

IS IT GOD'S WORD?

BY

JOSEPH WHELESS

AN EXPOSITION OF THE FABLES AND MYTHOLOGY OF
THE BIBLE AND OF THE IMPOSTURES OF THEOLOGY

BY JOSEPH WHELESS

Lately Major, Judge Advocate, U.S.A.;
Author of "Compendium of Laws of Mexico";
Translator, Civil Code of Brazil; Associate Editor,
American Bar Association Journal, in
Section of Comparative Law:
Member of American Law Institute, etc.

"Behold, the false pen of the Scribes hath
wrought falsely" -- Jeremiah VIII, 8 (R.V.)

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IS IT GOD'S WORD?

FOREWORD TO SECOND AND REVISED EDITION

Like Saul of Tarsus before he changed his name -- but not his nature -- the maker of the ensuing search of the Scriptures, born down in the Bible Belt, was bred "after the straightest sect of our religion," a Southern Methodist. Nurtured by earnestly Christian parents, I was heir to their faith and joint heir to salvation with them. Through youth and into maturer years, like Paul, "so worshipped I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets" of ancient Jewry, with the heavy increment for faith of the Wesleyan brand of Protestant Christianity superimposed.

Being so born and taught, so I naturally believed. For religious belief is all but exclusively a matter of birth and early teaching, of environment. A man takes and holds, though often most indifferently, the religion, or brand of belief, of his fathers, of his family. Born a pagan, a Jew, a Buddhist, a Mohammedan, a Mormon, that he remains, except one time in many thousands, through life; though, if taken in infancy, he will as naturally fall heir to and believe the most contrary faith: witness the famous Janizaries, captive Christian children trained in the Moslem faith, and Islam's most fanatic soldiers. If born into a Christian family, Catholic or Protestant, or of one of the many sects of either, he usually remains, at least nominally, Catholic or Protestant, as he was born and taught. Children believe anything they are taught; Santa Claus, fairies, goblins, ghosts, and witches are as real, as veritably true, to a child as Jesus the Christ to a cleric -- often much more so. It is a maxim of the Master of the Christian faith: "Except ye ... become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven: ... for of such is the kingdom" (Matt. xviii. 3; xix, 14).

Hence the reason of the churchly maxim: *Disce primum quod credendum est* -- "Learn first of all what is to be believed."

From my earliest years the Methodist Sunday school and Church were as a sort of home extension of religious atmosphere and teaching; my earliest initiation was into the "infant class" of that institution of sacred learning. There my infantile mind was fed and fired with the venerable verities of our first parents and the seductive wiles of the talking snake of Eden, of Balaam's loquacious jackass, the anthropophagous whale of Jonah, the heroic adventures of David with Goliath and with Bathsheba, of noble Daniel, unscathed in the lions' den and in the fiery furnace, of Peter's walking on the water, and the devils sent into the pigs, with many other like articles of holy faith necessary to salvation.

Fascinated with these ancient gems of inspiration, and deeply imbued with the sense of Christian duty to "seek first the kingdom of God," whereupon everything else needful would be added liberally, daily I grew in biblical wisdom as I grew in stature and in strength. And, too, I took my religion seriously, and seriously strove to live as a Christian should, comforted by the saving Methodist doctrine of the divine right of backsliding; if sometimes I fell, I fell upon my knees, got up, and pursued resolutely my pilgrimage through this vale of tears. My Bible was my constant companion, guide, and friend.

Years before my majority I led all others in old "Tulip Street" in familiarity with Holy Writ; so when a great Sunday-school Bible verse-quoting bee was held, I was easily the favorite for winner, and as easily I won both prizes -- Heroes of the Cross and some other like classic of literature -- for number and correctness of verses quoted from memory. That Bible-quoting contest of some forty years ago struck the spark which, long smoldering, flames up now in this book of mine. In its original form, written some years ago, the chapters which are now headed "Harmony of the Gospels" and "Sacred Doctrines of Christianity" reproduced in substance, and yet do in effect, that memorable verse-matching contest.

From a sense of Christian duty, as well as for its practical aid in linguistic studies, I read the Bible often, and in several modern languages, and picked a little at the ancient ones. Later, when writing this book, I learned sufficient Hebrew for the understanding and honest rendition of the sacred texts. In such frequent readings of the Bible, and in more languages than one, I could not but be struck with important differences of meaning given in different versions to the same verse or text; memory, too, would go back to the same story told quite differently in other of the sacred texts; I would search out the parallel passage and find it at right angles or

criss-cross with the one before me. Such adventures roused dangerous trains of thought, which I devoutly sought to conjure out of mind. My honest mind was struck, too, and shocked, by many things which, it seemed to me, were absurd or abhorrent as human actions, and magnifiedly so as the alleged word or deed of my God. But "he that doubteth is damned"; so faith triumphed over reason for a long, long time, though I felt myself ever a bit less "orthodox" as the years went by, and as I read and thought. Yet so vital was my residuary faith, and so disturbed my conscience over my disregard of the divine ban, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: ... what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (2 Cor. vi, 14, 15) that upon entering the holy bonds I purposely backslid from my native Methodism, and took the plunge -- on a cold winter night -- into the Baptist communion, in the earnest hope of leading my new life partner (whose family were of that persuasion) into that aqueous fold of Christ with me. My faith and my chill bath were unrewarded -- then. This book is my tribute of unalloyed admiration and devotion to her whose beautiful character and soul shine out into my life with no pale reflected light of storied Calvary, but in their own native warmth and purity, untinged and untainted by any superstition of unreality. Great now is my reward; our two minds share cordially now the single thought -- always hers:

"Do good, for good is good to do;
Spurn bribe of heaven and threat of hell."

Faith, I read, "has for its object the unknowable." How could the things of faith be unknowable if they were all inerrantly revealed by God in the "Holy Bible, book divine"? I determined to know the truth, if it could be found in the Bible. I bought two copies of that sacred book for what seemed must be the test of truth. My method was simple and looked sure: from Genesis to Revelation I reread one copy, pencil in hand; every passage that seemed meet for my purpose I marked, noting book, chapter, and verse on the margin of each copy for identification.

These sacred and marked volumes I then tore apart, and with scissors cut out every marked passage. Patiently then I sorted the great mass of clippings, putting apart into little piles all that told the same tale differently, or treated the same Christian doctrine at cross-purposes. This accomplished, I read and carefully "matched" one inspired truth with another. Then, through several years, at every opportunity which a rather active professional work and frequent absences from the country permitted, and into the weary hours of many a night, painstakingly, conscientiously, faithfully, in my quest for truth out of the fountain of revelation, I carried on the work of creating order out of the chaos which almost appalled me with its multiplicity and its inconsistency. The result is here presented; my book speaks for itself. The wayfarer, though a fool, cannot mistake it.

Thus it was that I took up the challenge of the Christ to "search the Scriptures," haply to demonstrate to the seeker after truth "whether these things were so," as in the Bible related for belief, under the admonition of the Christ himself: "He that believeth not shall be damned."

No man, priest, parson, or zealot for his inherited faith, can say with truth that this book of mine falsely or wantonly "attacks the Bible," or defames the Bible God, or ridicules the Christian religion. If iconoclastic results follow this candid search of the Scriptures, the fault is with the Bible, for this my book speaks truly. This book is based wholly on the Bible; its all but every reference is to the Bible, faithfully quoted in exact words of inspiration. The Hebrao-Christian God is depicted in plain words of revelation for every word and deed attributed to him by the inspired writers. This God "whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you," truly. This book is simply the Bible taken by and large, and thus viewed in a light not shed upon it by pulpit expoundings of golden texts, or by private readings of isolated choice fragments. Ye bibliologists cannot impeach or refute the truth herein revealed out of Holy Writ --

"... nor all your piety nor wit Shall lure it back to cancel half a line, Nor all your tears wash out a word of it!"

The earnest hope is cherished for this book, that the simple and sincere search here made of the Scriptures for truth's sake, will serve to make only theology and religious intolerance vain and ridiculous; that it shame

contending Christians from an unfounded faith in the untrue, and encourage them and all men into the brotherhood of the only possible true and pure religion -- to

"Do good, for good is good to do."

Then will indeed be realized the burden of the herald angel's song:

"Peace on earth to men of good will."

IS IT GOD'S WORD?

CHAPTER 1: THE GENESIS OF CHRISTIANITY

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THE RISE OF CHRISTIANITY THE NEW AND THE OLD RELIGIONS

PAGAN TOLERANCE AND CHRISTIAN INTOLERANCE

THE DEADLY SANCTIONS OF RELIGION

"LIKE KING LIKE PEOPLE"

"NOT DEAD BUT SLEEPETH" FAITH FLOURISHED ON IGNORANCE

"CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION"

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THE GENESIS OF CHRISTIANITY

WHAT Is Truth?" asked the mystified Pilate of Jesus the Christ, as he stood before the Roman governor, accused by the priests of the Jews of having proclaimed himself King of the Jews and Messiah, thus "perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying, That he himself is Christ a king" (Luke 23: 2). Pilate asked Jesus, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" and a second time he queried, "Art thou a king then?" After standing some time mute, Jesus finally, and equivocally, answered: "Thou sayest that I am a king"; and he added: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth"; but, he averred, "My Kingdom is not of this world" (John 18: 37).

Then Pilate's challenging Question, which has rung down the nearly twenty centuries since, and yet challenges answer concerning "this just person": Was he Christ? Was he the Son of God, Virgin- born? Was he the heralded King of the Jews? Was he King of a Kingdom not of this world? These things recorded of him, were they so?

The system of Christian theology grown up around this unique Subject, and in current acceptance bound to the concept of a true religion of the spirit, is wrought upon the basis of an implicit belief in a composite of two miraculous "revelations of God to Man." Of these the one is known as the Old Testament or will of God, revealed in olden times to the Hebrew people; the other, of the century of Jesus Christ, and revealed through himself and his Jewish propagandists, is known as the New Testament or will of God. These two revelations are committed to mankind through a compilation of sixty-six small separate brochures of "Scriptures" or writings, together called The Bible from the Greek Ta Biblia or "The Books." This Bible constitutes all that we have or know of the "revealed Word of God."

Truth, without alloy of possible error, lies in the inspired and sacred pages of this wonderful "Word of God" -- if full credence be given to its claims for itself, and to the claims made for it by the theologians.

As for its own claims of inspired and inerrant truth, they abound: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3: 16); "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1: 21); though the Hebrew Deity himself, as quoted by Jeremiah, avers: "the prophets prophesy lies in my name" (Jer. 23: 25); and this prophet adds: "The false pen of the scribes hath wrought falsely" (Jer. 8: 8, Revised Version). John the Evangelist says: "He that saw it bare record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe" (John 19: 35). And his Divine Subject declares: "I have greater witness than that of John. ... Though I be a record of myself, yet my record is true" (John 5: 36; 8: 14). Paul, the chief of the propagandists, asserts, "I speak the truth in Christ; I lie not" (Rom. 9: 1) -- though with amazing naivete he has just admitted that he does "lie unto the glory of God" (Rom. 3: 7), that His truth may the more abound! The assumption of truth is usually attached to a confession.

The Scriptures Old and New, their verity thus vouched for, we well know to be a collection of many separate pieces of writing by many Different "inspired" Hebrew writers, through many ages of Hebrew history. The

Bible has not thus the advantage of unity of authorship, as have the Sacred Scriptures of some other widespread faiths of the present day.

The Koran of Mohammed is fabled to have been brought down from heaven to this prophet by the archangel Gabriel, full-written on the parchment skin of the ram which was miraculously provided in the nick of time just as Father Abraham was about to cut the throat of his son Isaac as a sacrifice to Yahweh on Mt. Moriah; the later Book of Mormon, miraculously written on golden plates, and hidden in a cache on Cumorah Hill, near Palmyra, was specially revealed to the late Prophet J. Smith, here in New York State, in the year 1823, by the angel Moroni. As these latter sacred texts were written in an unknown hieroglyph, the angel loaned to Prophet Smith a pair of patent spectacles called Urim and Thummim, which had the miraculous faculty of rendering the strange script into rather faulty English words to the eye of the seer, and so enabling him, hidden from curious prying behind a kitchen screen, to translate the mystic manuscript, upon the completion of which pious work the golden plates and spectacles were taken by the angel back to heaven.

Over 600,000 people in the United States live and die in the faith of this "revelation"; and the sect has been considerably persecuted and martyred for its faith by other Americans who believed other and more ancient Hebrew revelations (though they hate and persecute the Jews). And more millions of human beings have for 1200 years believed the "revelations" of Mohammed than ever did believe the Hebrao-Christian revelations. So much for "revealed" faiths. Before forgetting Prophet J. Smith, it may be recalled, as a bit of curious American history, that in 1829, less than one hundred years ago, John the Baptist himself, he who baptized the Jewish Jesus, came down from heaven to New York State and publicly ordained Prophet Smith and his confrere Oliver Cowdery into "the Priesthood of Aaron"; and that the immortal Saints Peter, James the Brother of Jesus, and John (which one not specified) then and there conferred upon the two Prophets "the Order of the Priesthood of Melchizedek," of which Jesus Christ was himself a perpetual member (Heb. 6: 20).

We shall examine the truth of the Christian theology, searching the Scriptures whether the miraculous things therein recounted for faith can possibly be so. Incidentally we shall catch an occasional sidelight from sacred or secular history, but chiefly we shall keep closely in our search to Holy Writ. First we shall take a brief retrospective look at some of the secular and historic phases of Christianity as it has prevailed unto the Christian civilization of past and present.

THE RISE OF CHRISTIANITY

Judea, the birthplace of the Christ, was a small outlying province of the far-flung Pagan Roman Empire, its turbulent Jewish fanaticism curbed by Roman law and legions.

The new religion rose there, but met with little acceptance in its native place, where the Jews could not recognize in the humble Carpenter of Nazareth the tokens of the kingly "Messiah" of their olden prophecy. It spread with readier acceptance among the neighboring pagans, who believed all gods and had no objection to taking on another; they were familiar with virgin births and with gods coming to earth in human form. At Lystra the pagan populace even acclaimed Paul and Barnabas as pagan deities, crying, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men," Barnabas being called Jupiter himself, and Paul the lesser divinity, Mercury, "because he was the chief speaker" (Acts 14: 11, 12). This greater pagan honor to Barnabas seems to have offended Paul's sense of importance; for shortly afterward they quarreled, "and the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other" (Acts 15: 39), in a rather un-Christian humor.

But the proselytizing campaigns continued, pushed with much zeal, now almost exclusively among the pagans. Naturally the new faith drifted toward imperial Rome, the head and heart of the ancient Pagan world. There, too, it took root and spread among the lowly and the slaves, its rites hidden away in the slums and in the catacombs.

