only the spiritual man understands spiritual things (I. Cor. ii., 14, 15), and those who all their lives had been votaries of Diana and Jupiter and the lesser deities of idolatry were anything but spiritual: they were strictly "carnal" through and through, and in their lives were generally addicted to the practice of the lowest and most debasing immoralities (Rom. i., 24-32). Could the Gospel be presented to them from some other standpoint, whereby it would or might be made to take immediate hold on the minds and lives of hearers of this class? Apparently Paul thought so; and thereupon he commenced preaching to the Corinthian Gentiles the gospel of a Person, Jesus the Christ, and "Him crucified" as the Redeemer of men. Of course, this gospel of a Person included a gospel of repentance and a gospel of faith, but these two were derivative and not primary. Both rested on a Person—what He was, said, and did—so that the personal element, in Paul's thought, became the fundamental truth to be primarily presented. This truth being well apprehended, the other essential elements of the new religion could be taught with reasonable hope of success (Heb. vi., 1).

Now, it is a fact that ideas, principles, and rules of action in society, church, and state, are made most forcibly and persuasively effective in con-

vincing the human mind when they are embodied in and illustrated by the life of some representative person or individual.

For example; when we wish to teach the evils of inordinate ambition, we can most effectively and convincingly do so by illustrations from the life and career of Napoleon Bonaparte. That our children may learn to execrate a traitor, we tell them of Judas Iscariot and Benedict Arnold. Our highest lessons of patriotism are deduced from the person and life of Washington. The integrity of our Union is personified in Abraham Lincoln; Mormonism, in Brigham Young; Methodism, in the Wesleys; Presbyterian theology, in John Calvin. For a pure and perfect Christianity, there is and can be no higher manifestation than in the person and life of the Carpenter of Galilee. He who understands Him knows the whole of practical religion; he who lives as He lived is a saint.

It is much easier to teach and understand a perfect life than a perfect doctrine. Ordinarily the latter appeals only to the intellect; the former reaches the heart and all the human sympathies. And the more nearly the person is like unto us, the more powerfully are we influenced by his life. Thus it was that "it behooved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren" (Heb. ii., 17), so that the power of His life and personality, entering into the hearts and lives of the members of the lost humanity, might become efficacious unto their redemption.

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Hence, if I correctly understand the meaning of I. Corinthians ii., 2, Paul's gospel was distinctively the gospel of a Person, Jesus the Christ, and of "Him crucified," that is, as the Redeemer of men. These were his two and only two fundamentals; everything else in Christianity was derivative therefrom.

It is no part of my present purpose to summarize the gospel of Paul in its entirety, for I could not do it if I would, but only to point out the more salient features wherein it differed in formal statement or otherwise from that of the Twelve. And here it may also be noted that though Paul scarcely ever refers in set terms to the doctrine of the new birth, such doctrine is in fact involved in his figure of a death unto sin (Rom. vi., 11), and a resurrected life unto righteousness (verse 13). Some thirty or forty years later, the apostle John, by formal statement in the words of the Master, made this doctrine the basis of his Gospel (John iii., 1-12); but, so far as existing records go, Paul was the first to put it in form and force as an element in the work of saving men. So that in all the respects named, and perhaps in some others, his Gospel was new, and he had a good right to call it his own. Of course he got it from the Master, and so he tells us (Gal. i., 12); but, according to the records, he was the first fully to apprehend it in its length and breadth, and the first practically to utilize it in general evangelical work. When he did this, he created or formulated a universal

religion, a religion for humanity, a religion capable of saving the entire race—and he is the only son of Adam of whom that can be said.

It is greatly to be regretted that Christianity has failed to keep itself free of Judaism as Paul intended and taught. Certain Jewish theories of sacrifice, expiation, and atonement, borrowed in part from the Epistle to the Hebrews, but more largely from the Old Testament, as well as theories of mediation by a priesthood, have become imbedded in the creeds or beliefs of many of the numerous branches of the Christian church. These theories are not taught in the writings of Paul, nor in any of the four Gospels. Also the law of Sabbatical observance, as adopted by most of the Protestant churches of America, is strictly Judaic, or Mosaic, and not Pauline. The name "Sabbath" is itself Mosaic (or, more probably, it came from heathen Babylon), and as used by us it is a misnomer. In the early apostolic age, what we now know as the Sabbath, or Sunday, was called the first day (Acts xx., 7), as the unorthodox Quakers still call it; and at the close of the century it was known as the Lord's day (Rev. i., 10)—a name now chiefly used by the Disciples of Christ, another unorthodox body, or so regarded. Christianity will not reach its perfection until we learn to think less of Moses and his system of legalism, and more of Paul and his gospel; for in matters of revealed religion Paul is a higher authority than Moses.

## A JAPHETIC GOSPEL

WHEN Paul, under divine guidance, crossed over from Asia Minor into Greece (Acts xvi., 6-10) and undertook to Christianize the sons of Japheth, he appears soon to have discovered that he had on his hands what we now call "a new proposition." The learned philosophers of Athens simply laughed him out of that city (Acts xvii., 32). What he said was to them too absurd for reply or even for serious thought. So also to the Japhetic Gentiles of Corinth; even after he had preached there for a year and a half (Acts xviii., 11) his preaching was still naught but "foolishness," and he so tells us (I. Cor. i., 23). And even to the Japhetic converts at Rome he had to protest that his gospel was nothing to be "ashamed" of (Rom. i., 16) much as though, under or in view of the public derision to which they were subjected, they were half ashamed of it themselves, and thought that he ought to be so too.

Nor is such a state of things at all difficult to account for. As respects their established beliefs, the Semitic races of Western Asia ordinarily cared nothing for the reason why; if they were satisfied, or assured by those who were in authority and

were supposed to know, that this or that was so, they usually inquired no farther. Their habitual modes of thinking did not take them into the reason of things. It was enough for them that God made the world; but whether He made it by a single creative act, or by a series of such acts running through six ordinary days, or by a slow process of evolution during millions of years, was with them a matter of no consequence. The account which they received described it as a six-days' work; they accepted the statement, adopted it as a settled article of belief, and neither asked any questions nor entertained any doubts as to its literal accuracy.

The Japhetic mind, on the other hand, if not differently constituted, is at least differently trained. As a general rule, it accepts nothing as certain (except provisionally, or as a "working theory") unless it can be demonstrated to the physical senses as *a fact*, or else can be shown by a plausible and credible line of reasoning to be at least *probably true*. When Paul visited Athens and Corinth, he came in contact with a class of men who thought and reasoned along those lines. With them, authority in matters of religion, duty, and obligation did not count, as it did among the sons of Shem. When, for example, resurrection of the dead was preached as one of the tenets of the new religion, the Japhetic thinkers of Corinth promptly asked: "How are the dead raised? and with what manner of body do they come?" (I. Cor.

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xv., 35)—evidently implying that the objections thus raised were unanswerable, and that this particular teaching was not worthy of belief.

Numerous other facts and illustrations to the same effect might be given, but regarding these as sufficient, they would seem to justify the conclusion that when Paul undertook to Christianize the sons of Japheth he presently discovered the necessity of formulating and elaborating, especially for them, a systematic statement of the Christian faith such as, lying along or conforming to their lines of thought, would demonstrate to them its credibility, and bring it within the bounds of their acceptance. Nor was it an easy work. A very long line of devout thinking and spiritual experience intervened between the teaching of "Christ crucified" (I. Cor. ii., 2) as a starting-point and the final consummation in the unknown future (and in an unknown world as well), "when this mortal shall have put on immortality" (I. Cor. xv., 54). Those two things were a great way apart. The Semites could easily jump the chasm that lay between; but not so the sons of Japheth. For them a road had to be built, or a highway cast up, along which they could travel, mentally and spiritually, before they generally would even begin the journey.

Paul built the road; and as our best Biblical scholars are generally agreed that no other part of the New Testament, that is, outside of what he wrote, had then been written, we must conclude that he did so without aid from any human source.

The mile-posts and guide-boards which mark the line of that road will be found for the most part in the three letters that he wrote to the Japhetic churches of Corinth and Rome; and I think it possible that we have therein a considerable portion of what he included in the phrase "my gospel"—and a gospel specially formulated for the incredulous intellects of the sons of Japheth, the race to which we belong.

To follow that road and learn to know it practically and thoroughly, we need travel it only once, but this is the work of a lifetime, for the angel of death stands at the other end. But we may take a brief survey of it, note its stations, and learn something of what Paul did.

1. The starting-point or beginning of the road is outlined in his first reported speech on Japhetic soil (Acts xvii., 22-31), where he carefully distinguishes the God in whose name he speaks—"AN UNKNOWN GOD," at least to them—from the multitudinous gods of their heathenish idolatries, and sets Him forth as the Creator and Ruler of the Universe, and as the Father of all the races of men. Naturally his hearers would understand that they were included; and this obviously was an important fact which he wished them to learn.

On leaving Athens he went directly to Corinth, which at that time was probably the chief center of Japhetic art, science, and philosophy, for Athens was in its decline. Here, according to his own statement (I. Cor. ii., 2), he adopted as the basis



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and substance of his preaching the gospel of a Person—"Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." As to this I have already expressed my understanding. This Jesus Christ, in Paul's apprehension of Him, was the eternal Son of God, the manifestation of God to men, and the Saviour and Redeemer of humanity (Rom. xvi., 25-27; I. Tim., iv., 9, 10).

Another fact which lies at the beginning of Paul's gospel was the great and terrible fact of sin—that all men everywhere, of every race and through all time, had been and then were so pervaded and saturated with sin, and so dominated by it in their thoughts and lives, that they were in awful need of aid, and of such powerful and efficient aid as should suffice to take them out of that state or condition, and make them over into something purer and better—something fit for the Master's use (Rom. iii., 9-20; v., 12-14).

Death was another horrible fact; but when sin came to an end, death would be destroyed (I. Cor. xv., 54-57).

2. But how does this Person, this Jesus of Nazareth, who is now in some distant heaven, come into such personal relationship with the individual believer here on earth as to give him any efficient aid in this, his great moral emergency? Paul answers that it is by means of, or through the exercise of, faith in Him, as though this were a sort of connecting-link between man and his Redeemer (Rom. iii., 22).

3. But this faith is not of the ordinary variety.

It must, to be good for anything, possess a strength and quality that will dominate the life of the professed believer, and produce in him a result which Paul calls righteousness—which clearly includes pure, holy, and upright living (Rom. v., 1-11; xii., 9-21). To make men righteous is, in Paul's conception, the aim and end of Christianity (Rom. i., 17); and he carefully distinguishes this righteousness from, and contrasts it with, the vile and debasing immoralities which then pervaded Gentile society (Rom. i., 24-32), as well as with the strictly legal morality of Judaism (Rom. ii., 17-29). The righteousness which Christianity thus demands of its adherents, is so ineffably superior to all other, that it is, as it were, divine; it is "of God" (Rom. i., 17).

4. This righteousness—and this is Paul's next step in the road to immortality—results in justification (Rom. iii., 28), by which I understand him to mean a state or condition on the part of the individual believer in which God is willing to deal with him as if he were just or righteous—not because he is so, but because he is honestly, faithfully, and diligently trying to be so (verses 23-26).

5. Next, this state or condition of justification brings each genuine believer into a relationship of "peace with God" (Rom. v., 1)—it is obviously a good thing to be at peace with Him—and also gives him "access" or admission to the enjoyment of a measure or degree of "grace" wherein he may thereafter and forever "stand" (verse 2), for he

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then, by divine adoption has become one of God's family and one of God's heirs (Rom. viii., 15-17).

A road that leads to such results is certainly a good road to travel; and no son of Japheth can say that the waymarks are not clear and distinct.

6. The three fundamental elements of spiritual life, as above enumerated—faith, righteousness, and justification—when properly cultivated and developed, lead unto salvation (Rom. viii., 14-17), a salvation which, begun here (verses 10, 11), shall finally, by the portal of the Resurrection (I. Cor. xv., 42-44), merge in another life, into a glorious immortality (verses 50-57).

This is the end of the road, so far as we now know it; but it is not all that Paul has to tell us about it.

7. All these elements of spiritual life—faith, righteousness, justification, adoption, salvation, resurrection, and immortality—have become available to us through Jesus Christ as a gracious gift bestowed on us out of the amplitude and abundance of God's mercy and love to us; that is, not because we were entitled to them, but because He was graciously pleased, in His infinite kindness, to give them to us; and such was His loving purpose from all eternity (Rom. viii., 31-39; Titus i., 2).

8. All these are made efficacious in us and for us by His Spirit (Rom. viii., 26, 27); but there are sundry other experiences that belong to this road.

(1) He who begins with faith must exercise repentance.

(2) If he would walk in the ways of righteous-

ness, he must leave his sins behind; that is, forsake and abandon them, and not try to take them along with him.

(3) Progress in the state or condition known as justification leads one on to or toward a state or condition of sanctification; that is, toward a greater purity of thought and life, or toward holiness.

(4) Then he who has journeyed so far on that road as to attain unto "peace with God" may consider himself to be "called" or "elected," and may dwell thereafter in that spiritual freedom wherewith Christ has made us free.

9. Sum up all these elements of spiritual life and experience, add them together, and we have:

(1) The gospel of a Person—faith in "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (I. Cor. ii., 2)—worked out and elaborated into a system of believing, living, and doing, so that even the naturally skeptical sons of Japheth can have no excuse for refusing to hear, believe, and obey.

(2) We have also a gospel in which, as concerning the elements thus enumerated, all branches of the Christian church among the sons of Japheth are substantially agreed. The points on which we disagree and divide relate almost entirely (*a*) to forms of doctrinal statement; (*b*) to the relative prominence given to one doctrine as related to some other; or (*c*) to matters of church government and worship; none of which, under the teachings of Paul, are essential to salvation, or for membership in the church, which is Christ's body.

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(3) Herein we have a perfect gospel—perfect because it marks out and shows the way unto perfection.

(4) It is a universal gospel because it not only contains, but states in logical order, all the essential principles of our Christian system in their living relationship to practical life, so that “all sorts and conditions of men” may find therein everything they really need to know.

I cannot say to what extent this Pauline system of thought, thus specially formulated for the Japhetic races, should be employed or relied on in the Christianization of such totally dissimilar races as, for example, the Hamitic of Africa, or the Dravidian of India, or the Mongolian of China, all of which differ from us much more than we differ from the sons of Shem. But from what little I know of these alien races, I should suppose that Paul’s system of doctrine or teaching (for that is what doctrine really means) would be to them totally incomprehensible; that they could not understand it if they would; and, possibly, would not if they could. Nor do I see any reason why they should be required or expected to understand it. If, as clearly appears from what Paul says, Christianity has but one fundamental principle, faith in “Jesus Christ, and Him crucified,” then I can see no reason why each race or nation, adopting and starting with that basic principle, may not well be allowed to develop therefrom and formulate for itself a system of its own that shall lead

to the same end, righteousness in this life and immortality in the next; or, better yet, why some man, knowing what Christianity is, and knowing what the race or nation is, and having gifts somewhat akin to those which Paul possessed, should not do it for them. At all events, I feel safe in saying that no now existing form of denominational Christianity will become universal, nor will any such form save the race. If Paul had been led, under guidance of the Spirit, into China instead of being led into Greece, would he have written for the Chinese as he wrote for us? Possibly so; but I very much doubt it.

## PAUL AND THE EMPIRE

MY knowledge of Paul and my appreciation of his work have been matters of growth, and perhaps of a rather slow growth. Hence it is only recently that I have come to notice the somewhat radical differences that exist between Paul's gospel and that of Jesus of Nazareth, and of which I shall say more presently. If we took chronology for our guide, Paul's letters, instead of coming along toward the end of the New Testament record, would stand at the beginning, and would be arranged in a very different order from that which now prevails. The two letters to the Thessalonian converts would come first; then, probably, Galatians; then Corinthians first and second; then Romans; all probably written between A.D. 52 and 58. About three years later, and all nearly at the same time, he wrote Ephesians, Colossians, Philipians, and Philemon. Titus and I. Timothy may be dated about A.D. 64, and II. Timothy, his latest extant letter, about A.D. 66.

These letters contain the earliest Christian literature now extant. So far as other dates are at present ascertainable, all his epistles except, possibly, those to Titus and Timothy, antedate the

earliest of the four Gospels, and there is no clear indication that he ever read any of these. Accordingly, his writings show that he had but little knowledge of the former teachings and miraculous works of Jesus while on earth. There is nothing to indicate, and we have no reason to believe, that he ever saw Christ in the flesh, or that prior to his conversion he regarded Him otherwise than as an object of hatred and hostility. He quotes His words once, and only once (Acts xx., 35), and the original of this quotation is lost. Once only he cites Him as an authority (I. Cor. ix., 14). Aside from these instances, and from what he may have learned during the fifteen days spent with Peter at Jerusalem (Gal. i., 18), his knowledge of the gospel he preached and wrote, came to him by direct revelation, or at least he so tells us (Gal. i., 11, 12). Consequently his teachings were not based on our present four-Gospel records, but on an independent and direct revelation made personally to himself.

Why this was so, we are not advised, but doubtless good reasons existed. It is possible that, as Paul's gospel was to be, at least primarily, a gospel to and for the Gentiles, it was regarded as important that it be divested, so far as possible, of all the elements of Judaism as Judaism then existed.

It is a fact worthy of note that Paul never made, so far as we know, any systematic or general statement of the substance or contents of the special revelation thus made by him. One would naturally suppose that he would not have failed



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to do this, especially as the adherents of a somewhat divergent gospel were at one time seeking to impose that, to the exclusion of his own, on the churches he had organized (Gal. ii., 6-9). Perhaps his failure in this respect arose from the confident expectation which he entertained at one time that Christ the Lord would very soon reappear (I. Thess. iv., 15-17), in which case the authority of the Lord Himself would supersede anything that his servants might write. Hence Paul probably regarded his own writings as ephemeral in character and destined to be short-lived.

During His public ministry, Jesus preached what may fairly be called an ideal religion; that is, a religion perfect in its principles, and also perfect in the application that He made of those principles to the facts of daily life, and as thoroughly perfect as a millennial state of existence can possibly require. Thus, he taught what we now know as a community of goods, or the duty on the part of the rich of sharing their wealth with the poor (Mark x., 17-27); and He taught it, not as a distant or millennial duty, but as a duty then present, and of immediate binding obligation. He also taught (in derogation of Moses) an ideal law of the marriage relation (Matt. xix., 3-9), which our Protestant churches (except the Episcopal) have not learned to enforce or live up to even yet. He taught, too, a law of love which, if applied as between master and slave, would have been fatal to the system of slavery that prevailed

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everywhere throughout the Roman Empire. And as to the civil governments of His day, He seems to have regarded them generally with indifference (Matt. xvii., 25) or open contempt (Luke xiii., 31, 32).

Now, when Paul undertook the work of converting the Gentiles, and in that work came to apply Christian principles to the peculiar conditions of Gentile life, he was confronted with a number of serious problems. Should he preach as Jesus had done, a community of goods, and should he undertake to put that principle in force in the churches which he gathered here and there among the Gentile provinces of the empire, such work would tend to unsettle the laws of property in the empire; and out in the provinces Rome allowed no interference with her laws. If he should teach the Master's law of love—"thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"—he must so teach it that existing domestic relations, and particularly the attitude of the slave toward his master, should not be disturbed, for this would certainly tend to render the slaves restless if not rebellious against the brutal tyranny under which they suffered; and here again the Roman law was inexorable.

Such teachings as Jesus gave on these and sundry other strictly mundane affairs might do very well for the Jewish people, since they were in every sense a peculiar people, obstinately fanatical and difficult to manage, so that, as to their intercommunal relations, they were left to do pretty much

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as they pleased. But such teachings would not do in the Gentile communities that made up the Roman Empire. The preservation of order was the first duty of a provincial magistrate, and Rome made short work of those who sought to break up or interfere with existing civil or political institutions. Immediate arrest, a short trial, and a quick death was the rule for such. Hence Paul could not preach a community of goods among the Gentiles. No more could he release the wife from slavish obedience to the commands of the husband, no matter how brutal or unjust they might be (Col. iii., 18). Slavery, too, he was compelled to recognize as an institution that must at least be tolerated (verse 22); and when he made a convert of the runaway slave Onesimus, he had to send him back to his owner, for to keep him would have been stealing, under imperial law. He could not send him to a land of freedom, for there was none, nor turn him loose to become a criminal and an outlaw. Nor could Paul say anything in derogation of the civil government or of the existing rulers, for this would have been treason. Any one of these offenses would have been fatal to the cause. Paul would have been put to death, and likewise every person affiliated with him, and the nascent church, at least among the Gentile communities, would have been wiped out at the very beginning. For the church was not yet strong enough either to run counter to the laws of the empire or to disregard the established usages of

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the provinces; neither did it become so until about two or three centuries later, by which time it had secured so firm a foothold and so commanding an influence that the empire was compelled to yield to its authority.

I cite these facts simply to illustrate the other and larger fact that Paul in his work, from its very inception, had on hand the very large problem of adapting the ideal teachings of the Master to the then existing social, civil, and political conditions of Gentile life. He took men, life, and society as he found them, and did the best he could to make them better. He made no effort to attain unto or to incorporate into the Gentile church the high idealism of the Master in respect of worldly relations, but leaving them as they were, he sought to sanctify those relations and to make them an auxiliary in the larger work of saving souls. If he could not safely teach a community of goods, he could at least enjoin on his converts the duty of liberality to the poor (I. Cor. xvi., 1, 2; Rom. xv., 26). If he could not reform the marriage relation, he could at least make it the duty of husbands to love their wives (Eph. v., 25)—something that was exceeding rare in Gentile heathenism. And though he could not abolish slavery, he could enjoin on the slave-owner the obligation of dealing justly with his slaves (Col. iv., 1); for it was true then, as was held several centuries later, and held much later still by the highest court of our own Christian nation, that

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slaves had no rights which their owners were bound to respect. Paul was preëminently a practical man, and in the practical work of founding, not an ideal, but a practical Christianity, he accomplished results that appear likely to last till the millennium.

Hence the work of translating the idealism of Jesus into a *practicalism* that would render it admissible into Gentile life and surroundings, thus securing for Christianity a permanent foothold in Gentile communities, was at once a delicate and a hazardous undertaking. None but a man of transcendent genius and ability, a man of profound piety, such as Paul was, could ever have accomplished it. But for his Roman citizenship, his personal safety among either Jews or Gentiles would have been *nil*. But for his liberal education and his mental and spiritual power, he could never have understood the essence and substance of Christianity. If he had not been an honest man—intellectually honest—he would not have yielded to the influences which made him a Christian. If he had been a timid man, he never would have pioneered the work of the church anywhere. If he had been at all lacking in courage, he would have given up the work when, as often happened, the difficulties before him became apparently insuperable (II. Cor. iv., 8, 9). If adulation could have turned his head, he would have become the supposed incarnation of a heathen deity, and would have founded

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a religion of his own (Acts xiv., 12, 13). If, after his conversion, he had retained the bigotry of his Judaic education, he would never have polluted himself by any association with the dogs of Gentiles. If he had carried over into Christianity the fanaticism of Judaism, he would have imposed on his Gentile converts the rigorous and (some of them) odious requirements of the Mosaic law; and in that case Christianity would have become only a new sect of Judaism embracing Pharisees, Sadducees, and Nazarenes (Acts xxiv., 5). If he had been lacking in discretion, he would have ruined his cause by impracticable measures that would have brought him into immediate and open and fatal conflict with the empire. He says of himself: "I am become all things to all men" (I. Cor. ix., 22), and therein he discreetly conformed to the Master's command: "Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Matt. x., 16).

The rare discretion that Paul displayed during the twenty-five or thirty years of his ministry, in the adjustment and maintenance of apparently irreconcilable relations, whereby peace was preserved between the church and the empire until the church became too powerful to be destroyed, is one of his most striking characteristics, and probably the one that goes most frequently unnoticed. His enemies were always lying in wait. A single rash speech carried to the willing ears of a procurator or a proconsul would have been liable at any time to prove his undoing. A single indiscreet

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move, involving a change in the civil or political status of his converts, or the least indication that they occupied an attitude of hostility to any of the imperial laws, would have brought down on them at once the wrath of Rome. In fact, such was the final outcome.

It appears probable that in Paul's time the imperial authorities counted the Christians as a sect of the Jews; and the Jews, by a special concession, were exempted from the obligation of paying divine honors to the emperor. They were also protected in the free exercise of their own religion, for religious freedom was at that time as well established in the Roman Empire as it now is in the United States. But toward the end of the first century the Christians, then generally known to outsiders as "Adherents of the Name," became so numerous that, no longer being associated with Jews, they were separately dealt with. As subjects of the deified emperor they were required to show their loyalty to him by at least burning a pinch of incense in his honor. This, because they regarded it as idolatry, they refused to do. Thereupon they became the objects of persecution, not because they were Christians, but because they were disloyal to the emperor. The contest that followed between the church and the empire lasted for about two centuries, and it was a war to the death. But during this time the church had become too strong to be destroyed and eventually it conquered. It was by no means

the least of Paul's achievements that he skilfully averted that war while the church was in the infancy of its growth, for at that time the hostility of the empire would have been fatal to it and to him.

For reasons already stated, I do not understand that Paul imagined, regarding many things which he required or permitted, that he was making rules of practice which should be of binding obligation on the church throughout the ages of its future history. He was writing and working, primarily at least, with direct reference to the then existing condition of things. For instance, when he forbade women to speak in the church (I. Cor. xiv., 34) he simply required them to conform to the demands of public decency and morality. The connection which women in those days had with the services of religion in heathen temples was not such as was promotive of good morals. Hence in order to preserve his churches from even the suspicion in public apprehension of immoral associations or practices, Paul was compelled to prescribe as he did. But such a state of things does not now exist in connection with the service of our holy religion; and while I do not advocate a woman-ministry, I know no good reason why this prohibition of Paul's should still be quoted as final authority on that point. If he were now living, I doubt not that he would listen with interest and approval, and possibly with profit, to such a woman as Mrs. Ballington Booth,



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even if she were speaking from a Presbyterian pulpit.

Hence also, in so far as Paul omitted to enjoin on his converts the high idealism of the Master as set forth in the Gospels, I think that he probably did so for reasons that were but local and temporary; and if so, it obviously became the duty of the church, as soon as it gained the upper hand in its contest with the empire, to endeavor vigorously to conform its rules of living and doing to the much higher standard which the Master had prescribed. Unfortunately the church did not do so; nor, except in a few small and uninfluential sects (as the Moravian, for example) has it done so yet.

## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### I

IF this book were entitled *Thirty Years of Conflict*, the average reader would easily get a more correct understanding and a higher appreciation of its contents. Its present title is clearly a misnomer. Peter is the only one of the original apostles whose "acts" can be said to figure with any considerable prominence, and that only in somewhat less than the first half of the book. Paul, the leading character in the rest of the book, was never, so far as we know, recognized as an apostle by the Twelve. The next most prominent personages in its narrative, Philip, Stephen, and James (Acts i., 13), never even claimed apostleship. If Luke had intended to treat of the acts of the apostles generally, he would have told us something of what the others were doing during the thirty years of his history. The man who first devised this name for this book did not understand his business.

It is the only book in the Bible that is strictly historical. Chronicles, as the name implies, is a mere chronicle of events; Kings and Samuel are the same.

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Luke, the author of Acts, was probably a Greek by descent, and clearly possessed in a high degree what is called "the historical faculty"—a faculty not uncommon among the educated men of Greece and Rome, but quite rare among the people of Hebrew blood. Josephus is the first Jewish historian of whom we have any knowledge, and he, by training and education, was half Roman.

Luke also had a good education, or else he possessed a native genius for literary work. His Greek diction is superior to that of any other New Testament writer. Where the facts were not within his personal knowledge, he looked up and collated his authorities with care (Luke i., 3). Much of what he wrote in Acts he personally observed (Acts xvi., 16; xx., 7, 13; xxi., 1; etc.). As a physician (Col. iv., 14), he probably had the usual education of his profession. His writings, at all events, show clearly and conclusively that he was well equipped for the work he undertook.

From evidence found in Luke's Gospel, it seems reasonably clear that this was compiled and written *after* the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70); and, conjecturally, I would place it at or about A.D. 75. The Book of Acts came later (Acts i., 1), probably not much if at all earlier than A.D. 80, and, for reasons presently to be noted, not later than the early or middle nineties.

It will appear as we proceed that during the first thirty or forty years of the preaching of the new religion, say down to about A.D. 65 or 70,

the attitude of the empire—that is, of the civil authorities—was not unfriendly.<sup>1</sup> The new religion was tolerated, and its adherents were protected, just as were the cults of Judaism or of Jupiter or Diana. What particular deity a man worshiped, or what religion he believed, was at that time a matter of indifference to the Roman authorities so long as he paid his taxes, obeyed the laws, and kept the peace.

So far as existing records go, no *general* persecution by the civil authorities was inaugurated till near the end of the reign of the Emperor Domitian, say about A.D. 93–96; but it appears reasonably clear that at some time earlier, say between A.D. 75 and 90, the imperial authorities had drifted into a position of hostility to the new religion, and were showing that hostility in such ways as to make the prospect alarming. This hostility, we may readily believe, as it became more open and more pronounced, led to local persecutions here and there throughout the empire, until at last under Domitian, all restraints were removed, and the attitude of the imperial authorities then became unalterably hostile, and deadly in its hostility.

We may safely say that this period marked an

<sup>1</sup>I leave the Neronian persecution (A.D. 64–68) out of consideration, because: (1) it was the result of the personal malevolence and brutality of Nero himself; (2) it ended when he died; (3) it did not extend to the provinces, but was limited to the city of Rome; and (4) it did not change the subsequent policy of the empire toward the Adherents of the Name.

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epoch in the history of the new church. Thereafter it had to fight for its right to live: either the church or the empire must conquer. The fight was made; it lasted for the next two hundred years or more; the empire was defeated and Christianity survived. But during the earlier years, Judaism was hostile, and violently so, as it had been from the first; so also was heathenism.

Now, as I read the Book of Acts, it was written primarily for the purpose of presenting, historically: (1) the conflicts between Christianity and its open and avowed enemies, Judaism and heathenism; (2) the unjust efforts made by these to effect the suppression of Christianity by bringing it into conflict with the empire, during the period of which the book treats, say down to about A.D. 64; and (3) the fact that these efforts were unavailing because, during this period, the church had invariably lived at peace with the empire, and with the church the empire had always maintained friendly relations. If these things were so, they would obviously operate as an argument in favor of the *continuance* of amicable relations between the church and the empire, and as an argument against any policy of persecution that might be "in the air" or under consideration by the emperor, his officers, and advisers. For if (as was the case), during the turmoils and conflicts of the first thirty years of the life of the new church, its adherents had so observed the laws and lived in such peace as to entitle them to the friendly protection of the

civil authorities; and if (as was also the case) the only occasions when they were mixed up in riotous or disorderly proceedings resulted from the unjust assaults of Jewish and heathen fanaticism, these facts ought obviously to have been of no little weight in preventing the adoption of any opposite or adverse policy, and the new church should have continued to receive public toleration and official protection.