This new religion, besides being purer and simpler -- at first -- than some of the older cults, was coupled with some very effective inducements. Its Founder proclaimed himself as very God; he had come to establish a kingdom on earth and in heaven. To those who would abandon their families and their poor possessions, he made the positive promise of immense immediate reward: "There is no man that hath left house ... or lands for my sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses ... and lands; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10: 29, 30; Matt. 19: 29; Luke 18: 30). He proclaimed again and again that in a very short

time the existing world should end, that he would come in glory to establish his kingdom and a new earth, where he would reign forever. So soon, indeed, would this great reward be realized, the prospective king asserted, that there were some "standing here, who shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. 16: 28). The new religion assured everlasting felicity in its heaven to all who would just believe; it threatened eternal torment in the fires of its hell for all who would not believe and accept it. Under the spell of these promises and threats and of the assurance of a quick end of the earth, the propagandists of the cult promptly established a strange new scheme of which they were the administrators -- a scheme of pure communism. As the world would quickly come to an end, there was no reason and no need to take heed of temporal affairs; they must all watch and pray and pool all their poor belongings in their leaders' hands for the common benefit. This the trembling and zealous proselytes did, under the sanction of supreme fear: "Neither was any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the price of the things that were sold, and they laid them down at the Apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need" (Acts 4: 34, 35). And the story of what befell Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5: 1-11) for holding out a part of their substance from the common pool was wholesome warning to any who, with a cautious eye to a possible hitch in the "second coming," might be inclined to "lie to the Holy Ghost," who kept the score of the contributions. The history of Dowie, "Elijah 2," and his New Zion, and of "Moses 2," younger brother of Jesus Christ," here in twentieth-century United States, illustrates the truth that certain human traits are not yet extinct.

Such was the intellectual enlightenment of the classes among which the new faith was propagated, and for which the inspired Gospel biographies of the Christ and the apostolic epistles were put into circulation. The chief of the disciples and his associate propagandists were admittedly "unlearned and ignorant men" (Acts 4: 13) the new cult was that of fishermen and peasants, of the ignorant, the disinherited, the slave as is proved by many of their acts and sayings, recorded in the New Testament and in early church history.

Naturally the new religion gained adherents and slowly spread, as all other religions have done: Mithraism, its closest and all but successful rival; Mohammedanism, which far outspread it; Mormonism, Spiritualism, Mother-Eddyism and many another cult and superstition, including "heresies" combated and persecuted by the new faith from the very first, several of which (like some entirely "pagan" religions) all but overthrew the struggling new "orthodox" creed of the Christ. But by virtue of its superior moral merits, its exceptional system of rewards and punishments, and the great zeal of its propagandists, it grew and strengthened and finally gained the upper hold in the centuries-long struggle with paganism.

THE NEW AND THE OLD RELIGIONS

Christianity was not so new or so novel as we generally think it. In its essentials it had hardly a new thought in it -- except hell-fire and the oft-repeated and never-realized dictum, "The end of all things is at hand" (I Peter 4: 7). In lieu of the plurality of gods of the pagan religions, it evolved the one pagan god Yahweh, of old Hebrew mythology, into Three-in-One Christian Godhead. The other pagan gods became, in effect, the "saints" of the new cult; or, as the Catholic Encyclopedia has it, "the Saints are the successors to the Gods" (Vol. 15: p. 710) - though the theory of the Psalmist tallies better with that of the new theology: "All the gods of the heathen are devils" (Psalms 96: 5, Vulgate). The incarnation of Gods in human form by virgin birth was common place myth; their death, resurrection, transition to and fro between heaven and earth, and the like, were articles of faith of many pagan creeds and of all mythologies. Monotheism, without idol-worship, is the single essential difference of the Christian religion from paganism; and when one recalls the Trinity, and the icons and sacred images of saints, even this difference seems attenuated.

The death and resurrection of pagan gods is alluded to specifically by Ezekiel. Yahweh had brought him in his vision to the north door of the Temple at Jerusalem; "and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz" (Ezek. 8: 14). Tammuz was a so-called god of vegetation, fabled to have died and been resurrected with the returning seasons. One month of the Hebrew calendar is named Tammuz. The fable is simply a myth of the death of vegetation in the winter and its rebirth in the spring. It was a very prevalent superstition in ancient times, in Assyria, in Egypt (the myths of Isis and Osiris), in Palestine, Greece, and other pagan countries; and the Tammuz myth was one of the heathenish cults followed by the pagan Hebrews. The women referred to by Ezekiel were celebrating the annual death of their god Tammuz by weeping for him. Now they weep annually

over the death of Jesus Christ, and rejoice each year on the Easter of his resurrection. This so-called Tammuz-cult was native to Babylonia; and, says the Catholic Encyclopedia, "it was unmistakably allied with the worship of Adonis and Attis, and even of Dionysus. Much might have been hoped for these religions with their yearly festival of the dying and rising Gods" (Vol. 11: p. 388). But they were otherwise corrupt and moribund, and gave way finally to the newer, pure religion, but identical cult, of the Christ.

It would be interesting to develop the records of the adoption by Christianity of the pagan myths and ceremonies. It is a large subject, and we cannot go into it at length here, where our task is limited to a study of the sacred texts for the proofs or disproofs of their own validity which they so abundantly afford. But some brief extracts from authoritative works may be included, for their own significance and to point the way for further inquiry.

True, practically every tenet and ceremonial of the Christian religion has its counterpart in, and was adapted from, the beliefs and ceremonies of the pagan religions which preceded it and for centuries lived alongside it. We have just noticed the "Yearly festival of the dying and rising God" in the ceremonials of paganism. This is very like the death and resurrection of the Christian God, Jesus Christ; and it is the resurrection of Jesus which is the cornerstone of the Christian religion: "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (I Cor. 15: 14). To be as brief as may be in outlining this very suggestive subject, I will quote a paragraph from a well-known recent work, 'The Next Step in Religion,' by Ray Wood Sellars, [Ray Wood Sellars, *The Next Step in Religion: An Essay toward the Coming Renaissance*. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1918)] supplemented by extracts from the Catholic Encyclopedia, the best brief outlines of Christian adoptions and adaptations of paganism. Says Mr. Sellars:

"The Orphic cults in Greece, the Osiris and Isis cult in Egypt, the worship of Attis and Adonis in Syria [of which Palestine is part], the purification and communion ceremonies of Mithraism, all turned about the idea of a secret means of salvation. The God dies and is resurrected; the Virgin Goddess gives birth to a Son; the members of the religious community eat of their God and gain strength from the sacred meal. The Church Fathers were aware of these similarities, and sought to explain away the resemblances by means of the theory that the Devil had blasphemously imitated Christian rites and doctrines." -- I may pause to point out that these pagan rites long antedated the Christian analogies, and therefore the theory loses force. -- "The death and resurrection of a Savior-God was very prevalent in Tarsus, Paul's own city. The Attis Mysteries were celebrated in a season which corresponded to the end of our Lenten season and the beginning of Easter. They were preceded by fasting and began with lamentations; the votaries gathered in sorrow around the bier of the dead divinity; then followed the resurrection; and the risen God gave hope of salvation to the mystic brotherhood; and the whole service closed with the feast of rejoicing, the Hilaria." (Sellars, pp. 23-24.)

Much more comprehensive, and constituting a very notable admission, are the following passages from the Catholic Encyclopedia. By way of introductory, it says: "Speaking from the standpoint of pure history, no one will deny that much in the antecedent and environing aspirations and ideals of paganism formed, to use the Church phrase, a *praeparatio evangelica* of high value. 'Christo jam tum venient: crede, parata via est.' sings the Hymn of Prudentius. The pagan world 'saw the road,' Augustine could say, 'from its hill-top.' 'Et ipse Pitaetus Christianus est.' said the Priest of Attis; while, of Heraclitus and the old Philosophers, Justin avers that 'there were Christians before Christ.' Indeed, the earlier apologists for Christianity go far beyond anything we should wish to say, and indeed made difficulties for their successors" (Vol. 11, p. 393). And again: "It has indeed been said that the 'Saints are the successors to the Gods.' Instances have been cited of pagan feasts becoming Christian; of pagan temples consecrated to the worship of the true God; of statues of pagan Gods baptized and transformed into Christian Saints" (Vol. 15:p. 710).

A few instances out of the great number of these analogies between pagan and Christian rites follow:

"The Christian ritual developed when, in the third century, the Church left the Catacombs. Many forms of self-expression must needs be identical, in varying times, places, cults, as long as human nature is the same. Water, oil, light, incense, singing, procession, prostration, decoration of altars, vestments of priests, are naturally at the service of universal religious instinct. Little enough, however, was directly borrowed by the Church -- nothing, without being 'baptized,' as was the Pantheon. In all these things the spirit is the essential: the Church assimilates to herself what she takes, or, if she cannot adapt, she rejects it.

"Even pagan feasts may be 'baptized': certainly our processions of April 25th are the Robigalia; the Regation Days may replace the Ambarualia; the date of Christmas Day may be due to the same instinct which placed on December 25th the Natalis Invictis of the Solar Cult (Vol. 11, p. 390).

"The Roman Virtues, Fides, Castitas, Virtus (manliness) were canonized [p. 391]. The Mysteries had already fostered, though not created, the conviction of immortality. It was thought that 'initiation' insured a happy after-life and atoned for sins, that else had been punished, if not in this life, in some place of expiation (Plato, Rep. 366; cf. Pindar, Sophocles, Plutarch). These Mysteries usually began with the selection of Initiand1: their preliminary baptism, fasting, and confession. After many sacrifices, the Mysteries proper were celebrated, including tableaux showing heaven, hell, purgatory, the soul's destiny, the gods. Apuleius (in Metamorphoses) tells us his thrilling and profoundly religious experiences.

"There was often seen the 'Passion' of the god Osiris; the rape and return of Kore and the sorrows of Demeter (Eleusis) -- the sacred marriage and divine births (Zeus, Brimos). Finally, there was usually the Meal of mystic food; grains of all sorts at Eleusis, bread and water in the cult of Mithra, wine (Dionysus), milk and honey (Attis), raw bull's flesh in the Orphic Dionysus- Zagreus cult. Sacred formukae were certainly imparted, of magical value (Vol. 11: pp. 391-2). In the Tauroboliuml the Initiandi were baptized by dipping in the bull's blood, whence the dipped emerged renatus in aeternum ('reborn into Eternity'). In the sacred Meal (which was not a sacrifice), the worshippers communicated in the God and with one another.

"The sacred Fish of Atargatis have nothing to do with the origin of the Eucharist, nor with the Ichthys Anagram of the Catacombs. The Anagram -- (Ichthys, the Greek word for Fish), does indeed represent 'Iesus Christos Theou Uios Soter' -- (Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior); the propagation of the symbol was often facilitated owing to the popular Syrian Fish-cult (from Dagon, Syrian Fish-god). That the terminology of the Mysteries was largely transported into Christian use is certain (Paul, Ignatius, Origen, Clement, etc.); that the liturgy, especially of baptism, organization of the Catechumenate, Disciplina Arcana, etc., were affected by them, is highly probable. Always the Church has forcefully molded words, and even concepts (as Savior, Epiphany, Baptism, Illumination (photismos), Mysteries (teletes), Logos, to suit her own Dogma and its expression. Thus it was that John could take the expression 'Logos,' mould it to his Dogma, cut short all perilous speculation among Christians, and assert once for all that the "Word was made Flesh' and was Jesus Christ" (Cath. Encyclopedia, Vol. 11, p. 392).

The fish anagram above referred to was an ancient pagan symbol of fecundity, of great vogue and veneration throughout pagandom, and was adopted by Christendom for the double reason that the initials acrostically formed the name and title of Jesus Christ and that in ancient science fish were supposed to be generated in the water without carnal copulation, and were thus peculiarly symbolic of the virgin-born Christ. The pagan origin and Christian significance of the symbol are attained by the authority just quoted: "The most remarkable example of such a poem [acrostic or anagram] is attributed by Lactantius and Eusebius to the Erythrean Sibyl, the initial letters forming the words 'Iesus Xristos Theou Uios Soter (stauros).' Omitting the doubtful parenthesis (cross), these words form a minor acrostic: Ichthys, fish, the mystical symbol of our Lord" (Cath. Encyc. Vol. 1:p. 111).

The pagan origin of the two greatest Christian festivals, Christmas and Easter, may be emphasized by brief extracts. "Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church. The first evidence of the feast is from Egypt. ... [about 200 A.D.] ... There is no month in the year to which respectable authorities have not ascribed Christ' birth. ... At Rome, then, the Nativity was celebrated on 25 December before 354; in the East, at Constantinople, not before 379. ... The well-known solar feast, however, of Natalis Invictis, celebrated on 25 December, has a strong claim on the responsibility for our December date. ... It would be impossible here to even outline the history of solar symbolism and language as applied to God, the Messiah, and Christ in Jewish or Christian canonical, patristic, or devotional works. Hymns and Christmas offices abound in instances. The earliest rapprochement of the births of Christ and the Sun is in Cyprian (De pasch. comp.19): 'O, how wonderfully acted Providence that on that day on which the Sun was born ... Christ should be born.' In the fourth century Chrysostom (De Solst. et AEquin., 2: p. 118) says: 'But our Lord too is born in the month of December (25). ... But they call it the "Birthday of the Unconquered." Who is so unconquered as our Lord? Or, if they say that it is the birthday of the Sun, He is the Sun of Justice.' ... Pope Leo I bitterly reproves solar survivals -- Christians on the very door-step of the Apostles' Basilica turn to adore the rising Sun. ... But even

should a deliberate and legitimate 'baptism' of a pagan feast be seen here, no more than the transference of the date need be supposed. The abundance of midwinter festivals may have helped the choice of the December date, the same instinct which set Natalis Invictis at the winter solstice will have sufficed, apart from deliberate adaptation or curious calculation, to set the Christians feast there too" (Cath. Encyc., Vol. 3: pp. 724-727). This "baptism" of the most popular pagan festival of the Sun as the birthday of the Son of God is thus evidently admitted to be as the secular histories clearly prove it was -- a sop to the pagan masses to conciliate them with Christianity by permitting them to continue to enjoy their great festivals and ceremonies the more readily to entice them into the paganized Christian Church.

As Christmas is a "baptized" pagan festival of the solar cult, celebrating the birth of the sun at the winter solstice, so is Easter a pagan solar festivity, celebrated at the spring equinox in all the Eastern pagan lands as the renewal of vegetal life and the resurrection of nature from the long death of winter. The name Easter, according to the Venerable Bede, "relates to Eostre, a Teutonic goddess of the rising light of day and spring" (Cath. Encyc., Vol. 5: p. 224). It is identically the Jewish passover; "in fact, the Jewish feast was taken over into the Christian Easter celebration" (Id. p: 225). But it is of even more pagan origin than Judaism, with its festivals of "new moons"; its pagan solar character is shown by the time of its celebration: "Easter was celebrated in Rome and Alexandria on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox. ... Already in the third century 25 March, was considered the day of the crucifixion" (Id. p. 225). "A great number of pagan customs, celebrating the return of spring, gravitated to Easter" (Id., p. 227). The foregoing is as comprehensive a statement of the admitted "borrowings" or "adaptations" by Christianity from paganism as can well be made in brief quotations. They are authoritative, and they completely prove that there is nothing new in the Christian religion except Hebrew monotheism, with threats of hell and damnation, and temporal torture and death for the unbeliever.

It may surprise and grieve many good Christians to know that all their pious observances, prayers, hymns, baptism, communion at the altar, redemption, salvation, the celebration of Christmas as the birth of their God in mid-winter, and of Easter, his resurrection as spring breaks, all, all, are pagan practices and myths, thousands of years antedating their Jesus-religion.

The simple truth is that paganism was outworn; its myths were too childish to be believed by the enlightened minds of those days. Four centuries before Christ, Socrates was put to death for disbelief in the gods of Greece. Paganism, too, had become corrupt in many of its practices; the time was ripe for a reform in religion, and for a purer system based on belief in one God. One of the many pretended Messiahs of Israel served as the occasion for this reform. His own people did not largely accept him; his propaganda found readier acceptance among the pagans, who had a freer form of worship and were very prone to believe in any god and in every fable. So the new cult made its way slowly through the pagan Roman world.

The new religion was at first tolerated throughout the Empire, and at Rome. As it grew and spread, it interfered with the business of many "Demetrius silversmiths," who violently opposed it as destroying their idol-trade (Acts 19: 24). By their evil reports, maybe, its votaries became suspected of criminal practices and conspiracies against the Empire, and it suffered intermittent persecutions, but it persisted. It met persecution and attempted suppression, not as a religion, but as an interference with the policy of the State. After three hundred years, during which paganism flourished decadently and was the religion of "the best peoples and best portions of the earth," the new religion gained the adherence of the pagan Emperor Constantine, who became sole emperor of the pagan world through a victory due, as he was made by Christian priests superstitiously to believe, to a miraculous Sign of the Cross, with the legend *In Hoc Signo Vinces*, hung out in heaven for him during the battle at the Milvian Bridge by the Christian's God himself. The emperor, in gratitude or as a shrewd policy of state, adopted the new god and creed, and at the instigation of the priests set up this creed as the state religion and enthroned its priests in place and power in the state. In the spirit of pagan tolerance, which one would think should be the spirit of Christianity, Constantine decreed religious liberty throughout the Empire. The terms of his Edict of Milan, in 313, are worth recalling; they shame the very sect which was its intended beneficiary.

PAGAN TOLERANCE AND CHRISTIAN INTOLERANCE

The proselytized emperor decreed: "It seems to us proper that the Christians and all others should have liberty to follow that mode of religion which to each of them appears best; for it befits the well-ordered State and the tranquillity of our times that each individual be allowed, according to his own choice, to worship the Divinity." But no sooner had the priests of the new religion foisted themselves securely into power, and by their threats of hell fire dominated the superstitious minds of the emperors, than the old decrees of persecution under which they themselves had previously suffered were revamped and turned into engines of torture and destruction of both pagans and "heretic" Christians alike, and religious intolerance became the corner-stone of the Church apostolic. Without mentioning earlier laws, in which the new persecutors cautiously felt their way, it was enacted, at priestly instigation, in the famous Codex Theodosianus, about A.D. 384: "We desire that all the people under the rule of our clemency should live by that religion which divine Peter the apostle is said to have given the Romans. ... We desire that heretics and schismatists be subjected to various fines. ... We decree also that we shall cease from making sacrifices to the gods. And if any one has committed such a crime, let him be stricken with the avenging sword" (Cod. Theod. 16: 1, 2; 5: 1; 10: 4). What a contrast to the Edict of Milan, granting tolerance to all! In these laws of the now "Christian" empire priestly intolerance is made the law of the land; and the accursed words "Inquisition of the Faith" and "inquisitors" first appear in this code.

THE DEADLY SANCTIONS OF RELIGION

But the priests should not alone bear the infamy of these laws of persecution and death, instigated by them. To the Devil his due! The "Holy Ghost" itself, it is claimed by the Bible and the Church, inspired and decreed by positive command all the bloody murders and tortures by the priests from Moses to the last one committed; and the spirit of them lives and is but hibernating to-day. The Holy God of Israel, whose name is Merciful, thus decreed on Sinai: "He that sacrificeth to any gods [elohim], save unto Yahweh only, he shall be utterly destroyed" (Ex. 22: 20). And hear this, which the ancient priests attribute to their God:

"If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go serve other gods, and ... Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die" (Deut. 13: 6--10)!

Words are inadequate to comment on this murderous decree of a barbarian God! And not only must all under penalty of a fiendish death worship the Holy Yahweh of Israel, but listen to this other fatal, infamous decree of the priests in the name of this God:

"The man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest, even that man shall die" (Deut. 17: 12).

And the tergiversant slaughter-breathing persecutor for pay of the early Christians, now turned for profit their chief apostle of persecution, pronounces time and again the anathema of the new dispensation against all dissenters from his superstitious, tortuous doctrines and dogmas, all such "whom I have delivered unto Satan" (I Tim. 1: 20), as he writes to advise his adjutant Timothy. He flings at the scoffing Hebrews this question: "He that despised Moses, law died without mercy ...: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?" (Heb. 10: 28, 29). All such "are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7); "that they might all be damned who believed not the truth" (2 Thess. 2: 12); and even "he that doubteth is damned" (Rom. 14: 23). This Paul, who with such bigoted presumption "deals damnation 'round the land on all he deems the foe" of his dogmas, is first seen "consenting to the death" of the first martyr Stephen (Acts 8: 1); then he blusters through the country "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord" (Acts 9: 1), the new converts to the new faith. Then, when he suddenly professed miraculous "conversion" himself, his old masters turned on him and sought to kill him, and he fled to these same disciples for safety, to their great alarm (Acts 9: 23-26), and straightway began to bully and threaten all who would not now believe his new preachments. To Elymas, who "withstood them," the doughty new dogmatist "set his eyes on him," and thus blasted him with inflated vituperation: "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord"? (Acts 13: 8-10). Even the "meek and loving Jesus"

is quoted as giving the fateful admonition: "Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10: 28) -- here first invented and threatened by Jesus the Christ himself, for added terror unto belief. Paul climaxes the terror: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10: 31).

Thus "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" against all who would not believe their gospel of miracles and damnation, the founders of the new faith forged and fastened the fetters of the new superstition upon the already superstitious pagans about them, and gradually throughout the Roman world. By fear of hell, pagan individuals, and in later times, by the choice proffered by "Christian" conquerors between the Cross and the sword, whole pagan peoples fell under the domination of the new militant faith. Whole tribes and nations were given the choice between Christianity and death; early history abounds in instances. The Hungarians adopted Christianity as the alternative to extermination in A.D. 1000; also the pagan Wends when conquered in 1144, and most of the pagan Teutonic tribes. Charlemagne required every male subject of the Holy Roman Empire above the age of twelve to renew his oath of allegiance and swear to be not only a good subject but also a good Christian. To refuse baptism and to retract after baptism were crimes punishable with death. It was indeed fearful danger and death by torture, rack, and fire to show the faintest symptoms of doubt of the faith of the Holy Church.

"LIKE KING LIKE PEOPLE"

Following the truism of Isaiah, "like king like people," very great sections of the people throughout the Empire, especially the official and subservient classes, hastened to adopt the name and outward indicia of Christianity, now become official and popular. But so "joined to their idols" were the masses of pagan "converts" for convenience, and so addicted to its showy forms and ceremonies, that the now officially recognized Church of Christ was not slow to popularize itself with the pagan-Christian masses by taking over bodily and "baptizing" to itself the temples, idols, rituals, ceremonials, the whole pomp and glorious circumstance of paganism, as we have just seen admitted by the paragraphs of church history quoted from the work of Sellars and the authoritative Catholic Encyclopedia. Christianity became thus scarcely more than a refined veneer of paganism. A devout pagan becoming, either from convenience or conviction, a Christian, no doubt felt quite comfortable and at home in a "baptized" pagan-Christian temple, aglow with all the trappings and ceremonials and resonant with all the old familiar litanies of his just-recanted paganism, with merely the name of Zeus or Jupiter replaced by that of Jehovah, and of Adonis or Tammuz by that of Jesus, and with "Mary, Mother of God," for Isis (with the child Horus), as the new "Queen of Heaven." As the missionaries of Rome carried the new cult into yet other countries, and various kings and rulers fell to the appeal and pomp of the priests, whole tribes and nations of heathens followed their leaders into the Church, veneering their paganism with the name, forms, and ceremonials of Roman Christianity. This is the testimony of early ecclesiastical and secular history. Later instances more generally known, but the significance of which is as generally overlooked, further confirm Isaiah's maxim. For a millennium the Western Empire was more or less Roman Christian; the Eastern Empire had the Greek Church with its own Patriarch, but, with considerable vicissitudes of constancy, it recognized the supremacy of papal Rome, and the formulas of faith and creed were the same, with the exception of the age-long controversy over the "filioque" clause of the Nicene Creed, and the bitter feuds over image-worship known as iconoclasm. The rancours engendered from these differences of belief, together with the bigoted pretensions of patriarch and pope, led to the final rupture between Greek and Roman Churches in the year 1053. All the West followed their leader the pope; the East clung with equal tenacity to the tenets of the patriarch. So bitter were the hatreds thus perpetuated, that the Western popes and emperors refused all aid to the beleaguered emperors and Church of the East in the fatal conflicts with the Turks, till in 1453 Constantinople and the whole Eastern empire fell before the Crescent, and Europe became Turkish and Mohammedan up to the very gates of Vienna.

But western and northern Europe remained of the Roman faith until the Reformation begun by Luther in 1517. Here a most signal vindication of "Like king like people" is witnessed. The Christian kings and rulers who had political grievances against the pope quickly took up the quarrel of Luther with the Roman Church; those who were politically friendly to the pope seized arms to defend him and the Church; their respective peoples flocked to their standards and followed them in their rival faiths, and Europe was a welter of blood and strife during the

ensuing fierce wars between Catholic and Protestant Christians. The strife of hostile Christian faiths yet endures, abated some-what in degree.

England was wholly Romish before the Reformation; so staunch a supporter of the True Faith was the lecherous Henry 8 that the pope bestowed on him the title Fidei Defensor, Defender of the Faith. Papal sanction being refused to his scandalous project of divorce from Catharine, in order to marry Anne Boleyn, Henry broke with the pope and became Protestant; carried England with him into the Protestant ranks; founded the Church of England; and became its supreme spiritual head. The old Romish practice of burning dissenters at the stake was turned against the English Catholics to suppress that sect entirely. Henry's Romish daughter "Bloody Mary" succeeded him, and she was in turn succeeded by her Protestant bar- sinister sister Elizabeth: each in turn kept the fires of Smithfield blazing with the burning of the "heretics" of the opposite faith. Finally, with the revolution against the Catholic Stuarts, Protestantism won and England became what she is today, the staunch bulwark of the reformed Faith and the Established Church.

On such chances and caprices of vanity and spite in Providence doth the religious complexion of whole nations of loyal Christians turn and depend. It is curious to remember that the Protestant sovereigns of England yet bear the popish title "Fidei Defensor," which is blazoned on the national escutcheon and stamped on the coin of the realm to-day,

And so, through the long dark ages of faith, and so long as the priest-prostituted State would use its civil power in superstitious aid of the Holy Church, the Holy Church has zealously fulfilled its Bible's commands and has murdered and tortured men, women, and tender children by fire and sword through its special agency of faith, the Holy Inquisition. This priest-ordained institution was only abolished by the infidel Napoleon in Italy in 1808; but the moment his dreaded power fell, the "Scourge of God" was eagerly re-established in the Papal States by God's Vicar Pope Pius VII in 1814, and in Tuscany and Sardinia in 1835. It was only finally abolished, along with the usurped "temporal power" of God's vicars on earth, as one of the first glorious acts of the new Kingdom of Italy, in 1870, -- just at the time when the Holy Ghost came to the "Vatican prisoner" to reassert that the torture and murder of dissenters from theological dogma was a God-imposed duty and divine right of his Holy Church. We shall see how this is.

"NOT DEAD BUT SLEEPETH"

It would appear, from what is quoted below, that Holy Church does not accept complaisantly this deprivation of power to execute these bloody features of the divine commands committed to it. It recognizes perforce its temporal impotence, and seems, like the modern Hun, to bide if not to toast "The Day," as it often suggests? "Today the temporal penalties formerly inflicted on apostates and heretics cannot be enforced, and have fallen into abeyance"; -- abeyance, temporary suspension, reluctant disuse, if you please, as may be read in Vol. 1: p. 625, of the Catholic Encyclopedia, published under the imprimatur of Holy Church but a few years ago (1907), in New York City, and as is several times repeated in its volumes. Its whole system for suppression even to extermination yet exists intact, ready for instant resort when and should "changed conditions" again permit. From Vol. 14: p. 761, et seq., commended to very thoughtful perusal, are quoted several precious, pregnant paragraphs (the italics are mine):

"Nearly all ecclesiastical legislation in regard to the repression of heresy proceeds upon the assumption that Heretics are in wilful revolt against lawful authority; that they are, in fact, Apostates who by their own culpable act have renounced the True Faith. ... It is easy to see that in the Middle Ages this was not an unreasonable assumption. ... "No one could be ignorant of the claims of the Church; and if certain people repudiated her authority, it was by an act of rebellion inevitably carrying with it a menace to the sovereignty which the rest of the world accepted. ... "The Canon Law deals very largely with the enunciation of principles of right and wrong which are in their own nature irreformable; the direct repeal of its provisions has never or very rarely been resorted to; but there remain upon the statute book a number of enactments which owing to changed conditions are to all practical intents and purposes obsolete. ... "The custom of burning heretics is really not a question of justice, but a question of civilization (p. 769). ... "The gravest obligation," says Pope Leo 11II in his Encyclical "Immortals Dei" of Nov. 1, 1885, "requires the acceptance and practice not of the religion which one may choose, but of that which God prescribes and which is known by certain and indubitable marks to be the only true, one" (p.764).

There we have the incubating germs of potential hell on earth again in the name of God and the Christian religion. It is not the Roman Church alone which is guilty; now, and throughout this book, I make no imputations against it as Catholic, but only as Christian; for 1500 years it was the only, as it claims yet to be the only true, "Christian" Church, -- "fons et origo malorum," of religious superstitions and persecutions innumerable. Its greater guilt lies only in its being the father of all these priestly dogmas which have been and are the blight of civilization. The dissenters were, and well might be again, their Providence permitting, all that this same article above quoted imputes to them; for in a typical tu quoque conclusion (which admits its own guilt) Holy Church thus recites history: "On the other hand, the ferocity of the leading Reformers more than equalled that of the most fiercely denounced Inquisitors. Even the 'gentle' Melanchthon wrote to Calvin to congratulate him on the burning of Servetus: 'The Church, both now and in all generations, owes and will owe you a debt of gratitude.' And, says Luther, 'Let there be no pity; it is a time of wrath, not of mercy. Therefore, dear Lords, let him who can slay, smite, destroy.' John Knox 'thought that every Catholic in Scotland ought to be put to death.'" -- And the authorized and authoritative Encyclopedia article just quoted asserts solemnly that the inspired canon laws, including those prescribing the torture and burning to death of "heretics," are in their divine nature "irreformable," have accordingly never been repealed and merely lie "in abeyance" or are "for practical purposes obsolete," only because of "changed conditions"; and that the infernal "custom of burning heretics is really not a question of justice [i.e. of right or wrong], but a question of civilization" -- which has gradually brought about these "changed conditions," so that "burning heretics," while yet a divinely sanctioned and unrepealed law of God and Church, cannot in these days be enforced because of this secular "civilization" which renders the burning laws of God and Church unpopular and impotent.