Hence the argument of the Book of Acts is an argument against persecution, and it was probably written at a time when the church was in danger. It involved a vindication of the church against unjust assaults, a justification of the policy it had pursued, and an effort to secure on the part of the empire the same friendly treatment which for thirty years it had enjoyed.

Obviously, such a history could not be written without setting forth also the successes which the church had met with and the reasons why it had grown and prospered and gone to nearly all parts and provinces of the empire; for these successes, judged either by the means employed or by results attained, involved nothing unfriendly to the empire or at variance with its recognized interests, and hence gave no ground for a change in the imperial policy.

Also, it was important to the same end that the civil authorities should be informed as to the origin of the church; where it came from; how it came into existence; the purposes and principles

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of its organization; who were its leaders and representative men.

Let us see if the facts fit this theory, for otherwise the theory is worthless.

### *The Origin and Organization of the Church*

These are set forth briefly but with sufficient fullness for the writer's purpose in chapters i. and ii. The new religion is shown (i., 1-14) to be the outcome of a religious movement the history of which he had narrated in a previous book, but the consummation of which, by the resurrection and ascension of its founder, is here particularly set forth. The instructions he gave for the guidance of his followers (verse 8) are clearly stated, and it will be noted that they contain nothing of a political cast or type. So far, the empire had nothing to fear. The original and authorized organizers of the church are individually named (verse 13), and record is made of the completion of the official organization by the election of a new member to take the place of one who, through a course of base treachery, had been driven by consequent remorse to a consequent suicide (verses 15-26).

Next (chap. ii.) we are told of the marvelous success which, in consequence of the presence and power of a supernatural agency, this new religion met with at the very beginning of its career, and how this success had brought into its

membership representatives from both the near and the distant provinces of the empire (verses 5-11). It was indeed wonderful; in power and extent the like had never been seen in the world before; but it was only what the ancient prophets of the Hebrew nation had predicted centuries earlier, as Peter proceeded to demonstrate.

Thus far there was nothing in which the adherents of the new faith might not take a justifiable pride and rejoice with a holy fervor. To them it was a vindication and source of consolation. Nor was there anything to which the emperor or his officers and advisers could take exception. The religions already prevalent in the empire, and recognized by law, had supernatural stories to tell that were much less credible than anything thus far narrated. Neither was there anything inimical to imperial interests. Of course, Luke does not say all this, but he states the facts, and leaves the obvious inferences to be drawn.

### *The Early Conflicts with Judaism*

Three early conflicts with Judaism are narrated; all belong to Jerusalem and to the first two or three years of the period under consideration; but none of them involved any conflict with the empire or with any imperial interests. Let us take them in order.

1. The miraculous healing of the lame beggar by Peter in the name of his divine Master, "at



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the door of the temple which is called Beautiful" (Acts iii., 1-10), is evidently narrated because: (1) it was an early and striking illustration of the broad and kindly beneficence that dwelt in and characterized the new faith—that is, it was not inimical (as commonly charged when Luke wrote) to the best interests of society and humanity; (2) it opened the door for a new exposition of the origin and nature of the new faith (verses 11-26); (3) even so kindly an act done, not to a fellow-believer, but to a poverty-stricken and helpless stranger, was the groundwork of the first conflict in which the nascent church became involved (chap. iv.); but also because (4)—and this was quite as important a fact as any—the conflict was on a question in which the empire (or state, as we call it) *had no interest*. This miracle, wrought in the highest kindness and charity, marked the inception of an implacable and deadly hostility on the part of Judaism, and a hostility that continued to be implacable and deadly, and unceasingly active, down to the end of the period here dealt with. Judaism became an enemy; but this enmity, based as it was, not on any principle of legality or civil right or equity, but on a bigoted and inhuman fanaticism, contained or presented no reason why the empire or state should also be an enemy.

In this first conflict, the new faith won a temporary victory, and the victory was devoutly celebrated (Acts iv., 13-31). The miracle also worked greatly to an increase in the membership

(verse 4), and likewise in the consecrated enthusiasm of the members of the growing church (verse 32).

What bearing had the Ananias episode (Acts v., 1-11) on the general subject in hand? Simply this: it showed that *the church was honest with itself*; in other words, that it had both the power and the will to enforce on its own membership a faithful compliance with the high rules of moral conduct which it professed to the world. Obviously there was nothing here at which the imperial authorities need be alarmed.

2. The wonderful success met with in the further preaching of the new religion (verses 12-16) led the Jewish Sanhedrin, the highest court of the nation, to take official cognizance of what was going on; for the Sanhedrin exercised jurisdiction over matters of faith and morals, as well as over such civil questions as were not reserved to the Roman tribunals. As the Sanhedrin looked at it, the stability of the orthodox faith of the Jewish church was being endangered by this religious revival which was sweeping like wildfire through Jerusalem. Such proceedings could not be tolerated.

The record (verses 17-42) of the arrest of the apostles, their imprisonment, supernatural deliverance, rearrest, trial, and final acquittal need not be recapitulated. It is brief, simple, and clear. But two facts should be specially noted, for Luke is careful to state them with much particularity:

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first, that at this time the apostles in Jerusalem had not taken a position of antagonism in respect of the religious requirements of the Mosaic law. They carefully observed the regular usages regarding temple worship (Acts iii., 1). Their usual place of teaching was in the holy temple (Acts v., 20). They were Jews as much as ever. They affirmed that their new faith and belief were in strict accord with the teachings of Moses and the covenant with Abraham (Acts. iii., 22-26). Evidently they regarded this, their new faith, as a further development of Judaism, as something to be added to it, and which, being so added to it, would perfect it, and not as something that would abolish and supersede it. This latter conception and its practical introduction into Christianity belongs to Paul rather than to the original Twelve.

The other fact is this: The first serious manifestations of Jewish hostility to the new faith came from the Sadducaic element or faction of Judaism, and not from the Pharisaic (Acts iv., 1; v., 17); for the Jewish church was at that time divided into two irreconcilable parties or sects, each violently hating the other; and in the Sanhedrin the Sadducees were then in the majority. In this particular crisis the Pharisaic element sided with the apostles (Acts v., 34-40), probably not out of any love for them, but simply to thwart and annoy their common enemy. It was not long, however, before the Pharisees also became bitterly hostile, as we shall presently see.

The two facts thus stated were important for Luke's purpose—the first, because it had to do with the charge of heterodox teaching that was brought against the apostles (Acts iv., 17, 18; v., 28, 40), which charge they answered by proving the contrary, as already noted; the second, because it had to do with the composition or makeup of the court that tried them. The majority of the court, the Sadducees, were avowedly hostile, and in fact were the prosecutors; so that the accused, after trial, were finally acquitted by the conjoint vote of both factions (Acts. v., 40) that is to say, by their avowed enemies, the Sadducees, as well as by their temporary allies, the Pharisees.

Nor does the fact that before release the apostles were scourged, just to keep them from offending again (verse 40), lessen the effect of this as a verdict of acquittal; for we may be sure that the same Sanhedrin which a year or so before had, contrary to law, condemned Jesus to death (Matt. xxvi., 66) would as unhesitatingly have condemned his apostles to a like fate if it had been possible to do so. Hence the verdict of acquittal, thus rendered, fully justified the inference that Luke obviously wished his readers to draw, that the Christianity preached by Peter and his apostolic colleagues contained nothing which was at variance with the teachings of Moses and the prophets; for the Sanhedrin, the court especially invested with jurisdiction of such questions, had in this case so decided. The accused had been guilty of no crime

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known to the Jewish law. Nor was it pretended that any law of the empire had been violated. Hence the new religion was entitled to tolerant treatment at the hands of both and should not have been persecuted by either.

On the release of the apostles, their work was resumed with renewed zeal and activity, under the special manifestations of divine favor that attended it, till we come to the conflict that arose out of the vigorous preaching of Stephen, justly revered as the first of the long roll of Christian martyrs (Acts vi., 1-8).

3. This third conflict, probably about a year or two later, was a direct outcome of Jewish bigotry and fanaticism. Stephen was rapidly forging to the front as a new leader of the primitive faith, and he had acquired such an understanding of it that he was led to take the advanced ground afterward occupied by Paul, that Christianity, instead of being a sect *of* Judaism, to live and be developed only *within* the Jewish church, and to whose membership no one could be eligible except Jews' proselytes, was in reality a religion that would abolish and supersede Judaism, so that membership therein was open to Jews, but also to impure, polluted, and hated Gentile dogs, and, in fact, to all men without regard to race or nationality. As soon as this was seen to be the drift of Stephen's argument, and before his position was fully developed, the Sanhedrin was turned into a howling mob, and he was stoned to death

without even the forms of verdict and sentence. The wrath thus engendered against him was turned in deadly persecution on the infant church with such malignant violence that its leading adherents were compelled to flee from Jerusalem in haste (Acts viii., 4); and even then the emissaries of Judaism, under the leadership of the zealous and bigoted Saul, followed rapidly on their trails in vain efforts to effect the total extermination of the new faith.

Luke's *historical* purpose—and I am now dealing with his record from a historical standpoint—in narrating this third conflict (as, merging into a mob, it had no judicial result) was apparently to explain how it was that the new religion came to be presented to the Gentiles of the empire at large; for thus far no Gentile had been converted, nor, so far as we know, had any Gentiles ever heard of Christianity. Consequently, thus far no imperial question had been raised. And still further, not only was it true that, as is afterward shown, Christianity could and did live at peace with the empire, wherefore there was no excuse for imperial persecution, but it was also true that the members of the new faith had, from the first, sought to live at peace with Judaism, and that the conflicts which arose with Judaism were not of their seeking. The Jews in every case were the aggressors; their aggressions were without good or valid reason; and the Christians were the innocent victims. And this was true of

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Herod's brutality (chap. xii.), as it was of the events already reviewed.<sup>1</sup>

But the church now, for the first time, came into living contact with the Gentiles. The work spread into Samaria (Acts viii., 5-25)—for the Samaritans were classed as Gentiles—a high official of a distant Gentile court is converted (verses 26-40); also a Roman centurion (Acts x., 1-48) and probably others, for these are evidently selected as historical illustrations of the general facts and conclusions to be historically developed.

For strictly historical purposes (chap. ix.), the conversion of Paul was but an episode, though for religious purposes it was much more; but it was an episode necessary to the narration, for hereafter the contact of Christianity with the empire was almost wholly associated with Paul and his work, so much so that the acts and lives of the other apostles pass entirely out of Luke's field of view. If they or any of them made it any part of their official work to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles, history does not record it; and the traditions that are preserved relative thereto are of no historical value. On the records as we now

<sup>1</sup> Luke's reason for failing to give an account of the trial and conviction of the apostle James does not appear in the record. If conjecture be allowable we may surmise that this was a tyrannical case of judicial murder; and if so, it had no significance in respect of the relations of Christianity to Judaism or to the empire—the latter being, as it seems to me, the particular subject of Luke's history.

have them Paul is entitled to the sole credit of that work.

And that work, as he developed and enlarged it, brought him into repeated conflicts with the synagogue authorities in Gentile cities and districts. Luke mentions a number of these, but chiefly for the purpose of showing how, in his work, Paul was uniformly compelled, in order to accomplish anything, to quit the synagogue and turn to the Gentiles (Acts xiii., 44-48). His Gentile work finally led to conflicts that brought him and his cause before the imperial tribunals, with results which may form the subject of our next lesson.



## THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

### II

WE shall find that the conflicts in which Paul became implicated at last brought him, on several occasions, into direct contact with Rome as represented by her highest judicial officers, and on the last occasion before the emperor himself. Thus the question was fought out whether the active propagation of Christianity contained or involved anything at variance with the laws and interests of the empire. If it did not—and such was the final outcome of the history now before us—then the conclusion was obvious that it had a right to the same toleration and protection in and throughout the empire that was already enjoyed by Judaism and the multitudinous cults of heathenism. Let us note these occasions in their order.

I. According to Luke's account, the work of preaching the new religion had gone on actively, aggressively, and successfully for some twenty-five years, and in such a peaceable way that nothing had been said or done which required even the notice of the imperial authorities, a fact by inference greatly to the credit of the rising church.

The first conflict came at Philippi (Acts xvi., 11-39). A female slave of that place, popularly regarded as possessing "a spirit of divination," and who, by the exercise of her art, "brought her masters much gain," made herself so annoying to Paul that he exorcised the demon that was supposed to inspire her vaticinations, and as a result her value as a money-maker was at an end. Her owners, evidently for purposes of revenge, effected the arrest of Paul and his coadjutor Silas and brought them for trial before the Roman prætors. The exorcising of demons, however, was not an offense under Roman law. Paul had done nothing to interfere with the ownership of this slave, nor had he done anything to lessen her market value *as a slave*. Hence no law of the empire was violated by what he had done. So, to get desired revenge, the charge was made that he was a disturber of the public peace (verses 20, 21). This was a punishable offense under Roman law, and one of which the prætors were bound to take cognizance.

The trial, however, instead of following the requirements of Roman procedure, merged into an exhibition of mob violence in which the prætors not only unjustly but illegally and offensively took an active part, in such manner as to render themselves liable to be called to account at the imperial court; for breaches of the peace, especially by lawless mobs, were something which Rome did not tolerate (Acts xix, 40). On the morrow they

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came to their senses, humbly acquitted the prisoners, meekly discharged them, and, evidently to get the matter hushed up before a new outbreak of mob violence should bring down on them the wrath of the emperor, they begged Paul to take himself elsewhere.

Two or three inferences were deducible from this account:

(1) Paul, in exorcising a demon, did nothing in violation of any law of the empire. The casting out of demons was not uncommon even in heathenism (Acts xix., 13-20).

(a) The charge that he was a disturber of the public peace was not true. He stood his trial and was acquitted.

(b) The only disturbers of the peace on this occasion were the mob and the Roman magistrates.

Obviously there was nothing in all this that should lead the imperial authorities to take a position or adopt a policy inimical to the new church. Its chief leader and representative, Paul, had kept the peace and obeyed the laws.

2. The next occasion was when, a few months later, at Corinth, Paul was brought before Gallio, the Roman proconsul, a man of good birth and high rank, a brother of Seneca the philosopher and moralist, well-educated and highly trained in Roman law, and a personal favorite of the emperor. As the sequel proved, he was a typical Roman judge.

After a few weeks, Paul's work in Corinth became

so offensive to the officials of the Jewish synagogue that they seized his person and brought him before the proconsul for trial; but, unfortunately for them, they could not charge him with any crime or offense known to the Roman law—only that he, a Jew, was persuading men to worship their (and his) God in a manner contrary to the methods prescribed by the Mosaic law (Acts xviii., 13). Gallio, as a Roman, cared no more for the Mosaic law than we care for the Book of Mormon; and as for the particular way in which any citizen or subject of the empire worshiped his deity, or what deity he worshiped, provided he did it in a peaceable manner, and not in disregard of any imperial law, Gallio cared not a button. Subject to these two conditions, Rome permitted to all her subject nations the free exercise of their respective religions, and subject to the same conditions. Religious freedom at that time was as well established in the Roman Empire as it is now in the United States. Nor were the adherents of one religion allowed to interfere with the free exercise of any other, for such interference would be, or would lead up to, a breach of the peace, and the preservation of the peace was the first duty of every Roman official.

As soon as the charge was made, Gallio saw that it involved no question that came within the jurisdiction of a Roman magistrate. If they had any charge to make “of wrong” done (a civil injury to anybody), or “of wicked villany” (a crime

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against the law of the empire), he would try the case; but, as the charge made—evidently the only charge that could be made—was about “words and names and your own [Mosaic] law,” these were questions concerning which the empire cared nothing. Gallio accordingly rendered a prompt decision, and dismissed the case (Acts xviii., 14-17).

Now why did Luke take the trouble to report all this with so much detail? Simply because it was what, in modern law practice, we call a precedent, or an adjudicated case; and under Roman practice adjudicated cases had quite as much weight as with us—perhaps more. *Stare decisis* is a very old rule. A proconsul, as a judicial officer, ranked next to the emperor, and the decisions of the former were regarded as a judicial expression of the will of the latter. Hence Luke could very properly and very forcibly cite this case in order to establish the conclusion that Christianity contained nothing inimical to the empire; that it always had been so held, and therefore that Christianity should be tolerated, licensed, and protected just as were Judaism and the numerous cults of heathenism. If so, the conclusion followed that the persecution of the church was contrary to the long-settled and well-established policy of the empire.

3. The third occasion came some two years later at Ephesus, then the capital of the Roman province of Asia, now a part of Asia Minor. So

numerous were Paul's converts from heathenism that the sale of the images and shrines which constituted a part of the cult of the heathen goddess Diana, became seriously lessened, and a trade-union riot followed (Acts xix., 23-41). In this case, however, though Paul was not arrested, two of his coadjutors were, but no formal trial appears to have been had. But apparently some of the magistrates were friendly to Paul, had kept themselves well-informed of what was going on, both as to Paul's doings and as to the trade-union opposition, and consequently were prepared to deal with the riot as soon as it broke out. Verse 40 gives formal expression to the danger that confronted the magistrates when the public peace was disturbed. In the case here referred to the town clerk, evidently familiar with all the facts, reminded the mob that these Christians were "neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of [their] goddess" (verse 37), and consequently, by inference, had done nothing to interfere with their worship or to disturb the public peace. If they had done any wrong or injury to Demetrius or his fellow-craftsmen, an ample remedy by a regular course of procedure was provided by law, and to this they could report (verse 38). Obviously no such wrong had been done; the makers of devotional shrines could still continue to make and sell as many of them as the worshippers of Diana desired to purchase. Paul and his coadjutors had not interfered with the worship of

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Diana nor with the business or trade of her devotees. And if it was so here, it was presumptively so elsewhere in the empire—in fact wherever any idolatrous or other worship prevailed. Thus the leaders of the new church were adjudged to be keepers of the peace in their relations with heathenism, just as before Gallio they had been held to be keepers of the peace in their dealings with Judaism. In both cases they had respected and obeyed the laws of the empire.

4. All these experiences, however, were only a prelude to the next, which began in the temple at Jerusalem, and ended in the court of Cæsar at Rome, occupying in all four or five years.

About the year A.D. 57 or 58 Paul made a trip to Jerusalem, ostensibly to carry and deliver certain moneys which his Gentile churches had raised for the poverty-stricken members of the mother church (Rom. xv., 25, 26). I doubt if this was the real reason for the journey, for certainly Paul was not justified in thus risking his life (Acts xxi., 4, 11-14) on a business errand which any one of his several lieutenants could have done just as well and with perfect safety. But clearly it was the only reason of which Luke knew. How it was that by so doing Paul was putting himself in peril, has been explained already. When he released the churches under his charge from the obligations of the Mosaic law and ritual, as adopted and enforced by the great Sanhedrin at Jerusalem, he thereby became in Jewish thought a renegade and

an outcast. It is safe to say that when he entered the city he was the most thoroughly hated man within its walls. But as he had been there only once or twice during the previous twenty years, and then only for a short time, he was probably known personally to few outside the circle of Christian converts, and even the majority of them regarded him with very marked disfavor (verses 20, 21).

In order to conciliate this hostile Christian element, Paul consented to show in public at least an external conformity to one of their leading ceremonial observances (verses 22-26). One day, while so occupied, he chanced to come under the notice of some foreign Jews who knew him by sight, and who, in their bigoted fanaticism, at once raised the "mad-dog" cry of heresy and temple-profanation. A wild and lawless riot immediately broke loose. The Roman garrison quickly intervened and rescued Paul from an otherwise certain death, not because they cared anything for Paul, or even knew him, but simply to "keep the peace." Before the officer in command of the garrison could find out what the riot was about, he learned of the existence of a secret but well-devised plot, engineered by the holy Sanhedrin itself, having for its object the assassination of Paul. He thereupon promptly relieved himself of responsibility by sending Paul, under a powerful military escort, to his superior officer, Felix, the procurator at Cæsarea, and referred Paul's



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accusers to that superior authority (chaps. xxi.-xxiv.).

A time was set for the trial, and the accusers appeared, accompanied by a professional advocate who filled the rôle of prosecuting attorney. A set of charges (an *accusatio*, or, as we call it, an indictment) was formulated, in substance as follows:

(1) That Paul was a notorious disturber of the public peace (Acts xxiv., 5).

(2) That he was a ringleader of the new sect, then known in Jerusalem as "the Nazarenes" (verse 5).

(3) That he had profaned the holy temple of the Jews (verse 6).

Counts 1 and 3 of this indictment were for offenses that were punishable under Roman law, for as to count 3, the Jews in their worship were under the protection of the empire. Paul in his defense denied that he was guilty of either of these offenses and demanded the proofs, as he had a perfect right to do under Roman law (Acts xxiv., 11-13, 19, 20). But the proofs were not forthcoming. Perhaps the witnesses, "the Jews from Asia" (Acts xxi., 27), had returned to their distant homes, or for some other reason could not be found. Possibly they had discovered the mistake they had made (verse 29).

Under count 2 Paul admitted the fact, but denied that this constituted a crime under Roman law (Acts xxiv., 14-17), which was a true and complete answer to the charge.

Clearly the prosecution had failed to make out a case and the prisoner was entitled to an immediate acquittal and release. And not only had the prosecution failed, but Felix had already acquired in some manner a sufficient knowledge of Christianity—then known to him as “the way”—to enable him to see that the empire had nothing to fear from Paul’s preaching (verse 22). At the same time he had no notion of letting Paul go. He would make his imprisonment as comfortable as possible (verse 23), and that might prevent any appeal to the emperor; he would detain him on the frivolous pretext that he must see Lysias before pronouncing judgment (verse 22); he would bring Paul within the fascinating influence of his beautiful Jewish bride Drusilla (verse 24); he himself would entertain him as a specially honored palace guest (verse 26); he would even try to endure his preaching, but a single experiment was enough (verse 25)—and all for what? A bribe! (verse 26). Paul could have had his liberty at any time by paying a reasonable bribe, but it was not yet time for the church to be doing business in that way. We do it now, only we call it a ransom—the same thing under another name.

Felix continued to play this game for two years (verse 27); but finally, on account of tyranny and brutality, he was removed from office and ordered to Rome for trial. Then in hopes of appeasing the wrath of the Jews who had been instrumental in securing his recall, he left Paul a prisoner in chains.

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The case then came before the procurator's successor, Festus, who in the main was a fair and exemplary ruler. What Festus should do with the case was to Felix apparently a matter of indifference. Having incurred the emperor's displeasure, Felix had other matters to think of.

The Jews had become a turbulent, fanatical, passionate, and quarrelsome people, and were probably the most difficult to manage of all the subject nations of the empire. Festus, within three days after reaching his capital, Cæsarea, probably in order to get a better knowledge of the singular people with which he had to deal, made a trip to Jerusalem (Acts xxv., 1). Jewish hatred of Paul had not abated during the two years that had passed. At once the Jews made a dead set to get Festus to bring Paul to Jerusalem for trial, where, even if he should reach the place alive, which was very doubtful (verse 3), it was perfectly obvious to one knowing the condition of things in the city that he would be convicted on the testimony of perjured witnesses, or that, if acquitted, he would be assassinated as soon as he was out of sight of the imperial guards. Festus at first very curtly refused the demand of the Jews. Paul was in his custody at Cæsarea, and there the trial must be held (verses 2-5).

The trial was so held, and it was briefly a repetition of the former trial before Felix (verses 6-8). The charges were not sustained, for if they had been, Festus would have pronounced judgment at

once, as he was anxious to placate the favor of the turbulent people he had come to rule (verse 9). This latter consideration moved him to suggest that instead of rendering judgment at once—and obviously a judgment of acquittal (verse 10)—he would retry the case at Jerusalem. Paul evidently knew that a trial among the perjurers and assassins of Jerusalem would only result fatally to himself. Thereupon he exercised his right as a Roman citizen of an appeal to the emperor. This appeal removed the case from Festus's jurisdiction. He then had nothing to do but keep the prisoner in safe custody till he could be sent to Rome, and with him to send a transcript of the charges made against him, and of the proofs and proceedings.

Festus, however, had now got himself into a rather bad box. He could not help recognizing the fact that Paul was entitled to a verdict of acquittal, as fully appears from the last clause of verse 10, and from Festus's own admissions to Agrippa (verses 17-19, 25); but he had refused to acquit him before the appeal, and under Roman procedure he could not acquit him *after* appeal. He must now send the prisoner to Rome; must send with him a transcript of the case, a transcript that should include some charge of offense against the laws of the empire and also an abstract of the evidence to sustain the charge. This he could not furnish for the prosecution had failed to make out a specific case. By sending to his imperial master such a case as this then appeared

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to be, he would only render himself a subject of derision at the imperial court (Acts xxv., 27).

While Festus was still puzzling with himself what to do, it happened that Herod Agrippa, the Roman governor (under the title of king) of certain provinces along the northeast frontier of Palestine made a state call on Festus, and doubtless being cordially welcomed (for such a call was a high honor) "tarried there many days" (verses 13, 14). Now, while Festus evidently knew nothing of Moses and the prophets, nothing of the peculiarities of Jewish religion, ritual, ceremonial requirements, Messianic expectations, etc., and consequently could not make out whether Paul, in his preaching had so interfered with Jewish worship and observances as to render himself amenable to punishment under imperial laws, Agrippa, on the other hand, was perfectly familiar with the whole subject; for, in addition to his training and long experience as a Roman king, he had had in early life a Jewish education, and was, nominally at least, an adherent of the Jewish faith. Even still, by the special authorization of the emperor, he appointed the high priest and exercised a general supervision over the affairs of the temple. Possibly he might help Festus out of his dilemma. Accordingly one day Festus submitted to him a brief statement of the case (verses 14-21). Agrippa readily consented, and the day following was set for the hearing, which, though not a trial in form (for no trial could be had after ap-

peal), yet in moral and logical effect amounted to that.

This hearing was evidently made a state occasion for the entertainment of the royal visitors by a lavish display of all the wealth, pomp, and magnificence with which it could be invested. Festus, as imperial procurator, would necessarily wear his scarlet robe and the other gorgeous insignia of his high office. Agrippa, we may be sure, did not forget, when he came, to bring with him his crown and royal apparel—for the Herods were always noted for their love of ostentation and show. Bernice also was there. She too was a Herod, the daughter of one king, successively the wife of two other kings, the sister of a fourth king, and afterward the reputed mistress of an emperor; wealthy, proud, and imperious, and noted even in Rome for her rare beauty. It is safe to say that with her personal attractions, dress, and decorations and her attendant retinue, she contributed no small part to the magnificent pageantry. The uniformed officials of Festus's court were there, his assessors, military tribunes, and lictors. The city officials also were invited (verse 23). Evidently in Luke's thought the court, as thus constituted, befitted the occasion; for it was finally to be determined, so far as it could be determined by any authority less than that of the emperor himself, whether Christianity, as preached by Paul, was permissible within the empire. In the trial of Paul, Christianity itself was on trial.

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Festus opened the proceedings with a neat, clear, and graceful statement of the case as it was developed on the previous trial, and also of his dilemma in respect of sending it to the emperor. He then turned the case over to Agrippa, who thus became the presiding judge. On receiving permission to speak, Paul proceeded with a masterly exposition of the relation to Judaism of the new faith that he preached (chap. xxvi.).

In it he was grand, eloquent, and sublime. No finer defense of Christianity was ever formulated. Agrippa, to whom it was especially addressed, evidently understood it all; but Paul's recital of heavenly visions and revelations, of Messianic hopes and Mosaic prophecies, of repentance, sanctification, and the resurrection of the dead—to these Festus apparently listened in dismayed wonder and astonishment. What could it all mean? To him such talk was but the raving of a man driven into insanity by overstudy (verse 24). Paul gracefully affirmed his own sanity and declared that he was speaking "words of truth and soberness," as Agrippa well knew, if Festus did not (verses 25, 26).

Resuming his defense after Festus's interruption, Paul began to press home on Agrippa the conclusiveness of the argument from prophecy (verse 27). It seems clear that Agrippa at once apprehended the drift of the argument, but he was not minded to be caught in a trap. He had heard enough. He closed the discussion with a

curt remark (verse 28), the meaning of which cannot be certainly determined, for we do not know the tone of voice or the manner in which it was spoken. Agrippa, though a Jew by faith, was cynical in temperament, and not noted for piety; in fact, he was "a man of the world" as the world went then. Derisively he said in substance, as I read it: "A little more and you will make a Christian of me." The idea of making a Christian of Herod Agrippa was the climax of absurdity, or as we sometimes say colloquially, it was "too funny for anything." We may readily imagine that, unless restrained by etiquette or "good form," a loud haw-haw throughout the court must have greeted this remark. Paul's reply is in strict accord with this interpretation, for he impliedly admits that he has no more expectation of converting Agrippa than he has of converting the lordly Festus and his heathen court, the wanton Bernice, and the other numerous members of the heathen concourse. The idea, so prominent in our modern preaching and hymnology, that Agrippa was "almost persuaded," is not sustained by the record.

Without waiting to hear the remainder of Paul's argument, the court adjourned (verse 30). After a consultation of all the officials (court and cabinet), a verdict of acquittal was unanimously agreed on (verses 31, 32), although technically it came too late to effect Paul's release. But as a judicial finding its moral effect was the same.



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Paul, in preaching Christianity, had wronged no one; had done no violence to Judaism nor to its service or worship; had violated no law of the empire. Probably there was just at that time no officer of the imperial government better qualified to pass judicially on those questions than was Herod Agrippa, and I surmise that this was Luke's reason for giving such full particulars of this remarkable trial.

I have followed these proceedings with some detail simply to bring out clearly the fact that on these charges, and the only charges which could be brought against him, Paul was tried three times by the imperial authorities—first by Felix, then by his successor Festus, and again by Agrippa—and by none of the three was he found to be guilty of any offense against, or of any crime under, the laws of the empire, even though the prosecution was conducted by the Jewish Sanhedrin with all the wealth, power, and influence at its command, and when two at least of the three judges were avowedly hostile, and the third, Agrippa, no friend of Paul's.

It is a noticeable fact that Luke is silent as to the first disposal of Paul's case, when this was brought before the emperor for appeal.

From the record left us (Acts xxviii., 11-31) it seems that Paul, on arriving at Rome, was not regarded by the imperial authorities as a particularly dangerous personage, and hence, instead of being subjected to close confinement was made a

prisoner in *libera custodia*, that is, guarded only by soldiers to prevent his escape, and in order that he might be produced when called for. His imprisonment was largely nominal.

He was allowed to rent lodgings or apartments of his own, and within those lodgings was subject to no restrictions in respect of his evangelizing work. And this detention continued two whole years, probably awaiting the coming of a new transcript of the case from Festus, to take the place of the one presumably lost in the shipwreck; or possibly the interval was spent in efforts to look up the witnesses, "Jews from Asia" (Acts xxi., 27), in whose bigotry the proceedings had their inception.

If we may conjecture that the witnesses were never found, or that the transcript, when it came, was found by the Roman lawyers to be fatally defective, and that Paul, after a nominal hearing, was discharged without trial, then the history would be perfectly consistent with all the facts now known to us.