Revolting and truly significant as this is, it is also a confession which suggests the truth of the assertion often made that "Christian civilization" is a misnomer, and that such civilization as the world to-day enjoys exists, not because of the Christian religion, but in despite and defiance of that religion and its ministers. Only so far as the world has broken away from the superstition and thrall of the theological dogmas of this religion and its Holy Church and has caught something of its better spirit, making "obsolete" the fires of the Church on earth and in hell, has civilization slowly and painfully progressed, and have human liberty of thought and conscience and political and civil liberty become possible and been slowly and painfully realized in some parts of the "Christian" world.

FAITH FLOURISHED ON IGNORANCE

With the decline and fall of the Roman Empire the Christian religion spread and grew, among the Barbarian destroyers of Rome. The Dark Ages contemporaneously spread their intellectual pall over Europe. Scarcely any but priests and monks could read. Charlemagne learned to wield the pen only to the extent of scrawling his signature. The barons who wrested Magna Carta from John Lackland signed with their marks and seals. The worst criminals, provided they were endowed with the rare and magic virtue of knowing how to read even badly, enjoyed the "benefit of clergy" (i.e., of clerical learning), and escaped immune or with greatly mitigated punishment. There were no books save painfully-written manuscripts, worth the ransom of princes, and utterly unattainable except by the very wealthy and by the Church; not till about 1450 was the first printed book known in Europe. The Bible existed only in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and the ignorant masses were totally ignorant of it other than what they heard from the priests, who told them that they must believe it or be tortured and killed in life and damned forever in the fires of hell after death. It is no wonder that faith flourished under conditions so exceptionally favorable.

During the long dark ages of faith, the Holy Church and benightedness were at their apogee and holy heyday. Miracles of superstition happened every day by the conjuration of unwashed saints and the exorcisms of motley priests, just as they do to-day in the jungles of Africa and the arctic regions of America, through the conjurings of Hottentot medicine-men and Eskimo shamans; but never a single true miracle such as the modern ones of medicine, of surgery, of sanitation, of the physical sciences!

Any who may question the accuracy -- or desire astonishing details -- of this reference to the miracles and superstitions of saints and Holy Church, is cheerfully recommended to the exhaustless fount of authentic lore and accredited vouchers for it all, in the sixteen volume Catholic Encyclopedia, under the names of the myriad various saints and the articles Magic, Exorcism, Necromancy, Sorcery, Witchcraft, and scores of other such, all

vouched for under the imprimatur of authority. And none of this, with such sanction, can possibly be impeached of error; for the same high source states: "Error is in one way or another the product of ignorance." The priestly maxim of those dark ages of faith is the accredited axiom of Hugo of St. Victor: "Disce primum quod credendum est" -- "Learn first what is to be believed"! -- though amongst the churchmen it is said to have been a privileged maxim for themselves, that they might "hold anything so long as they hold their tongues." Under the sway and dominion of such "sacred science," genius was dead; the human intellect atrophied; credulity was rampant. All this followed swiftly upon the grafting of the Christian religion upon the splendid though decadent civilization of the Roman Empire in East and West. These all are simple facts of history.

"CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION"

Dickens's Child's History of England, in speaking of the early pagan inhabitants of that island at the time of the Roman invasion, 55 years before the era of the so-called "Prince of peace," says: "The ancient Britons, being divided into as many as thirty or forty tribes, each commanded by its own little king, were constantly fighting with each other, as savage people usually do."

That single sentence epitomizes the whole history of "Christian-civilized" Europe from that day to this: the Christian has been no whit different from the savage as regards the savage pastime of "constantly fighting with each other, as savage people usually do." Read any history of Europe as a whole, or of any particular people of Europe: its pages are replete with next to nothing but fighting and wars, internecine and international, in almost every single year of its bloody annals. And wars about what?

Without an exception they have all been of one of three inveterate classes: wars instigated by lust of conquest and power on the part of "divine right" kings or even more populaulers, seeking to rob and steal each other's territories or to force their will upon others; wars, and the most terrible and brutal of all, incited by this Holy Christian religion before the Reformation, with the holy purpose of exterminating unbelievers, as in the Crusades and the Spanish butcheries of the Moors, or with the pious object of exterminating, at Popish instigation, dissenting "heretics," such as the Albigenses, Waldenses, Netherlanders, Cathari, Huguenots, Jews, and scores of others; and after the Reformation, furious exterminating wars of one fanatical faction of Christians against another, all blasphemously in the name of God! Such pious infamies, for a thousand years and more, from its earliest usurpation of power until skeptic anti-clericalism made it impotent, have been the chief occupation of the Church Persecutr9: -- that

"... saintly, murderous brood, To carnage and the Bible* given, Who think through unbelievers' blood Lies their directest path to heaven." *The original reads "the Koran."

A third, and redeeming, class of European wars has been those glorious and righteous struggles for liberty by oppressed and debased peoples, ground to misery and desperation by Holy Church and divine right kings -- both which institutions are thoroughly Biblical and Christian -- to throw off their galling yokes and to win political freedom and liberty of conscience for themselves and their posterity. But the Christian religion, while instigating and waging many of the most cruel wars, has never once prevented a single accursed war, of which over fifty have plunged "civilized Christian Europe" into a welter of blood and misery in the past century alone; while the world today yet staggers under the devastation of the greatest and most destructive war of all history, which desolated humanity and all but overthrew civilization. And no war has been in which the name of God was not inscribed upon the bloody banners of the aggressor; assailants and defenders alike swamp high heaven with frantic and fatuous prayers to God to give victory to each against the other -- prayers which God has never heard or attended to, for God, as Napoleon cynically and truly said, "is always on the side of the heaviest guns" -- or of the deadliest poison-gas and most ruthless butchery of men.

Until wicked, brutal, damned war is ended on earth, there is and can be no true civilization; for all war -- unless defensive -- is uncivilized, brutish barbarism. And to this holy consummation the Christian religion, as such, will never lead or even contribute. He whom the Christians fondly call "The Prince of Peace" -- for what reason and with what reason God only knows -- is not to be counted on to aid; for himself explicitly avers: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, And a man's foes shall be they of his own household" (Matt.

10: 34-36)! Far from preventing war, truly has his theology, or creedal religion, throughout his era been the prolific cause and miserable pretext of wars and woes unnumbered: of human misery degradation, ignorance, intolerance, persecution, pogroms, murders by fire and sword -- in a word, of most of the ills and sorrows which humanity, subject to its thrall, has suffered from the days of Constantine's league with the Church, A.D., 313, to this very year of Christ and his religion. Gainsay this no man who knows history can.

The Christian religion has been the fearful sanction of human slavery, of "divine right" rulers, of "God-anointed" priestly domination of the mind and soul of man, of the imposed inferiority of woman. The deadly dogma of divine right of kings and of the sin of resistance to oppression is positively ordained: "The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they, that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" (Romans 13: 1. 2). But the Declaration of Independence reads otherwise. As for the priestly dominance, we will take ancient Scripture for authority -- More modern instances may occur to some: "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests beaule by their means; and my people love to have it so" (Jer. 5: 31); and the pertinent query follows: "What will ye do in the end the end thereof?" That is for this age to answer unequivocally.

THE "CHRISTIAN" PEOPLES

The best and most highly civilized portion of the human race is within the pale of Christendom; but are these peoples so because they profess the Christian religion? Just as well and truly say that they are the most intelligent of mind, the fairest of complexion, the most comely of form and face because they are Christian. But as pagans, before ever they heard of Christianity, they were the same: because they were of the Caucasian race, Aryan -- which means "noble." All know the story of the youthful priest, later Gregory the Great, seeing a group of "barbarian" captives exposed for sale in the Christian slave-market of Rome; struck with their personal beauty, he asked of what country they were. Being told "They are Angles," he exclaimed: "No, they are angels," and was thus moved to send missionaries to their Teutonic homeland to "convert" their nation from paganism to the true faith. Deathless in history, in song and story, are "the glory that was Greece, the grandeur that was Rome" -- the two highest civilizations of antiquity as well as of the early Christian era: the glory and the power were of pagan Greece, of pagan Rome long before and long after the Christian religion came, and that glory, that high civilization was eclipsed, swamped, by the night of the Christian dark ages -- which were the ages of faith.

Not only these greatest civilizations, but the greatest minds of the ages, the best of men, were pagans: Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, Epictetus, Demosthenes, Cicero, Seneca, the Plinys, the Antonines, Marcus Aurelius, the philosophers, the poets, Pilate himself -- the catalogue is long and illustrious: Justin had to explain it thus -- "there were Christians before Christ." The Augustan Age, just at the time of the advent of the Man of Sorrows, was the glorious golden age of the ancient world -- and purely pagan. And for centuries after Christ the greater part of Europe remained pagan, and but slowly, and bloodily, gave way to Christianity after the league of State with Church under Constantine, as we may again notice in this sketch.

Having given a rapid retrospect of some of the phases of Christian history, and sought to clear away some popular misconceptions, I shall proceed, in the following chapters, in all conscience and truth of statement, easily verifiable by all, to "search the Scriptures," Hebrew and Hebrao-Christian, whether these things which they contain for our faith are worthy of faith and credit. This search will truly "reveal" the Bible and its God in the very words of inspiration. If they be found inspired of truth, the first and highest duty of man is reverently to cherish and obey them -- "for therein ye think ye have eternal life." If inspiration and truth, divine and human, are found lacking, for God's sake and humanity's, may intelligent people renounce forevermore the vain priest-imposed "hope to merit heaven by making earth a hell" for superstition's sake; let us cease wrangling and being intolerant over moronic myths, and let us have peace from "idle tales" and fables.

IS IT GOD'S WORD?

CHAPTER 2: A SKETCH OF HEBREW SCRIPTURES

A SKETCH OF HEBREW SCRIPTURES

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A SKETCH OF HEBREW SCRIPTURES

THE Bible, as all must admit, is the only source of knowledge which we have, of the great questions of miracle and of "revealed religion" which come to us through its pages. The authenticity of its remarkable contents, as the word and will of God, can only be tested and ascertained by itself; by the internal evidences of its own words must its divine origin and inspired truth be vindicated, or its mere human origin and want of inspired truth be demonstrated. On a matter of such high importance to man and to the soul and its destiny, no candid and honest mind can offer reasonable objection to a candid and honest inquiry, made by a frank and faithful examination of its own words. To this capital end, therefore, we will follow the injunction of the Man of Galilee and "search the Scriptures," haply to find the answer to the eternal question posed by Pilate, "What is truth?"

THE BIBLE A COLLECTION OF "LITTLE BOOKS"

What, first, is this Bible? It is not one single and homogeneous book, in the form in which we see it printed; indeed, it was first printed, in Latin, in the year A.D. 1452, by Gutenberg, in Mainz. And what we know-and fondly cherish-as the Bible is not the Bible at all, but a translation, or version, more or less faulty and incorrect-and often intentionally very misleading-of ancient manuscripts of Hebrew and Greek writings, themselves very faulty and conflicting, forming together the so-called Bible. The very name Bible indicates its nature as a

collection of writings. The name Bible is the Latin Biblia, from the Greek diminutive plural, ta bibliay "the little books," a term first used as referring to the Hebrew Scriptures in 1 Maccabees 12: 9. The Greek word biblos, from which comes the diminutive biblia, is from the Greek bublus, papyrus, the name of the material, from Egypt, on which ancient books were written. The title Ta Biblia for the whole Scriptures, Hebrew and Christian, was first used in the Second Epistle of Clement (14: 2) written in A.D. 170.

The Bible, thus called, is a compilation, or gathering into one volume, of sixty-six separate "little books," or fragmentary "sacred" writings, from Genesis to Revelation. These sixty-six little books were written, or edited and compiled, in very different ages of the world, by wholly different, and mostly unknown, persons, in different countries and languages, Hebrew and Greek principally; but, as is commonly supposed, by Jews invariably. Together they form the "sacred writings" of the later Hebrews and of the early Jewish and Pagan Christians-the name given, first at Antioch (Acts 11: 26), to the followers of the Jewish Jesus Christ.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE BOOKS

The Hebrew little books," thirty-nine in number according to the accepted Hebrew and Protestant "canon," forty-six according to the Catholic, were written, of course, mainly in the Hebrew language, though Aramaic elements enter into some of the later compositions. This Hebrew language, like several others of the allied Semitic languages, was written entirely with consonants, having no written means of expressing vowel sounds; their words consist mostly of only three consonantal letters. The whole Hebrew Scriptures is a solid mass of words in consonants only, with not a single vowel among them. This consonantal mass of words was written from right to left, without spacing between words, and without a single mark of punctuation from end to end. Jerome, who made the Vulgate Version of the Old Testament, says:

"When we translate the Hebrew into Latin, we are sometimes guided by conjecture." Le Clere says: "The learned merely guess at the sense of the Old Testament in an infinity of places."

But what they have guessed it to mean we must believe or be damned.

There were no divisions, as at present, into chapters and verses, these divisions having been invented only some three or four centuries ago to facilitate quotations and references; even now the chapter and verse divisions differ considerably between the Hebrew text and the English translations. The Hebrew rabbis and scholars, somewhere between the fifth and eighth centuries A. D., devised and put into use in their manuscripts of the Bible a system of so-called "vowel points" dots and dashes as in modern shorthand-to express and preserve what they considered to be the probable ancient pronunciation of the Hebrew words. No wonder there are infinite doubts and difficulties as to the original words and their vowelization, and therefore even of their meaning. Many of the Hebrew words are almost untranslatable, and the same Hebrew word is often given scores of wholly different meanings in translation. A glance at the index-lexicon to the Old Testament in Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible, demonstrates the difficulties, or the ingenuity, of the King James translators. For example, the word abar is given 88 different meanings; amar, 51; asah, 96; nathan, 94; nephesh (soul), 27; and so throughout the list-many of these renditions being totally unrelated to each other, as nephesh; soul, appetite, pleasure, fish, hairy, ghost. This results from the rude nature of the Hebrew language, which has only about 2050 root words, of which only 500 make up the bulk of the Old Testament. (Cath. Encyc., Vol. 7: p. 177).

THE BIBLE LANGUAGE-HEBREW

Such a thing as the "Hebrew language," as a separate and distinctive speech of the ancient Israelites, in which they held familiar converse with Yahveh, and in which Yahveh spoke with Adam and Eve and with the patriarchs and Moses, never existed; no more than an "American language" now exists as distinct from the mother speech of England, or than the "Latin" languages of South America are distinct from the Spanish and Portuguese of the Iberian peninsula. As to the language of Yahveh and Adam and Eve, says the Catholic Encyclopedia: "The contention that Hebrew was the original language bestowed upon mankind may be left out of discussion, being based merely on pietistic a priori considerations."

Abraham was a native of "Ur of the Chaldees," and hence naturally, with all his family and people, spoke the Chaldean or Babylonian language, which was very much akin to that of Canaan, where Abraham migrated, and was spoken by him and his descendants until the Seventy migrated to Egypt, 215 years later. Indeed, even as

late as Isaiah; the language of the Chosen People is expressly said to be the "language of Canaan" (Isa. 19: 18). The Catholic Encyclopedia further says: "The name Hebrew (as applied to the language spoken by the ancient Israelites, and in which are composed nearly all the books of the Old Testament) is quite recent in biblical usage, occurring for the first time in the Greek prologue of Ecclesiastics, about 130 B.C." (Cath. Encyc. Vol. 7: 176). And further, as to the language of Abraham and the patriarchs: "That it was simply a dialect belonging to the Chanaanitish group of Semitic languages is plain from its many recognized affinities with the Phoenician and Moabitic dialects. Its beginnings are consequently bound up with the origin of this group of dialects. ... The language spoken by the clan of Abraham was a dialect closely akin to those of Moab, Tyre, and Sidon, and it bore a greater resemblance to Assyrian and Arabic than to Aramaic" (Id.). Indeed, the dictionary of the Hebrew language which lies before me is called The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon -- so nearly one and the same are the two dialects.

So, if Yahveh, God of Abraham and of Israel, spoke all these wonderful things to his Chosen People, he spoke them in the common language of the peoples and gods of Canaan and Assyria, and not in some choice and peculiar "Hebrew language" as a special idiom of his Chosen People and of his divine revelations to his people and through them to mankind. Highly important sidelights on inspiration and the verity of sundry characteristic Scripture histories flow from this fact, so that its importance and interest justify this brief paragraph.

THE NAME OF THE HEBREW TRIBAL GOD

So obsolete did the "Hebrew language" become, following the world-conquests of Alexander the Great and the almost universal spread of the Greek language and culture throughout the Orient, that several centuries before the time of Christ even the form and proper pronunciation of the name YHVH of the Hebrew tribal deity were lost and unknown; though a few Jews, as Philo of Alexandria and Josephus, a generation after the time of Christ, professed to know it, but held it unlawful to pronounce or divulge it (Josephus, Antiq., 2: 12: 4; see Cath. Encyc., Vol. 8: art. Jehovah).

Again the authoritative Catholic Encyclopedia speaks on this very significant point: "The modern Jews are as uncertain of the proper pronunciation of the Sacred Name as their Christian contemporaries. ... The name was not pronounced after the destruction of the temple" (Vol. 8: p. 329). On page 330 it gives a list of the forms of the name as found in ancient writers, and lists: Jao, Jaoth, Jaou, Jeu, Ja, Jabe, Jahb, Jehjeh. It then comments: "The judicious reader will perceive that the Samaritan pronunciation Jabe probably approaches the real sound of the Divine Name closest. Inserting the vowels of Jabe into the original Hebrew consonantal text, we obtain the form Jahweh (Yahweh), which has been generally accepted by modern scholars as the true pronunciation of the Divine Name" (p. 330).

Very remarkably, for an orthodox Christian authority, this scholarly thesaurus of theology-which so often seems to forget orthodox theology when engaged in questions of pure scholarship- reviews at some length inquiries of scholars to discover the origin of the old Hebrew tribal Yahveh-that is, whence the Chosen People got or "borrowed" their tribal god. The colloquy between the God and Moses at the burning bush demonstrates that neither Moses nor the Chosen People knew or ever had heard of Yahveh, or of any other "God of their fathers"; for Moses says to the God: "Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?" (Ex. 3: 13). The matter of the traditional "revelation" of the name of the God to Moses we will duly consider a few pages later.

The article referred to reviews amply the suggested origins of Yahveh and his adoption by the Chosen People, of which but one or two very significant ones may be here noticed. Under the sub-caption, "Origin of the name Jahveh (Yahweh)," this high authority says: "The opinion that the name Jahveh was adopted by the Jews from the Canaanites, has been defended by [a number of eminent scholars], but has been rejected by [others]. It is antecedently improbable that Jahveh, the irreconcilable enemy of the Canaanites, should be originally a Chanaanite god" (Vol. 8: p. 331). Passing other suggested origins, it says: "The theory that Jahveh is of Egyptian origin may have a certain amount of a priori probability, as Moses was educated in Egypt. Still, the proofs are not convincing. ... Plutarch (De Iside, 9) tells us that a statue of Athene (Neith) in Sais bore the inscription, 'I am all that has been, is, and will be,' ... the common Egyptian formula, Nuk pu Nuk, but though its literal signification is 'I am I,' its real meaning is 'It is I who'" (Id.). Again: "As to the theory that Jahveh has

a Chaldean or Aceadian origin, its foundation is not very solid," and the familiar Assyrian forms Yahu or Yah and Yau are cited, with the statement added, "Jahveh is said to be merely an artificial form introduced to put a meaning into the name of the national god" (Id.).

The immense significance of this scholarly confession that the theory of Egyptian origin of Yahveh may have "a certain amount of a priori probability," and that this name is said to have been adopted "to put meaning into the name of the national god" Yahveh, or that the Hebrews may have adopted or adapted their tribal or "national god" from Egypt, Chaldea, or some other of their heathen neighbors, is that such concessions, or their bare possibility as fact, destroy at once utterly the Bible "revelations" and the pietistic Hebrao-Christian assertions that YHVH is eternal and "self-revealed" God since before the foundations of the world. It totally explodes the pretended "revelation" to Moses at the Burning Bush, soon to be noticed. In a word, such fact or the admission of it wholly destroys Yahveh except as a pagan Hebrew myth and a Christian "strong delusion" to believe ancient primitive myths fovealed truth of God.

The name of the God, too, is often and variously abbreviated in the Hebrew texts. Dozens of times in Genesis it is written simply yy, the first time in Gen. 2: 4, the first mention of Yahveh. Elsewhere it occurs as Yah, or Yehu, Yeho, and as Yah,-Yahveh; often as Yahveh-Elohim. It is always, as we shall see, falsely rendered in the translations as "Lord" and "Lord God," foasons of pious fraud which will duly appear.

THE BIBLE ALL COPIES OF COPIES

There is not existent in the world a single original book or manuscript of Hebrew or Christian Scriptures, containing the inspired Word of Yahveh. The most ancient manuscripts of the Hebrew texts date only from the eighth century of the era of Christ; while of the Christian books, said to have been written by the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost within the first century of the era, all, all are lost, and the oldest "copies" bear the marks of the fourth century. And even in this fourth century, so gross was the corruption of text, so numberless the errors and conflicting readings, that the great St. Jerome, author of the celebrated Latin Vulgate version of the Scriptures, has left it recorded, as his reason for his great work, that the sacred texts "varied so much that there were almost as many readings as codices," or manuscript copies of the text. And for years past, the papal authorities have been collating all known extant versions and bits of Scriptures for the purpose of trying to edit them into one approved version of the inspired Word of Yahveh

Curious indeed it seems that in this inspired revelation of Yahveh, the Hebrew God, to Man, wherein the awful destinies of the human soul are said to be revealed to eternal salvation or damnation, some ten thousand different, conflicting, and disputed readings and textual corruptions and verbal slips of inspiration admittedly exist in the inspired texts, with the knowledge and sufferance of the God whose awful will it all is; while the Providence of that same God, Yahveh, by special miraculous intervention has preserved wholly "incorrupt" through all the ages of faith, the cadavers and ghastly scraps and relics of holy saints and martyrs galore, from the very Year One on, which are yet to-day (or at last reports were-Cath. Encyc., passim) as fresh, fragrant, and wholly "encorrupt" of flesh as when alive-which, in very truth, in the case of many saints-as their lives are recorded by the monks-is not saying very much for either freshness or fragrance. An instance-e pluribus unum-is that of the pioneer Saint Pachomius, who, ambitious to outdo in bodily mortification his companions in filth, left the pig-sty in which he dwelt, and sat himself on the ground at the entrance of a cave full of hyenas in the pious desire of entering glory via their bestial maws; but the hyenas, rushing out upon the holy saint, stopped short of a sudden, sniffed him all over, turned tail, and left him in disgust uneaten.

AND TRANSLATIONS OF TRANSLATIONS

On the title-page of Bibles in current use is the statement "translated out of the original tongues"; but this does not tell the whole or the true story. The first translation of some of the Hebrew Scriptures (for all were not yet written) was the Septuagint into Greek, undertaken at the behest of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, of Egypt, begun at Alexandria about the year 285 B.C., and completed after some three hundred years. In many places this Greek translation differed widely from the Hebrew. About 392 A.D. Jerome made his translation from the Hebrew into Latin, this being the "Vulgate" version, which only gradually made its way into acceptance and suffered so many perversions that it was pronounced by Roger Bacon to be "horribly corrupt"; but it was adopted by the Council of Trent in 1546 as the "sole authoritative source of quotation; and it [the Council] threatened with

punishment those who presumed to interpret the Scriptures contrary to the sense given them by the Fathers" (New Int. Encyc., Vol. 13: p. 251).

This Latin Vulgate, Old and New Testaments alike, with the Apocrypha added, was in its turn translated into English in the Douai Catholic version of 1609, thus removed three steps of translation from the Hebrew and two from the Greek. The Protestant versions in English, including the King James version of 1611, are more directly from the Hebrew and Greek texts of the respective Testaments. It is reported that the Tennessee legislator who sponsored the notorious "Anti-evolution" law in that state was greatly surprised to learn, from the eye-opening revelations of the Scopes trial, that his cherished King James version of Holy Writ, whose precious petrified "Sacred science" he sought to protect from the destroying effects of modern knowledge, was not in the original language of "revelation," in which Yahveh and the talking snake spoke to Adam and Eve. Some further anomalies and a number of tricks of translation will appear in their due order as we proceed.

WHEN THE BOOKS WERE WRITTEN

It will be of signal value to inquire, for a moment, concerning the periods of time indicated by the Bible, and the times when the principal books of it were written and by whom they were written-oather, as that is the only course possible, to show, negatively, by whom, and when, they were not written. This inquiry will be confined to the "internal evidences" of the Bible texts themselves, with a bit of reference to their marginal editorial annotations. The force of such "internal proofs" is self-evident.

To assist to an easier understanding, take this illustration:

If one picks up a book, a newspaper, a letter, or any piece of written or printed matter which bears no date-mark or name of some known writer, one may not be able to ascertain exactly when or by whom it was written or printed. But one can often very readily determine, by the nature of its contents, that it was not written or published until after such or such a known time; and hence that it could not have been written by some person already dead or of one not yet born.

If such a document, for instance, contains the name of Julius Caesar or of Jesus Christ, this proves at once that it was written some time within the past 1900-odd years, and not possibly before the advent of these two personages. If it mentions President Washington or some incident of his administration, it is evident that it could not have been written before Washington became President, in 1789; if it mentions Presidents Washington, Lincoln, and Coolidge, it is proof that it was written as late as the date the latter became President. So of every factual or fanciful allusion-it can go no higher than its source. In a word, we know that no writing can speak as of a matter of fact of any event, person, or thing, until after such event has become an accomplished fact, or such person or thing has existed. No one can to-day write even the name of the President of the United States in the year A.D. 1939.

With this simple thumb-rule of ascertaining or approximating the time of production of written documents by what is known as their "internal evidences" we may gather some astonishing proofs as to when, and by whom, sundry inspired records of Holy Writ were not written-contrary to some currently accepted theories.

SOME LIGHTS ON BIBLE CHRONOLOGY

According to the chronology, or time-computations worked out of the Bible narratives (principally by Bishop Usaher) and printed in the margins of all well-edited Bibles, Catholic and Protestant alike, until recent ridicule shamed the Bible editors into quietly dropping them, the world and Man were created by the fiat or by the fingers of the Hebrew God Yahveh about 4004 years before the present so-called Christian Era, not yet two thousand years old; so that the reputed first man, Adam, inhabited the new-made earth slightly less than six thousand years before the present time. The revelation of this interesting event-which by every token of human knowledge outside the Bible is known not to have occurred just when and how there related-and of many equally accredited events, is recorded (for wonder of mankind) in the first five books of the Bible Genesis to Deuteronomy, called the Pentateuch or Five Books, or, as entitled in the Bible, "The Five Books of Moses." Moses is reputed to have written them at the inspiration or by the revelation of Yahveh, the God of Israel. According to the Bible chronology, Moses lived some 1500 years before Christ; the date of his exodus out of Egypt with the Israelites is laid down as the year 1491 Before Christ, or some 2500 years after the Biblical creation of the world. So, if Moses wrote the account of the creation, the fall of man, the flood, and other

notable historical events recorded in Genesis, he wrote of things happening, if ever they happened, 2500 years more or less before his earthly time, and some of them before even man was created on earth; things which Moses of course could not personally have known.

But it is explained that while this is true, yet Yahveh inspired Moses with a true knowledge or "revelation" of all those things unknown to him, and so what he wrote was revealed historical fact. This is a matter which will be noticed a little later.

But the Book of Genesis, and all the Five Books of Moses, contain many matters of "revealed" fact which occurred, if ever at all many hundreds of years after the death of Moses. Moses is not technically "numbered among the Prophets," and he does not claim for himself to have been inspired both backwards and forwards, so as to write both past and future history. It is evident therefore, by every internal and human criterion, that these "five Books of Moses," containing not only the past events referred to, but many future events-not in form of prophecy, but as past occurrences -- could not have been written by Moses, the principal character of the alleged Exodus and of the forty years' wandering in the Wilderness of Sin, at the end of which he died. The cardinal significance of this fact, and of others connected with it, as bearing upon the historicity of Mosaic narrative and revelation, will appear in due course.

Indeed, in the light of modern knowledge, it is quite evident that Moses and the "Hebrews" of his supposed time (1500 B.C.) could not write at all; or, if at all, on the theory of their 430 years in Egypt, only in Egyptian hieroglyphs. Not till many centuries later did the Hebrews acquire the art of writing. Professor Breasted, the distinguished Egyptologist of the University of Chicago, points out that to the nomad Hebrews writing was unknown; and that it was not until about the time of Amos (about eight hundred years after Moses) that the Hebrews were just "learning to write"; that "they were now abandoning the clay tablet, and they wrote on papyrus with Egyptian pen and ink. They borrowed their alphabet from the Phoenician and Aramean merchants." [James H. Breasted, *Ancient Times* (Boston: Ginn & Co.), see. 305] These Arameans themselves borrowed the alphabet from the Phoenicians "about 1000 B.C."; [Op. cit., see. 205.] the Phoenicians had themselves "devised an alphabet drawn from Egyptian hieroglyphs." [Op. cit., see. 400; see also Andrew Norton, *The Pentateuch*, p. 44.]