There could hardly have been a judicial trial and *acquittal*, for, if there had been, and if I am right in the views above expressed as to Luke's purpose in writing the book, he would certainly have told us of such an event, for such fact would have completed and fully confirmed his main argument. In fact, such an adjudication would have been final in all Roman courts throughout the empire, at least, until reversed in some later

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proceeding by the same or some subsequent emperor.

Hence I am inclined to think that, as the outcome of this particular episode, Paul was finally discharged without trial; evidence and record, one or both, being lost. But the fact that for "two whole years," and while in custody as a prisoner, he was permitted to preach Christianity, at the headquarters of the empire, is strongly confirmatory of the conclusion that the imperial authorities, at that time, did not regard the new religion as containing anything inimical to imperial interests; and this fact Luke apparently recorded with care, for it was at least partial confirmation of the conclusion which he was seeking to establish.

The inference is obvious; the empire had no cause or occasion to take an attitude or adopt a policy hostile to Christianity, and least of all to persecute its adherents. If precedents or adjudicated cases were worth anything, the results of these three trials could be properly cited along with those that had gone before to support that conclusion.

5. Paul's next trial was before the emperor at Rome. Of the details and results of that trial we know nothing with certainty, but other facts known to us are compatible only with his acquittal. Luke tells us only (Acts xxviii., 30) that Paul remained two years a prisoner in Rome. Probably the transcript of the case was lost in the shipwreck (chap. xxvii.), and the proceedings were delayed

till a new one could be procured from Cæsarea. For reasons, a statement of which would unduly lengthen the present sketch, I think it fairly clear that Luke intended to write a third book—his Gospel being, as he calls it, “the first” (Acts i., 1) —which should be practically a continuation of Acts (the second book), and should further develop the same general subject. Perhaps death intervened to prevent it; perhaps he wrote it, and it is lost. In any event, the Book of Acts is a clear, and historically a noble, vindication of the rights of Christianity within the empire, and of the right of its adherents to live in the empire as a part of the empire, and to be protected by the empire. They kept the peace and obeyed the laws; so it had been judicially decided by the imperial courts time and time again; what more had the empire a right to ask?

If, as I believe, Luke wrote the Book of Acts, partly at least, to avert, if possible, a coming or threatened persecution, his effort so far was a failure. The power of Judaism to injure the new faith ended practically with the destruction of Jerusalem (A. D. 70); but the hostile forces of heathenism were too strong to be held permanently in restraint, and the empire was soon committed to a policy of persecution. The causes that led to this change of policy were so complicated that to state them, even briefly, would require a separate sketch; but their power was such that they could not be stayed. The empire was at

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last led to take an attitude incompatible with the existence of Christianity, which it attempted to suppress; but after about two hundred years of bloody, brutal, and persistent persecution, Christianity triumphed, and by its own sacrifices demonstrated finally its right and its power to live, and to labor, and to enjoy the fruits of its labors, even in the strongholds of the most powerful persecutor with which it ever came in conflict. The Book of Acts is, in effect, a history of the first thirty years of that conflict.

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

THE fourth Gospel resembles no other book in the Bible; and, indeed, there is none like it in the wide world. It has a distinctive character of its own, and occupies a position by itself. Of course, like each of the other Gospels, the personality of Christ dominates it in every part, and pervades it throughout; but in tone and spirit it is pitched on a totally different key. Even its starting-point is radically different. Matthew and Luke open their Gospels with an account of the birth and childhood of Jesus. In John's apprehension, the Christ whom he delineated had no childhood. As "the Word" of God, the manifestation and expression of what God is, has done, is doing, and purposes yet to accomplish, especially in the salvation of our fallen race—thus regarded, He existed from all eternity, created everything, pervades everything, is the source of all life, and that life, in what to us is its highest development, is both the life and the light of men.

Presently, in the unfolding of John's thought, this "Word became flesh, and dwelt among us," to the end that we, through the "grace and truth" which Christ brought from heaven to earth as a

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part of His very essence and being might be saved. How this wonderful transformation was effected, how "the Word," through a virgin mother, "became flesh," was, from John's point of view, a matter just then of no consequence, and accordingly he said nothing about it (John i., 1-18). From the standpoint he occupied, the incidents of the nativity, and the life of Jesus until He attained manhood, were of no special interest.

But the results that were to follow from this transformation—from the incarnation of "the Word" in humanity—were of transcendent importance. Humanity was to be remade; men were to be "born anew" (or "born from above"), not so much, in John's thought, by the example He set and the manner of living that He prescribed, or even, primarily, by any sacrificial or other theory of an atonement wrought out by Himself, as we might naturally infer from the earlier Gospels; but rather through the power of His personality and spirit working in the hearts of men. This was briefly the gospel that Paul preached, and here Paul and John were at one, as we shall presently see. Neither of them places any stress or gives any great prominence to the particular incidents of our Saviour's life—that is to say, prior to His passion—except as through these incidents they are enabled to bring out in bold relief the leading facts or truths of His new revelation. What we sometimes speak of as "the historic Christ" — that is, a person advancing

“in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke ii., 52)—is wholly foreign to the Gospel of John and to the teaching of Paul.

The fact that the fourth Gospel was written thirty or forty years later than the others justifies an inquiry as to whether some new and unwelcome conditions may not have arisen in the church during that time, on account of which arose also a necessity for a new and perhaps a somewhat different presentation of the essential truths of the Christian faith.

New times, new errors, or heresies, and even new beliefs, or new forms of old beliefs, frequently demand new statements or new creeds, as the later history of the church abundantly proves—and of this, the Presbyterian Church of to-day, with its late efforts at creed-revision (now a success) is an illustrative example.

In speaking of new times, new conditions, etc., we must remember that the new church, under its early spirit of enthusiasm, was undoubtedly growing and moving with marvelous rapidity *in some direction*—but whither? From Paul’s epistles we can readily gather the direction of its development during his lifetime and while under his guidance. But at the time when the fourth Gospel was written Paul had been dead for thirty years or more—the period of an average generation—and his power of guidance and restraint was wanting. John was apparently his successor as the apostolic bishop of the churches of Asia



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Minor; but as to what was going on in those churches during those thirty years we really know scarcely anything except what we can infer from what John elsewhere tells us.

The book of Revelation, generally ascribed to John, was written not very far from the same time as his Gospel. Both belong to the same period or era of church history—approximately about the end of the first or the beginning of the second century. In so far as the condition of things in the church, its tendencies, its errors, its piety, and its prospects, may have influenced or controlled John in the preparation of either, the two books are on a par. In view of the fact that these two records are practically contemporaneous, and that both belong to a comparatively late period, as above indicated, the letters of John to “the seven churches” (Rev. ii., 1-3) become exceedingly interesting and instructive under our present inquiry. “Seven” being in Jewish thought one of the sacred numbers indicating completeness, it is fairly inferable that each of the churches named stood for some particular type or phase of religious development, and that, taken together, they represented the existing religious status, or the condition of religion at that time, at least in the churches of Asia Minor.

From these letters it is clearly evident that, during the thirty years, more or less, which had elapsed since the death of Paul, the real spirit of the religion that he had preached to these churches

had largely died out. Some serious and alarming heresy, promulgated by the otherwise unknown sect of the Nicolaitans, had become firmly established in the church in Pergamum, to the great deterioration of the standard of piety therein; while through some other influence in the same church religious sacrilege and sexual immorality had ceased to be matters of censure (Rev. ii., 14, 15). The metropolitan church in Ephesus had fallen away from its "first love" (verse 4). In the church in Thyatira, some woman whom, from the pseudonym (Jezebel) given to her, I should imagine to have been probably a compound of Catherine de' Medici and Madame de Pompadour, had gained the upper and controlling hand, and had introduced into its service some of the vile abominations of heathenism (verses 20-23). In the church in Sardis the forms of religion were still observed, but its spirituality had departed and the church was "dead" (Rev. iii., 1). In the church in Laodicea religion had so far lost character as to become distasteful to the spiritual apprehension of the apostle, as much so as a drink of lukewarm water to a thirsty traveler on a hot day, and what little religion was left was but the religion of formalism (verses 15-17).

Only two out of the seven churches escaped the severe denunciations of the apostle. Between Greek philosophy, rabbinic casuistry, and heathen idolatry in five of the churches the fountain stream along which flowed the sanctifying graces of the

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Holy Spirit had become, if not totally obstructed, at least so badly befouled and clogged that but little was left which John could safely regard as the basis of hope for the future. Every one of the five is solemnly warned against one or more evils in its membership, which, if not speedily corrected, would prove fatal to its very existence. Of only two out of the seven could the apostle speak otherwise than in words of alarm for the future. And doubtless he was familiar with the subjects of which he spoke, especially if, as already suggested, these churches, after the death of Paul, came under his apostolic jurisdiction and care. He would then have a good right to address them, as he did, in terms of high commendation for whatever of zeal, piety, and love were still existent in them, but also with severest denunciation and warning against their back-sliding, which appears to have been much in excess of their steadfastness.

Such being the state of religion, or rather of irreligion, at the date of the fourth Gospel, there is ample room for the surmise that this Gospel was written with especial reference to the alarming evils which the apostle then saw to be impending over the church, and which, if not speedily remedied, could not fail to produce disastrous results. In his view, the only remedy was, not a revival of a knowledge of the historic Christ as sketched in the synoptic Gospels, but a renewed apprehension of Him as a spiritual force ever present and dwelling in the hearts of men. As Paul had put it in his

day, *his* religion had for its basis *the revelation of Christ in himself* (Gal. i., 16); and, as appears throughout his epistles, he had endeavored to instil into the early believers the same vital and controlling fact as a part, and the major part, of the individual experience of each. But the power of this idea or conception of Christ was now lost, or at least was no longer apprehended. John, in his Gospel, sought to revive it. How did he proceed?

1. He laid down a new law for the adherents of the Christian faith: "Except a man be born anew (or from above), he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii., 3). Forty years or so earlier, the other Gospel writers had put in the foreground the law of *repentance*, but John went farther by indicating that a repentance which stopped short of or failed to produce a *new birth* in each individual believer, was no repentance at all: it would be of no avail as respecting citizenship in the new kingdom. Thus he carried the law of repentance to its extremest application, and so strikingly and impressively set it forth, in connection with the Nicodemus interview, as to make it practically a new law of the church and a new element of the Christian faith.

2. As part of the interview with an otherwise unknown but somewhat disreputable woman, John records (John iv.) our Saviour's definition of God: He "is a Spirit," not an emanation, as in the gnosticism of the second century, nor "an in-

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fluence outside of ourselves which makes for righteousness," as in the agnosticism of our own time, but an individual personal Spirit, to be worshiped by all who seek Him "in spirit and truth." But what was more to the point, there was no geographical locality where He was especially to be found for purposes of worship, as theretofore had been the almost universal belief. By the Jew, His earthly dwelling-place was thought to be only in Jerusalem, and only there could His worshipers gain access to His very presence. To the Samaritan, His home was on Mount Gerizim. But the new record was then made that He is present everywhere and to every individual in whose heart dwells the spirit of genuine devotion. Thus was revealed, not for the first time, but at least with new force and impressiveness, the great fact or truth that the God of the Christian faith would come into direct personal relations with every devout worshiper at any time and anywhere on His footstool. This was a part of Paul's gospel to the Gentiles, and herein John follows Paul.

3. And if Christ was the life of the world, how was the spiritual life of His followers to be sustained, especially as against the errors of faith and practice which were then so prevalent and powerful?—for we must remember that no form of life with which we are familiar has the capacity of sustaining itself. Some means of sustenance must be provided for spiritual life and growth.

In the little synagogue at Capernaum, on the

next day after the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, and in the hearing of many of those who had been so fed, Jesus answered this question (John vi., 22-59). Solemnly and impressively He announced the new truth: "I am the bread of life." How or in what way does He become the bread of life? This is a matter of individual experience. Not one person in a thousand has any conception as to how or why ordinary food sustains and nourishes the body; we become hungry and learn the rest by experience. In like manner, by that course of pure and holy living which leads us to "hunger and thirst after righteousness," and in no other way, can we come to learn and to know how or why it is that, when we are born anew into His life, that life in us will be nourished and supported in and through Him. It cannot be explained, it can only be lived, and the duty of living it can only be measured by the infinite value of the immortal life so to be attained.

4. Progressively, step by step, John proceeds to develop the dominant thought of his Gospel, which is, the *personal relationship* that the individual Christian should sustain to the God he professes to worship and serve; and this dominant thought John gradually unfolds until in his hands it becomes a relation of *oneness with God*. When that is attained, and so long as it is preserved, it obviously follows that the individual Christian can no more lapse into heresy or idolatry, or conform to the abominations of heathenism (as the

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church was then so largely doing) than God Himself can. Such a thing would be not only impossible, but inconceivable.

How do we find this idea developed?

Christ, in John's conception of Him, brought into the world a new apprehension of the nature, strength, and extent of the Father's love for sinful men. It was a love for the undeserving, the unworthy, the wicked, and a love that even death itself could not quench (John iii., 16; viii., 42, etc.). Paul had understood and preached the same truth (Rom. v., 6-8), but the churches to which he preached were rapidly forgetting it.

Next, in the exhibition of this love, as well as in their essential life, thought, and being, Christ and the Father were one. Christ dwelt in the Father, and the Father in Him (John x., 30; xiv., 10, *et seq.*).

Likewise, He dwelt in the hearts of His devout followers and by so dwelling He incorporated the love and life of the Father into their hearts and lives, into their very essence and being, and thereby made them *like God*—one with Him, participants in and partakers of His life, and therefore able and willing to return His love, and to live with Him and like Him and in Him (John xiv., 20-23; xv., 8-17).

Thus they would be born again or anew, or born from above, and born into a new life with God, and the union or oneness of God and man would be perfect, complete, and eternal. And when so

born and so united with Him, the errors, the backslidings, and corruptions which had crept into and endangered the spiritual life of "the seven churches" would infest them no more.

As to what the apostle meant by oneness with God, I must say, as I said of the bread of life, that it is something to be learned by living it—by trying faithfully and diligently to attain unto it. Such seems to have been Paul's idea (Phil. iii., 13, 14). I apprehend also that the old patriarch Enoch understood it, at least in part. He "walked with God"—much, perhaps, as two friends with the same interests, tastes, and wishes, either cheerfully adopting the choice of the other, might walk the same road without a thought of dissent or hesitation, and find therein the highest attainable enjoyments of mutual fellowship. Along the paths selected by one, the other finds it his chiefest pleasure to journey. He wishes no other route. By living as he did, Enoch was led directly into the presence of the God whom he served, for the record adds: "He was not; for God took him" (Gen. v., 24).

It may be added that even our Saviour made no effort to explain the full meaning of the phrase "oneness with Him." Briefly He says: "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching" (John vii., 17). In His conception it is something to be learned as a result of Christian experience, and so far as we now know, it can be learned in no other way.



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5. Another element of our Christian faith received its first full recorded development at the hands of John.

The doctrine of the resurrection became a sort of stumbling-block in the early church. This was something that lay wholly outside the hopes and expectations of heathenism. No Gentile prophet or philosopher had ever made this a part of his teaching. The uninspired human intellect, in its wildest flights of imagination, had never soared to the sublime conception here involved. The philosophers of Greece laughed at it, as something too absurd for serious consideration, as soon as Paul mentioned it (Acts xvii., 32). Hence it is not surprising that among the early converts gathered from heathenism were some who hesitated to accept so novel and to them so improbable a doctrine or belief. Some in the Corinthian church, in the days of Paul, denied it outright (I. Cor. xv., 12). Others took the view that a spiritual resurrection was meant—a resurrection of the soul from moral death to a heavenly life—and that, as to each individual convert, such a resurrection was already past (II. Tim. ii., 18).

Paul, of course, controverted this heresy with his usual emphasis and vigor, but solely on the authority of the revelation made to himself. That is, he did not cite against it any oral declaration or teaching of the Master. Possibly he did not know of any. Whether this heresy continued to exist in the church down to the end of the

century does not positively appear, but if we may surmise that it did, then the appositeness of John's citation of the Master's words (John v., 25-29), not previously reported, will be at once apparent. The other Gospel writers had preserved His revelation as to the *fact* of a resurrection, but had said nothing directly as to what it would consist of or how it would occur. John recalled and recorded what the others had passed over in silence—that in this resurrection the graves would be opened, and that something belonging to the personality of the buried person would come forth. This citation settled the question for the church from that time onward. The predicted resurrection was not past; neither did a moral resurrection satisfy its requirements.

The modern church has gone to the other extreme, in teaching as an article of faith "the resurrection of *the body*"—a doctrine not found in the New Testament.

From these and a few other considerations of like kind, I infer that the fourth Gospel was not written (as the others were) by way of general setting forth of the life, works, and teachings of Jesus, but rather as a special presentation of John's matured conception of Him—who and what He was—with special reference to the practical wants and needs of the deteriorating church as it existed about the end of the first century, and thus in order to answer or refute the pernicious practices and heresies then threatening its existence. And to

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quite a large extent he accomplished his purpose. The Gnostic heresy died out long ago. The Arian heresy has its few survivors among the adherents of the Unitarian church. The resurrection heresy has not been heard of for centuries. Idolatrous and licentious practices, except where the superstitions of the Middle Ages still survive, have been driven out. But the church has yet to get back to the "first love" that pervaded the earliest converts and also has yet to learn to realize in the lives of its individual members, what the Master meant by oneness with Him.

## PETER

PETER was a fisherman, not of the leisurely, contemplative, Waltonian kind, but one who fished for a living. He had a wife and a mother-in-law to support (Luke iv., 38), also a home to provide for, though whether he owned or rented it does not appear. Nothing is said of his having children, but a Hebrew family without at least one child (except through bereavement) was rare. Of his personal appearance we know nothing even by a reliable tradition. It is doubtful if he had accumulated much property; if he had, it is still more doubtful if he entrusted any of it to the apostolic treasurer, Judas Iscariot, who received and disbursed—or confiscated (John xii., 6)—the scanty charities given to the mendicant band. Several years after the Crucifixion Peter's wife was still living, and accompanied him at times on his missionary tours (I. Cor. ix., 5). Though evidently possessed of good natural abilities, he had no education beyond that which every Jewish peasant boy received (Acts iv., 13), and this rarely extended beyond the ability to read and write the Aramaic dialect of everyday life, with a more or less general knowledge of Old Testament history,

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of the forms of Jewish worship, and of the requirements of the Jewish faith. Peter's Epistles show that later in life he became familiar with Greek and probably with Latin, the official language of Rome (Acts x.). But during his early life he belonged to the class for whom the high ecclesiastical authorities of Judaism had nothing but curses and contempt (John vii., 49).

Peter was one of the original Twelve; that is, one of those who were first called to follow the Master. It has been generally assumed, contrary to the record as I read it, that the Twelve constituted practically an unchangeable body; that with the single exception of Judas Iscariot that body continued to the end as at first composed. The name of at least one other of the original twelve, Lebbæus or Thaddæus (Matt. x., 3), disappears in the subsequent history, and his place is taken by Jude, who, with James the Less, was a son of Alphæus (Luke vi., 15; R. V. marg.). The idea generally accepted that these are different names of the same person is a pure theory, is against probability, and has no historical support. And the same is equally true of the supposed identity of Nathanael and Bartholomew. This is purely a supposition, without a particle of proof to support it.

For some reason not stated in the record, perhaps by seniority or age, or perhaps by natural temperament, Peter became, on most occasions, the spokesman of the apostolic band. I would not

say of him, as is frequently said, that he was especially rash or impulsive; he was rather what I would call self-reliant, being also quick to decide and prompt to act. Such men are natural leaders in all organizations. He believed in himself, and sometimes overbelieved, as the sequel proved. If, during his personal association with the Master, he sometimes was "of little faith" (Matt. xiv., 31), it is not for us to censure him more severely than the Master did, for Messianic faith was then a new plant, quite recently planted in soil not of the best for a rapid growth. But after the Pentecostal descent of the Holy Spirit, the faith then developed in Peter, coupled with the natural self-reliance of his manhood, easily made him the first among his peers, and one of the three, who, under the name of Cephas, presently attained the name and rank of "pillars" in the apostolic church (Gal. ii., 9). His discourses, as reported by Luke (Acts ii., 14-40; iii., 12-26, etc.), are models of bold, lofty, and fervid eloquence, supported by compact argument. They express in brief terms the great essential ideas of salvation, persuasively illustrated from prophecy, and convincingly driven home to the hearts and consciences of his hearers. These facts lead fairly to the inference that he was naturally a born leader of men, and that in his dull and toilsome occupation of fisherman his opportunities for leadership had not equaled his abilities.

Notwithstanding his faults and defects, Peter was one of the three selected by the Master to be

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the chief recipients of His personal confidence. They only were permitted to witness the glory of His wonderful transfiguration (Matt. xvii., 1-13). They were also the selected watchmen on whom He relied to warn Him of the approach of His expected betrayer at the time of His agony in Gethsemane (Matt. xxvi., 37). At the healing of Jairus's daughter, no others were allowed to be present (Mark v., 37). No reason is assigned for this choice, but Jesus, the Master, undoubtedly knew His men (John ii., 25). They were probably "the pick of the flock." Their subsequent history would indicate as much. With the exception of Matthew (in his Gospel) and Jude (in his Epistle), the other nine have left no record or known memorial of their subsequent lives or labors. Of the three. James was an early victim of Herod's brutality (Acts xii., 2). To John was entrusted the double honor of closing the New Testament canon (Rev. xxii., 18, 19) and of being the last to await, in an earthly life, the second coming of the Master (John xxi., 22). The subsequent life and labors of Peter show that the Master's confidence in him was not wholly misplaced, and that he was entitled to rank as the coequal of the other two in the honors and work of the new kingdom of heaven.

In making our estimate of the man, his denial of the Master should not be passed by. For once his self-reliance failed him, and it was a sad and a grievous failure—but was it a surprising failure? He was at that time a comparative stranger in

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Jerusalem; it was not his home; he had been there but seldom, probably once a year, and then only a short time; the high priest and his august court were to him the objects of overwhelming awe, for they represented the invincible authority and majesty of the great Jehovah; the Roman soldiery who made the arrest were subjects of terror, since, being generally brutal themselves, they also stood for the brutal and domineering power of Rome (Luke xiii., 1); Peter himself was nothing but a peasant fisherman of the despised province of semi-heathen Galilee; the drift of adverse feeling against the Galilean Jesus and all his followers ran high that awful night; even the servants and waiting-maids of the palace joined eagerly in the "mad-dog" cry against Him and them, so that when they sneeringly and contemptuously asked Peter, "Art thou too a Galilean, and a follower of this deceiver of the people?" the load was too heavy for him to carry, and he broke down. Would you or I, being what he then was, and amid such surroundings, have done better?

It is no answer to all this to say that John was faithful and stood by his Master during the events of that awful night, and that Peter might equally well have done so. For, as John himself tells us, he did not enter the palace of the high priest as a total stranger; in fact, the high priest knew him personally (John xviii., 16). For this or some other reason, John was evidently less impressed, overawed, or terrified by the unexpected surround-



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ings and proceedings. His actions show that he was enough at home to think of himself, to think of the Master, and to think also of Peter, whom he recognized in the crowd outside the gate, and that he had enough influence to secure Peter's admission notwithstanding the probable orders to exclude the Galilean friends of Jesus. Hence, in respect of Peter's denial, it is hardly fair to judge him by the standard of John's fidelity.

Nor should Peter be singled out, as is usually done, as being, next after Judas, the chief sinner of the apostolic band. The rest, except John, deserted Jesus entirely (Matt. xxvi., 56). Peter was the only one to resist by force the outrage of the betrayal and arrest (John xviii., 10), and he was evidently the only one who ventured to show his face that night at the palace gate. The rest disappear from sight and history till after Jesus was dead and buried and the immediate danger to them was past. While these facts constitute no extenuation of Peter's sin, they show that even in those hours of extreme peril his self-reliant courage was not entirely gone, and exceeded that of any of the remaining nine.

If not surprising, it is at least noticeable that many of our modern religious teachers are more severe in dealing with Peter's shortcomings than was the Master Himself. With marked gentleness and even tenderness, Jesus uniformly dealt with the errors and defects of this, the chiefest of His followers. (See Matt. xiv., 31, 32; John xxi.,

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15-19, etc.) Only once, so far as our records show, did Jesus speak to Peter with apparent severity (Mark viii., 32, 33), and here, I apprehend, the severity is more apparent than real. The phrase "Get thee behind me, Satan" was probably an everyday proverb in common use (and we still hear it used occasionally) and, as then used by Jesus, was intended to convey the idea that Peter's expostulations could be of no avail and need not be repeated. Certainly Jesus could not have applied to His chief apostle, in its literal signification, the name of the Evil One. Such language, with such a meaning, would have involved in Jewish thought the grossest possible discourtesy; and it pleases me to think of Jesus, not only as the Son of God, but also as a perfect man, and hence an ideal gentleman in speech as well as in act. He once denounced, with furious invective, a like characterization of Himself by his enemies (Matt. xii., 24-32). To my mind it is simply incredible, at least in the absence of convincing proof to the contrary, that He should have literally applied to His strongest and one of His most faithful adherents an opprobrious epithet such as He would not allow His bitterest enemies to apply to Him. Jesus of Nazareth was not, in my apprehension of Him, that kind of a man.

For some twelve or fourteen years after the ascension Peter devoted himself actively and vigorously, and with great success, to the preaching of the new religion, for the most part to his own

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countrymen in the cities and villages of Judæa, as narrated with some detail in the Book of Acts, but going once as far as Samaria (Acts viii., 14-17). The power of the Holy Spirit rested with him to a remarkable degree, and the many miracles which he wrought in the name of the Master made an impression second only to those of the Master Himself (Acts iii., 1-9; v., 12-16; ix., 26-42, etc.). His escape from the power of Herod by angelic interposition was equally memorable (Acts xii., 1-9). The narrative of these events is the most convincing proof of the power of the man in the new work, as well as of the sincerity of his consecration to that work; and we doubt not that to him these events were an abundant assurance that the new kingdom to the establishment of which he gave his remaining years would, as Daniel had foretold, "never be destroyed" (Dan. ii., 44). His self-reliance, backed up by faith in its success, never deserted him again.

During these years, the power of the new religion began to be felt among the Gentiles. Christian churches were established at an early date outside of Judaism, notably in Samaria (Acts viii., 14) and Antioch (Acts xiii., 1). If Peter were then, as he seems to have been, the primate of the apostolic college, he presumably would have taken the supervision of these Gentile churches, as well as of the Palestinian churches composed of converts from Judaism. Unfortunately, however, he seems to have been so

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thoroughly pervaded with the prevalent Jewish prejudice against Gentile contamination that he could give to the Gentile movement but little more than a bare toleration. He thrice boasted, in answer to what he recognized as a voice from heaven, of his Pharisaic purity (Acts x., 13-16). He had no use, not even in the Master's service, for anything which, tried by the ceremonial standard of Judaism, was "common and unclean"—and such were the Gentiles in his eyes. And though as a result of the miraculous vision, he temporarily accepted the new revelation that in God's sight those of the Gentiles who feared Him and wrought righteousness (Acts x., 35) were no longer to be counted as "common and unclean," it still appears that as a rule by which to govern his own apostolic work he could not, or at least did not, adopt it. With apparent willingness, he turned over to Paul the entire field of Gentile work (Gal. ii., 9), and so far as extant records show, he never resumed it, nor made any effort or claim in that direction. His right of primacy, at least among the Gentile churches (of which we are part), ended then and there. We hear of him once afterward at Antioch, but his Jewish prejudices were too strong for his Christianity, and he was publicly and severely rebuked for his non-Christian bigotry by one who in the Gentile churches, possessed and exercised an authority greater than his (Gal. ii., 11-14). If, in respect of Gentile Christianity, any one was entitled in

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the apostolic age, to claim or exercise the authority incident to primacy, that man was Paul and not Peter. As to that fact, the record is clear.

In regard to the question of primacy in the church, it seems reasonably clear that Peter was the primate among the Twelve, and that such primacy received the approval of the Master; the episode of the rock and keys apparently means as much (Matt. xvi., 18, 19). The Biblical records also seem to indicate that for a few years following the ascension, he acted as primate of the new churches in Palestine. It also clearly appears that therein he was afterward superseded by James, a brother of our Lord and not one of the Twelve, but by what authority is not known (Acts xii., 17; xv., 13; xxi., 18, etc.). After that, his primacy, if he held any, was apparently limited to the churches which grew up among the Jews of the dispersion—that is, among the Jews scattered about through the Roman Empire, and most numerous in the cities of Asia Minor (I. Pet. i., 1). But I do not find, either in the Bible or outside of it, that Peter ever was granted, or claimed to hold, or tried to exercise, any authority as primate (or pope) over any Gentile church, and still less over the Gentile churches at large, or that he was granted, or claimed to possess, or tried to exercise in or over any church whatever any right of primacy which was divinely authorized or directed to be transferred to any ecclesiastical successor of his.

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When, through the power of divine grace working in the hearts of men, a church shall arise which shall include in its fold the entire body of genuine believers on the face of the earth, I have no doubt that it may (if it so choose), under divine guidance and authority, elect or select a primate, a patriarch, or a pope, and that *its* power (not his) will be practically unlimited in all matters of faith and morals. But such a church, called in the Apostles' Creed "The Holy Catholic Church," is at present non-existent, except as an ideal. The sectarian divisions in "the body of Christ" which Paul so vehemently condemned (I. Cor. i., 12, 13; iii., 4-7) are now the rule, have been for centuries, and seem likely to be for a long time to come. "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke xviii., 8.)

As incidental to some of the matters above referred to, it may be added that questions of official name and ecclesiastical rank were not regarded as of much importance in the church in apostolic days. Paul's right to the title of apostle, though he was not one of the Twelve, is universally admitted. James, "the Lord's brother," who, at least during the earlier days of Christ's ministry, was an unbeliever (John vii., 5) ranked as an apostle (Gal. i., 19). So also did Barnabas (Acts xiv., 14); and it seems probable that Andronicus and Junias were similarly styled (Rom. xvi., 7). Evidently these matters were bound by no

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hard and fast lines. On the other hand, Peter, in addressing the elders of the churches of the dispersion, was pleased to call himself their "fellow-elder" (I. Pet. v., 1).

Our present rigidity in respect of ecclesiastical rank was evidently unknown in the apostolic era of church history. The "elders" of Acts xx., 17, are called "bishops" in xx., 28.

Of Peter's subsequent life we know but little outside of what we can gather from his epistles, but from them we may fairly infer that he labored diligently and effectively for the residue of his life among the Jews of the dispersion, chiefly in the region we now know as Asia Minor, and more particularly in its central and northern provinces. His first epistle is specifically so addressed (I. Pet. i., 1). His second epistle was written for the same readers (II. Pet. iii., 1). These epistles, written in his old age, indicate that the self-reliant zeal of his earlier years had become toned down into something approaching the gentle tenderness of John. But he also exhibits a masterly grasp of the truths of revelation, and a singular clearness, beauty, and force in presenting them. Some Gentiles had been gathered in, and as to them, his old antipathy was gone (I. Pet. iv., 3). But not even yet was he ready to accept the whole of Paul's gospel (II. Pet. iii., 15, 16). He could not see how it could all be true. Whether Babylon (I. Pet. v., 13) means the Chaldean city of that name, or is a metaphorical designation of Rome—as in Rev.