SOME SIDELIGHTS ON MOSES

Moses, as the traditional great leader and lawgiver of Israel, is worthy of very interested attention. In no accurate sense was Moses, if he ever lived, a Hebrew at all; indeed, he is expressly called "an Egyptian" (Ex. 2: 19). Certainly he did not speak the Hebrew language, since it was non-existent as such, as noticed in another place; and after four hundred years in Egyptian slavery the slave descendants of Jacob the Syrian, of Chaldea, had evidently ceased to have any knowledge of their old Chaldean tongue, and could speak only an Egyptian dialect. As well should the descendants of the African slaves brought to America three hundred years ago speak to-day the strange dialects of their native jungles. In another place we shall see that neither the people nor Moses had ever heard of Yahveh, God of Israel; and that during the sojourn in Egypt and for a millennium afterwards they continued to worship the gods of Chaldea and of Egypt.

All know the story of "Moses and the Bulrushes"; how the unnamed Pharaoh sought to destroy all the newborn male children of the Israelites, commanding the Hebrew midwives to slay them at birth; how the yet unnamed infant son of Amram was put into an "ark of bulrushes" and hidden on the bosom of the sacred Nile, watched over by his sister Miriam, found by the Pharaoh's daughter, drawn from the water by her, raised by his own mother, and adopted by the daughter of the Pharaoh. All this is very romantic, but not novel. Other high-born ladies have concealed their indiscretions by more or less similar shifts.

Sargon, King of Accad about 3800 B.C., as shown by his monuments yet existing, was also secretly born, was placed by his mother in an ark of bulrushes, just like Baby Moses, and turned adrift on the Euphrates, where he was found by a kindly gardener (as were also Romulus and Remus, born of the god Mars and the vestal virgin, Rhea Silvia), The gardener nurtured him until his royal birth was discovered; he became beloved of the goddess Ishtar, and was raised by his valorous deeds to the throne of his country. Sargon then conquered all western Asia, including the land of Canaan, and set up his monuments of victory even on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, where they remained, undisturbed by the floods of Noah, Xisuthros, and Deucalion, until discovered in recent years, and their records confronted with those of Holy Writ, in the British Museum in

London, and elsewhere, where they may be seen to-day. The stele of Hammurabi's Code, we may also recall, stands to-day an eloquent and unimpeachable witness of the mighty past, in the Louvre at Paris; while Moses's Tables of Stone, writ by the finger of the Hebrew God Yahveh, are even as the sepulchre of Moses, whereof no man knoweth unto this day.

To return from the digression. As the story is recorded in Exodus 2: the princess of Pharaoh spied the ark in the Nile, "had compassion on" the babe and rescued him; afterwards, when he grew, "he became her son." Now the remarkable incident: "And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water" (Ex. 2: 10). What has "Moses" to do with "drew" out of the water? In English speech nothing discernible; but in the original Hebrew it is a plain play on words: "and she called his name Mosheh, ...

Because meshethi (I drew) him out of the waters" (Heb., mashad, to draw). The curious thing about it all is that the Egyptian princess is represented as speaking in Hebrew, or Chaldee, and making a pun-name for her protegee in that evidently unknown tongue. That it hardly happened that way is obvious. The birth, rescue, and "christening" of Moses have every indicium of myth. This evidently fabled beginning must raise grave doubts as to the historicity of Moses himself and of all his reputed career. Other indications of the legendary will not be wanting as we proceed to review the life and times of Moses, and his Five Books.

THE "FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES"

The first and most obvious proof that the so-called 'Five Books of Moses' were not written by Moses, but date from a time many centuries after his reputed life and death, is very simple and indisputable. This proof consists of very numerous instances of what are called post-Mosaics, or "after-Moses" events, related in those books under the name of Moses as their inspired author; events of which Moses of course could not have known or written, as they occurred long after his death.

It may be remarked, parenthetically, that Moses nowhere claims to have written the Five Books, nor does the Bible elsewhere impute their authorship to Moses. It is only "the law" which is elsewhere attributed to Moses. Indeed, the books are written throughout in the third person-Moses did or said this or that; never, in all the relations of the doings and sayings of Moses does "I did" or "I said" once occur, except when Moses is recorded as making a speech.

A singular passage in Exodus vi illustrates this point and is striking evidence that Moses could not have written the books. In verse 13 it is related: "And Yahveh spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, and gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt." Immediately, in verses 14 to 27, follows a strange interruption of the narrative by the insertion of a series of family genealogies, beginning "These be the heads of their fathers' houses," with many names, including the pedigrees of Moses and Aaron, the marriage of Aaron, and mention of the names of his offspring; then this careful explanation: "These are that Aaron and Moses, to whom Yahveh said, Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt. ... These are they which spake to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring out the children of Israel from Egypt: these are that Moses and Aaron" (vv. 26-27). Moses could never have written in this form and manner among his contemporaries who knew him and, all about the "bringing out of Egypt." A thousand years afterwards the thing was written, and the sacred scribe took these pains, thrice reiterated, to identify the Aaron and Moses mentioned in the genealogies with the traditional Moses and Aaron of the traditional Exodus.

It is recognized by scholars that all these elaborate genealogies inserted in the Five Books are post-exilic compositions. Their exact duplicates are found in the post-exilic Books of the Chronicles, and some in Ezra. This too is the origin of the use of "Adam" as a proper name instead of the common noun that it is. Again, if Moses had written the books, surely he would have at least once written the name of the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

But several times in the verses cited is it said, as often elsewhere in the Five Books, "Pharaoh king of Egypt," as if Pharaoh were the name of the king instead of simply the official title of the ruler. The Egyptian title "Pharaoh" means "Great House," the dynasty of the divine wearers of the double crown; the more modern appellation "Sublime Porte," for the Grand Turk, is an instance of a similar usage. The writer did not know the name of the Pharaoh, and thought that Pharaoh was his personal name. In later and more historical books,

several Pharaohs are mentioned by their proper names, as Pharaoh Necho (2 Kings 23: 29) Pharaoh Hophra (Jer. 44: 30), and Shishak, king of Egypt (1 Kings 14: 25).

THE BIBLE "PREFACE"

A flood of light on Mosaic authorship of the Book of Genesis, as well as on "divine revelation" of the most wonderful of its recorded events, breaks in at this vital point. In this light we will read a record which will totally destroy the theory of divine revelation.

The Hebrews claim to "have Abraham as our father," or tribal founder. The "history" or account of tribal traditions of the Chosen People as a new or separate-and "peculiar"-ethnic division, first as nomadic desert Bedouins, later grown into a Hebrew nationality, begins with the "calling" of Abram and his departure out of Ur of the Chaldees into Canaan, the "Land of Promise." This event is related in Genesis 12; from there to the end the whole of Hebrew Scripture is a miraculous "history" of Abraham and his descendants as the Hebrew people.

The first eleven chapters of Genesis are not Hebrew history at all; they deal with cosmic and human-race history, of the creation of the world and the progress of the gentile races of mankind, centered around an alleged direct line of personages, non-Hebraic and pre-Hebrew, from Adam, through Noah and his son Shern, to the immediate forbears of the Hebrew Father Abraham, who was born a Chaldean (Gen. i-xi). All the rest of the record deals with the theocratic history of the Hebrews as "Chosen People" of their god Yahveh, through their whole national life down to the Babylonian captivity, the restoration to their native land under Ezra and Nehemiah, by grace of the Persian conquerors of Babylon, and their subsequent re-establishment of their theocracy.

Note now this capital fact: in the whole Scripture record, from Genesis 12 to the post-exilic Books of the Chronicles, Ezra, etc., there is not a word of mention of one of the transcendent wonders of Genesis i-xi: creation, Father Adam and Mother Eve, Eden, and the serpent, Noah and his flood, the Tower of Babel- not a hint of any of these great events and personages preceding Abraham's trek into Canaan in the year 1921 B.C. Does not such singular silence of all subsequent history, prophecy, and poetry of the Hebrews excite curiosity or wonder? The explanation is easy and very revealing.

In 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, conquered Judea, destroyed Jerusalem, and carried away into captivity the Chosen People. There in the new, strange country, "by the rivers of Babylon ... We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof; For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song. ... How shall we sing Yahveh's song in a strange land?"

(Psalm 137: 1-4) This proves, too, that David did not write this Psalm, for it was written after the captivity; and there they dreamed of the Messiah who should arise to "deliver us from the Assyrian." There in Babylonia, for fifty years (not seventy, as their prophecies say) until Ezra, and for 150 years until Nehemiah, the Chosen People remained, among the wonders of the highest civilization of the East. There they learned the lore and the literature of the Assyrian and Babylonian cultures; and they no doubt conned with amazement the tablets and books of the great libraries of the land in which they dwelt.

From these wonderful records of the past they learned the Babylonian Epic of Creation, wherein are recorded the fables of creation, the first parents, the garden, the forbidden trees of knowledge and of life, the serpent, the temptation, the fall of man, the flood and the ark, and of the Tower of Babel, the reputed original of which stood there before their wondering eyes. There they gathered these legends of the ancient past; and there, or after their return from captivity, they wrote, or wrote, or edited their own ancient chronicles and their books of religious lore for use in the restored homeland.

The thing speaks for itself: they simply recast the wonders of the Epic of Creation to suit their own notions and so as to make their own Yahveh the great Creator instead of Marduk. And to show that Yahveh's Chosen People were of the most ancient and illustrious lineage, they worked in the marvelous direct descent from the first man Adam, through Noah, to Terah, father of Abraham, only twenty generations since "in the beginning." When this product was completed, they tacked it on to their own tribal chronicles as a sort of introduction, and there it stands today-the revised Babylonian Epic of Creation as Genesis 1 - 11 -the preface to the theocratic history of the Hebrews. Later priestly theologians attached the potent name of Moses to the first five books,

and the whole gained credit as divinely revealed by Yahveh God to the traditional first historian and lawgiver, Moses.

SOME "POST-MOSAICA"

The instance is well known of the graphic account, in the last chapter of Deuteronomy, of the death and burial of Moses; this he could hardly have written himself. Even if he were inspired, as some people explain, to write of his own coming death and funeral, it would be odd for him to add

(34: 6), when he was not yet dead or buried, "but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day"- which was evidently very long afterwards, and proves an authorship much later than Moses. And in verse 8 is the statement: "And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: So the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended"- a post-mortem which it is needless to say Moses did not write.

In the same chapter is another similar proof of much later authorship by some other than Moses; for it is written: "And there hath not yet arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses" (verse 10) -- a statement which could only have been made after many later great prophets had arisen with whom Moses could be compared. Moses could not himself have written that no prophet had arisen "since" himself when he was yet alive and when no prophet could as yet be his successor.

In Exodus 11: 3 it is stated "the man Moses was very great"; and in Numbers 12: 3 is the information, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." So meek a man would not probably have made such immodest boasts of himself. It must have been some later chronicler sounding his praises. This conclusion is strengthened by the use of "was" and "were," in the past tense. And Moses no doubt well knew the name of his own pagan father-in-law; but the latter is variously named in the Five Books by four different names: Jethro (Ex. 3: 1); Reuel (Ex. 2: 18); Raguel (Num. 10: 29); Jether (Ex. 4: 18); and in Judges he is given a fifth name, Hobab (Judges 4: 11), all which indicates several different authors, or one very careless one, but not Moses.

Moses is reputed to have written the Five Books in the chronological order of the inspired events, and of course he must have written it all before he died, which was months before the Israelites entered the promised land.

The events of the forty years in the wilderness are supposed to have been written in the wilderness where they occurred. Yet in Numbers 15: 32 it is recorded: "And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day"; and he was brought to Moses, and "they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. And Yahveh said to Moses, The man shall surely be put to death" (15: 33-36). The writer was not "in the wilderness" when this was written, or he would never have added that phrase to it, as everything that occurred at all was "in the wilderness." Moreover, the "law" had already (it is alleged) been declared at Sinai, "whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, be shall surely be put to death" (Ex. 31: 15) -- so this narrative is just another "mistake of Moses."

Joseph tells the Pharaoh: "I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews" (Gen. 4: 15). There was no "land of the Hebrews" in the days of Joseph, nor of Moses, nor until some years later when the Hebrews more or less possessed the land of Canaan or the "promised land" under Joshua after the death of Moses. The Song of Moses in Exodus 15, in exultation over the destruction of the Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea, declaims upon the effects of that catastrophe, which had occurred that very day, upon the nations for hundreds of miles around: [This is a notable non-Mosaic form; the name Palestina is not Hebrew but Greek; it is in Herodotus that we first find the expression "Syria or Palestina" (New Standard Bible Dictionary, p. 650).] of Palestine, of Edom, of Moab, of Canaan (15: 14, 15). Moses sings: "The peoples have heard, they tremble" (15: 14, R. V.); which was impossible, as they could not so soon have heard the wonderful news, and their actions to it been known so soon to Moses. But the significant proof of long post-Mosaic authorship is in these anachronic strophes of the Song:

"Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Yahveh, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Yahveh, which thy hands have established" (15: 17).

This mountain was Zion, at Jerusalem, and the sanctuary was Solomon's temple; and Jerusalem did not come into the hands of the Chosen until partly captured by David. The temple was built by his son Solomon, some five hundred years after the so-called Song of Moses at the Red Sea, wherein these things are spoken of as already existing. So this reputed Song of Moses was written centuries after the death of Moses.

In Genesis 14 is the account of the capture of Lot, nephew of Abram, in a battle; Abram took a posse of 318 of his armed retainers and went to his rescue, and "pursued as far as Dan" (14: 14). Now Dan clearly did not exist in those times, nor in the time of Moses. This name of one of the tribes of Israel, descended from Abraham through his grandson Jacob, was given to the town (then named Laish) of the Promised Land which was captured by the tribe of Dan during the conquest (Judges 18: 27-29), some seven hundred years after Abraham and long after the death of Moses.

In Deuteronomy 3: Moses is supposed to tell of a war which he had with the giant Og, King of Bashan, whom he conquered and killed. It is related (3: 11), that Og had an iron bedstead 16 1/2 feet long and 7 1/3 feet wide; and for proof of the whole story, it says: "Is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon?"- preserved as a relic unto those days. But Moses never saw or heard of Rabbath, and could not have known what was in its local museum, for the town was first captured and entered by the Hebrews under David (2 Sam. 12: 26), some five hundred years after Moses died.

During the forty years in the wilderness the Hebrews were provided each day, it is recorded, with manna to eat. In Exodus it is said, "the taste of it was like wafers made with honey" (16: 31); while in Numbers it is averred, "the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil" (11: 8). If Moses had eaten it as a steady diet for forty years, he would have known just what it did taste like, and he would have said, "the taste is like" oil or honey, if it tasted so diversely.

But the strangest feature of this inspired story is this: in Exodus it is averred that the people ate manna for forty years "until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan" (Ex. 16: 35). It was Joshua who led them across Jordan into Canaan, some time after the death of Moses, and Joshua relates for a fact that when they got across the Jordan, they "did eat of the old corn of the land in the selfsame day, and the manna ceased on the morrow, after they had eaten of the corn" (Josh. 5: 11, 12). Moses could not possibly have known when the manna ceased or have written of this incident happening some time after his death.

In Genesis 36 a list of Edomite kings is given and it is said: And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel (36: 31). It was some five hundred years after the death of Moses before Saul became the first king (1095 B.C.); hence Genesis could not have been written by Moses, or by any one until after the time when there were kings over Israel so that such a comparison could be possible. Again, in Judges 17: 6 it is stated: "In those days there was no king in Israel, every man did that which was right in his own eyes"; which shows two things: that the Book of Judges was not written until during or after the time when there were kings in Israel; and that the Five Books of Moses, containing the laws of Yahveh, were not written by Moses, and that the "law" claimed to have been "given" at Sinai was not existent; for that "law" specially forbade and fearfully denounced idolatry and minutely governed the whole lives of the Chosen People, leaving nothing to choice.

Several of the Five Books abound with the provisions of the priestly code of sacrifices attributed to Moses in the wilderness, and are full of accounts of the manifold kinds of sacrifices made during the forty years in the wilderness. But all this is denied by the later prophets: "Thus said Yahveh Saboath, Elohe of Israel: I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Jer. 7: 21, 22); and a chorus of them join in this refrain: "I hate, I despise your feast days; though ye offer me burnt sacrifices and meat offerings, I will not accept them" (Amos 5: 21-26; Hosea 8: 13; Micah 6: 6, 7; Isa. 1: 11, et seq.).

All this shows that Moses never received or wrote the laws attributed to him and did not write the Five Books which relate all these things; and it confirms the view that this elaborate and intricate code of sacrificial and ceremonial law was a late priestly invention, unheard of by Moses, impossible in the wilderness, and unknown in all the intervening history of Israel, as we shall see in other places.

OTHER LATE-WRITTEN BOOKS

This same sort of simple but conclusive proof produces the same result with the succeeding books-Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, etc., showing that they likewise are of a date many centuries later than their supposed times and authors, as they relate matters occurring all the way from David to the Exile (about 500 B.C.). I will mention but an instance or two.

The Book of Joshua relates the death and burial of Joshua (Josh. 24: 29-31), and records that "Israel served Yahveh all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua," thus showing that the book was written many years after Joshua's death by someone else. The late authorship of the book is proved by the reference (10: 13): "Is it [the fable of the sun and the moon's standing still] not written in the Book of Jasher?" This book of Jasher was itself not written until at least the time of David, for in the account of this bandit hero it is recorded: "Also he [David] bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow: behold, it is written in the Book of Jasher" (2 Sam. 1: 18); so that Joshua, quoting Jasher, could not have been written before the latter, which records David.

In the Book of Judges it is recorded: "Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem and had taken it" (1: 8); whereas it was not until King David had reigned seven years and six months in Hebron that "the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land," and tried to take the city and failed. "Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion, and called it the City of David" (2 Sam. 5: 5-9). So Judges and Samuel must have been written long after David was King and after Samuel was long since dead. Samuel died some years before the event he is quoted as recording (1 Sam, 25: 1); and of course he could not have written of the calling up of his own ghost by the witch of En-dor, recorded in I Sam. 28: 7-19.

A most conclusive proof of post-exilic composition or editing of these books now appears. In Judges 17 is the account of Micah and the elaborate idol-worship which he established, and of the silver phallic ephod which he set up in his house. He hired a Levite to be his idol-master and priest; then these sacred trophies were captured by the Danites; and this remarkable historical recital is made: "And the children of Dan set up for themselves the graven image [Micah's ephod]; and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, he and his sons were priests to the Tribe of Dan until the captivity of the land" (Judges 18: 30). Here we have Moses's own grandson, and his descendants for generations acting as heathen priests of idol-worship in Israel, so fearfully forbidden by Moses in his law. This "until the captivity of the land" proves that Judges was not written for nearly a thousand years after the events related, and after the captivity.

In 1 Chronicles 9: 1 reference is made to "the kings of Israel and Judah, who were carried away to Babylon for their transgressions"; which shows that these books, too, were not contemporary chronicles of passing current events, but were compiled after the carrying away into Babylon.

As the Hebrew God and religion are principally to be found in the Five Books of Moses, these instances of the late authorship of the other books are sufficient for present purposes; other instances will be noted here and there as they may be pertinent. The purpose of thus pointing out the internal proofs that the Five Books of Moses and the others are of a date ages after Moses is to show by the Bible itself that the records of the origins and development of the Hebrew legends, history, and religion were not written by Moses, who is accounted to have been the medium through whom the Hebrew God Yahveh revealed these events and this religion; and hence that these revelations are not authentic emanations from Yahveh, God of Israel, but are mere tribal traditions reduced to their present form of writing many centuries after their misty and mythical origin; and that much of it all and particularly the law, as we shall more fully see, was the creation of the priests in the late and declining days of the nation, and after the captivity. These facts also illuminate the question of the inspiration of the "Holy Scriptures," on which depends their claim to full faith.

"YAHVEH" AND "ELOHIM"

In connection with the question of authorship of the Hebrew "Scriptures" there is another feature which is conclusive proof of human workmanship, not divine "revelation." This is apparent in the books written in the Hebrew language, and is of course known to all scholars. It is also evident in our English translations, where it can be readily traced through large portions of the books by the English words "God," "Lord" and "Lord God," as the original Hebrew words are therein translated falsely.

In a word, by these proofs it is manifest: that there were at least two older, independent, and contradictory sources of the present "Scriptures," that have been very carelessly patched together by later compilers who have worked them into more or less their present form. One of the older writers or schools of writers, of the Scripture records always makes use of the generic words El, Elohe, or Elohim (God, Gods), to designate the Hebrew tribal divinity; the other school invariably uses the personal name "Yahveh," or Jehovah.

The first writer or school is thus designated as Elohist, or by the initial "E"; the latter is called Jahvist, designated by the letter "J"; these two original sources are together designated as "JE." As even a cursory perusal of the books will prove, these two original "Elohim" and "Yahveh" records were at some later time combined into one record, in more or less its present form, evidently by reckless and "priestly" editors, who added much material of their own, designated by the initial "P," for priestly. This composite product is known as "JEP." Other minor sources and combinations are also to be discovered; but "E" and "J" tell the remarkable tale the "twice-told tale"-of revelation and inspiration beyond all contradiction-but contradictorily, always.

A PARENTHESIS OF EXPLANATION

A critical study of the Hebrew Scriptures by competent scholars reveals that their present form results from much and very uncritical editing and patching together of ancient traditions, folk lore tales, and written records, long after the times usually attributed to the several books; and indicates that the Hexateuch, or Five Books of Moses plus the Book of Joshua, took its present form about 620 B.C. The older parts of the composite, by the "Yahveh" writer, or "J," roughly date from about 800 B.C.; the "Elohist" or "E" document from about 750 B.C. One is considered to have been composed in Israel, the other in Judah, after the division of the kingdom upon the death of Solomon. The hostile factions of the Hebrews had common traditions, but each gave partisan interpretation and color to them; this resulted in the signal discrepancies and contradictions which are apparent from the combination of the two records without careful pruning.

Later, during and after the captivity, to about 450 B.C., when national longings and aspirations were very strong, and the tribal Yahveh was being evolved into "one God of all the world," the priestly editors, or "P," worked the Yahveh and Elohim documents into one whole, with fine dramatic skill and much originality, but with total want of critical sense. Still other editors, designated from their traces as "J2," "E2," "JE," and "R," worked the composite "JEP" over from time to time, to suit their own views, policies, and tastes, very freely making editorial additions and changes. All this can be followed by the critic's eye through the Hebrew texts almost as distinctly as the blue water of the Gulf- stream can be distinguished winding its way through the green waters of the ocean. And so the interested English reader can readily distinguish the main sources of composition by the different terms for the Deity, "God" for "El," "Eloic," or "Elohim"; "Lord" for "Yahveh"; and "Lord God" for the Hebrew "Yahveh Elohim."

It may not be without interest to mention that the personal God-name "Yahveh" occurs some 6000 times in the Hebrew Scriptures; the noun "El," meaning God or Spirit, occurs but two hundred and sixteen times; "Elohim," which is plural and means spirits or gods, is found some 2570 times; and the "dual plural" form "Elohe" is used many times, in composition, as "Yahveh, Elohe Yishrael." Further on we shall note another highly significant fact connected with this plural usage.

OTHER "SOURCES" OF SCRIPTURE

The fact is very obvious throughout that the later compilers or editors of the "Scriptures" in their present form often made use of older written materials, rather than always speaking "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"-who is not in those Scriptures revealed as having existed in their days. This fact is proved by the fact that these "inspired" writers frequently refer to and quote copiously from older, uninspired, and now lost books as the sources of information for matters which they relate. The instances of this editorial use of wholly profane sources are numerous.

Thus in Numbers 21: 14 it is stated, "Wherefore it is said in the book of the wars of Yahveh," followed by the quotation. The famous account of the sun and moon's standing still for Joshua is related not as original "inspired" matter; the story is told, and the writer asks, "Is not this written in the Book of Jasher?" (Josh. 10: 13). David's Lament over Jonathan and Saul, in 2 Samuel 1: 17-27, is quoted in full, with the reference, "Behold, it is written in the Book of Jasher." This Book of Jasher is several other times quoted, as is the Book of the Wars of Yahveh.

After all that is told of Solomon down to the time of his death, it is stated, "Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon?" (1 Kings 11: 41) There are repeated references to, and quotations from the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah (e.g., 1 Kings 15: 7, 23); and the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel (e.g., 2 Kings, 14: 15, 28

). Other lost books of sources, of uninspired secular records, are referred to, three in a single verse: The History of Samuel the Seer, the History of Nathan the Prophet, the History of Gad the Seer (1 Chron. 29: 29). In another verse we have references to the Book of Nathan the Prophet, and the Prophecy of Ahijah, and the Visions of Iddo the Seer (2 Chron. 9: 29). Again we are referred to the Histories of Shemaiah the Prophet and of Iddo the Seer, concerning genealogies (2 Chron. 12: 15). And we are told that "the rest of the acts of Ahijah, and his ways, and his sayings, are written in the story [commentary] of the prophet Iddo" (2 Chron. 13: 22).

Again, "Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Jehu, ... who is mentioned [which is inserted] in the book of the kings of Israel" (2 Chron. 20: 34). And so, as to the other acts of Hezekiah, "they are written in the vision of Isaiah, the prophet, and in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel" (2 Chron. 32: 32). At the close of the Scripture sketch of each of the several kings of Judah and of Israel occurs the editorial reference to the source of the chronicled events in the formula, "Now the rest of his acts are written in the book," the name of which is given in each instance.

That the whole of both books of Chronicles was written after the return from captivity, is apparent from the plain statement of the text, following the first eight chapters of genealogies, "So all Israel were reckoned by genealogies; and behold, they were written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah, who were carried away to Babylon for their transgression" (1 Chron. 9: 1). This is true, too, of the Books of Kings, which, like the Books of the Chronicles, form only a single book in the Hebrew sacred writings.

The Acts of the Kings of Israel (2 Chron. 33: 18) is another cited work lost to posterity, as is also the quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore entitled "The Sayings of the Seers" (2 Chron. 33: 19). Some of the apocryphal material of the Book of Esther is said to be found in "The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia" (Esther 10: 2), a purely pagan source. There is no claim at all that any of these many books of "sources" of Hebrew Scripture was inspired or was in any sense the "Word of God"; they were commonplace lay chronicles and books of history or literature; so that very large and material portions of "inspired" Hebrew Scriptures are from entirely uninspired and human sources. We shall see and judge of the other portions in due order.

DUPLICATIONS OF INSPIRATION

There are, moreover, numerous passages and even whole chapters of the Hebrew Bible which are in identical words, showing that the one was copied bodily from the other, or from a common older source, as is mostly the case, without giving the customary editorial credit to the original authors. A god would hardly repeat himself thus. Instances of these duplications of text may be multiplied; they very materially discount the theory of original inspiration of the copyists.

A notable instance, because the duplications immediately follow one another in the English versions (but not in the Hebrew Scriptures), is the last two verses of the last chapter of 2 Chronicles (36: 22-23), which are identical with the first two and a half verses of Ezra (1: 1-3). The Hebrew writer puts into the mouth of the pagan King Cyrus the avowal, "The Lord God [Heb., Yahveh Elohim] of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he [Yahveh] hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem" (Ezra 1: 2). Cyrus could hardly, as a good Persian pagan, have thus discredited his own gods in favor of the tribal god of the captive Jews. The latter half of verse 3 affords a signal instance of conscious mis-translation on the part of the clergymen of King James. It is recited that Yahveh "stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia" to build a house for Yahveh in Jerusalem; and Cyrus issued a proclamation in writing to the captive Hebrews, which is quoted in the English versions thus deceptively: "Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Yahveh, the God of Israel (he is the God), which is in Jerusalem" (Ezra 1: 3). Thus the pagan King Cyrus is made to appear to make the wonderful public admission (though in parentheses) that "Yahveh he is the God." But the original Hebrew text reads: "Yahveh, Elohe Israel, he is the God which is in Jerusalem," without the parentheses, as may be read in the original Hebrew and as is shown in small type in the margin of the Revised Version; but the Authorized or King James Version wholly distorts the truth.

Several other instances of duplication of long passages or chapters may be cited out of many others: the "Song of David" in 2 Samuel 22 and Psalm 16; the battle between the Philistines and Israelites, in which Saul was killed, in 1 Samuel 31 and 1 Chronicles 10. The latter account adds two verses (10: 13, 14), giving as the

reason why Saul was killed in the battle that he went and inquired of the witch of En-Dor, "enquired not of Yahveh"; though it is expressly stated as the reason why Saul had recourse to the witch: "When Saul enquired of Yahveh, Yahveh answered him not. ... Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit" (1 Sam.

28: 6, 7) -- after Yahveh had been enquired of and refused response. The priest applied to was evidently not friendly to Saul.

Other whole chapters practically identical are the accounts of the building of Solomon's temple, in I Kings 5-7 and 2 Chronicles 2-4 (though in 1 Kings 7: 15 and 2 Kings 25: 17, it is stated that the two pillars Jachin and Boaz were each 18 cubits high, and in 2 Chronicles 3: 15 that they were each 35 cubits high); the making of David king and his taking of Sion, part of Jerusalem, in 2 Samuel 5: 1-10 and 1 Chron. 11: 1-9; the removal of the Ark to Jerusalem, in 2 Samuel 6: 1-11 and 1 Chron. 13; the "finding of the law" by Josiah, in 2 Kings 22-23: and 2 Chronicles 34-35. Other striking instances of such duplications of inspiration may be found, in 2 Kings 19 and Isaiah 37; 1 Samuel 31, and 1 Chronicles 10 (see verse 10 of each for a contradiction); 1 Chronicles 16: 8-36 and Psalm 105. All these and many other like duplications, with their many variations and contradictions, clearly show that the writers used older sources, which they copied and changed to suit their own notions or purposes, and were not worried with "inspiration" at all.