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xviii., 2—is somewhat uncertain. If the former, as may well be the case, for that city then held a large Jewish population, his missionary labors extended nearly or quite to the ancestral home of his race. But if the latter be the meaning, it would give support to the old tradition that he suffered death by crucifixion at the hands of Nero about A.D. 68. If so, the prophecy of John xxi., 18, 19, was literally fulfilled. But Romans xv., 20, is incompatible with the old tradition that he founded the first Christian church at Rome.

Early Christian literature, commencing late in the second century A.D., and increasing in amount as the decades went by, abounds with traditional and apocryphal stories of Peter and his life-teachings. Very few of them are worthy of belief, though some may possibly be true; but as the true cannot, with our present knowledge, be separated from the false, the entire body is of no practical value for present purposes. Peter, as the Bible sketches him, is too great to be injured by dubious tradition, and is also great enough to require no enhancement of his memory by doubtful records dating from two to ten centuries after he had gone to his final rest.



## THE RESURRECTION: THE FUTURE STATE: MESSIANIC PROPHECY

IN the development of Old Testament religion, these three subjects have certain points of contact which may be profitably studied independently of the subjects themselves.

Biblical scholars have been greatly puzzled to account for the fact that the doctrine of a general resurrection, and of a future state of rewards and punishments, formed no part of the Mosaic system; for the fact is, as we shall presently see, that the Old Testament contains no clear revelation thereof until more than a thousand years after Moses had rested from his arduous labors. If any of the Old Testament worthies had, prior to the captivity (B.C. 587), any expectation or hope of a resurrection, or of an enjoyable life after death, they certainly failed to transmit to us any clear and unambiguous record of the fact. And the absence of these elements from the original Mosaic system is all the more singular for the reason that the Egyptians, as we learn from their *Book of the Dead*, had a highly elaborate cultus which included a life after death (though not at that time a resurrection), and a life, too, the character of which was

believed to depend largely on "the deeds done in the body." Moses, as one "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts vii., 22), could not have been ignorant of this feature of the religious system in which, as a prince of Egypt, he had been trained; nor is it easy to see how a man of his transcendent attainments could have failed to appreciate the possible potency of such a belief in the moral system that he formulated and taught.

Why, then, did he fail to include it in the record that he left for the guidance of his people?

The most reasonable explanation hitherto suggested, so far as my reading has gone, is based on the following facts:

The religious system of Moses originated practically with what was seen, said, and done at Mount Sinai just after the Exodus. Prior to the wonderful event of that epoch, Jehovah was a name unknown in the annals of the Hebrew race (Ex. vi., 3).

But on coming to Mount Sinai, they were expressly taught that the Deity who had brought them out of Egypt—then and thereafter known as Jehovah (or Jahve)—had His home or dwelling-place there on the mountain-top, and that the thunderings and lightnings which they then heard and saw were the proofs of His presence. They were also taught that He was so actually and personally there present that their leader Moses had sundry interviews with Him, wherein He made known to them by direct revelation the kind of

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service He required at their hands, as well as the laws or rules of life to which they must conform if they would please Him; and they were further told that if they obeyed Him, He would care for and prosper them in basket and in store, in life and in health; while, if they disobeyed Him, He would punish them by withholding these promised bounties, and, if need were, by famine, pestilence, and war, even to the extent of wiping them out of existence. He was great and powerful, and therefore *could* do as He had promised.

He was just and truthful, so that He being always there present with them, they might rely on it that He would do exactly as He had said.

In the polytheism of that age—and the people had just given up the polytheistic service of the gods of Egypt (Josh. xxiv., 14)—such a Deity as Jehovah thus described and showed Himself to be was exceedingly desirable; consequently they took up His service, and entered into covenant or contract relations with Him by which they became especially and peculiarly His people, and He became their Deity—their God.

But when, a year or more later, they proposed to resume their journey to the Promised Land, what then? The idea of divine omnipresence—so prominent a part of our later theology—had not then been born. If Jehovah remained behind at His home on Mount Sinai, how could He be of any aid or benefit to them while off in their desert wanderings, or after reaching their anticipated

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resting-place in Canaan? Obviously, as they looked at it, Jehovah must go along, and the record so represents (Ex. xxiii., 14). A tent at Shiloh, and finally the temple at Jerusalem, became His home, and He continued—or so it was thought—to dwell with and in the midst of the tribes for the next nine hundred years, or until the temple was destroyed and the city laid waste by Nebuchadnezzar, B.C. 587. But as it was believed that Jerusalem and the temple were invulnerable to human attack so long as Jehovah dwelt there, Ezekiel was constrained to conclude that before the city fell Jehovah had taken His departure (Ezek. x., 18–22). During the captivity, the land remained desolate, that is, empty, for Jehovah had gone. And at its end Ezekiel made known to the returning exiles his vision of the return of Jehovah to the new temple—“and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever” (Ezek. xliii., 1–9).

According to Jewish belief, Jehovah continued thereafter to dwell in His temple until the voice of prophecy finally became silent with Malachi. From that time, say about 330 B.C., until the manifestation of the Son of Man, no divine oracle was heard in Judæa—of which fact I will have more to say presently.

From which it follows that from the institution of the Mosaic system down to the end of the prophetic period (except during the captivity or exile), and possibly for some little time there-

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after, the Jews regarded themselves as living in the immediate presence of Jehovah; they believed that He actually dwelt first in the sacred tent or tabernacle in the wilderness, then at Shiloh, and lastly in the temple at Jerusalem—but always right “in the midst of them”; that, though invisible to mortal eyes, the Shekinah indicated His presence; that accordingly their lives and everyday actions were under His direct personal supervision; that for their honest service and faithful obedience He gave them then and there their proper reward, and for their disloyalty and disobedience He then and there punished them. Moses had so taught them, and so did the early prophets. Under such beliefs and such teachings, a future state of rewards and punishments, even if revealed, would have had little or no meaning for them. Jehovah could be no closer to them in another world than He was in this. Nor could He have any more power over them there, either to prosper or punish, than He had here. If He rewarded and punished them here, as they fully believed, then He and His law were presumed to be satisfied. It could hardly be supposed that after death He would reward and punish them over again. One punishment was enough, and one reward was all they had any right to expect. Consequently they had no sufficient incitement or stimulus to lead them to anticipate or even to desire a future life, and none was revealed, so far as we know.

Besides all this, the idea, now so common with

us, of personal or individual responsibility for wrongs done or sins committed entered but feebly into the apprehension of the Jewish people prior to or about the time of the captivity. In the thought of that day, the nation was the unit, and not the individual. Each person was an integer of value only as he was one of the nation. Hence, logically, it resulted that the nation was generally held responsible for the sins of its individual members. Thus the personal sin of Achan (Josh. vii.) was regarded as the cause of the disastrous defeat of the national army. The loss of the sacred ark, followed by the humiliating domination of the detested Philistines, was closely associated with the gross derelictions of Eli and the grosser sins of his sons (I. Sam. ii., 34). And once, when David's ambition got the better of his judgment, Jehovah is represented as visiting a severe but just retribution, not on David himself, as our modern ideas would have demanded, but on the people at large (II. Sam. xxiv.). Such illustrations are of frequent occurrence in their history. But obviously, a nation, *as such*, could not be punished in a future world, nor rewarded either—at least the Jews never thought of such a thing as possible. No more do we. Consequently a revelation to them of a future state of rewards and punishments *for the nation*—and it could have meant nothing more—would to them have been practically meaningless.

And consequently, as a Jew, under such a

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system or theory of belief, would personally have had no use for a future state, he would have nothing to suggest a resurrection, nor any conscious reason for expecting or even desiring one.

Now, the idea that each individual was himself (instead of the nation) primarily accountable for his own misdeeds, and that he was entitled to or might expect a personal reward for a life conformed to Jehovah's will, though occasionally hinted at by the earlier prophets, was fully and unambiguously set forth for the first time by Ezekiel (chap. xviii.) during the period of the captivity, nearly a thousand years after the time of Moses. Until about that time such an idea had not become a fixed or controlling element in Jewish national thought and life. But as soon as this, which was about that time a practically new revelation, became fully apprehended and understood, it was felt that there were hosts of individual wrongs that were never righted or avenged in this world; and still further, it was noted that the lives of the just were often lives of unmerited privation and suffering, on account of which there ought to be for such persons some future good in store.

Instinctively a fixed longing arose for another life, personal in its character, in which the wicked would be punished and the righteous would be rewarded. The revelation of Daniel of a resurrection and of a future life soon followed (Dan. xii., 1-3), and presently this doctrine became a constituent element of the faith of the Jewish church.

The date of this great revelation cannot now be definitely fixed, but approximately it was somewhat more than a thousand years after the time of Moses and about three or four hundred years prior to the beginning of the Christian era.

Now, while this may not be the real explanation of *why* Moses made no revelation of a resurrection and a future life, it would at least seem to be a sufficient explanation, and one which is apparently true. How does Messianic prophecy stand related to these facts?

Commencing with the grossly idolatrous and thoroughly corrupt reign of Manasseh (B.C. 697), the Jewish nation started on a course of policy which could have no other than a fatal result. The prophets, who usually were skilled in politics as well as in religion, foresaw and predicted the end—the loss of patriotism; and a nation which has lost both its religion and its patriotism is not worth saving. There could be but one result. The nation, from a race of heroes, as in the days of David and Joab and Jehoshaphat, had degenerated into a race of cowards. It only remained to be seen which of the Great Powers of that day—Egypt or Syria or Nineveh or Babylon—would subdue and take it in. Such, in a general way, was the condition of things during the period commencing with the early prophets Hosea and Isaiah, say in the seventh century B.C., and continuing, but each decade growing worse (except for a few years under Josiah), down to the time of



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Jeremiah, who, in the last chapter of his prophecy, makes record of the calamitous result which for years he had foreseen and against which he had, without avail, given ample warning. The city and temple were destroyed, and the people were carried captive to Babylon.

The Jews, in one respect at least, were like ourselves—in times of prosperity they took little or no thought for the future. But as the coming disasters, which finally overwhelmed them, began to cast their shadows before, the prophets saw beyond the darkening gloom a brighter and a better day, which would be ushered in after their calamities had gone by. The nation could not escape the awful punishment which it so richly deserved; but after that was over and past, there was a future of glory still beyond. Out of the promises and assurances thus made grew up the Messianic hope, which, gradually taking shape and form as the years of the captivity went by, became a source of dominant consolation and cheer to the devout followers of Jehovah. If, during the captivity, Jehovah had deserted His temple and abandoned His people to their fate, the royal house of David being involved, as clearly it was, in the general ruin of the nation, Melek-Messiah—a King-Messiah—would assuredly come, combining the divine power of the great Jehovah and the kingly prestige of David to deliver them from their enemies and to establish a kingdom of heaven which should extend throughout all the

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earth and last to the end of time. This is the underlying thought in the New Testament song of Zacharias (Luke i., 68-79).

Such, as I read the history of those ancient days, was the origin of the Messianic hope in the Jewish nation. It, as well as the hope of a resurrection and of a future life, arose out of the calamities that culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile or captivity of the nation. The necessities of the times created a new exigency in human affairs, and opened the door for a new revelation, which accordingly followed.

During the time between Ezekiel and Malachi, a period, say, of about 250 years, the idea that Jehovah, though maintaining a sort of earthly residence in Jerusalem, really dwelt in heaven, gradually became a settled part of the belief of the Jews; but as the prophet continued to be His personal representative, they still regarded themselves as under His direct guidance and control. The Messianic hope, already in existence as above explained, was not forgotten, and in the time of Malachi it met with a new reason for existence, and consequently received a new stimulus. For according to this book, though Jehovah is not represented as again taking His departure from Jerusalem and the temple, He is represented as totally estranged, not only from Israel at large (chap. i.), but from the priests as well (chap. ii.); Jehovah being estranged, what then?

They must look to the future for relief. The

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Messianic expectation was thereupon revived and re-expressed in more vivid form (chaps. iii. and iv.).

According to chapter iii., 16, personal communion with Jehovah was lost, so that they who feared Jehovah, instead of speaking with Him or with His prophet, "spake one with another." Still Jehovah was listening and heard it all, but He did not reply. The best that could be hoped for was that the loyalty and devotion of the few who still feared Him would be recorded in His "book of remembrance," so that when at last the hoped-for messenger should come in His name, He would not totally destroy them but would "spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" (verse 17). And this expectation, for the next three or four centuries, constituted the sole hope for the nation. But when would it be fulfilled? When would Jehovah's estrangement come to an end? When would He send His messenger, the Messiah, to renew and perpetuate the personal relationships which had once existed when He called Abraham His friend, and talked with Moses face to face? The silence of the sacred oracle after the prophetic office came to an end thus caused a revival of the Messianic hope to which the captivity had given birth—and a revival that lasted until, in view of the wonderful works of Jesus of Nazareth, those who witnessed them exclaimed in glad surprise, "God hath visited His people" (Luke vii., 16). The days of His long estrangement were then over.

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In carrying back the Messianic expectation to a much earlier date, say to the time of Abraham (Gen. xii., 1-3), or to the still earlier time of Noah (Gen. ix., 26, 27), as many very excellent scholars have done, two different ideas have been mixed together—first the idea of great glory and prosperity *to the nation*, and through *that* nation to other nations, which is all that is clearly foretold in the earlier promises, that is, those made to Noah and Abraham; and the other or second idea that, though Jehovah, on account of their sins would desert or had deserted them, still in the good course of time, and in view of their future repentance, He would come back again, or, not returning in person, would send His servant (Isa. lii. 13 *et seq.*)—His messenger (Mal. iii., 1), one on whom His spirit should rest, one of the house and lineage of David—Melek-Messiah, Messiah the King. These two ideas of future national prosperity, and of a personal messenger from Jehovah, though generally confused, should be kept distinct. They are different in kind, as well as different in time.

This latter idea or conception is not disclosed in any record prior to the degeneracy which began with the reign of Manasseh. Deuteronomy xviii., 15, contains nothing to the contrary; for, though written in the spirit and power of Moses, and based on Mosaic records and traditions, still the Book of Deuteronomy in its present form belongs probably to about the time of Manasseh; and

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what particular personage, if any, Moses had in mind when originally he wrote this prophecy, is nowhere directly revealed, though Peter finds a fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth (Acts iii., 22). The prophet Samuel fulfills its requirements.

Some of our best Biblical scholars tell us that, according to the context, Moses had no particular person in mind, but that in this specific passage, he predicted the continuity in Israel of the prophetic office which he had established—that is to say, after his own death, Jehovah would raise up from the ranks of the people some other prophet who would continue the work which he, when he closed his life on Mount Nebo, was compelled to leave unfinished. Nor does our Saviour's remark (John viii., 56) contain anything to the contrary; for, though Abraham doubtless foresaw the "day" or time or period of the Son of man, it is not said nor even intimated that he foresaw Him as a personality. Nor yet can we safely argue that the Psalms contain anything to the contrary, for the dates and authors of those which precede the captivity are matters of tradition and inference. The titles to the Psalms are no part of the inspired record, and represent at best only an ancient tradition. At the same time, it is undoubtedly true that when Jesus of Nazareth completed His earthly ministry, the earlier promises made to Abraham and to Noah, of divine blessings to be conferred on their posterity, received their complete fulfillment, but a fulfillment which, so far

as the record goes, was not dreamed of when those promises were made. So also were fulfilled the later predictions which, revealed and received under the stress of direful calamity and misfortune, pointed directly to Him as a person. All previous history and prediction centered and merged in Him; all subsequent history grows out of what He was, what He said, and what He did (Col. i., 15-18).

The expectation of "a good time coming" which is still vocalized in the songs of to-day, and which finds its highest expression in the anticipated Millennium, is as old as Abraham and probably much older; the expectation of a personal Messiah was born many centuries later, and had its origin with and in the same experiences that gave conscious birth to a belief in a future state and a final resurrection. The revelation came when human exigency called for it. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity."

## PROTESTANTISM

It is a striking characteristic of our Western civilization that it never stands still. It is always in motion, and always moves with a certain amount of intelligence—doing or trying to do something new, or something old in a new way; continually developing angular or tangential tendencies of thought, speech, or action in new directions or toward new results; making new or remaking old experiments; retesting old ideas, old plans, old theories, and old systems, not necessarily because they are old, but because for some reason, real or imaginary, they do not happen to suit, or sometimes from a spirit of mere inquisitiveness—much as the boy did who burst in the head of his drum just to see where the noise came from. Looking back we can see that it has, like the boy, sometimes acted foolishly. Occasionally it has kindled a fire in which it got its fingers burnt; but as a general rule its aims and purposes have been good, and seldom wholly bad, though sometimes tinged strongly with selfishness.

And this spirit, or, rather, determination to reinvestigate everything, retest everything, and, if need be, to revise everything, extends even to

matters of religion. Every truth, religious or otherwise, must square up and fit in with every contiguous or allied truth, and must also fit in with the now existing requirements of humanity; if it does not, something is wrong somewhere. Misfits are either thrown away or held for further revision when an increase of knowledge may make the work easier.

These facts become the more impressive when compared by contrast with the corresponding facts in the civilizations of the remote East, say of China and native India, in neither of which, except as foreign influences have dominated, has there been any material change for a thousand or more years. The more prominent civilizations of Asia, uninfluenced from outside, are as nearly stationary as it is possible for them to be. Whatever is good therein is enjoyed; whatever is bad is accepted as if it were good, and endured without murmur or protest. And this is as true of their religions—the religions of Brahm, Buddh, and Mohammed—as the reverse is true of ours. While these Eastern religions differ somewhat in different countries, the differences are as stable as the likenesses.

It is no part of my present purpose to inquire why these things are so. I use them only as a starting-point.

While it is undoubtedly true that our dominant systems of religion, generally known as Roman Catholic and Protestant, have been largely instru-



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mental in making our civilization, and in making it what it is, and while it is equally true that the basic principles of our religious faith are not subject to change by any human agency, it is also a fact that great changes have been made in respect of our understanding or interpretation of these principles, the forms in which they are stated, the relative rank or importance accorded to them, the ways in which they have been embodied in church and other organizations, and applied century after century to the ever-changing necessities, wants, demands, or even whims of the very civilization which they were helping to make. The Roman Catholic Church, for example, which prides itself on its stability, the permanency of its faith and practice, and its universality as well, is and always has been undergoing a process of change, not, it is true, by formally repealing or abrogating any matter of obligation, belief, or dogma once decreed, but rather by silently modifying or quietly dropping into "innocuous desuetude" such elements of belief or practice as have been found by experience to be unsuited to its purposes or incapable of enforcement; and also by adding new dogmas, or new interpretations, or new rules of practice as the exigencies of the times might require. The careful student of history scarcely needs to be told that the Roman Catholic Church of to-day is quite different from that of even two or three centuries ago; and any observant traveler can see the very considerable dissimilarity which exists

between the Roman Catholic Church of America and that of Central and Southern Europe. That church is a marked victim to change, whatever its votaries may argue to the contrary. Generally it is changing for the better, and in some directions is changing quite as rapidly as the safety of its own organization will permit.

The same is true of Protestantism and of all its branches, word for word. People made up as we are can no more help changing their systems of religious belief than they can help changing the cut or style of their clothes. When a nation or a people stop thinking, they stop changing—and not till then.

My present purpose is more particularly to note some of the more prominent tendencies now observable in the Protestant section of the Church Universal, indicative of present or possible coming changes, such as are affecting or are liable to affect its manner of life—premising, however, that any such well-developed tendency is fairly good proof of some kind or degree of dissatisfaction with what already *is*, and a hope or expectation that something better can be found.

I. Our Western civilization is apparently in serious doubt as to the suitableness or efficiency (or both) of Protestantism as now organized and administered, for suppressing the saloon and the brothel, for relieving the unfortunate and reforming the criminal.

The organization and work of the Salvation

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Army, the American Volunteers, and our numerous voluntary relief associations and rescue-homes, nearly if not all of which are outside of church control, are a conclusive expression of this doubt. Philanthropists who inaugurate a new and special agency for doing reformatory work, indicate thereby a lack of faith in the already existing agencies to which such work might properly belong. Nor does it help the matter at all that many of the devout adherents of the Protestant faith may be coöperating largely, and sometimes liberally, in aid of these outside agencies, for it indicates a like lack of faith or confidence on the part of Protestants themselves. Loss of faith in one existing institution cannot be shown more significantly than by the organization of another. When a living stream finds for itself a new channel, the conclusion is obvious that the old channel is dammed up, or is inadequate, or for some other reason is not satisfactory. The currents of reform are, and for some time have been, making new channels for the outflow and onflow of the streams of work, influence, and power which are to aid in the cleansing of humanity.

Another indication of the same fact lies in the clearly apparent and gradually increasing tendency to invoke the aid of legislation in the carrying on of that reformatory work which involves the promotion of public morals. Religious forces are properly regarded as especially appropriate and efficient in the field of moral reform; and when

these forces become so far reduced in amount, or so ineffective in results, that religious men and women turn in apparent alarm, as they are now doing, to invoke political aid, such action on their part is strongly confirmative of the conclusion that religion is on the decline. Legislation is an excellent adjunct in restraining or temporarily suppressing the comparatively small portion of our population which is really vicious; but the great majority of our saloon-keepers, and many of their patrons as well, are not vicious. For the purpose of controlling the *non*-vicious class, if moral agencies are weak, legislation is weaker still. If the salt of good morals has lost its savor, society cannot be saved, nor can men, otherwise inclined, be led into the ways of righteous living by an act of Assembly, nor by a hundred such acts.

2. I feel at least reasonably safe in formulating the conclusion quite generally prevalent that Protestantism is steadily losing (if it has not already lost) its hold on that very numerous class who live by the fruits of their own manual labor, the class of employees including mechanics and laborers generally, and small tradesmen or shop-keepers.

As to these people, it begins to look very much as if Protestantism were a failure. Such people are chiefly congregated in our mining, lumbering, and manufacturing districts, and in our cities. As to the miners, lumbermen, and factory hands, they are left for the most part to take care of

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themselves. Such efforts as are made in their behalf are usually feeble or spasmodic, and merely amount to enough to satisfy temporarily the occasional twinges of an outraged conscience. In the cities, our Protestant churches have practically become religious club-houses for the especial, if not exclusive, use of members and their families. Our Christian Endeavor and other kindred organizations expend their best efforts in the cultivation of individual piety in their own membership. Beyond what is meet, they are becoming mutual-admiration societies. People of the classes above referred to, usually included in the comprehensive phrases, "the common people" and "the lower classes," are found in our city Protestant churches in exceedingly small and gradually lessening numbers, and apparently cannot be induced to come to them. And the amount of religion they have at home is not visibly on the increase.

This particular evil has long been recognized, and repeated efforts have been made to "bring them in." Methodism in its origin had this for one of its aims—to reach and save the common people—and for a hundred years or so it was run on those lines, and with marvelous success. But for the last half-century, it has been changing by a slow process of degeneracy into a close assimilation to the other branches of Protestantism, until now, in respect of the feature or element here in question, the difference is small. It has become much like unto the rest of us. The Moody movement

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involved also an effort to reach the churchless masses. For a time they came to Moody's preaching in immense crowds—much as, when John the Baptist began his wonderful work, there "went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan" (Matt. iii., 5). But in his later years Moody allowed himself to be persuaded to walk along the well-beaten trails of orthodox Protestantism, so that his early work, like that of the Wesleys, though some of its fruits remain, is now scarcely more than a memory, or a part of the history of unrealized expectations. Protestantism has changed by degeneracy until "the common people" and "the lower classes" care nothing for it, and but very little for the Gospel it professes to teach. The exceptions are barely enough in number to prove the rule. The causes of the change need not be enumerated; they will readily be seen by those who really wish to find them.

Mormonism is in part a substantial protest against the indifference which Protestantism has shown toward the common or working people, especially during the last half-century; for, contrary to the general impression, the real strength of Mormonism lies, not in its religion, but in the fact that it is largely a social and industrial organization, and as completely so, though in a somewhat different way, as were the Economites in Pennsylvania in the days of their numerical and financial prosperity. Mormonism, in substance,

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embraces not only a religious union, but a social union, a labor union, and a commercial union as well. The Mormon Church sees to it that every adult member able to work is provided with a means of livelihood, and that his or her spiritual interests are looked after also. Those not able to work are systematically provided for. It is doubtful if labor is anywhere so well-organized as by that despotic church, and every producer is provided with a market. Their polygamous system enables them to take care of the surplus female population for whom remunerative employment cannot otherwise be found. All are thus provided for, and, so far as surface indications show, are reasonably happy in the present world and well-contented as regards their prospects in the next. Possibly Protestantism might learn something by knowing Mormonism better.

3. The failure of Protestantism to maintain (except theoretically) the high standard of spirituality which the Reformers originally put into it—God dwelling in man and man in Him, whereby man grows into a oneness with Him—even if not otherwise apparent, would seem to be proved by the sudden rise and rapid growth of the Christian Science sect, one chief article of whose creed is the identity of God with that which in man is good. This is a step, and a long step, in the direction of that *oneness with Him* which is the final aim and result of the Gospel of Christ as John understood and explained it. I think that the Christian

Science conception of this article of their faith is somewhat crude and decidedly hazy, but if apprehended and lived by Christian Scientists in form and substance as John sets it forth in his Gospel, it may ultimately become an arrow which will reach one of the defective joints of the Protestant armor (I. Kings xxii., 34); and if it does, the Protestant Church will be likely to suffer for its falling away from the high standard of the primitive faith.

I do not wish to magnify Christian Science, but still I cannot help regarding it as a dangerous protest against our Protestant neglect of that particular phase of Christianity which is developed in John's Gospel. For while it is largely a system of highly seductive error, it still embraces a considerable percentage of very plausible truth. Its theory of visible nature substantially conforms to the Buddhist doctrine of illusion—that all visible things are "Maya," illusion. Its good in man is approximately the "karma" theory or doctrine of Buddhism, though considerably tintured with Christian sentiment. By an un-scholarly but colorable misreading of the Bible, it has evolved and adopted a perverted conception of the divine Being. To the conglomerate thus formed, it has added a semi-realistic, but not wholly erroneous, interpretation of the fourth Gospel. To this also it has added a mystical theory of "health and disease," the greater part of which it borrowed from the "faith-curers,"



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but which probably contains more truth than we Protestants are willing to admit (though sooner or later we shall have to); and which, still further, as it appeals violently to the imagination and to our natural love of the marvellous, is an element of power, especially among the credulous and weak thinkers—classes, by the way, that include the large majority of mankind. By this unification of God and Good, Christian Science has made especially prominent in the spiritual life of its devout adherents an element of faith—oneness with God—which the Protestant churches have practically (though not theoretically) relegated from a primary to a subordinate place in their compendium of religious truth. In this respect Protestantism has made a serious mistake—a change for the worse—which, if not corrected, is liable sooner or later to prove fatal.

4. Among the intellectual and moral forces that are now guiding the development of our civilization, there appears to be a growing doubt as to whether the Protestant Church occupies an impregnable position in holding that the final authority in all matters of duty and obligation is an infallible Bible and nothing else.

The Roman Catholic holds to an infallible Bible as, and only as, interpreted and supplemented by an infallible church or by an infallible Pope when speaking *ex cathedra* in matters of faith or morals.

Which is correct? Or is either correct?

I do not propose just now to discuss these questions, or either of them, but only to call attention to certain phases of the Protestant side of the case.

(1) For the most part, Protestantism has been forced to abandon its old theory of verbal inspiration, for the facts will not sustain it. In lieu thereof, it adopted and theoretically at least still holds to a theory of "plenary" inspiration, of which more presently.

At the same time, the old theory of verbal inspiration is still stoutly maintained by many. Moody adopted and clung to it to the last. The Mormon Church believes and teaches it. Practically our Second Adventists and premillenarians also hold to it, at least so far as relates to matters of eschatology. And many individual believers of profound piety refuse to give it up; but otherwise, the general consensus of scholarly opinion among our best Biblical critics is to the effect above stated.

(2) There is, however, a section of orthodox Protestantism of high learning and scholarship, which, on account of numerous well-established errors in the oldest and best of the known texts, have adopted the theory of the infallibility or "inerrancy of the original manuscripts"—that is to say, even if the present Biblical text is not infallible, the original manuscripts were. But as the original manuscripts cannot be referred to for the purpose of verification, the theory has

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found but a limited acceptance; and I mention it only as illustrative of how Protestantism is restlessly moving in certain quarters, with uneasy and somewhat uncertain steps, in an effort to correct errors of which it is now becoming unpleasantly conscious.

(3) "Plenary" inspiration is differently defined by different Biblical scholars. In fact, it is one of those phrases which, on account of the uncertainty of its meaning, is used to cover a considerable divergence of belief. Generally it is understood to include the infallibility of the record in respect of the particular fact, thought, or truth expressed, but not of the particular form of statement employed in the expression of it.

This theory is still maintained, nominally at least, by a considerable majority of those who adhere to the Protestant faith.

(4) But this theory is vigorously assailed as untenable, and largely for the same reasons which led to the general abandonment of the "verbal" theory. In lieu of it, there is asserted the inspiration and infallibility of the Biblical record in respect of all matters of faith and morals, including therein all matters of divine revelation both as to this world and the next; all matters of moral obligation on the part of man to or toward his Maker and his fellow-man—telling him how to live and how to die and how to live hereafter—and also including a history of the dealings of divine Providence with certain individual men, and with

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certain portions or sections of humanity. Under this theory history *as history* and science *as science* in the Biblical record are not regarded as inspired, nor the record itself as infallible; though subject to the unavoidable errors which even the best and best-informed men will make, the history is to be taken as correct and the science as the best that the writers could have known.<sup>1</sup>

I have briefly stated these general theories in the order of their development, merely to illustrate the fact that even our Protestant faith is involved in the universal and ever-continuing movement of our Western civilization, is changing with it and being changed by it. Its theories or postulates are undergoing continual re-examination and revision, not usually in an unfriendly spirit, but generally for the purpose of getting at the truth; for the old proverb, *Magna est veritas et praevalabit*,

<sup>1</sup> Two facts, casually picked up, may illustrate the difficulty experienced by our Biblical scholars in dealing with the subject of inspiration:

1. The learned Lord Bishop of Ripon, in his valuable Introduction to "The Temple Bible," freely admits his inability to state in words what he understands inspiration to mean. Thus (p. 84) he says:

"I confess that I know no satisfactory definition either of Inspiration or Revelation. I have looked through many treatises; I have met with many attempted definitions; but none are really adequate."

2. Dr. De Witt, in a most excellent manual entitled *What is Inspiration?* (Randolph, 1893) formulates a definition (pp. 163-164) *two hundred words in length*. Such a definition requires a commentary for its comprehension; and that is really what his book is.

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is not a mere "glittering generality," but a basic fact in the divine administration of the universe.

While Protestantism is the latest and, up to the present time, represents probably the best evolution of Christianity, there is still room within its precincts for a radical reformation, for it does not embody in any practical sense the most perfect attainable results.

In the Greek and Roman Catholic churches, the Church of England, and its off-shoot the Protestant-Episcopal Church of America, the dominant element of religion is a ritual. In the Protestant and Reformed churches generally, it is a creed. In the church of the future, it will be righteousness, and a kind and degree of righteousness (Rom. i., 17, 18; iii., 21; ix., 30; x., 6; Phil. iii., 9, etc.) which will end our present wranglings about rituals and creeds, and in lieu thereof will give dominance to:

"Whatsoever things are true,

"Whatsoever things are honorable,

"Whatsoever things are just,

"Whatsoever things are pure,

"Whatsoever things are lovely,

"Whatsoever things are of good report" (Phil. iv., 8).

A religion whose dominant feature is righteousness is what the world needs just now.

Protestantism may live if it corrects its own errors and defects; otherwise our civilization will

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reject it and throw it away. But if it dies, as it yet may, we can rest assured that it will be succeeded by something truer—and therefore something better.

## LOST BELIEFS

THERE are a number of things taught in the Scriptures which we of the Protestant faith ignore and practically reject. Being authoritatively taught once, they were either believed or taught in order that they might be believed, and hence for convenience I term them "Lost Beliefs."

1. In Hebrews i., 14, it is clearly indicated that one of the normal, ordinary duties of angelic beings is to help those of us who are trying to follow along the way that leads to eternal life; and the interrogatory form of the passage distinctly implies that such was then the belief of the writer and of those to or for whom he wrote. It was so well understood that there was no doubt about it. Since they all believed it, the writer had only to remind them of the fact.

The agency of spirits, or spiritual agency in the promotion of righteousness among men, is, in our modern religious teaching, confined to the office and work of the Holy Spirit. Practically our faith is centered on this as the only power outside ourselves that "makes for righteousness"; so that when we invoke divine aid in behalf of our infirmities and shortcomings, we rarely, if ever, think of any other aid than that of the Holy Spirit.

But for thus limiting our conceptions we have no Biblical authority. On the other hand, in the passage above cited, we are plainly told, not as a new revelation, but as something then generally taught and believed by the Christian converts from Judaism, that angelic beings—all of them—have it as their proper and ordinary work, to aid those of us who are earnestly striving for better lives here and for immortal lives hereafter.

And this being true, why should it not still be so taught and believed? And why may we not in prayer reasonably and properly invoke angelic aid as well as the aid of the Holy Spirit? Do you say that it is not necessary, and that the Spirit can give us all the aid we need? Doubtless it *can*, but, according to Scripture, it is otherwise appointed. If it be true that, in the divine plan, such work, or any part of it, is assigned to angelic beings, is it for us to refuse to pray for such needed aid or service as is divinely appointed to be rendered by or through them?

It may be noted that the direct worshiping of angels forbidden by St. Paul (Col. ii., 18) is a very different thing and has no relevancy to the subject now in hand.

While we have no specific teachings on the subject, we have a number of illustrative examples in the New Testament as to what kind of aid or service by angels has been rendered to humanity in the past, the particular manner being usually, and perhaps always, that of a dream. But before



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noting a few such examples, let me add that, so far as we know, there is nothing miraculous in a dream; nor is there any case recorded in the New Testament of angelic service to humanity (outside of its agency in the giving of revelation), the duplication of which to a devout follower of the Master, and on a befitting occasion, should even now be regarded as in the nature of a miracle. It might be termed a "special providence," but a special providence is not necessarily nor always a miracle. The two should be carefully distinguished.

Outside the prophetic books, the Bible gives us a few sketches of inspired dreams; one in Genesis xv., 12-17, by which the future of his descendants for several centuries was made known to Abraham; one in Job. iv., 12-17, which for combined beauty and sublimity is unexcelled in our literature; and a third in Acts x., 9-16, which, in connection with what immediately followed, first removed the stigma of religious uncleanness from the non-Jewish nations of the earth—*quorum pars sumus*.

For a few illustrations of angelic service to men in the flesh, easy reference may be made to:

Matt. i., 20; ii., 12, 13, 19, 22.

Luke i., 11, 28; ii., 9; xvi., 22.

Acts v., 19; vii., 30; viii., 26; x., 3; xii., 7, 23; xxvii., 23.

Human experience plainly shows that dreams of warning, dreams of a possible future, dreams of guidance or instruction, dreams of reproach, dreams of praise, dreams that seem to be prompted

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by some extramundane agency, are not wholly unknown among even as unsuperstitious and incredulous a people as ourselves. Generally we refuse to heed them, or dismiss them with a laugh, and perhaps to our own serious loss. But how may we know an angel-inspired dream from any other? Of course, to do so would require a moral or religious apprehension which, for want of cultivation, very few of us possess. But how do we learn to distinguish a sincere conviction from a deceptive impulse? the promise of an honest man from the pledge of a sleek scoundrel? a house of purity from a whitewashed sepulcher? The prophet Samuel, in his youth and inexperience, failed to distinguish the call of Jehovah from the voice of Eli, and it took him some time to learn the difference between them (I. Sam. iii.). This difficulty is by no means a new one. It once existed in connection with prophecy (Deut. xviii., 21, 22), but it was not insuperable. I think it safe to say that he who sincerely and devoutly wishes to learn the things divinely made known to him during "the visions of the night" may learn to distinguish the genuine from the spurious much sooner and more surely than he can learn to separate correctly the men of his community into honest and dishonest. "By their fruits ye shall know them" is probably as true of dreams as of men.

A belief in angels as agents in and for the service of the devout followers of the Master is one of the

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Lost Beliefs of Christianity, and in my way of thinking Christianity is the poorer for the loss.

2. Another Lost Belief is referred to by St. Paul in I. Corinthians xv., 29—baptism for the dead.

The language employed and the form of expression clearly indicate that there was then an established usage in the church at Corinth which was generally known by that term. What did it mean?

It will be noted that there is no ambiguity in the language used. The phrase "baptized for the dead," or, as the original really means (and ought to be translated), "*in behalf of the dead*," must in the absence of evidence to the contrary be construed as meaning what it clearly expresses—that, in the usage referred to, living persons were baptized for, or in behalf of, some other persons who were dead, and that such baptism of the former was believed to inure in some way to the benefit of the latter. Such a belief implies a very near relationship between the living and the dead, and suggests that possibly (as in the religious cultus of China) they are not very far apart.

Many commentators and critics, without authority and contrary to authority, seek to distort the meaning of the language here employed by Paul so as to make it mean something else. With such it is useless to argue. We might as well discuss the meaning of the ten commandments. But the more orthodox critics try to make it

appear that in the passage cited Paul neither approves nor disapproves the usage in question.

Critics who so argue have not yet got acquainted with Paul. He was not a man of that kind. There were four things which, as his writings plainly show, he especially abominated: Gentile impurity, Jewish legalism, human hypocrisy, and heathen superstition. Either this usage was based on revealed truth, or else it rested on a heathenish superstition. If it had been the latter we may be reasonably sure that Paul would have let it pass by without even a word of disapproval. He was writing to a church of his own planting, and a church over which he still exercised apostolic authority (I. Cor. v., 13; xi., 34b). If we can presume anything on the subject, we must presume that its usages and practices either were established by him or were based on his teachings. Repeatedly in his epistles he condemns innovations introduced by others. No error of practice or belief seems ever to have escaped him. In the passage cited, he speaks as if the usage referred to, if not introduced by himself, at least was well understood by him and met with his approval. After a careful study, I can come to no other conclusion.

Hence I am constrained to regard this as another of our Lost Beliefs, and so thoroughly lost that if it were now preached from a Presbyterian pulpit it would doubtless be regarded as heresy, St. Paul to the contrary notwithstanding.

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The loss of both these beliefs can easily be accounted for. Two causes have led to their being dropped: one is racial, the other is historical.

(1) The Aryan race to which we belong, of all the races of the earth, has both by natural organization and by cultivation a minimum of superstition and a maximum of incredulity. Our intellectual tendencies lead us to believe nothing which we cannot apprehend by some one or more of our physical senses. In proof of the genuineness of Christianity, the argument from miracles has with us pretty much lost its convincing power, and this simply because we cannot understand a miracle even though we may admit it to be true as a fact. No more can we understand how invisible angels can affect our lives, nor how a baptismal rite performed on a living person can be beneficial to an invisible, disembodied spirit. But the Semitic races, to which the Jews belonged, had no such difficulty. Naturally and habitually they believed in things which they did not pretend to understand. The blowing of the winds was as much a mystery to them as the raising of the dead (John iii., 8). The mere fact that a thing seemed to be impossible was to them, or in their way of thinking, no reason why they should refuse to believe it. Hence an intimate relationship between this world and the next, or between the living and the dead, when authoritatively taught as true, presented no stumbling-block to their faith. We, on the other hand, believe as little of

it as possible, even though it may be true. As a race we are unfortunately lacking as respects faith in the unseen.

To this racial defect may fairly be attributed the comparatively small growth among us of the cultus of Spiritualism, the religion of Emanuel Swedenborg, and sundry other systems of belief in which the work or agency of unseen spirits constitutes so dominant an element. The Aryan intellect does not take kindly to such systems of thought. The mysteries that involve directly our relationships with God and eternity are as many as we care to consider. Just at present, another Lost Belief—faith-cure—comes in the same class. We now regard it with great incredulity and for the same reason. But of this I will have more to say presently.

If it were not too much of a digression, it would be interesting to note how prominent in the religious thought of the Mongolian race is the nearness of the relationship of the living and the dead. The fifth commandment of our decalogue has in China a force and potency away beyond anything we ever thought of; for they honor father and mother not only during life but after death—the latter especially to a degree which in genuine zeal and pure devotion probably excels the poor service that we coldly render to the God in whom we profess to believe.

(2) The other reason for the decadence of these Lost Beliefs is historical.

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In the ancient Hebrew church, prior to about the sixth or seventh century B.C., nothing had been revealed or was known as to a future life or a future world. Jehovah dwelt at Jerusalem among His own people, or at least it was so believed, and hence He and they were locally very near to each other. Worshipers in His temple came into His very presence. He was personally there, as was proven to their satisfaction by the Shekinah which, as they believed, rested on or hovered over the sacred ark in the holy of holies.

But in the course of time the idea grew up—we do not know its origin—that Jehovah had another home somewhere up in the sky, which came to be known as heaven. Presently, too, it came to be considered as the home or final resting-place of the pious dead. It was thought of as located in or beyond the clouds (Isa. xiv., 14), but not so very far off as to interfere with Jehovah's continued personal presence in Jerusalem for the good or chastisement of His people.

Such ideas were natural enough at that time. Science, as we understand it, was then unknown, so that the sun, moon, and stars were not ordinarily thought of as being other than mere appendages to the earth, and not as very far distant from it. If heaven was up among the stars, then obviously it was not so far away as to be beyond even the limited conceptions of that day.

This idea of the nearness of the next world to this continued down well into the Christian era

(I. Thess. iv., 17). And of course, so long as they were thought to be near together, a belief in the intercourse of the dead and the living was easy. But early in the development of astronomical science it was found that the starry heavens were much more distant than had been supposed. Angels and spirits were removed farther off. Through the idea of divine omnipresence, already an article of faith, God and man maintained their former relations, but angelic beings and the disembodied souls of the saints gradually grew distant, dim, and shadowy.

The discoveries of modern science have pushed away the starry heavens almost into infinite space. Our astronomers now count the distance of the *nearest* star by a number of miles that runs somewhere up into the trillions—a distance entirely too great for human comprehension. How much beyond that is the farthest visible star, no one pretends even to guess. Under all our ideas of heaven as a place or locality, if it be such, it must be still more distant; or else, if nearer, it must be invisible, and therefore, *as a locality*, absolutely unknown.

Thus it was that in the apostolic church heaven was thought of as near; and the intercommunion of the living and dead, or of angelic beings with the living, presented no difficulty whatever; but as heaven receded in distance, the faith of the incredulous Aryan grew weak, and finally broke down altogether.



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3. While faith-cure latterly has had some adherents, it was for many centuries a Lost Belief, and in its relationship to the present dominant systems of Christian thought it must still be so classed. Its chief interest at the present time grows out of the fact that it includes a large section of the peculiar "ism" that is misnamed "Christian Science." I believe that Christian Scientists repudiate any belief in what is commonly known as faith-cure, but they do so simply because, as they deny the existence of disease, they of course deny the existence of any "cure." But as I understand their somewhat nebulous theories, they propose by faith, prayer, "good thoughts," etc., to eliminate from the human consciousness that which we call *disease*. This necessarily includes both prevention *and* "cure." In this sense the followers of Mrs. Mary Baker G. Eddy *are* faith-curers, even though they may repudiate the name.

That in the apostolic church there was a prevalent belief in some kind of a faith-cure, sufficiently appears from James v., 14, 15 and I. Corinthians xii., 9. Possibly Mark vi., 13 should be added.

It is true that it is not unusual for the pastors of our modern churches even yet to pray with and for the sick; but with our racial lack of faith in what we do not understand, we still, as respects *cure*, place more reliance on the quinine of the physician than on the prayers of the ecclesiastic.

A cause other than those above-named aided largely in making faith-cure a Lost Belief. Early

in its history the Roman Catholic Church, which dominated the religious thought of Europe for many centuries, interpreted the faith-cure of the apostolic church as being a cure not of physical but of moral disease, that is, of sin, and accordingly it appropriated the passages above cited to the support of the theory or doctrine involved in its sacrament of extreme unction. And while the leaders of the Protestant Reformation and their successors have never failed to denounce this as a perversion of Scripture, they have made no serious effort to restore this Lost Belief to its rightful place in the system of religious thought and life in which we live. Practically it has continued to be a Lost Belief to the present time, though a few efforts have latterly been made here and there to resuscitate it.

It is also true, and every physician knows it to be true, that faith in something or in somebody is a powerful factor in the treatment of disease. It may be faith in the physician or in his medicine; or it may be the faith which a self-confident man may naturally have in his own vitality, or a faith prompted by his own wilful determination *to live*; or it may be a faith based on the promises and hopes of the religion in which he professes to believe. For the purposes of recovery from sickness *any* faith is better than no faith.

Under the modern microbe theory of disease, our best medical authorities are beginning to suspect that faith-cure may not be quite so un-

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scientific a system as for a thousand years or more it has been generally believed to be. In some diseases, or in some phases of disease, there appears to be an irrepressible conflict between the life-force or vitality of the sick man and the life of the unfriendly microbe—*life vs. life*. Which is the stronger and more enduring? One or the other is bound to prevail. If, through the nervous organization of the patient, his life-force or vitality (I use these words to indicate something that nobody fully understands) can be maintained, stimulated, or increased, such life-force or vitality may, it is suspected, act distinctively on the life of the disease-producing microbe and *kill* it. In that case the man will get well. Medicine deleterious to the microbe may aid in the conflict, but if this theory of life-energy should prove to be true (as now seems not improbable), then such agency will very likely be found to be more efficacious than the medicine administered in securing the final and desired result.

And what more powerful stimulant can there be to the maintenance of life-force or energy than a strong, unwavering, unflinching faith? And where else can we look for an equally sure and equally reliable and equally efficient basis or support for such a faith, than in the hopes and promises of the holy and perfect religion which we profess? The faith-cure of the apostolic church now seems in a fair way to be vindicated and adopted by the best medical science of the age,

and that too at no very distant day. Stranger things have happened within the comparatively short time covered by my own recollection.

And when, as now seems not unlikely, faith-cure becomes a science, I have no doubt that we skeptical Aryans will universally believe and adopt it, and will do so simply because it will then appear that, as respects the curing of disease, faith is a recognizable force, operative in a scientific way, to or toward an attainable and desirable end—the preservation of life.

Will man then become immortal? Hardly; but we can well afford to wait and see.

The fact is that we Aryans have selected from the teachings, practice and usages of the apostolic church those features or elements of the Christian faith which we deem to be essential or vital, and such others as, with or without modification, may suit our own peculiar inclination or habits of thought. The rest we reject or ignore. In other words, out of the materials furnished to us, we have evolved a form of Christianity peculiarly our own; perhaps I should say several forms, for from the same data we have developed the multitudinous beliefs which differentiate our divided and subdivided sects, though all agree on certain essentials.

What are these essentials? There are three of them, and only three: A belief (1) in one God; (2) in Jesus Christ as the Saviour of men, unto (3) an immortal life. All else is derivative therefrom. Thus considered, Christianity is the most

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flexible religion on the face of the earth. Having selected and evolved a system or form of Christianity which suits ourselves, it is not for us to say that other races, as the Mongolian, or Turanian, or Dravidian, or even the Semitic, must adopt the same just as we have shaped it. I am not thoroughly informed as to the peculiarities of these other races, but I doubt if our Presbyterian system, for example, will ever commend itself to their general acceptance. They all differ from us radically, and some of them almost interminably, in manner or ways of seeing, thinking, and doing on all subjects and in all things. Each and all of these races have the same right as ourselves, after accepting the essentials, to select and evolve a system or form suitable to their own wants and peculiarities; and the Christian missions ought to be conducted on that basis and to that end.

I believe in the final and universal prevalence of the Christian faith, but it will be a form of faith in which all nations and races can unite. It will, in my apprehension, drop out as unessential, irrelevant, and optional, fully nine tenths (a low estimate) of our now dominant creeds. Was it not a genuine prophet of Jehovah who proclaimed:

“And what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

Any form of Christianity evolved along the lines thus marked out is good enough for any man and for all men—for all the races of mankind.

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4. The Presbyterian Confession of Faith contains, *inter alia*, the following:

“The visible Church . . . consists of all those throughout the world, that profess the true religion, *together with their children*” (chap. xxv., sec. 11).

So much of the above as I have italicized is, in our branch of the Protestant Church, as well as in many others, practically a Lost Belief. The Roman Catholic, the Greek, the Anglican, the Protestant Episcopal, and a few other churches both believe and practise it. In such churches the children are, by right of birth, nominal members of the church from infancy, and usually are so counted. On arriving at years of discretion, they are, after a short preparatory training, and on assenting to a prescribed formula, duly admitted to full membership, and this as a matter of course. To be a full member of the church is thought to be as much a duty, and also a privilege, as for a good citizen to be a member of some political party. It is so preëminently fit and proper, that in such churches no one thinks of doubting or disputing it.

While we of the Presbyterian faith profess a belief in the same theory of church membership, with us it is scarcely more than a theory. In practice we have dropped it, and our usage is the same as if no such words were contained in our creed. The only relic of this belief that we still retain is the ordinance of Infant Baptism—in support of which, by the way, we are unable to cite any New Testament authority.

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Whether we and sundry other Protestant churches have gained or lost by practically dropping this portion of our creed, is a question I am not prepared to discuss. Just at present, I don't know; but my impression is that we have lost more than we have gained.

## REVELATION

THE Book of Revelation is a book of contradictions. Nothing could be more matter-of-fact than some of its statements (chaps. ii., iii.). In other portions the imagery employed is as wild, grotesque, and uncouth as that of Ezekiel (Rev. iv., 7, 8; xii., 3). Some passages show that the writer took positive pleasure in exhibiting what it is no exaggeration to call a hellish spirit of inhuman and malignant revenge (xiv., 8-12); while in other passages he shows equal delight in sketching the gloriously beatific life which awaits a redeemed humanity (chaps. xxi., xxii.). The book deals with time and eternity, with God and Satan, with heaven, earth, and hell, with saints and harlots, with dragons and frogs, and with nearly everything that intervenes.

The prevalent theories as to the origin and authorship of the book are as discordant as its contents. Apparently good and substantial reasons support the belief that it had but one author; other equally substantial reasons seem to indicate that it had a plurality of authors. Strong evidence exists that its authorship should be attributed solely to the apostle John;



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but many Biblical critics of high rank avow their conviction that another John, known as John the Presbyter, was its author. Still others aver, and for reasons of no little cogency, that neither of the two wrote it, and that its author is unknown. Again, the date of its composition is an unsettled matter—all possible dates being assigned by equally good Biblical scholars from about A.D. 66 down through a hundred or more years thereafter. Nor can the advocates of these various theories be arranged under any general classification of orthodox and heretical, for some of our most unorthodox critics are among the strongest advocates of orthodox theories, and *vice versa*.

From my standpoint, however, none of these variant theories have anything to do with the canonical character of the book. I accept it as a part of the inspired record, no matter who wrote it, nor when it was written, nor whether it had one or several authors. Premising this, I will present some of the facts and conclusions which I think are at least reasonably clear and which, if kept in mind, will aid materially in an understanding of its somewhat obscure and confusing contents.

1. The first three chapters were written at a time of great and alarming religious decadence in the churches of Western Asia; and they were written for the purpose of arresting such decadence and restoring therein the primitive standards of faith and practice. The specific contents of the several epistles to the seven churches clearly

prove so much. Out of the seven, only two, Smyrna and Philadelphia, are exempt from the severest reproof and warning. Gross heresies and alarming degeneracy marked the religious life of all the others. And what was true of these seven was probably true of the churches of that region generally; for, standing as they did at the leading centers of influence, they doubtless represented the general drift of the religious development of the day.

2. These churches were of Paul's planting; and though he foresaw and predicted such a period of degeneracy (Acts xx., 29, 30), it is reasonably certain from the contents of his later epistles, particularly Ephesians and Colossians (written about A.D. 62), that it did not come during his lifetime.

3. After the death of Paul an apparently reliable tradition indicates that John the Apostle succeeded to the bishopric of these churches. The writer of these three chapters writes as their Bishop properly might, that is, with a tone of authority—just as if he had an official right to say what he did, and a right which these churches could not refuse to recognize.

These facts would seem fully to justify the conclusion that John the Apostle was the writer of these first three chapters, and that they were written some years after Paul's death, and somewhere along toward the end of the first century, say about A.D. 90-92.

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4. It also appears that at the time John wrote these three chapters there existed in his mind an expectation of some general and severe persecutions which were soon to come on the churches (Rev. ii., 10, 16, 23; iii., 3, 10, 19). Such a persecution arose under the Emperor Domitian, A.D. 93-96. So far as we know, this was the first general persecution of Christians *as such*, though numerous local persecutions had occurred previously, some of which were both bitter and brutal. But up to the time of Domitian, while many individual Christians, and in fact large numbers of them here and there in the empire, had suffered grievously on account of their faith, and especially so at Rome under Nero (A.D. 64-68), the general policy of the empire was not at first hostile to the church as such. But some time during the twenty-five years that intervened between Nero and Domitian the imperial authorities gradually woke up to the fact that the supremacy of the church meant the destruction of the empire, and so it turned out. For after two or three centuries of bitter and bloody conflict the church triumphed, the empire was defeated and (except in name) perished from the earth by a slow process of disintegration. The *name* continued to the time of the first Napoleon, who finally wiped it out, A. D. 1805.

5. These first three chapters clearly constitute by themselves a separate section of the book. I see in them no direct relevancy to what follows,

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either in respect of subject-matter, authorship, or date of composition. The remainder of the book is for the most part dramatic in character, and seems to be made up chiefly of two separate dramas, composed at different times; and, as here recorded, the conclusion of one runs into the opening sections of the other. The concluding drama is apparently the earlier in date, and greatly excels the first in point of sublimity and grandeur. Both, however, treat of the same subject and in about the same way; both have a common origin and proceed to a common end. All this I hope to make clear as we proceed.

6. The first drama, as recorded, opens with chapter iv. Here we enter an entirely different atmosphere, or come into new conditions of thought and experience. The powers of heaven—so runs the vision or dream—are assembled in a council-room or hall of state, such as was usual in Oriental courts. The Book of Job opens in the same way. The writer, as a prophet or seer, in vision sees himself admitted, and he first describes the glorious personnel of the assemblage and the magnificence of the place where the council was held. He tells us who were there, and describes in detail the exercises of devout worship by which the council was opened and constituted. Obviously so grand a council would be held only for some great purpose, a purpose worthy of so great an occasion. A sealed book or roll—a roll *seven times* sealed and therefore presumptively containing

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something of vital importance to the universe at large—was held in the hand of the presiding Deity. Evidently the council assembled with a confident expectation that its contents would be made known, and that thus would be learned what the future had in store for the world or for the church (Rev. iv., 1). That the citizens of heaven were as ignorant on such subjects, and as anxious to learn, as the dwellers on earth, may fairly be inferred from I. Peter i., 12, and Mark xiii., 32.

The drama, or tragedy—for such it was—is opened by the proclamation of an angelic herald of high rank (Rev. v., 2) calling on any one in the wide universe who deems himself qualified for the work, to come forward and break the seals and open the roll. A pause followed: no one immediately appeared; and those who were present hesitated, as well they might, to respond to such a call. So momentous was the occasion—so awe-inspiring and so pregnant for weal or woe—that for a time no one ventured to volunteer. The distress of the Seer (verse 4)—who evidently represented our humanity—doubtless expressed the feeling of disappointment that prevailed throughout the assemblage. Finally one was found—no less a person than He who redeemed humanity. His worthiness could not be questioned; His willingness was His own; and thereupon the entire council unite in joyous acclaim of exalted praise (verses 9, 10). Angels innumerable join in the chorus (verses 11, 12), and even feeble humanity itself

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finds in the prospect good reason for the most ecstatic rejoicing (verses 12, 14). The world or, perhaps better, the church will now learn for the first time what not even the angels knew, the coming prospects and final success of the work of redemption.

7. The differently colored horses and differently accoutred riders that appeared and departed on their respective missions, on the breaking of the first four seals (vi., 1-8), were not regarded by the Seer as involving the particular disclosures he was looking for: hence he passed them by with but a brief mention of each. They revealed nothing but what was common in human history, and had been so for thousands of years. War and conquest, famine, starvation, and death, "Man's inhumanity to man," were written all over the records of the past. That this should continue for all time, the Seer could not believe. Hence he hurried on to the opening of the fifth seal (verses 9-11). With this the great subject-matter of the awful drama is brought to the front, for the souls of the victims of Roman atrocity, from Nero to Domitian, as though unable longer to restrain their intense longing for the revenge on hated Rome, shout out (*i.e.*, "with a great voice") their appeal: "How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Verse 10.)

Here we have the text, the key note, the central thought of this wonderful drama, to the portrayal

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or delineation of which a good part of the book is directly devoted. Revenge on Rome (figuratively called Babylon, for a direct use of the name Rome would have been high treason) breathes through, animates, and dominates the majestic development of this great drama as well as the next. For designating and characterizing hated Rome, no term of execration was too severe, too horrible, too obnoxious, or too filthy. As more fully characterized in the second drama, Rome was a monstrous, hideous, misshapen dragon (xii., 3), a ferocious, blasphemous beast (xiii., 1, 2), the ally of Satan (xii., 9), a gorgeously arrayed but filthy harlot—the incarnation of harlotry, and as such gorged to drunkenness, “with the blood of the saints” (xvii., 1-6). Accordingly the writer cursed Rome, as Job in his dire affliction cursed the day of his birth (Job iii., 1-19); as Shimei cursed David (II. Sam. xvi., 5-14); as the Psalmist cursed Edom (Ps. cxxxvii., 7-9); as Isaiah cursed the real Babylon (Isa. xiii., xiv.). In the matter of invoking curses on their enemies, the people of the Semitic races are said to possess exceptional fluency, and the Book of Revelation bears evidence of this.

But the time for this revenge had not, in the divine plan, yet come. The persecution of the church was not yet ended. Still others of “their fellow-servants and their brethren” were yet to undergo the terrible experiences of martyrdom. Until they “should have fulfilled their course,”

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these appellants for vengeance must wait, even though their appeal was just. In the meantime, and apparently as a special mark of honor—for such was the Oriental usage—to each one was given “a white robe” (Rev. vi., 11).

8. I do not think it possible to correlate the different elements of this dramatic picture, or panorama, with the successive events of human history to any such extent as to find even an approximately exact correspondence therewith. In construing the visions, the dreams of prophets and seers, we are to look only for general effects, not for historical details. Neither, as a general rule, does the element of duration or of time-how-long enter into the dramatic picture. The writer records what he sees, and usually, though not always, notes the order in which the incidents of the vision follow each other, but rarely the time occupied by each—much as in an ordinary dream, say of a voyage to Europe and back, which, though vivid and apparently real, may last only a few minutes. Such exceptions as occur in the present narrative will be noted as we proceed.

For these reasons I am unable to speak with any approach to certainty as to the duration of time which may be covered by the events pictured or referred to as occurring thus far. The writer gives no key by which that matter may be determined. Probably he himself did not know, for otherwise we may reasonably presume that he would have told us. Nor have I yet found any



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commentator whose exposition herein has appealed to me as sufficiently clear and certain to be adopted as a matter of belief or faith. For myself, I am in the position of one awaiting further light and knowledge.

9. The marvelous panorama that gradually unrolled before the vision of the writer on the opening of the sixth seal (Rev. vi., 12-17) bears a striking resemblance to the events which, in the popular apprehension of the early church, were immediately associated with the expected early return of the Master—an event which Paul confidently looked for during the lifetime of the generation then living (I. Thess. iv., 17). Peter also thought that it was near at hand (I. Pet. iv., 7), as also did the writer of the book we are considering (Rev. xxii., 7, 12, 20). The occurrence of unnatural phenomena in the natural world was generally believed to forecast His coming. He himself foretold such signs (Matt. xxiv., 29; Luke xxi., 25-27); so did Peter (II. Pet. iii., 10-13); and Paul appears to have had somewhat similar expectations (II. Thess. i., 7-10). The events which thus, in the writer's vision, followed the opening of the sixth seal, were doubtless supposed by him to indicate that the second coming of Christ was thereby presaged, that it was near at hand, and that when He came, it would be partly at least for vengeance upon Rome. So much at least seems to be implied in Revelation vi., 17: "a great day of wrath" was impending, and so

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terrible would that wrath be that no one would be "able to stand."

10. Apparently as a part of the chaos that followed the opening of the sixth seal, the writer saw the vision of the four angels of chapter vii., 1-3. At this moment the majestic development of the drama is arrested, for not yet have we had any report of the later martyrs, the "fellow-servants" and "brethren" who, according to chapter vi., 11, were to meet their fate and be gathered in before the appeal of the earlier martyrs (verse 10) for revenge could be entertained. These must be accounted for, and their safety assured. Accordingly, a census is attempted: "a hundred and forty and four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel" (Rev. vii., 4) expresses the idea that the salvation of Israel is complete: they are all there. The writer was evidently a Jew by nationality, and he gloried in a vision of the realization of what to Paul in his day was not in sight—the salvation of Israel (Rom. xi., 25). The Gentiles too were there, in countless numbers, "out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues" (Rev. vii., 9). While especial mention is made of those who had "come out of the great tribulation" (verse 14), as though persecution had spent its fury, the account *seems* to indicate that all the redeemed had been gathered in, and the writer might very naturally have thought so, in view of his expectation that the Master was coming "quickly," as already noted.

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And if the harvest unto eternal life was then thought to be complete, nothing could be more fitting than the songs of grateful praise that celebrated the consummation of the great work of human redemption (verses 10, 11). The best that heaven offered or could offer was at their disposal (verses 15-17), and they awaited the opening of the seventh and last seal, which would surely bring the longed-for but delayed revenge on persecuting Rome.

11. On this, "there followed a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour" (Rev. viii., 1)—as though all the inhabitants of the celestial world, angels and men, stood aghast or in terror at what was presented to their view. The time for revenge, not only on Rome but on all the agencies of evil, had now come; and so appalling was the revenge to be that no one put forth either hand or voice to hasten its infliction. Even the martyred victims of the most cruel atrocities that human depravity could suggest or contrive were silent with the rest, much as if they too hesitated at the awfulness of the vengeance they had so ardently implored. But the last seal was broken; the divine decree must be executed, and the instruments of vengeance, seven angels with seven trumpets, stood forth in array, and "prepared themselves to sound" (verse 6).

Before they did so, however, as if some further justification were needed for the dreaded events that were to follow, the "prayers of all the saints"

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—doubtless the prayers of the thousands of martyrs mangled alive by savage beasts or burned alive by more savage men, as a means of adorning the festal days and nights of Roman brutality; prayers that could not be forgotten for deliverance from atrocities that could not be forgiven—these prayers of the martyred saints were gathered together as incense, and burned in the presence of Him of whom the record runs: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. xii., 19). And in attestation of the fact that in the infliction of the coming retribution of Rome no mercy was to be shown, the angel loaded the now empty censer with fire from the altar of vengeance, and tragically "cast it upon the earth" (Rev. viii., 3-5). Thus, emblematically, the doom of human and satanic wickedness was then sealed; probation was ended, and the instruments or agencies of divine retribution proceeded to their work.

12. It is not necessary for my present purpose to follow in detail the horrors narrated as the development of this awful drama slowly proceeds. It is not pleasant reading, for it is written in the spirit of Moses when he wrote Deuteronomy xxviii., 15-68; in the spirit of Samuel and Saul when they wiped out Amalek (II. Sam. i., 15); in the spirit of David when he tortured his captives to death under saws and harrows and axes and in brick-kilns (II. Sam. xii., 31); in the spirit of the writer of the imprecatory Psalms—the spirit which everywhere and always demands "an eye for an eye, and a tooth

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for a tooth" (Matt. v., 38), and sometimes with compound interest added. Thus runs the record from Revelation viii., 6 through chapters ix., x., to xi., 13. Nor do I find anything in this portion of the book that appears to correspond with any specific history of which we have any record. That it all once had a meaning does not admit of doubt, but the key to its meaning is lost; and the asserted analogies between the events of subsequent history and the vivid but indefinite sketches of these chapters are altogether too remote, uncertain, or fanciful to furnish anything like a reliable guide for the purpose of interpretation.

13. With these chapters, however, we come to one of the vexing questions in Biblical criticism. Chapter x. (except verse 7) and chapter xi., 1-13 were apparently written by some other and earlier writer than the author of the previous portions of the book. The latter, probably finding them extant and anonymous, and that they suited his purpose, inserted them at this place in his narrative. While this view is somewhat conjectural, the best indications point that way. The writers were certainly different, for one is represented as being in heaven during the running of his vision (Rev. iv., 1, 2), while the other was on earth (Rev. x., 1-4). One vision was based on the disclosures of a *sealed* book or roll (Rev. v., 1); the other on an *open* book or roll (Rev. x., 8). For reasons already stated, I would assign the portion of the book already considered to a date

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subsequent to the general persecution under the Emperor Domitian, and quite near to the end of the first century. Chapter xi., however, was probably written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70, for the temple is represented as still standing (verses 1, 2). As above stated, I am strongly inclined to the view that the author of the previous chapters, finding an earlier apocalypse in existence of a like general trend—its author perhaps unknown—one that sufficiently suited his purpose, adopted portions of it, with perhaps some changes and corrections, including the insertion of chapter x., 7. And it suited his purpose partly perhaps because it announced the near coming of the end of all things (verse 6), as also the complete revelation or disclosure of the last of the divine mysteries; and if, as perhaps he reasonably might, he should understand that “Sodom and Egypt” (Rev. xi., 8)—names highly obnoxious in Jewish thought—meant hated Rome, and that the earthquake of verse 13 meant its destruction, its general drift and meaning would lie along the lines of the visions he was then narrating.

14. With the sounding of the seventh and last of the trumpets of vengeance, the Seer presents us (verses 15-19) a scene of ecstatic rejoicing in heaven over the complete establishment to all eternity of “the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ” (verse 15), as also over the final triumph of divine wrath against the nations, and the immediate reward to “the prophets, and to the

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saints, and to them that fear thy name" (verse 18). Obviously the full consummation was thought to be then very close at hand. The holy temple in Jerusalem, now lying in ruins for twenty years or more, was reopened in heaven; the old Mosaic ark of the covenant, probably lost when Nebuchadnezzar ravaged the city about six hundred years before, is refound; while the unusual portents of nature indicate the coming of great events (verse 19).

15. Apparently this particular drama ends at this point, and with chapter xii. we are introduced to another, the opening chapters of which are lost. But in what we have the writer turns back and begins again with an era of violent persecution and a persecution which, by historical allusions, is fairly well-identified with that of Nero, A.D. 64-68, which followed the burning of Rome, and a description of which burning, it may be added, is probably reproduced in chapter xviii., 9-19. The dramatic form of representation previously used is still preserved. The same general subject is also adhered to—revenge on Rome (still designated as Babylon) for the fearful persecutions inflicted on the saints, and a sketch or delineation of the final and glorious rewards of the latter in the New Jerusalem—for the old Jerusalem was laid waste.

16. As the introductory part of this added drama is lost (and of course previous historical allusions are lost with it), the historical meaning,

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if there be any, involved in the vision of the star-crowned and sun-clad woman (Rev. xii., 1-6, 13-17), and in the vision of the war in heaven (verses 7-12), must be matters of conjecture. None of the numerous commentaries that I have been able to consult give any explanation which I can regard as satisfactory. The proper interpretation of visions and dreams is a department of Biblical criticism in which our Biblical scholars have not yet attained to a very high state of proficiency. Hence, as to these two particular visions, I pass them by with only a comment or two.

(1) Of the war in heaven the account reads much as if Satan, *up into the beginning of the Christian era*, still continued to have, and to exercise, as in the days of Job (Job i., 6), and as in the later time of Zechariah (Zech. iii., 1, 2), a right or privilege of free entrance into the court of heaven, where he appears as "accuser" of those who "loved not their life even unto death," which obviously means the redeemed martyrs; but that at a time subsequent (not prior, as generally believed) to the sacrifice on Calvary, he and his angels were expelled thence and "cast down to the earth" where, on account of his "great wrath," and because he had but a "short time" in which to work before the anticipated early return of Jesus the Master, it was evidently expected that he would play havoc, probably as the instigator of renewed and more virulent persecution against the saints of the Most High. How much of this



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is figurative, and, if figurative, what it means; how much, if any, is historical, and how or when fulfilled, the record does not disclose. *If* historical it is widely at variance with the views generally taught in our church as to the time when Satan was expelled from heaven. But be this as it may, the song of triumph (Rev. xii., 10-12) over the defeat and expulsion of Satan is worthy the occasion. In the working out of the plan of redemption, this event was evidently thought to be "the beginning of the end," or at least the first of the victories that were to bring it about.

(2) The apocalypse of the woman whom all nature delighted to honor (verses 1-6, 13-17), and in whose child were centered the hopes of humanity for its final redemption, introduces a repulsive dragon as the chief source or agency of persecution. Its heads, horns, and diadems (verse 3) seem to associate it closely in the thought of the Seer with the Cæsarean line of emperors, of whom Nero was the last and the worst. It is generally conceded, and apparently for good reasons, that in chapter xiii., we have a sketch of the Emperor Nero as "a beast" (which he undoubtedly was), and of some one of the obsequious ministers of his beastly passions, who therefore was "another beast," and also of the cruelties and barbarities of the Neronian persecution of A.D. 64-68. To have named Nero in that connection would have been treasonable, and therefore to the writer fatal, for the Roman sword (*gladius*), though short, could reach to the

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utmost limits of the empire. But a secret key (verse 18) sufficiently identified him to Christian readers, and the mere use of the words "dragon" and "beast" by the writer (evidently a Jew by descent and early training) indicates an overpowering execration with which the surviving Christians invested the memory of their persecutors, and is a corresponding index to the awfulness of the persecutions. In Jewish thought the names of animals regarded as unclean expressed the acme of opprobrium and hate (Matt. vii., 6; xv., 26). That in this particular case the names were deserved fully appears from the fragmentary remains of the history of that period. At that time, as fully as ever afterward, was probably exemplified "the patience and the faith of the saints" (Rev. xiii., 10).

17. In chapter xiv., 1-7, the Seer seems to be setting forth, perhaps for the consolation and encouragement of the persecuted saints, his conception of Mount Zion, the home of the redeemed martyrs—in substance about as follows:

(1) A sacred number, say seven or twelve, multiplied by itself, with an added cipher or two, expressed in Jewish thought that which was endless or practically infinite (Matt. xviii., 22). Here three ciphers added to the product gave a faint expression of the number of the redeemed—a number so great that the chorus of their voices in song had a grandeur and power not unlike that of the most sublime of nature's manifestations (Rev. xiv., 1, 2).

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(2) The music of the next world will be something entirely new, and also something beyond human comprehension (verse 3).

(3) Our Saviour's statement as to the absence of sexual life and relations in the next world (Luke xx., 35, 36) will be literally verified (Rev. xiv., 4).

(4) The universal curse of human lying will not be found there, and no "blemish" will exist (verse 5)—the force and significance of this last fact resting on the other fact that, by a "blemish" of any kind, both animals and men were, in the thought of that day, rendered unfit for the service of the Most High (Lev. i., 3; xxi., 21).

(5) *Another gospel* will then be promulgated, but what it will consist of, or how it will differ from our present gospel, is not stated (Rev. xiv., 6).

18. But during this time Babylon (or Rome), "the dragon," had not been forgotten; nor had Nero, "the beast." The depth and severity of the vengeance yet to be taken on them, and now prophetically announced (verses 8-12), were something appalling; for they were to be compelled to "drink of the wine of the wrath of God, undiluted, in the cup of His anger . . . and the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever" (verses 10, 11). If hell contains any doom more terrible than that, it is not recorded. The agonizing prayer of the martyrs (Rev. vi., 10) was now heard, and assurances were given of frightful vengeance. But as the Neronian period of martyrdom was

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not yet ended, the Seer was directed to write of those who were yet to suffer (Rev. xiv., 13):

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth:

“Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors;

“For their works follow with them.”

19. The vision of the reaping of the earth (verses 14-20) presents no facts which I am able to render into actual history. Apparently it is prophetic of a final harvest, but it is a harvest of evil and not of good. The entire fruits of the reaping are represented as cast “into the great winepress of the wrath of God” (verse 19). Nothing is gathered into life eternal. This certainly is not the reaping our Saviour told of in Matthew xiii., 37-43, nor do I know of any other reaping prophetically foretold to which it can properly be referred. The account clearly involves, however, that which is the dominant thought of the book, *vengeance without mercy*.

20. In the progressive development of the present drama, the time had now come for the avenging of the wrongs inflicted by Nero, “the beast” (Rev. xv., 2), on the martyred saints. The “seven angels having the seven last plagues,” which seem to be the perfected or completed expression of “the wrath of God,” make their appearance (verse 1). Face to face with the impending retribution, and notwithstanding its obvious horrors, the martyred victims of Nero’s

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brutality are again represented as joining in a holy song of devout praise (verses 3, 4). Here, as in the drama of the earlier chapters, the avenging spirit of ancient Judaism—the blood-revenge of the desert—runs riotous in ecstatic anticipation of the awful vengeance that was in store for the persecuting Gentiles. Even the sanctuary of the divine presence could not, as the vision represents, be cleared of the visible and stifling indications of His anger till the angelic ministers of His wrath had fully accomplished their ghastly work (verse 8).

If John the Apostle wrote all this, then we must conclude that when he did so he laid aside the spirit of benignant gentleness and love which belongs to the fourth Gospel and to the three epistles that bear his name, and that he resumed for the time being those belligerent traits of his early manhood which gave him the name of Boanerges—"Son of Thunder"—(Mark iii., 17), and which once prompted him to invoke fire from heaven to avenge a personal discourtesy (Luke ix., 54). While his authorship cannot be authoritatively denied, we can safely say that the spirit and tone of the passages we are now considering do not tally with what we otherwise know of him in his later years.

21. The earnest longing of the martyrs for revenge must have been fully satisfied if the vision of the seven bowls (Rev. xvi.) possesses a historical significance at all commensurate with what is

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delineated. In fact, we may reasonably conclude that such was the verdict, for along with the portentous convulsions of nature which followed the pouring of the seventh and last bowl, what happened to imperial Rome is thus recorded (verse 19):

“Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.”

*Nero's martyrs were avenged at last.*

But not even yet, in this wonderful drama, had the writer given what he regarded as an adequate expression of the old Christian hatred of Rome. He gives it, however, in chapters xvii., xviii. Nowhere in literature, ancient or modern, so far as my reading has gone, is there any sketch or setting forth of malignant but ecstatic antipathy such as is embodied in the vision of these two chapters. No dramatic writer of any age or race has come within a thousand miles of it in respect of the vigor of thought, sublimity of feeling, and beauty of expression with which the writer has here set forth, in a single picture, the acme or perfection of rancorous hate, and self-satisfied joy. In this respect it stands easily first in the annals of literature, whether sacred or profane.

22. Responsive to the scene of this dire retribution, the powers of heaven, with the saints and martyrs, break out in a responsive litany of triumphant rejoicing, united with devout adoration and praise to Him who had done it all (Rev. xix., 1-10). The reader will look in vain here or

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elsewhere in the book for the expression, or even a hint, of sorrow or regret.

Evidently it was not written for any such purpose. A spirit of unrelenting and unforgiving revenge, either anticipated or executed or in progress of execution, finds expression in every chapter and on every page. No tinge of remorse anywhere appears. If any mercy whatever, or any mitigation of suffering, was felt or shown either to the ignorant or to the innocent, the writer failed to put it down. This fact may, however, justify the suggestion that (contrary to the view generally entertained) the writer was not writing history, knew he was not, and consequently did not try to do so, but rather was writing the earliest Christian tragedy now extant, and one which might fairly be entitled "*The Tragedy of Persecution.*" And if it were so entitled, I think that our Biblical scholars would have much less trouble in getting at a correct understanding of its meaning.

23. One other thought may here be in place. The prevalent tone of the book indicates clearly the vigor and virility of the church at the close of the apostolic era. Even amid the intensest horrors of persecution, there is no hint or suggestion of a "let-down" in respect of any of its claims, pretensions, or hopes. As between the church and the empire, it was a fight even unto death. There was no flagging in its energies; no weakening in respect of their use; no cowardice on the part of either its leaders or their followers in the day of

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battle. In maintaining its right to live and develop along its own chosen line of growth, the church, as here sketched, was fierce, vigorous, and unrelenting. The determined spirit of Richelieu dwelt in it, for it knew "no such word as fail." If, on the other hand, the gentle spirit of the Prince of Peace was then temporarily absent, we may safely conclude that the extreme exigencies of the times demanded it. It was then a church militant in every sense of the word; and in respect of this particular contest, it became the church triumphant. Living now in the "piping times of peace," it is not for us to say aught in disparagement of the writer or of the record, for in the calamitous experiences of that era of persecution, the divinely appointed rule was established that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."



## A FUTURE LIFE

So far as existing records go, the ideas entertained by the Hebrew people relative to a future state, say up to about the time of the Babylonian captivity (sixth century B.C.), were exceedingly crude. The spirits of the dead, good and bad alike and together, were believed to continue a semi-conscious, comatose, or sleepy sort of an existence, in a pit or cave somewhere down in the bowels of the earth, then known as Sheol. It was from such a sleep and such a cave that the prophet Samuel was "disquieted," with some apparent irritability on his part, when he came "up out of the earth" under the divination of the witch of Endor (I. Sam. xxviii., 13, 15). It was while in such a cave that the spirits of the deceased kings and heroes of history were aroused to give a derisive welcome to the newly-arrived ghost of the mighty Nebuchadnezzar of imperial Babylon (Isa. xiv., 9-17). Life in Sheol contained nothing pleasant to look forward to; nor in the writings of that period do we find any mention of a way of escape (Ps. vi., 5; Eccl. ix., 10). A dull, inactive, and apparently unending existence in the cave or pit, Sheol, was the best that the people of ancient

Israel then held in expectation. If Psalms xvi., 10 be a product of David's pen (which is doubtful), we must conclude that his prophetic eye took in more than elsewhere appears as the belief of his day.

But in the course of time (seventh century B.C.) it was made known, probably by revelation, that for the sons of Israel (to no others is it promised) there would be a deliverance from the dark cave of Sheol; and this is the first hint we have of a separation in a future state between the righteous and the wicked. Our record herein is found in Hosea xiii., 14. However, as nothing to the like effect is found in the authentic writings of Hosea's contemporaries, Isaiah and Amos, it seems fair to infer that this new revelation did not at once become a part of the faith of the Jewish church. But it is possible that the germinal seed of divine truth thus planted by Hosea gradually grew in the minds of the leaders of religious thought until, about one hundred and fifty years later, it blossomed into the incipient doctrine of the resurrection from the dead, as first appears in Ezekiel xxxvii., 12, 13. But even then, only the resurrection of Jehovah's people, the loyal sons of Israel, is promised. Apparently the final destiny of the remaining dead did not come within the scope of the prophet's vision. Or, possibly, in his view, Sheol was good enough for them, and he let them stay there. The Jews never had any particular love for the Gentiles, either dead or alive.

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In stating my views as above, I have not overlooked Isaiah xxvi., 14, 19, but I think it quite clear that this old "song" (verse 1) belongs to a much later period, say to the time when the destruction of Jerusalem was close at hand, as indicated in chapter xxiv. If I am right in so concluding, the writer of this song was a contemporary of Ezekiel, and represents the same state of religious thought.

As to the successive steps in the growth or development of this doctrine of the resurrection—that is, during the next two hundred years or thereabout—we have no knowledge whatever, but at about the end of that period we have the record found in Daniel xii., 2, 3, which probably represents the high-water mark of Jewish belief on this subject nearly, if not quite, up to the beginning of the Christian era. Of this justly celebrated passage, the following points may profitably be noted:

1. It relates only to the Jewish people (Dan. xii., 1). No others come within the range or scope of the prophet's vision; hence he gives us no information whatever as to the final destiny of the non-Jewish dead. If they, or any of them, were to be raised, or delivered from Sheol, by resurrection or otherwise, the prophet did not know it.

2. Limited thus, as the vision was, to the Jewish people, it is singular at least that the prophet uses the word "many" (verse 2) and not "all" in designating those who "shall awake."

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Possibly as he was speaking especially of some "time of trouble, such as never was," etc. (verse 1), he had in mind only those who were victims of, or participated in, the events of that "time." Some of them had been faithful, and for such an "everlasting life" was predicted (verse 3). Others, however—in the troublous times that characterized the later history of the Jewish people there were many such—were faithless and disloyal; and for these the prophet entertained only a feeling of "shame and everlasting contempt" (verse 2).

3. The separation of those who "shall awake" into two easily distinguished classes is a marked feature of this prophecy. Nor can any question be raised as to the justice and reasonableness of the separation. We shall find as we progress that this division and separation become more pronounced under later revelations.

4. If the prophet had any special knowledge of a heaven or a hell, the record he made fails to indicate it. The inference appears to be unavoidable that nothing of either was known at that time. Everything which he predicts might just as well belong to this side of Jordan as to the other.

Little is known as to the growth of religious thought for the next three hundred years, or to the opening of the Christian era, but at this latter epoch, the current popular belief can be gathered from our Gospel records, and largely from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke xvi., 19-31).

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1. The separation into two classes was made at death, or immediately after. Apparently each disembodied spirit naturally went its appointed way, though Lazarus was specially honored with an angelic escort. For the purposes of this division and separation, a resurrection was not thought to be necessary.

2. The distance apart of the two classes in their new homes, though said to be "far," was not at that time thought to be so great as in our modern theology. Not only was each within the range of vision of the other, but they were believed to be so near together that the intelligible transmission of human thought or ideas was perfectly feasible. In other words, the nearness of the two localities, and the intervening conditions, were such that the occupants of each could actually see the conditions and surroundings of the occupants of the other, and intelligible conversation between them was regarded as involving no matter of difficulty or surprise.

3. Still further, it was believed that the occupants of the higher or better place could, for temporary purposes, pass over to and visit the other.

This, however, was an error which our Saviour at once corrected by telling his hearers:

4. That between these two localities there was "a great gulf fixed," of such kind or extent that it was impassable in either direction, at least to the spirits of the dead. Obviously, in His view the

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occupants of the one had no occasion to interest themselves in the affairs of the other.

Thus the final and complete separation of the saved and the lost was definitely made known as an element of our religious faith, and as such, so far as we can gather from existing records, it was then revealed for the first time.

5. It was also then believed that the occupants of this higher and better world could be sent on beneficent errands to, and could hold intelligible and profitable intercourse with, the living inhabitants of the earth. This is nowhere denied in the New Testament, and from Hebrews i., 14 I should infer that it was a well-recognized part of the belief of the church in the apostolic era of its history—a belief which, unfortunately, has been lost.

By this time the Hebrew Sheol, or Greek Hades, had come to be regarded as the abode, not of *all* the dead, but only of the reprobate class, and from being a place of semi-oblivion, it had come to be regarded as a place of torment, and the particular form of torment was that of fire.

6. Heaven was thought of as the home of their great progenitor Abraham. To be received in his bosom implied a cordial and sincere welcome, as to “a feast of fat things.”

From other sources we learn that many of the Jewish people, and probably a majority, believed at that time in a Jewish resurrection at the “last day” (John xi., 24); but it does not appear that they had any well-defined expectation of a *general*

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resurrection, such as would include the Gentile dead. In fact, the Jews of that day had no interest in the Gentiles, either in this world or in the next.

There are a few passages in the Psalms (as xvii., 15; xlix., 15, etc.) which indicate that the writer thereof entertained an expectation, or at least a hope, of deliverance from Sheol for himself, and presumptively for all the loyal and devout followers of Jehovah; but as neither the dates nor the authorship of these psalms can now be determined, they give us no material aid in our present inquiry. At best, they indicate no advance over the prophecies of Ezekiel and Daniel already quoted.

Nor does the justly celebrated passage Job xiv., 13, 14 aid us materially, for as our scholars tell us, the original Hebrew text here is in hopeless confusion, nor do we know the date of its authorship. On linguistic grounds, our best scholars are now inclined to assign it to a comparatively late date.

Thus it will be seen that up to the time of Jesus of Nazareth the doctrine of a future state was but crudely developed in the Jewish church. A resurrection at the last day was believed in, but it was limited to the Jewish people. As to them, there would be a division or separation of the good from the bad; the good would be welcomed to Abraham's bosom; the bad would be tormented in Hades. As to what they then thought heaven would be, we have no further knowledge of a reliable character, except such as we may gather from Psalms

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xvi., 10, 11 and lxxiii., 25, where life in the presence of Jehovah was looked forward to with evident delight. But as to the date of these, as of the other psalms referred to, we only know that they were parts of the hymn-book of the Jewish church at and for some unknown time prior to the beginning of the Christian era, but which certainly was compiled, in its present form, subsequently to the return from the captivity.

This brings us to the later and what we may regard as the authoritative, complete, and final revelation as made by Jesus of Nazareth.

1. He put this present life in a new relationship to the future state; that is, heaven was not made for the sake of the earth, but the earth was made in order that its inhabitants might, by and while living on the earth, be prepared or made ready for heaven. This new relationship lies at the basis of much of His teaching, as, for example: "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. vi., 20); "Strive to enter in by the narrow door" (Luke xiii., 24); "Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles" (Luke xvi., 9); etc. The parable of the talents (Matt. xxv., 14-30) has this for its setting; so also the laborers in the vineyard (Matt. xx., 1-16); and the wedding garment (Matt. xxii., 1-14). The dominant tone and drift of our Saviour's teachings point as rigidly and unerringly as the finger of a guide-board in the



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direction of another world. Accordingly, as taught by Him, life here is to be organized and run, not with reference to results thought by each individual to be most agreeable to himself just here and just now, but rather with reference to results that will best fit and qualify him, or get him ready, for another life in a future state—a life which, lasting eternally, will last for an awfully long time! Briefly, a man is to live here in such a way as will best prepare him, not merely to *live* hereafter, but to live *in* that hereafter, in its surroundings, whatever they may be, and to do this forever. Such, clearly, according to Jesus of Nazareth, was the divine purpose in our creation. But that hereafter—the future state—is of a particular kind. Certain qualities are necessary for admission thereinto, qualities specifically enumerated in Matthew v., 3-9. *How* these qualities are to be acquired is also made known: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” . . . [and] “thy neighbor as thyself” (Matt. xxii., 37-39).

It is safe to say that they who sincerely and faithfully endeavor to make such a preparation in this life, will not be kept waiting long at the gates of the New Jerusalem.

2. Jesus of Nazareth, however, tells us practically nothing of what or where heaven is, or what His devout followers will have to do when they get there. Perhaps because of our own

limitations it was impossible for Him to give us any realizing apprehension of the actual facts. Such seems to have been Paul's understanding after he had been there and returned, for in substance he says that, as to what he saw, he could not tell us if he would, and would not if he could (I. Cor. ii., 9; II. Cor. xii., 4). We only know that somewhere between this life and the next from these bodies of ours will be eliminated the only elements for which they can now be said to exist: (1) the preservation of physical life by use of food (Rev. vii., 16), and (2) sexual reproduction (Matt. xxii., 30). What our bodies will consist of when these elements are gone, we do not know. But we may safely infer from the data thus given that heaven will be supremely adapted to the most enjoyable use and exercise of such bodies as we shall then have, and of such mental and spiritual excellences as in our preparations here we may have acquired; and all this will be in the presence and fellowship, and with the approval and benediction, of our Master and King, and this for a time the end of which was not within the range of prophetic vision. Further than this our knowledge does not go.

It is true that the writer of Revelation, apparently in order to stimulate and encourage the growth of a high spiritual life among those whom he addressed, endeavored to give them some idea of heaven, but obviously the only way he could do so was to represent it as being made up of the best

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things then known, or at that time within human comprehension. Accordingly, he told them of white robes, royal crowns, harps, music, a wedding feast, a temple more gorgeous than Solomon's, lighted not by the sun, nor by the holy oil-lamps of their earthly sanctuary, but by the actual presence of the great Jehovah himself. He told of a city, of a river flowing through it, of shade-trees on its banks, of golden streets and lofty walls and pearly gates, all of which would strongly appeal to the vivid imagination of the Semitic people.

Through a blind sort of unhealthy pietism, a large section of the Holy Catholic Church has drifted, not into regarding all this as literally true, but into reading it and thinking and talking about it *as if* it were true; so that these ideas have largely covered Christian thought through all the intervening centuries. But these, the best elements of the best life and civilization of the first century, cut but a small figure in comparison with the Anglo-Saxon life and civilization of the twentieth century. The things thus enumerated—white robes, crowns, harps, etc.—appeal but feebly to the average man of the present day, compared with the comforts and luxuries of our present civilization. And if these are literally the best things that heaven has to offer, many of us would rather stay here. Consequently the desire to go to heaven has lost much of its intended power as a stimulus to pure and holy living.

Now, I do not here propose to set forth my feeble surmise of some few things that clearly seem to me to belong to the final destiny of a redeemed humanity; but I feel safe in asking: Can it be that a heaven of harps and pearly gates and golden streets constitutes an adequate repayment or return for the thousands of years of labor and toil and suffering and agony of the millions of humanity that have gone, that are here, and are yet to come? for the wars that have devastated nations? for the earthquakes, famines, and pestilences that have afflicted our race? for the wrongs and outrages of brutality, lust, pride, passion, and violence? for the miseries of the poor, the unfortunate and needy? Yea, more: Was not the price paid on Calvary a price infinitely too high, if its purpose was only to redeem our comparatively worthless humanity unto a life and destiny such as filled the narrow conceptions of Jewish prophecy?

As I look at it, our church needs to revise or newly define its teachings about heaven and a future state. Unless heaven is or contains something the attainment of which shall be an adequate return for its cost, the first step in the mystery of the universe will not be solved. I believe, however, that it does; and I so read the teachings of Jesus and Paul, both of whom had been there, and knew what they were talking about.

If we cannot believe them, we can believe nobody.

3. If, as above suggested, it be the divine

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purpose that this world should be a place of preparation, or a training-school in and by which to prepare humanity for another and a different world and for another and different life, then naturally we should expect, as in substance is promised, that those who have been diligent students in this school—and the more diligent the better—would be selected as the most fit persons to participate in and do the work of such other life; for they alone would be qualified. Only of them could it be said that they had conformed to the purpose of their creation. The rest would naturally be accounted failures, and, like all other failures, their proper place would be in the moral dumping-ground, or waste-heap, or scrap-pile of the universe. So far as our records show, God has no place nor use for those members of the human family who refuse or neglect to prepare themselves as prescribed. Such preparation, and that only, is what they are here for.

Regarding the final destiny of such as are failures, the New Testament presents two or three different views, not necessarily conflicting, for in the intended meaning of each, all are undoubtedly true.

(1) According to one view, the members of humanity last referred to were culled out, rejected, and thrown away, and nothing further was known in reference to them. For the purposes of the narrative, they passed out of sight and consideration and into oblivion. For this we have the authority of Matthew viii., 12; xiii., 48; xxii., 13;

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xxv., 12, 30; Mark viii., 36, 37; Luke xiii., 6-9, 28; xiv., 24; xvii., 34, 35; etc.

This also is the extent of Paul's revelation on this subject (I. Cor. ix., 27); and perhaps this was all that he felt called upon to say, for evidently in his view this was enough.

(2) A further phase of the subject is presented in many passages to the effect that this, the rejected and waste material of our present moral system, will be thrown into the dumping-ground of Gehenna; for such was the Jewish Gehenna, a dumping-ground for the refuse and offal of the city of Jerusalem. Such a view is all that we can fairly infer from such passages as Matthew v., 22, 29, 30; x., 28; xviii., 9; xxiii., 15, 33; Mark ix., 43, 45, 47; Luke xii., 5; etc.

In some of these passages the awfulness of such a fate is enhanced by a reference to the fires of the Jewish Gehenna, which were always kept burning for the purposes of sanitation.

(3) In a series of allied passages this morally waste material is figuratively represented as destroyed or consumed, generally by fire, as in Matthew iii., 12; vi., 30; vii., 19; x., 28; xiii., 30; xxi., 41; Mark, xii., 9; Luke xix., 27; xx., 16; etc.

In still other passages the active infliction of a terrible punishment is set forth as awaiting those who have refused or neglected to make the required preparation; though usually (but not always) the denunciation of such a punishment is associated with some manifestation of active wickedness.

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And if the punishment so denounced was to have any end or cessation, the prophetic eye failed or was unable to see it. (Matt. xii., 32; xiii., 41, 42, 50; xviii., 34; xxv., 41, 46; Mark iii., 28; etc.)

It is a singular fact that Matthew makes more allusions to a future state of retribution than are to be found in all the other Gospels and in the epistles. I do not know of any reason why this should be so.

The different views above noted, as to the final destiny of the lost, might suggest the possibility that in the future world there may be different degrees of punishment. So, too, as respects the final destiny of the righteous, it may be possible that some will receive a higher reward than others. The parable of the ten pounds (Luke xix., 11-25) looks very much that way; though the parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matt. xx., 1-16) appears to have an opposite meaning. As to both these matters, I think we must await further light; but while doing so, we may safely rest in the certain conviction that the reward of the righteous will be more than ample, and that the punishment of the wicked will not exceed their just deserts. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?"

But I take no more stock in a hell of fire and brimstone than I do in a heaven of harps and pearly gates. All such illustrations are purely figurative, though undoubtedly they have a meaning, and a meaning of fearful import to us. As the descriptions of heaven were made up of the

best things that a Jew of the first century knew anything about, so the New Testament descriptions of hell are made up of the worst. The Gehenna of Jerusalem was regarded as foul—impure and corrupt—and repulsively so, up to the highest height of Jewish conception. As a receptacle for the city refuse and offal, it was as impure as a modern cesspool or an unflushed sewer. The festering worm of its rottenness made it so abhorrent that nothing but the ever-during fires that were kept could mitigate its disgusting vileness.

Our modern civilization contains much that a Jewish Pharisee of the first century would have abominated as simply nasty. Herein the modern Jew is somewhat of a degenerate; but the high-caste Brahman of India still retains the old ideas and practices of personal purity. To him many things in western civilization are unutterably vile and repulsive. Until our pure religion brings us up to a higher standard of personal and social purity, even divine grace will have uphill work in the conversion of the high-caste Brahmans, living, as they do, in a pride of purity which we neither attain unto nor even seek after.



## SATAN

I WAS once asked by a lay churchman: "Do you believe in a personal Satan?"

I replied that I had no well-settled belief either way; in short, that I did not know.

In the New Testament, Satan is clearly and undoubtedly and uniformly referred to and spoken of *as if* he were a person with a distinct personality of his own, and with all the qualities and attributes of personality, including individuality, volition, and responsibility. I was brought up so to believe, and such, as I understand it, is the view generally held to-day by all, or practically all, the orthodox branches of the Christian church. Furthermore, it is held that he is, and ever since the human race appeared on the earth has been, the open and avowed enemy of God and man, hostile to all the true interests of both, and malignant and unrelenting in his hostility.

Now, all this may be true, nor do I deny or dispute it; but:

1. According to the generally accepted belief, Satan, as a person, must possess all the attributes of God himself except two—omnipotence and love. That is to say, he is, according to current teachings,

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omnipresent, for he exists everywhere, at least on earth, and omniscient, for he knows everything, even to the most secret thoughts of everybody.

Besides this, he is believed to possess and exercise the same kind and degree of capability for entering into the minds and hearts of men as is possessed by the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, and also a greater power over them. And this takes in a pretty large part of what we call omnipotence.

Now, the idea that a personal being, thoroughly malignant in character, and who, at least in his relation to us, possesses more than one half of the attributes of God himself—that such a being should be a constituent part of God's moral universe, is something which I cannot understand. It may be true, but it passes my comprehension.

2. Another singular fact: At the time the Book of Job was written (though I do not know when it was), and according to the conception of Satan that then existed, he did not possess a single one of the attributes which we now ascribe to him. As sketched in Job (chapters i., ii.), Satan was not at that time regarded as either omniscient or omnipotent, nor yet as omnipresent; nor was he a malignant being. In fact, he entertained no special hostility toward God or man. He came into the council-chamber of Jehovah, just as if he had a right to be there, nor is he represented as an unwelcome guest. He had been sauntering up and down the earth—or so he said—much as if he had

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nothing else to do, or as if that were a pleasant way of putting in the time. No act or intent of evil toward any one is charged against him. He saw Job, and saw how upright and prosperous he was, as well he might be, for he was the especial object of divine favor. According to this sketch, Satan was a sort of cynical character, but not malignant. He had no particular hostility toward Job, but he thought that Job was good simply because it paid him to be good.

Obviously, the Satan of Job and the Satan of the New Testament have little, if anything, in common except the name.

3. There is another fact which I cannot overlook, but just how much weight it should have in the argument, I do not know. Through a vividness of imagination almost incomprehensible to us matter-of-fact Anglo-Saxons, the Hebrew race had as one of its characteristics a marked tendency to personify agencies and forces that were not understood, and to illustrate which we need not go outside the writings of St. Paul, for he was much given to this practice. In I. Corinthians xv., 54, 55, death is personified or spoken of *as if* it were a person, and as perfectly as Satan ever was.

Now I can conceive it as *possible* (though I do not say it is *true*) that "Satan" is, in Biblical usage, a personified name for *a condition of things*, and a condition of things that stands in close relationship to *another* condition of things generally known as "sin," the difference between the two words, as

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thus regarded, being substantially this: that while "sin" generally refers to, or has to do objectively with, the individual man *as a sinner*, the name "Satan" includes more particularly the subjective agencies and forces that *tend to make him such*. And while this, perhaps, is not theologically exact, it is near enough so for my present purpose.

4. Another fact: Neither the Hebrew nor the Greek language (nor the English, for that matter) had any *one* word that expressed, or could be made to express, the two ideas of the agency, force, or influence which, acting on the man, makes him *a sinner*, and the resultant effect *in* the man and in his life—the effect that we call "*sin*." To express the first of these two ideas, as distinguished from the second, the Hebrew adopted the word "Satan," which, our scholars tell us, means an "adversary"; and the use of this word for the expression of that idea became so universal that it was carried forward into the New Testament. The latter of the two ideas above noted is, of course, sufficiently expressed by the word "*sin*."

5. I think it at least reasonably clear:

(1) That at some very ancient but now unknown period of time, there existed in the old Hebrew faith a belief in the existence of a super-human person, then known by the name of "Satan." This seems to be a fair inference from the Book of Job, as noted above.

(2) But as already explained in the same connection, this Satan of Job fell very far short of

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being such a Satan as the New Testament writers had in mind.

(3) By the time of the return from the Babylonian captivity (late in the sixth century B.C.), the Jewish satanic idea or conception had grown or developed until the name Satan stood for some person or personification who or which was regarded as hostile to God and man—as appears in Zechariah (iii., 1, 2), a prophet of the Return. The same also appears at about the same time in I. Chronicles xxi., 1, for it is clear that the two books of Chronicles were not put into their present shape at a much (if any) earlier date, since they describe the beginning of the captivity (II. Chron. xxxvi., 17-21).

Aside from these three citations there is no Old Testament mention of Satan, either as a person or as an impersonal power or influence in the world.

(4) By the Jews in New Testament times, Satan was undoubtedly thought and spoken of as a person, but whether or not correctly so, is a question that I cannot answer. I cannot answer it, because I find that in respect of ideas and theories which were not essential to His work, our Saviour occasionally assumed the truth of things that His hearers verily believed, but which, in the fuller knowledge of to-day, we know to be untrue. For example, when He cursed the barren fig-tree (Mark xi., 12-21), he assumed what everybody believed, that the tree had a volition of its own, and was at least partly responsible for its own

barrenness. So likewise in His works of healing He assumed the presence of demons, as was then the universal belief, in cases such as we now recognize as paralysis, epilepsy, or insanity. Errors of popular belief as to matters not essential to His mission, He usually ignored.

Did this idea that Satan was a person come in that class? I do not know; nor, as I look at it, is it a matter of much consequence either way. As respects any interest of life here or hereafter, I fail to see that it makes any practical difference whether we regard Satan as an individual person or as an impersonal power, agency, or influence which acting on or in us, makes for wickedness. The result is identically the same in either case in so far as it affects us. The question involved is purely a question of dogma or doctrine, and is not one of practical righteousness.

In saying that the writers of the New Testament regarded Satan as a person, I ought perhaps to make one exception. The author of the Epistle of James tells us that the power which in us makes for wickedness is human "lust" (Jas. i., 14, 15). The only passage in which he recognizes this power as extrahuman and personal is in chapter iv., 7, "Resist the devil," etc. Can this mean that, in his apprehension, "the devil" is but another name for "lust"? Perhaps so; perhaps not.

The belief in a personal Satan probably arose out of an effort to account for the origin of evil in our world. At one time Jehovah was regarded

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not only as the author of good, but of evil as well, the latter being the expression of His anger (II. Sam. xxiv., 1). The author of Genesis took it to be one of a lower order of animals, a serpent.<sup>1</sup> As, in course of time, these theories were found to be untenable or unsatisfactory, some new one had to be devised. The responsibility for the introduction of evil into our world must be deposited somewhere—it did not make much difference where. The Satan of Job appears to have been a convenient personage, and the responsibility was accordingly shoved onto him. His name having thus become associated with evil, the association

<sup>1</sup> There is an idea, which forms part of our general religious thinking, that Satan in the form of a serpent was really the tempter in Eden. Perhaps this is so, but we have no Scripture authority for it. The writer of Genesis clearly entertained no such conception. As already stated, the idea of Satan did not then exist in Hebrew thought; and, what perhaps is equally to the point, the curse pronounced on the tempter, "upon thy belly shalt thou go," etc. (Gen. iii., 14) applies exactly to a serpent, and does not apply to any such personality as Satan is now represented to be. Nor does any subsequent Biblical writer, either directly or by implication, associate Satan with the Edenic temptation. Paul is careful not to do so (II. Cor. xi., 3). The passage that comes nearest to such association is Revelation xx., 2, where Satan is called "the old serpent," but this designation does not identify him with serpents generally, nor with any particular serpent of Biblical history (there are several such; e.g., Genesis xlix., 17; Ex. iv., 3; Num. xxi., 9); and still less does it identify him with the serpent of the great temptation. The author of the Book of Revelation should not be charged with meaning something he did not say, especially in view of his own prohibition of a curse on him who should add anything to his record (Rev. xxii., 18).

grew and developed in popular thought until within a few centuries he came to be regarded as the incarnation of every form of evil, even to the extent of a malignant hostility to everything that was good.

Thus far, I have assumed that the Satan of Job was an actual personage, but if I should ever come to know that he was purely an imaginary character, it would not surprise me in the least, nor make a particle of difference in my religious faith. The Book of Job is a drama both in form and in substance, as would be perfectly obvious if it were divided up into acts and scenes and printed with the proper stage directions. It has been correctly termed the "oldest drama in the world," and published in convenient form to be read as such. We cannot be certain that its subordinate *dramatis personæ* are other than imaginary. Satan, as a character in the drama, comes in this class. He may be a real personage or only a made-up character introduced for dramatic effect. If so, what is said of him proves nothing material to our present inquiry.

Perhaps, after all, Satan is only a name for human ignorance, somewhat as we say the earth is held in its orbit by gravitation; but what gravitation is, nobody knows.

The personification, under specific names, of forces that we do not understand is not at all unusual even with ourselves. We still think and talk of an imaginary "Nemesis" who persistently



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follows the invisible trail of the criminal and cannot be shaken off. We think and talk about one of the mysteries of our moral nature, which we name conscience, calling it "dead," or "active," or "sensitive," just as if it were a person. Boreas, in our thought, personifies the violent tempest, and Neptune the chaotic sea. Such illustrations might be multiplied, but these will suffice.

I close as I began: "I don't know."

Which theory is right, is purely a matter of opinion, and, so far as I can see, it makes no practical difference which theory any particular person may adopt—unless he be a theologian, and I do not belong in that class.

## SIN

A CORRECT understanding of what sin is lies at the basis of a correct knowledge of Christianity; or, in other words, no man knows what Christianity is—I mean the Christianity of the New Testament—until he first learns what sin is.

The definition of sin contained in the Westminster Shorter Catechism may be theologically correct, but practically (that is, to the moral consciousness of the generality of men) it is but little more than a meaningless collocation of words. It runs thus:

“Sin is a want of conformity unto or transgression of the laws of God.” (Ans. to Q. 14.)

In my boyhood days children were required to memorize this definition, often before they knew how to read. And a great many otherwise very good men are still urging and insisting that this and more than a hundred other answers equally or still more abstruse, and to the comprehension of a child equally meaningless, shall be an essential part of a child's Sunday-school training.

It would be much better, at least from a practical standpoint, to say that sin is, or includes, anything and everything that is morally wrong

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or impure, morally injurious, or debasing, or defiling; just (for illustration) as a spatter of mud or filth of any kind will stain and defile a man's shirt-front, or a woman's white skirt, and thereby render the garment offensive to the sight and, until cleaned, unfit for use. Sin is moral dirt.

When we learn to abhor sin as something that is morally defiling, just as we abhor a stained, mud-bespattered, filthy garment, and *for the same reason*—because it is defiled and defiling—we shall at least partially know and appreciate what Christianity is as an agency for getting rid of sin.

We shall then have a good start on the highroad to the millennium; for sin is the source and cause of all and every form of evil and suffering, physical, mental, and moral, to which humanity is now subject, and, so far as I know, it is the only fact or agency that *stands in the way* of the coming of the millennium.

It is a noticeable fact that the original meaning of the Hebrew word "Satan" is "one that stands in the way," hence an "adversary." (I. Chron. xxi., 1; Zech. iii., 1: R. V. marginal translation.)

Sin, in its moral aspect, that is, as something morally defiling, is unknown in any heathen religion of which I have any knowledge. Buddhism, for example, knows nothing of sin, but seeks to reform the world by the avoidance of suffering. According to that system of belief, suffering comes from desire: the man who has the fewest desires is the happiest; hence suppression of desire leads

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to happiness. When a man has suppressed or destroyed all feeling of desire, and has done it so completely that he is not conscious of wanting or desiring *anything*, his state or condition, involving physical deadness and mental vacuity to everything external to himself, is "Nirvana," or heaven—a condition rather than a place. Thus sin is wholly ignored in the Buddhist faith.

Our so-called Christian Science has a theory that (if I correctly understand it) makes sin to be an element of an imaginary or unreal development of the moral system in which we live; hence sin is to be ignored as imaginary and unreal; so that the Christian Scientist, by growing up or training himself into a knowledge and practice of that only which is essentially *good*, will leave behind him that which is imaginary and unreal and sinful—somewhat, perhaps, as a skilled seaman will (if he can) sail out of a fog and leave it behind. It is then of no further interest to him. While he was in it, it obscured his vision, and furnished him no sailing-directions. To that extent, and for that reason, it was to him unreal. Sin and suffering and disease are, in Christian Science, nothing but a moral fog-bank, to be gotten rid of by sailing out of it.

Thus sin is practically ignored in the Christian Science system of belief.

Chinese Confucianism, on the other hand, is directed primarily to the cultivation and practice of a highly developed moral code that is based on,

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or begins with, the theory that evil and suffering result from a failure or neglect to maintain correct relations with one's surroundings or environment, including the natural laws under which we live. Consequently the maintenance of such correct relations in all the interests and ramifications of life, social, civil, and political, and also as regards the multitude of spirits, evil and good, that fill all space, is the means of avoiding evil, calamity, and suffering of every kind. Conformity with the relations established by nature, and by one's lot in life, is the primary rule of living and doing.

Here also sin is ignored.

The Epicurean philosophers of ancient Greece said, "Take life as it comes and *enjoy it.*" The Stoics said, "Take life as it comes and *endure it.*" Neither system of belief knew or taught anything of sin.

Judaism and Christianity, and the religions derived therefrom, are the only systems, so far as my knowledge goes, that contain or embody anything like a correct idea or conception of sin.

As we loathe a soiled garment, so we must learn to abhor a soiled moral consciousness that tolerates or looks otherwise than with disapproval on anything that is impure or savors of impurity, whether in thought, word, or deed.

To illustrate: A friend of mine once, in describing a third person about whom I asked, said, *inter alia*: "He is so clean, and of such delicate sensibility, that if an impure thought should chance to

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come into his mind, I really think it would make him blush."

Perhaps the description was overdrawn, but it illustrates what I mean.

I apprehend that this is the reason why God abhors sin: not so much because it is a violation of His law, but rather because He is himself so ineffably pure that even the sight of anything impure anywhere in His universe is offensive to Him; and the *degree* of its offensiveness is perhaps measured by the infinite perfection of His purity.

Now, while there can be no possible objection to the vigorous efforts made by our clergy to convince their congregations of the *sinfulness* of sin, I think the end to be accomplished—the destruction of sin—will sooner be attained by the training up of men and women to a standard of purity of thought and life, so that anything impure will be shunned and avoided *because* of its impurity. It then becomes offensive to us. When sin ceases to be pleasant there will be no sinners. As long as it is pleasant, or as long as we think it so, sermons on the sinfulness of sin will slide from our consciences as easily as dew from a cabbage-leaf, and without leaving even a wet spot behind.

In one aspect of the case—and not a theoretical aspect either—sin is the *result* of moral disease, and the best, and perhaps the only, way to get rid of it is to *cure the disease*, and this by improving the moral status or condition of the individual sinner. If the tree be good, the fruit will be good,

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and not otherwise (Matt. vii., 18), a fact too often forgotten by those who are seeking to reform the world by legislation. People cannot be made good by act of Congress. Prohibitory laws are utterly useless except as they may hold in restraint the active and aggressive agents of wrong-doing. In many physical diseases, as is well understood, if the vitality of the system can be improved, or sometimes even maintained, the patient will get well of himself.

I have used a filthy garment to illustrate what sin is, but there is one point of difference: the garment can ordinarily be cleansed so perfectly as to obliterate all trace of the defilement; but a defiled moral consciousness can never, at least by any process now known to us, be restored to its original unstained purity. Possibly it may be done in the next world, but not in this. The *guilt* incurred by each of us on account of having, by a sinful life, *worked his own moral defilement*, may be provided for under our system of the atonement, but the moral stains on one's self cannot be wholly obliterated—at least, not in this life. A sin committed produces something more than a stain; it leaves a scar, a moral deformity. The hymn "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" expresses a Christian ideal, but for its attainment we shall have to wait till we get to the other side of Jordan.

A question as to the unity of the race has been much discussed: are all of the present races of the

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world descended from a common pair of ancestors? Physical reasons seem to me to necessitate an affirmative answer; but even if it were otherwise, the phenomena of sin indicate clearly to my mind that, from a moral standpoint and in matters of moral guilt and obligation, the race is a unit; for under like conditions all branches of the race have the same tendency to sin, and such tendency runs uniformly in the direction of the same sins; all are subject to the same feeling of guilt on learning what sin is, and all have the same capacity for repentance on being convicted of sin—in varying degrees, perhaps, but the same in kind. So far as has yet been ascertained, the moral organization of humanity, like its physical, was originally made from a single pattern, and its development, whether upward for the better, or downward for the worse, lies along the same lines. This being so, we may reasonably conclude that the same means of salvation are equally suited to the wants of all; and herein the facts as we find them coincide with and confirm the assurances of Holy Writ.

Righteousness *versus* sin is the great question of the universe. When that reaches its final solution, the other question of salvation *versus* death will disappear.



## THREE ANCIENT TRADITIONS

WHILE I think that "Adam and Eden," as set forth in Genesis i.-iii., is largely a made-up story, though made up and told for reasons that more than justify the telling, I also think that next following we have a record of three exceedingly ancient traditions which were preserved in the Semitic family for untold centuries, and each of which has enough of a historical character fully to justify its place in the record. These three traditions involve:

1. The Beginnings of Civilization.
2. The Deluge.
3. Babel.

But before considering their significance, it may be well to get, if we can, something like an approximate idea of their antiquity.

The earliest Biblical date which can be even approximately fixed is that of the first migration of Abraham (Gen. xi., 31), say about 2100 B.C., though this may include an error of perhaps two hundred years. At that time Semitic civilization was well established in the Euphrates valley. By an ancient inscription discovered some years ago, we learn that a Semite king of Babylon, Sar-

gon the First, had carried his conquests westward to the shores of the Mediterranean somewhere about fifteen hundred years earlier,—say about 3500 B.C.

We also learn from the records found in the ruins of the distant East that a civilization sometimes known as Accadian (Gen. x., 10), and by some antiquarians believed to be of Turanian or Tartar origin, prevailed in the Euphrates valley prior to its conquest by the Semites. The date, or even the probable date, of this conquest is unknown. We can only say that it was probably some considerable time, say several centuries, earlier than 3500 B.C. For our present purpose, but only as “a working theory,” and always subject to correction, I will assume that it was not far from about 4000 B.C.

How many centuries back of this we must go in order to stand at the very beginnings of Semitic civilization, is purely a matter of conjecture; but from what we know of the slow development of other nations that are still hardly out of barbarism, a thousand years would be a moderate estimate. Two, three, or even five thousand years are more probable periods, but this will do.

Bear in mind that these traditions certainly antedate any historical record yet discovered. Many nations have traditions more or less nearly allied to these (of which more presently), but nowhere do we find any such fact or event narrated *in the line of history*. In every case the tradition

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lies back of any known historical record. Hence it will be understood that the dates above given are minimum dates, and are given only as possible stepping-stones to further conclusions.

The Book of Genesis was put in its present shape, we may say with reasonable certainty, not earlier than the time of Moses, or approximately 1500 B.C.

Hence we must allow something like thirty-five centuries at least, and perhaps twice or three times that period, between the dates of these traditions and the earliest known date to which can be assigned the making of the oldest of our Biblical records. Counting back from the present, a like period would take us back nearly to the time of Moses. In other words, these traditions must be at least as much older than Moses as Moses is older than we are.

Let us now consider these traditions in their order:

1. *The Beginnings of Civilization.*

Briefly the record runs thus:

“Jabal was the father of such as dwell in tents and have cattle.”

“Jubal was the father of all such as handle the harp and pipe.”

“Tubal-cain, the forger of every cutting instrument of brass and iron.” (Gen. iv., 20-22.)

Obviously, these extracts relate to the founding of the arts or occupations of the herdsman, the musician, and the metal-worker, or ironmaster.

Agriculture was doubtless much older, but the name of its "patron saint" was lost. But even down to the time of Moses, the names of the other three were still preserved in the old traditions or folk-lore of the race; and they are recorded by the sacred historian as the next things in importance after the fall and the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden.

The ancient Aryans were never much given to herding or cattle-raising on a large scale, and perhaps this is the reason why, as an occupation, it has no place in our early traditions; nor have we any record or tradition of its "father" or founder; but as to the other two, music and metallurgy, the names of Pan and Vulcan are still held by us in nominal veneration.

I should conjecture that cattle-raising in that early day meant wealth; that music signified pleasure; and that metallurgy stood for manufacturing interests as related to the attainment of the ordinary comforts and conveniences of life. If so, the main objects and aims of practical, every-day life have not changed much from the times of Jabal and Jubal and Tubal-cain, down to the days of Armour and Wagner and Andrew Carnegie. Meat, music, and metals are still the *sine qua non* of the life that we live. Men change as individuals, but generic man never changes. We are still working and living on and along the same lines on which civilization was begun many thousand years ago, animated by the same mo-

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tives, working for the same ends, and very largely by the same instrumentalities. The various races of cattle have undergone no material change since Jabal, from his tent-door, counted his herds and congratulated himself on their increasing numbers; the stringed and wind instruments of to-day are lineal descendants (degenerates, some of them) of the harp and pipe of Jubal; and while we have no record of the metal-working appliances of the ancient days of Tubal-cain, the fundamental principles involved in the earliest known furnaces of three thousand years ago are still utilized in the mills at Homestead, Bessemer, and McKeesport.

Doubtless through these, the principal and fundamental elements of actual life and prosperity, the foundations of an extensive and well-developed civilization were laid. With a wealth of flocks and herds, the luxury of music and song and the personal comforts that we get through the metal-worker—with these well developed into their various derivative arts, as would be inevitable after the beginnings were made, substantially everything that is involved in the highest development of the best city life of to-day would be attainable, and, as we may reasonably infer, was actually attained. The only exceptions are painting, sculpture, printing, and navigation. Is it not said that Cain built a city? And should the rest of the world, having the means at hand, not know how? And must we not presume in a city life the practical use and enjoyment of everything

then attainable that belongs to a life of that kind? In fact, we have no historical record anywhere or of any kind that antedates a city as distinguished from a country life. According to this tradition, they were developed together, side by side, and at a period of time far back of any existing historical record.

That the sons of Shem were proud of their civilization, just as we are proud of ours, is sufficiently proven by the tenacity with which, for so many thousand years, they carried in memory and prescribed by tradition a knowledge of its beginnings. Time could not obliterate it, nor could the deluge wash it out. This feeling of civic pride permeates all Semitic literature, and perhaps especially the very ancient Book of Job, for its author takes evident pleasure in his occasional references to flocks and herdsmen (Job xlii., 12), to music (Job xxi., 11, 12), and to the work of the ironmaster (Job xxviii).

Nor have I overlooked the fact that Jabal and Jubal and Tubal-cain are represented as of the line of Cain and not of Seth, from the latter of whom the Jews derived their descent. Why this is done is not explained. Most probably it means that these elements of Semitic civilization were not original with that race, but were borrowed from some neighboring people—perhaps somewhat as the Japanese have more recently borrowed from the Western nations the art of war. Such borrowing is quite common. We ourselves have

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borrowed our alphabet from Tyre and Sidon; our mathematics from Arabia; our literature from Greece; our law from Rome; our religion from Jerusalem.

Obviously, this old tradition of the beginnings of civilization, though brief in its record, includes a very large section of the early history of the remote ancestors of the Semitic races, and as such is well entitled to the place it holds in the Biblical records, and is equally well entitled to acceptance and credence for the knowledge it gives us.

Possibly with further discoveries among the ruins of the distant East it may acquire a new and still larger meaning. There is no danger that it will ever be discredited, for it runs strictly along the lines of human experience, and is rigidly consonant with the fact of history and with what might reasonably be expected to be true.

But we really have no data by which to determine the time of the beginnings of civilization. That part of the Book of Genesis which antedates the first migration of Abraham, though doubtless including many matters of fact, can scarcely be regarded as history in the modern sense of the word. Still less can we look to it for any reliable information in matters of chronology, for though the Jews preserved family pedigrees with great care, they cared little for the particular dates of the general events of history, as the Book of Judges sufficiently proves. When man first appeared on the earth is not known even approximately. Our

geologists tell us that the earth has been in condition for his occupancy for an unknown but very long period, variously estimated at from fifty to a hundred thousand years. But when he actually came on the scene, nobody knows. How long he lived in a state of savagery and barbarism is just as little known. Some, in fact some millions, of the race are in that state or condition yet. Hence the beginnings of civilization, as reported in Genesis, must be referred to a very remote antiquity, so remote that nothing whatever can be said as to its date.

### 2. *The Deluge.*

It is evident that at some time or other some great disaster in the nature of a tropical tornado or cyclone overwhelmed a stretch or area of territory then occupied by the particular people from whom the Hebrew tribes claimed descent; and so overwhelming was the disaster that only a single family was known to have escaped. Torrents of rain fell from the clouds, and a tidal wave from the sea swept inward over the land (Gen. vii., 6), to the destruction of all animal life within the submerged territory (verse 21).

At this time, however (whenever it was), civilization had so far progressed that the arts of ship-building and navigation were well known. According to the understanding of the writer, a long period had elapsed since the days of Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-cain, a period variously estimated, from the chronologies given, at from one



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thousand to two thousand years; but really we know nothing as to its length. The escape of the single family of Noah is attributed by the writer, first, to the fact that Noah was providentially warned of the coming disaster in ample time, and second, was sufficiently versed in ship-building and navigation to make the necessary provision for safety.

As to the territory covered by this disaster, we can only infer that it extended from a contiguous seacoast line to "the mountains of Ararat" (Gen. viii., 4), which would seem to mean the Euphrates valley. The statement that all the earth was submerged, and all animal life destroyed, is evidently the statement of an eye-witness. While the ark, bearing Noah and his company, was floating on the waste of waters, there was no land nor life in sight.

That such a disaster should at some time have befallen the occupants of some seacoast territory is nothing especially remarkable. That at least one of the inhabitants, particularly if he was familiar with the ways of the sea, with wind and weather, should have had some premonitions of the coming storm might naturally be expected. If, so far as he knew, when it was all over, he and his family were the sole survivors, it need excite no wonder if he and his descendants so narrated it till it became a fixed tradition.

Hence at least the leading events of the tradition contain nothing improbable, and are worthy of credence.

As to the time when the deluge occurred, everything I have said as to the antiquity of the *Jabal et al.* tradition applies here also. Though ten or twenty centuries may have intervened, both events go so far back into the darkness of antiquity that no date can be assigned to either. And as to the deluge, we have two or three additional facts that indicate an indeterminate antiquity.

(1) The recorded fact that the ark finally grounded "upon the mountains of Ararat" (Gen. viii., 4) would seem to indicate that the highlands of Armenia were once the home of the ancestors of the Semitic races. If so, then the time of the deluge must have been long prior to any period of which we have historical record; for, from the earliest dawn of history, that territory has been occupied by tribes either of Aryan or Turanian origin. If the Semites ever held that country, it must have been many thousands of years ago.

(2) Traditions of a devastating deluge are found among many widely scattered nations of widely different racial descent. Every such tradition antedates any and every historic record of every such nation.

(3) According to the arrangement of the text, the writer considered that the deluge antedated the division (at Babel) and the consequent dispersal of at least three of the leading races of the earth—the sons of Japheth (Aryan), the sons of Shem (Semitic), and the sons of Ham (African).

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The time when that division occurred is as completely unknown and as indeterminable as is the date of the creation of man.

But this deluge tradition has a religious significance that gives it its chief value, and but for which it is doubtful if any record of it would have been made. Herein chief prominence is given not to the deluge itself, but rather:

(a) To the divine agency which brought it about;

(b) To the reasons why Jehovah did it; and

(c) To the exalted faith exercised by the sole survivor; and to the fact that, on account of such faith, he and his family survived.

The impressive inculcation of these three lessons furnished abundant reason for the preservation of the ancient tradition.

(a) The first lesson was the supremacy of Jehovah, which was the fundamental article of the monotheistic faith of the Hebrew tribes. But for this, the Jewish religion would have been merely one of a hundred religions, perhaps better than the others, but with no warrant for laying claim to being the *only religion*.

(b) As to the second point, Why did Jehovah do it? the answer is, as narrated in the record (Gen. vi., 5-12), because the entire race was wicked, overwhelmed with wickedness, saturated with wickedness, wicked in everything it did or tried or planned to do, wicked from the initial thought through to the final act. In the conception of

the writer, it was so entirely gone in wickedness as to be beyond all hope of redemption.

Now, in Semitic thought, when any person or people met with disaster or calamity, or even serious misfortune, such a fact alone argued, and argued conclusively, that such person or people had sinned, and the greatness or extent of the calamity was a correct measure of the greatness of the sin (John ix., 2).

Hence when the sacred writer wanted us to know how excessively wicked humanity had got to be, he illustrated and proved his statements by telling us what an awful disaster it met with. In his conception, the disaster proved the wickedness of the victims, and its awfulness proved the depth, extent, and depravity of such wickedness.

(c) The third lesson was a lesson of faith and its reward (Heb. xi., 7), a lesson that humanity then needed to learn; a lesson that God's messengers have been proclaiming to wicked men during all the intermediate ages, and a lesson that will continue to be taught to the end of time.

Obviously, the inculcation of these three lessons was a sufficient reason for the recording of this old tradition of the deluge, and this, too, even if the tradition had, before the writer's time, grown by repetition until it included some details that to us seem improbable. The man who measures the square feet of floor-surface in the ark with reference to the standing-room required for male and female representatives of the whole animal kingdom, and

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regulates thereby his belief in divine revelation, has yet to learn the meaning of this record. The man who, to the neglect of the intended lessons, seeks to convert questions of ship-building and the stabling of animals into articles of faith and standards of orthodoxy is badly in need of further light. At least such is my opinion.

### 3. *Babel.*

The third of these old traditions is that of Babel. Like the other two, it goes back for its origin to an indeterminate time. There are no data now existing by which we can compute even the probable time when the sons of Shem, Ham, and Japheth separated and each went his own way.

Except as I shall presently mention, I do not see that this Babel tradition has any particular religious significance. But the writer of Genesis was evidently an ethnologist of wide observation and high attainments; Genesis x., the oldest ethnological record in existence, sufficiently proves that. While he believed in the unity of mankind, he was apparently unable to give any scientific explanation of the great differences that he observed between the languages of different races. In fact, except as between cognate races, such differences have not been explained yet. But the writer did the best he could and gave us an explanation that doubtless accorded with the best science of his day.

He found in existence, and adopted for his use, an old tradition to the effect that the descendants

of those who survived the deluge, preferring, as many a migratory people has done since, the productiveness of a river-valley to the comparative sterility of a mountainous region, migrated from the Ararat uplands, where the deluge had left them, back to their old homes, to a locality known as Shinar, down in the low and level plains of the Euphrates. To avoid future danger, they set out to build a tower so high that no tidal-wave could submerge it. Before it was finished, they got into a wrangle about something; verbal disagreements led to, or by frequent repetitions were magnified into, linguistic differences; the divergent parties became different races; and each went a different way. This explanation was satisfactory then; and while we reject it, our best scholars have found none that is better.

The leading religious lesson that the writer had in mind was probably this: the impiousness and foolishness of thinking and trying to outwit God. The failure to do so was a failure then; nor has it ever succeeded since.

I cannot help admiring the honest simplicity and ingenuousness of the writer, and his scholarly attainments as well, in thus working the religious truths he wished to teach into the cherished traditions of his remote ancestors. It made pleasant reading. Ponderous treatises on theology may come and go, but these stories of the infancy of our race will, like the babbling brook, "go on forever." The world will never tire of reading

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them. Even to the mature mind they are as charming as *Æsop's Fables*, *Grimm's Tales*, and the folk-lore of *Odin* and *Thor*; and like them, each has its own moral, so obvious on its face that he who runs may read. But in our modern line of thought we have carelessly or studiously neglected the moral of the story in order to swear to the literal truth of its details. The latter, though of great literary interest, are, in my view, of little consequence otherwise, except as a means of bringing the moral of the story, or its intended religious teaching, within the easy apprehension of everybody. The man who throws away the oyster, and tries to masticate the shell, belongs to the same class as he who, forgetting the moral, makes the story itself an essential article of faith.

## SOME PENALTIES AND A PROMISE

As a result of the introduction of sin into the world, the sacred writer informs us, certain penalties were inflicted on the active agents through whom it was brought about—the serpent, the man, and the woman (Gen. iii., 14-19).

But the singular fact is that the penalties imposed contained nothing that was new to the organization of the particular individuals affected thereby. Thus nothing new was involved in the penalty imposed on the serpent: "Upon thy belly shalt thou go"; for the serpent had always so wriggled its way along from the day of its creation. "Thorns and thistles" were not a new infliction, for the earth had produced them from the early days of its fertility. Of man and his present physical organization, we can truthfully say that he and it were specially adapted for work and toil and sweat, whereby to acquire necessary sustenance, nor did *his* penalty make him any more so. And as for woman, her lot after sentence contained nothing of suffering beyond what her physical condition already necessitated. As has been frequently remarked, the history and condition of the earth clearly indicate that it was originally



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designed, built, and equipped, not for an Edenic life, but for the occupancy of just such a sinful race as now lives on it. None of the penalties above referred to have subjected any of the guilty parties to any physical punishment outside of what appears to have been, in the orderings of nature, his, her, or its previously appointed lot.

Hence, according to Anglo-Saxon ideas, none of these penalties were really in the nature of punishments for the particular offense in question. But the Semitic peoples looked at these matters very differently. In their way of thinking, crime and suffering always went together; or, rather, the latter invariably followed the former; and they seldom troubled themselves with any distinction between a misfortune that was *caused by* or *resulted from* a crime. To them the sequence was enough. If a party was guilty, and soon afterward met with misfortune of any kind, the two were associated together in their line of thought, and inseparably associated, just as if it were a clear case of cause and effect (Luke xiii., 1-4). This mode of thinking was of course very illogical, but the Orientals as a general rule are not logical and never were.

Now, the Anglo-Saxons, being generally more accustomed to logical habits of thought, are unable to understand how a penalty that does not embody, or in some way contain, some new and objectionable experience to the individual, can be to him a punishment. If the serpent always went on his

belly, and could not possibly go in any other way, how could it be a punishment to him for a new offense to be told that for the future he must always go that way?

Still, we Anglo-Saxons retain even yet a trace of the same illogical style of reasoning, though we partially conceal it by the use of such phrases as "the eternal fitness of things," or "good enough for him," or "serves him right." It is only in accordance with "the eternal fitness of things" that reptiles so obnoxious and repulsive and treacherous and dangerous as are the serpents of tropical countries should crawl on their bellies to the end of time. Such a life is "good enough" for a snake, and "serves him right" for being a snake—and this without regard to any crime that may be laid to his charge.

And we sometimes argue, or at least think, the same way about some men. Our regrets are coldly spoken, or not spoken at all, when we have in mind the misfortunes of men who are excessively mean, or inordinately selfish, or unusually brutal, or for any reason are objects of hatred or contempt. Even though the misfortune may have no relation to the offensive characteristics of the man, still we think, though politeness may forbid us to say it, "good enough for him," or "serves him right."

Such, as I apprehend the matter, is with us the residual remnant of the old Semitic idea that misfortune or calamity necessarily implies a pre-existent crime, and that the former is the intended

punishment for the latter. So construed, I can understand the record of the penalties referred to.

But it may be that the writer of this account, under the form of a parable of a crime and its penalties, was really intending to tell us something else. In what I have said of "Adam and Eden" I have explained that one probable purpose of the narrative was to tell us that man was responsible for the introduction of sin into the world and for all the moral evil appertaining thereto or resulting therefrom. It was, perhaps, still further the thought of the writer that man was also responsible for the *physical* badness which exists in himself and in all animate nature—for its "thorns and thistles"—for the physical necessity that compels man to work in order that he may live, and also for the suffering incident to the reproduction of life, and that all this, in some way which he could not explain (nor can we), came about through or on account of his own voluntary sin. If such was the writer's thought, we must say of him that, as regards a knowledge of the moral system of the universe in respect of its beginnings, he knew quite as much as we know now, and quite as much as we are likely to find out, at least in the present life. The final solution of this, and of many like questions, will probably belong to another life in another world.

I turn now to the promise of Genesis ix., 12-17, the rainbow and its meaning.

Apparently the same line of thought that led to

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the association of an old penalty with a new crime led also to the association of an old rainbow with a new but confident hope or expectation, divinely supported: that the deluge of Noah was so exceptional or extraordinary an event that its like would never occur again. Abstractly the rainbow of Noah had no more relation to the deluge-storm than any other rainbow had to the particular shower that produced it; but a new association of ideas was established by the promise. The rainbow then meant something, and probably for the first time; since with the little scientific knowledge then available, it is doubtful if anybody at that time knew how a rainbow was produced. Probably this, like other mysteries of nature, such as the blowing of the wind (II. Sam. v., 24), was attributed directly to divine agency. But now the God to whom they ascribed it assured them that thereafter it would have a meaning. Gratefully and joyfully they accepted the assurance without troubling themselves as to how or why. It was enough for them to know that a relationship of some kind was divinely established. Whether it was purely artificial or imaginary, as distinguished from causative, is a question they never stopped to consider. Hence the record, as they understood and applied it, was rigidly true, and highly instructive as well as true, in that it established to their satisfaction, and gave them a perpetual reminder, that:

“While the earth remaineth seedtime and

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harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. viii., 22).

Nor is it anything unusual in our own ways of thinking to give an old object a new meaning. We frequently convert natural objects into perpetual memorials of something else. Thunder-storms were not new in the Catskills when Henry Hudson first sailed up the river that still bears his name, but the Rip Van Winkle legend gave to such a storm a new association in the minds of men. After Julius Cæsar theatrically crossed the insignificant stream that formed one of the boundaries of Rome, the new meaning then acquired by its old name, the Rubicon, became permanently historic. But such illustrations are too common to require further citation.

I think it highly probable that the rainbow-promise may have had another meaning. As I have elsewhere explained, in "Three Ancient Traditions," the deluge was thought to have been necessitated by the extent and depravity of human wickedness. But it was now promised that such a necessity would never again arise; or, as I would conjecture, it was believed that by or as a result of some new or more efficient form or manifestation of divine agency, entering the world and acting in the hearts and on the lives of men, the race would never again reach such depths of wickedness as to require the employment of so drastic and destructive a remedy. From the new standpoint then occupied, the race was to be and would be

saved and not again destroyed. Perhaps this was what the rainbow ultimately meant; that is, that the world would thereafter grow better instead of worse. If so, the promise has not been left wholly unfulfilled.

In the spirit in which Sancho Panza said, "Blessings on him who invented sleep," I would devoutly say: "Blest be the man who invented the rainbow," for it contains the initiatory promise and pledge of the millennium.

## THE STORY OF THE CREATION

IN *Adam and Eden* (Vol. iii., p. 1) I have stated my belief that the account of the temptation and the fall was not historical, and was not intended to be, but rather was allegorical, and this for sufficient reasons and good purposes as there stated.

In "Three Ancient Traditions" (1) the Jabal, Jubal and Tubal-cain story, (2) the deluge account, and (3) the Babel episode, I have recognized as to each a historical substratum or basis, but have pointed out how exceedingly ancient must be the facts or occurrences from which each of these traditions took its origin, really going back of and far beyond any historical record or knowledge now existent anywhere—that is to say, over and above what is here recorded.

Of the story of the creation, I think it quite clear: (1) that it is not allegorical, but is a genuine record of a divine revelation; (2) that, viewed solely from a scientific standpoint, it so far conforms with the best science of the present day that it is entitled to rank as a true and correct, though exceedingly brief, sketch of the work of creation; (3) that, in point of antiquity, this revelation goes

back and is lost in the same historical darkness as the "Three Ancient Traditions" above referred to, and possibly was much earlier than any of them.

We may be reasonably sure that it came originally by divine revelation, because, so far as we know or can fairly surmise, there was no other way by which it could have become known to the inhabitants of the earth, for it was evidently impossible that human eyes could have been there to see and make record of the work as it originated and progressed. Our best scientists tell us that through the millions of years prior to about the time designated as "the fifth day" the earth was not in condition for the occupancy of man; in fact, until about that time man, with his present physical organization, could not have lived on its surface. Hence, whatever actual knowledge the race may have acquired, as to the origin of the earth and of all things that are therein, must have come from some superhuman source and by what we call revelation.

Nor could this story have been made up, since, at the latest date to which the writing of Genesis can possibly be assigned, the science involved in the orderly and successive steps of this narrative did not exist; for modern science is exceedingly modern. I can readily see that an attentive observer of a remote antiquity might have surmised, and perhaps might have concluded, that animal life was impossible until the earth was well stocked with vegetation; that fish could not have lived until



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they had water to swim in; and that vegetation could not have been looked for until a fertile soil was provided; but for any reasonable theory as to how there came to be a soil, and how it came to be fertile, and where the ocean came from, the data though observable, as we now know, were not apprehended or understood until very recently. There was not enough known at that early date to justify even an intelligent guess as to the origin of things, either animate or inanimate. The monstrous guesses found in the cosmogonies of uncivilized nations furnish almost conclusive proof that the Genesis story of the creation is something a good deal higher than guesswork. So accurate is it that the best science of the world to-day cannot in the same number of words tell it any better.

Certainly the first man who put that story in cognizable form, either oral or written, not only knew what he was talking about, but he knew it from some source external to himself. He had no science to guide him in shaping it; he could not have guessed it; he may have dreamed it, and I think it highly probable that by means of a dream or series of dreams, it was first made known; but there was a divine intelligence present to shape and develop the dream. Human guesses and human dreams, unless guided and controlled by some power "whose dwelling is not with flesh," do not follow along the undiscovered and unknown lines of exact science.

As to the antiquity of this story, or the time when it was first revealed, but little can be said. Our oldest record of it is in Hebrew; but as compared with the antiquity of the race, Hebrew is probably a modern language. Our scholars tell us that it was not the original speech of Abraham, but was a local dialect of one or more of the Canaanite tribes, and was adopted by the descendants of Abraham at some date now unknown, perhaps prior to the time of Moses, perhaps later. From the dug-up records of the remote East, we find that in the folk-lore or traditions of the Babylonian Chaldeans, long before the time of Abraham, there was extant a story of the creation which, though pervaded and loaded down with the puerilities of polytheism, still has many points of resemblance to the narrative in Genesis, and is so strikingly similar as to indicate that the two had a probably common origin. In other words, both the Genesis story and the Chaldean story go back to a revelation that antedates all existing records and all historical periods of which we have any knowledge.

From all of which I think we may reasonably surmise: (1) that such a revelation was made in the very early history of the race, and to some branch of it now unknown, but a possible tradition of which is preserved in the Enoch story of Genesis v., 21-24; (2) that as the race degenerated morally, as it certainly did, the revelation referred to became corrupted and loaded down with heathenish

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variations and additions and in that degenerate form became a part of the traditional folk-lore of the scholars of ancient Chaldea; (3) that in this form it passed, along with other learning of the Chaldean schools, into the civilization of Western Asia, probably at the time of the early Babylonian supremacy, which, from other records, we know to have been extended westward to the Mediterranean many centuries prior to Abraham; and (4) that the writer of the Genesis narrative, under the guidance of a new inspiration, eliminated from that tradition its heathenish, puerile, and polytheistic errors, and practically restored the revelation to its original, genuine form. But who the writer was we do not know, nor is it important that we should. The record shows that he was a master-workman in that particular field. It may have been Moses, though I doubt it; but I do not care to dissent from those who so believe. Whoever wrote it, it comes to us backed up by divine authority, expressed, first, on the face and in the substance of the record itself, and second, in its practical consonance with and confirmation by the ascertained facts of science. That story and the story of the earth itself, both have the same divine origin.

There is one fact revealed in this Genesis account as to which science is wholly silent, the fact that all life, motion, and matter owe their origin to the creative act of an extramundane power or agency, or perhaps to a series of such acts. Science cannot

and does not pretend to account for the origin of anything except as it may have come derivatively from something different which previously existed. How the *first* life, or the *first* movement of anything, or the *first* form of matter came into being—in regard to these beginnings, science is totally and profoundly ignorant. Self-creation is more abhorrent to genuine science, and is more inconceivable and incredible, than an extramundane Creator. As a working theory, and, so far as we now know, a possibly true theory, science many years ago worked its way back to something which it called an “atom,” but so infinitesimally small that no microscope can isolate it, and consequently it is cognizable only by the imagination. Proceeding from this point, science has (or thinks it has) more recently resolved its infinitesimal atoms into swirling vortexes, each made up of myriads of “electrons” or “corpuscles,” but about which it knows nothing except that they, as conceived of, represent some form of movement or force, and possibly constitute the first form of matter. There science stops. It can go no further. As to the ultimate origin of movement or force, science does not tell us anything, but Genesis does: “The Spirit of God *moved* upon the face of the waters” (Gen. i., 2); and motion means force. “And God said, Let there be light, and light was” (verse 3); and next after motion, light was the first form or manifestation of force cognizable to the eye. The primordial relationship of matter *and* force is not

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yet scientifically known. Genesis tells us all we know on that subject.

Science *may* be correct when it says, as it does through a certain school of its advanced votaries, that, given matter and force to begin with, they could, under the action of known laws, evolve the universe. But of the origin of matter, the origin of force, and the origin of the laws that pervade and dominate both matter and force, we have no knowledge except what we can gather from the account in Genesis. If this account be not true,

“ . . . this I dare boldly tell,  
'T is so like truth, 't will serve our turn as well.”

Did Moses write this story along with the introductory chapters of Genesis? I am unable to disprove the theory that he did, but I very much doubt it. According to the record of his life, he had no particular interest in such matters during the first third of it, when, as a prince of Egypt, he was a member of the court of Pharaoh; nor during the second third of it, when, as a fugitive from the wrath of the King, he filled the position of a shepherd in the distant land of Midian. The last third of his life, forty years in round numbers, was occupied with “matters and things,” and was spent amid surroundings, all of which were the reverse of favorable to high-class authorship. He had twelve unruly and discordant tribes to manage; tribes that were jealous of each other,

and, except his own tribe of Levi, likewise jealous of him; tribes composed of people just out of serfdom. As Egyptian serfs they had been given to the usages and practices of Egyptian idolatry, and though they generally yielded to Moses the authority of nominal leadership, they did not hesitate to rebel whenever things did not go to suit their wishes or whims. Under such conditions, and for such a people, Moses had to devise and inaugurate a system of civil government or rule and get them to obey it; also a system of religion that was practically new, and because it was new, was accepted with reluctance; and also a military organization for protection against a hostile environment, and for the conquest which he and they looked forward to. Nor was their manner of life at all favorable for either a high religious or a high literary development. During these forty years they lived a nomadic pastoral life, a good part of the time in the wide region of country around Kadesh-Barnea. The settled conditions of civilization were wanting. Pasturage and water for flocks and herds were the first necessity, in a region where, at certain times of the year, both were scarce. Conditions that forbid a settled home and compel a continuous struggle for existence are not favorable for the development of a revelation, nor for the preparation of a history of a remote religious antiquity which had no contemporary interest or importance.

But notwithstanding all this, the prevalent use

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of the name of Moses in connection with these chapters, and with the Pentateuch as a whole, is perfectly correct and proper, fully as much so as the universal use of the name of the first Emperor of the French in connection with the Code Napoleon, even though the latter probably contains but little from the pen of that illustrious personage. That the Pentateuch contains many documents which belong to the Mosaic period, as well as some that are probably much older, cannot be a matter of reasonable doubt. That as a whole it records and reflects the spirit and doings of the time of Moses,—how he and his people lived and thought and worshiped and warred and sinned, were punished and repented, and how after sundry delays, defeats, failures, disappointments, and vicissitudes, they finally attained possession of what they had been taught to regard as their ancestral home—all this may be accepted as veritable Mosaic history. That the hero of that history, or the man who *made* the history, should have the honor and glory and earthly immortality which belong to or accrue from a faithful record of such history, is no more than his due; and this for the further reason that his character and personality are indelibly stamped on it and give it its chief practical value through all succeeding time.

## BIBLICAL REVISION

ONE of the "signs of the times" is a steadily increasing restlessness over, or in view of, the defects in our authoritative translations of the Bible—and by "authoritative" I refer particularly to the versions known as the "Authorized" or "King James" version, and the "Revised." While the latter is a great improvement over the former, it fails to satisfy, I will not say public demands, but rather public wants. For though there is little or no public clamor on the subject, there is a constantly growing indifference or neglect as respects the matter of Bible-reading and Bible-study on the part of both the real and the nominal lay adherents of the Christian faith. Some of the causes of this neglect will appear as we proceed. But the neglect itself shows that there is in the minds of people of that class a manifest feeling of dissatisfaction with the Book itself in its present rendering; and consequently there is a real, though perhaps rarely expressed, want of something better. This dissatisfaction is distinctly voiced in the growing hostility to the reading of the Bible in our public schools. Much of this hostility lacks sincerity, and much of it is partisan in character,



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but some of it is honest, though generally based on erroneous considerations. And in further proof of the existence of this dissatisfaction, note may be made, first, of the steadily increasing number of private or unauthorized translations, some of which are not translations at all, but free and sometimes very crude paraphrases of the original; and secondly, that Biblical teachers, in their classrooms, are compelled to resort to their own translations or paraphrasing methods of speech, in order to bring what is said within the ready comprehension of their hearers.

Now, it goes without saying that a book which is intended for the use of all sorts and conditions of men and women and children, especially where matters of life and death, of good morals here and immortality hereafter are involved—that such a book should have at least the following among other essential characteristics:

I. The intended primary meaning of what it says should be reasonably clear to the comprehension of the average lay reader. To talk to a man in forms of speech which he does not understand involves a waste of time on the part of the speaker, and wearies and disgusts the hearer.

To illustrate: The phrase “the body of this death” (Rom. vii., 24), as an English phrase, is utterly meaningless to the average layman. The same is true regarding the phrase “the mind of the flesh” (Rom. viii., 6), and regarding many other expressions that appear in both the Authorized

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and Revised versions. It is no part of my present purpose to make a compilation of such phrases; I wish only to call attention to them.

A few Greek and Hebrew idioms of speech are retained with some resultant obscurity, due to the idioms themselves, where the actual meaning could be equally well expressed by an English phrase of equal brevity and force. Thus, "Thou hast said" (Matt. xxvi., 64) might better read, "It is as you say," or "I am." "What have I to do with thee?" (John ii., 4) might well be changed to "What is that to me?" These illustrations might be multiplied.

2. The Bible, for the use of English-speaking readers of the present day, should, in respect to sexual matters, conform to present standards of cleanness.

The fact that the ancient Jews, along with the heathen peoples by whom they were surrounded, were (if judged by modern standards) unclean of speech, even in some cases down to the uncleanness of the modern barroom and brothel, is no reason why we should be equally unclean. Such things are incompatible with the purity of heart of Matthew v., 8. As a people, we have outgrown that comparatively low state or degree of civilization, but we have retained and most pertinaciously clung to the sexual filth which they, in their ignorance or under their peculiar usages of speech, put into the sacred record. It is time—high time—that we had a clean Bible. On this point I

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speak advisedly; and any man who, in family worship, having sons and daughters of years of discretion, has attempted to read the Bible through in course, will not need to ask me to cite chapter and verse in order to make good what I say.

This characteristic of our present Bible—by which I mean the freedom and coarseness with which sexual matters are mentioned, especially in the Old Testament, though occasionally also in the New—is more of a hindrance to the general use of the Bible than most of our religious authorities imagine. A single illustration now occurs to me. Not very long ago, I happened to be in a bookstore chatting with the proprietor, when a mutual friend, a business man of wealth, high morals, and good standing, but of no religious pretensions, came in and asked if there was any edition of the Bible published that omitted the offensive sensualism so often found in the Old Testament. He was a bachelor himself, but had many nephews and nieces just coming to years of discretion, and he wished to buy and present each of them with such a Bible. And I also happen to know of cases in which young boys have, without any improvement to their purity of heart, amused themselves by looking up and making a jest of erotic phrases, references, and descriptions which were not needed and are of no value for the purpose of religious instruction and growth in grace.

As to the authority of the church to make such

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omissions from the Bible record, I shall have something to say presently.

3. The fact that fully one third of the Old Testament is made up of matter which is of no possible interest, concern, or benefit to anybody (except the antiquarian), either for this life or the next, detracts very greatly from its attractiveness, or even suitability, for general reading.

If any one feels inclined to doubt the accuracy of this statement, let him read the Old Testament in course—the whole of it—with blue pencil in hand, and make his record as he goes along. When he gets through he will agree with me.

Now, if revision were made in respect of only three matters, (1) meaningless and obscure renderings, (2) gross sexual references, and (3) profitless details, leaving all the rest of the Bible as it now reads in the "American Standard Edition" of the Revised Version, I think it perfectly clear that we should have a Bible equally good for all the purposes of religion, and a great deal better for general and devotional reading by English-speaking men, women, and children. We should also have a Bible against which, for use in our public schools, much less could be said.

The efforts of private revisers, at least of all whose work I have seen, are open to the very serious, if not fatal, objection that they have revised too much; that is, they have gone far ahead of what the public want. The poetic beauty and archaic attractiveness of the greater part of the

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present version so justly appeal to the average religious taste and good sense of people at large that an over-modernization of the text is vigorously resented. But every new reviser, having set out to revise, measures his success by the amount of revising he does. In such hands the good and bad suffer alike together; and hence, in every private revision I have seen, the remedy of the new is worse than the disease of the old. Revision should undoubtedly be made, but it should be made slowly. First, obvious and material defects should be corrected, and no others; the Book, as so corrected, should be tested by a considerable and prolonged usage, say of the average lifetime of a generation, whereby to ascertain (1) whether the corrections thus made constitute an improvement in public apprehension, and (2) if they do, wherein and how can the rendering be further improved, so as the better to adapt it to the religious wants of the English-speaking race.

The work of revision, if it be done as it ought to be done, is not the work of a day or a year, or even of a single generation. In no case should the integrity of the Bible as a book of righteousness and salvation be destroyed, or even lessened or impaired. In all other respects, it should be made to conform to those conditions and requirements which will make it most efficacious for the purposes for which it was written; and in order that it shall be most highly efficacious, it must be so revised as to make it acceptable to all who have

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any interest in, or desire a knowledge of, its contents. The revision completed in 1885 was a great work, ably and devoutly done. Use has stamped on that work the general approval of the church. But that revision was especially devoted to other points than the three above noted. I humbly submit, but only as the opinion of a not inattentive layman, that the scholars of the Holy Catholic Church ought now to give their attention and efforts to a further revision whereby (1) to render Hebrew and Greek idioms into modern English; (2) to give us a clean Bible, clean on every page; and (3) to eliminate from its pages such details as do not in any way, shape, or manner concern either righteousness in this life, or immortality in the next. After twenty or thirty years, use of a Bible so revised, the church will know better what, if anything, needs doing next by way of still further revision.

As respects any *general* revision of the Bible in the direction of a new translation, there is one obstacle which at present, I think, is insuperable. Most of our Biblical scholars, while well up in Hebrew and Greek, are not well instructed or thoroughly skilled in the niceties of English speech. More especially is this the case in respect of what we call classical, as distinguished from colloquial, English. Such masters in the use of "English undefiled" as James Russell Lowell and Oliver Wendell Holmes are not to be found among our clergy—at least I know of none; and only a man so

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qualified should presume to think of improving (except as to sundry idioms and obsolete words) the magnificent diction of the greater part of our present revision. Future scholarship may supply men thus qualified, but just now they are exceedingly scarce. I feel safe in saying of any man of the present generation of scholars who thinks he can make a better general translation of the Bible than the one we now have, that if he does not thereby betray his incompetence for the work, he at least shows that he has not fully "sized up" its difficulties.

In making these suggestions, I am perfectly aware of sundry possible counter-statements, and particularly:

(1) That any alteration in the text, either by addition or omission, is authoritatively and forever forbidden by Rev. xxii., 18, 19.

But the word "book" as used in these verses means the book of Revelation, and no other. A New Testament "book" did not exist at that time. All existing data and all present-known facts fully justify the conclusion that our New Testament canon was not made up or compiled into a single "book" till many years later. And it further appears that the right of this book of Revelation to be included in the canon at all was in serious dispute among the leading ecclesiastical authorities of the church till near the end of the second or the beginning of the third century. Hence this particular citation is not relevant to the point in question.

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(2) Another possible reply may be thus stated: The Bible as we have it—the whole of it—is given to us by divine inspiration, and no finite or human authority is empowered either to add to or subtract from its inspired contents.

If, for example, Genesis xxxviii. is thus divinely inspired as an authoritative part of the sacred record, then I must admit the sufficiency of this reply. To any man who so holds, and is willing so to preach and teach, my suggestions as above given are impious and accordingly should be rejected. But it pleases me to believe that the Holy Deity specially made known to us by Jesus of Nazareth, the God to whom purity in all things on the part of His followers is supremely acceptable, cannot be honored, but is grossly dishonored by the ascription to Him in His perfect holiness, of any such unholiness as this chapter contains. Is this heresy? If so, then Jesus of Nazareth was a heretic when He denounced the Mosaic law of marriage.

There are a few other matters outside of a new translation that might be profitably considered by those to whom, in any event, questions of Biblical revision must be entrusted. One is the elimination of duplicated extracts from old historical records. Thus in Isaiah, chapters xxxvi–xxxviii. (except xxxviii., 9–22) and xxxix are a repetition of the record found in II. Kings, beginning with chap. xviii., 13.

Very considerable portions of Kings and Chroni-



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cles are made up of duplicated extracts from the ancient records of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, all of which are as unnecessary and as objectionable as to have two copies of the Declaration of Independence in a history of the United States.

The same is true of some of the Psalms. Thus David's thanksgiving hymn of I. Chronicles xvi., 8-36 reappears in two or three of the Psalms (lxxviii., 43-68; cv., 1-15, etc.), where it is divided up into sections, probably for purposes of convenience in the musical services of the Temple. As the reasons for such division no longer exist, at least outside the Jewish synagogue, and as for Christian use the *undivided* hymn is much to be preferred, the broken-up sections might well be omitted.

Many improvements along these lines might be made in the interest of the general reader, without injury or loss to anybody—except the printer.



## INDEX

	PAGE
ACTS: EARLY CHURCH AND EMPIRE.....	80
ACTS: PAUL AND THE EMPIRE.....	95
ANGELS, AGENCY OF .....	173
BABEL.....	259
BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD.....	177
BIBLE, CONTENTS OF THE.....	iii
BIBLICAL REVISION.....	278
CIVILIZATION, BEGINNINGS OF.....	249
CREATION, THE STORY OF.....	269
DELUGE, THE.....	254
FAITH CURE.....	183
FALL: THE PENALTY.....	262
HEAVEN.....	219
HELL.....	227
IMMORTALITY: HISTORY OF DOCTRINE.....	215
JAPHETIC GOSPEL, A.....	59
JESUS, THE EARTHLY LIFE OF .....	1
JESUS, THE WISDOM OF.....	15
JOHN, THE GOSPEL OF.....	116
LOST BELIEFS.....	173
PAUL, THE GOSPEL OF.....	45
PAUL, THE WRITINGS OF.....	28
PAUL AND THE EMPIRE.....	69
PETER.....	130
PROTESTANTISM, DEFECTS OF.....	158
RAINBOW-PROMISE.....	265
RESURRECTION, THE: HISTORY OF DOCTRINE.....	215
RESURRECTION, THE: ORIGIN OF DOCTRINE.....	143
REVELATION: A DRAMA.....	190
SATAN.....	231
SIN.....	240
TRADITIONS, THREE ANCIENT.....	247

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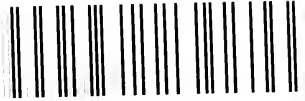
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