INSPIRATION AND CONTRADICTION

The fact of distinct and contradictory sources worked up into a sort of composite hodge-podge with utter lack of literary or historical criticism and total disregard of self-contradiction is further very evident from the many double and contradictory accounts of the same alleged event. Some minor instances of this we have just noticed. These contradictions are indeed too many to be even cited here they infest every book and almost every chapter of Holy Writ from Genesis to Revelation, wherever the same event becomes a twice-told tale. At this place we shall notice particularly only the major early instances: the double and contradictory accounts of the creation and of Adam and Eve; of Noah's Flood; or of the Tower of Babel, and other lesser legends of Genesis. In other chapters we give special attention to the notable contradictions of the Exodus, of the ten commandments and the law, of the conquest and possession of the promised land; of the prophecies, of the life and career of Jesus Christ; together here and there with such others as may be incident to the matter at the time in hand. But first we shall note a highly important consideration to be borne in mind throughout.

THE LAWS AND TEST OF TRUTH

In connection with the numerous examples of flagrant conflicts and contradictions in the inspired revelations of the "Word of God" as recorded in the Hebrao-Christian Scriptures, I wish at the outset to call particularly to attention and constant remembrance two very simple principles of correct judgment, which must govern at all times in determining what is truth. One is an eternal principle of human thought, the other an ancient and valid maxim of the law of evidence.

At the base of all human knowledge and judgment there are three simple rules known as the "three primary laws of thought." Of these the third in order is this simple proposition, on which all valid judgment depends: "Of two contradictories, one must be false." Both of the contradictories may be false; but one must be false inevitably. If one person says of an object: "It is white," and another says: "It is black," one or the other statement must of necessity be false. Of course both may be false, as the object may be red or blue or varicolored; but in any event, one or the other statement must be false, for it cannot be both. This is a fundamental law of thought or correct judgment, or of truth.

The other principle, somewhat complementary, is a rule of law. Every judge declares it to his juries as the law of every jury case on trial, for this ancient maxim is the law in every court to-day.

As a Latin maxim it is: "Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus"-that is, "false in one thing, false in all things." Not necessarily so as to the whole; for one part of the testimony of a witness, or of anything said or written, may be false or mistaken while the remainder may be quite true and correct. The maxim means, as the court always explains to the jury, merely that if the jury believes that a witness "knowingly or wilfully has testified falsely as to any material fact" in his testimony, they are at liberty to disbelieve him entirely and to reject all of his testimony as false. The reason is evident; for if a person orally or in his document or book says one thing which

is detected as false; everything else which he says or writes is at once thrown into doubt, and unless otherwise corroborated, may well be considered to be all erroneous or false. Often it is impossible to know with certainty what things, if any, may possibly be true; all are tainted and discredited by the parts shown to be false. This is peculiarly true with respect to the Scriptures, said to be in totality inspired and true: if some parts are proved false, the whole is discredited.

Upon these two simple and fundamental principles of reason and of law I shall proceed to "search the Scriptures, whether these things were so," to the end that all may judge of their inspiration and their truth. If we find that the "Word of God" tells the same story in two or more totally different and contradictory ways, or that one inspired writer is "moved by the Holy Ghost" of Yahveh to tell his tale one way, and another inspired writer is moved to tell it in another way, totally different and contradictory in the essence of the alleged facts of the same event, we are forced to know and confess that one or the other at least is wanting in God's inspiration of truth and is inevitably false. This being so, and there being no possible way of determining which version is the false and which may not be, both must be rejected as equally false, or equally uninspired and incredible; and in either event, the theory of inerrant inspiration and of the revealed truth of the "Word of God" is irreparably destroyed.

FATAL CONTRADICTIONS OF REVELATION

The Creation

The first chapter of Genesis declares by inspiration that creation took place in six days, in this exact order: 1. on the first day light and day and night were created, (though the sun and moon were not created until the fourth day); 2. on the second day, the "firmament of heaven," a solid something "dividing the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament"; 3. on the third day, the dry land, the seas, and all manner of plants and trees; 4. on the fourth day, the sun, moon, and stars; 5. on the fifth day, every living creature that moveth in the waters, and every winged fowl; 6. on the sixth day, all manner of beasts, and cattle, and creeping thing: then, afterwards, on the same sixth day, "God [Elohim] created man in his own image; male and female created he them." And then (1: 28), "God [Elohim] blessed them, and God [Elohim] said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it." And, running over into the second chapter, this "Elohim" account concludes:

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished; and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God [Elohim] ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day" (2: 1, 2). Thus all creation, including man and woman, was fully made and finished in six days: no mention is made of any Adam and Eve, or Eden. This is the Elohist version of the creation.

Then, beginning with the fourth verse of the second chapter, a totally different "Yahveh" account of creation of the world and of man, without woman, all in one day, is related: "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth. when they were created, in the day that the Lord God [Yahveh Elohim; i.e., Yahveh of the Gods] made the earth and the heavens." Then follows this description of the processes after the earth was thus already created:

"And no plant or herb of the field was yet in the earth; ... and there was not a man to till the ground. ... And Yahveh Elohim formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And Yahveh Elohim planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed." And he planted all kinds of trees in the garden, and put the man into the garden to till it (2: 15). Then Yahveh Elohim said: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make an help meet [i.e., fit, appropriate] for him" (2: 18). Then "out of the ground Yahveh Elohim formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto the man" (2: 19).

Before proceeding further, to the creation of the woman, we will note the glaring contradictions already apparent in these two accounts. First we see a creation of everything by Elohim (Gods) in six days; then a creation of the heaven and naked earth by Yahveh in one day. In the first or Elohim account, on the third day, after creating the dry land, Elohim (Gods) commanded, (Gen. 1: 12) "and the earth brought forth grass, herb yielding seed, and tree bearing fruit," etc. But in the second or "Yahveh" account, after the earth was all rough-finished and read , on the one day, it is declared (Gen. 2: 5): "no plant of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprung up." Then immediately follows the declaration (2: 7) "And Yahveh Elohim

[Eng., Lord God] formed man out of the dust of the ground"; then planted the Garden of Eden, and all its trees, and put the man into the garden. Nothing could be more contradictory than this.

There is another very notable contradiction: in Gen. 1: 20, 21, on the fifth day, the "living creatures" (Heb., nephesh hayyah), and the "winged fowl" were brought forth out of the waters --"Let the waters bring forth abundantly the living creatures Inephesh hayyah] and the winged fowl"; and this, of course, before the creation of man and woman on the sixth day; whereas, in 2: 19, after the creation of the man, and when Yahveh was trying to find a "help-mate" for him among the animals not yet created, "out of the ground Yahveh formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air, and brought them to the man."

Another notorious contradiction: in the Elohim version (1: 24, 25), Elohim made every beast, and animal, and cattle on the sixth day, before man was created. In the Yahveh account, as we have just seen, after the man was created and put into the Garden of Eden, Yahveh "out of the ground formed every beast of the field, and brought them to the man" (2: 19).

Most notorious of these creation contradictions is that of the creation of the woman. In the Elohim account, as we have seen, on the sixth day-after all else was created and done "Elohim created man in his own image, male and female created he them [i.e., man and woman]; and Elohim said, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (1: 27, 28): thus both man and woman were created on the sixth day, and were sexually equipped and commanded to multiply and reproduce. But in the second or Yahveh account we have man created all alone, and put into the Garden of Eden alone.

Afterwards Yahveh considers: "It is not well for the man to be alone; I will make an help meet for him" (2: 18). Then we have the very remarkable, not to say ridiculous, episode of Yahveh making all kinds of animals and parading them before the man for him to choose a female animal helpmate or wife, but none was "meet," or fit, or satisfactory for him-"but for the man there was not found an help meet [fit] for him" (2: 20). Then follows the rib story, of woman being made from the rib of the man and brought to him to be his wife (2: 22).

A peculiar contradiction resulting from these divergent forms of myth relates to the modus operandi of the creation. According to the Elohist, it was all the work of divine fiat; the Gods sat "upon the circle of the earth" (Isa. 40: 22), "and Elohim said: Let there be ... and the earth brought forth ... and it was so" (Gen. 1: 2, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26); "he spake, and they were made"-were brought into existence by his word. But the Yahvist represents the superman God as coming down bodily to earth and as busily engaged molding the dust of the ground into man and animals and fowls (but not fishes), planting a garden and trees, talking to the man, and then artistically carving the rib into Eve; all creation thus being "the work of his fingers" (Psalm 8: 3).

These are two totally contradictory stories of the creation of the earth, and of living creatures. Hence one is false; the notion of the inspired truth of God in one or the other of them must be abandoned as impossible. Of course we know that both are mere fables, equally false, and wholly disproved by every fact of the sciences of geology and anthropology and astronomy, which prove that the earth and sun and stars were countless ages in formation, and that human and animal life has existed for perhaps hundreds of thousands of years, far beyond the lately discovered Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon men, who outdated the biblical Adam by tens of thousands of years. But we will stick to our Bible "facts," and not appeal to the discoveries of science, nor to the common elements of modern human knowledge, to gainsay divine inspiration of the Bible. The book and its truth must be tried by itself. It is also evident on the face of these two conflicting accounts that two different writers, "E" and "J," wrote them, and not Moses; and also that the third man, "P," who patched them together, did it in a very apprentice-like manner, and without any inspiration or critical knack at all.

The Garden of Eden had some topographic and hydrographic features truly notable. Of so limited an area that a single man was sufficient "to dress and to keep it" (Gen. 2: 15), it yet contained every created species of fauna and of flora; and all this exuberant growth without water, "for Yahveh Elohim had not caused it to rain upon the earth; but there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground" (Gen. 2: 5, 6). So wondrously copious was this mist that its superfluity created a vast prehistoric river, which "went out of Eden to water the garden"and so it would seem that the garden was somewhere outside of Eden. So vast was this Father of Waters that, after watering the garden, "from thence it was parted, and came into four heads" (2: 10). One branch, the Pison, "compasseth the whole land of Havilah" (2: 11), wherever that was; the second, Gihon, compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia" (2: 13), which we know to be a vast country in equatorial Africa; the

third river was the Hiddekel, "which goeth towards the east of Assyria" (2: 14), and is supposed to be the Tigris, which however is west of Assyria; "and the fourth river is Euphrates" (2: 14). These last two rivers are thousands of miles from Ethiopia, but all are a notable tribute to the copiousness of that watery mist of Eden.

THE "DAYS" AND MATTER OF CREATION

A word of comment may be made in passing on a couple of points which have given occasion to much concern and controversy, by the attempt to "accommodate" revelation to the everyday facts of science. It is argued that the "days" of creation may be used allegorically or figuratively; that, as "a day with Yahveh is as a thousand years," these Genesis "days" may well denote the indefinite eons assigned by science to the vast work of universal creation. (Cath. Encyc., Vol. 4: p. 473, art. Creation.) But that the old Hebrew writers of these primitive myths had no such figurative notions, and my yom (day) meant exactly the solar day of twenty-four hours, is very clear: six times, at the close of each day's recorded work, it is declared, "and the evening and the morning were the first day," or the second, or third, day, etc.

The Hebrew word yom (day) is used in the Old Testament 1153 times; its plural (yammim, days) 811 times. Always the word means simply the twenty-four-hour solar day; always-can we believe it? Except in these "six days" of Genesis 1:where, instead of meaning "day," as plainly written, it is piously expounded as meaning "countless aeons of time" so as to make Genesis look like a work of modern science! Quaint double usage is jumbled into a single verse: "And Elohim called the light yom [day], and the darkness he called layil [night]. And the evening and the morning were the first yom [day]" (Gen. 1: 5)! Here the light part of the day is the hours between dawn and dark; the darkness is only the hours between sundown and the next dawn; but together they form the "first yom"-countless aeons of the first process of creation! Verily, the theologians are funny-mentalists!

And if each of the first six "days" are not days but aeons of time, how about the seventh day? The gods (Elohim) "rested [Heb., shabath, the sabbath] on the seventh day" (Gen. 2: 2). If each of the other six days was an unreckonable won, the seventh day (aeon) of rest must, for propeecuperation from such vast and prolonged labors, be of more or less like ample duration; so that, as only six thousand brief years (not even a second of an aeon) have elapsed since all the work of creation was finished, the gods must be resting even yet-as might be suspected from some evidence in their creation.

Why "evening and morning" marking the "day" instead of morning and evening, as is more natural and of all but universal usage in speech? Simply because the Jewish day began, and yet begins, in the evening, at sunset, and their "day" is from one sunset to another; so in writing these myths it was conformable with Jewish customs to put the evening as the beginning of the day. Moreover, all the eight works of creation were stuffed into six days, so that Yahveh could rest on the seventh day, the Jewish sabbath, or day of rest. In order to accomplish this, and Yahveh thus be made to appear to institute and sanction the sabbath, two distinct works, the creation of the seas and the dry land and the creation of trees and plants, are assigned to one, the third day; and two other works, the creation of the animals, and the creation of man and woman, are crowded into another day, the sixth-eight distinct works in all.

This obvious conclusion it is pleasing to find confirmed by the Catholic Encyclopedia -which makes many admissions without seeming to see their logically fatal effects: "The third day and the sixth day are distinguished by a double work, while each of the other four days has only one production assigned to it"; and it adds, curiously for it, but acutely and correctly: "Hence the suspicion arises that the division of God's creative acts into six days is really a schemation employed to inculcate the importance and the sanctity of the seventh day" (Vol. 7: p. 311)! From this it is palpably evident that the seven days of the ordinary calendar week were in the inspired mind of the old Jewish Chronicler who worked up the Hebrew creation myth from the Babylonian Epic of Creation.

All these material works of creation, the earth and the seas, the sun, moon, and stars, were not created by the fiat or by the architectural skill of Yahveh out of nothing, for "ex nihil nihil fit." From before the "beginning" of creation, or its constructive works, the material earth itself existed, but simply was "without form and void," or, in the Hebrew words, thohu (desolation) and bohu (waste) (Gen. 1: 2). And the material waters existed, for "the spirit [wind] of Elohim moved upon the face of the waters" (1: 2); the waters not being collected together

into seas until the third day (1: 9, 10). It is curious how the otherwise intelligent human mind can so struggle through centuries to "accommodate" sense and science to "what are patently early myths and naive, childish, primitive folklore," as Charles P. Fagnani, D.D., frankly calls these tales of Genesis.

SOME SIGNIFICANT MISTRANSLATIONS

Before considering various contradictions in the Book of Genesis and other sections of the sacred history, it is pertinent to call particular attention to some very peculiar mistranslations, rather than errors of translation, which with painful frequency occur in exactly those passages where they are most significant. As the translators were theologians, as well as indifferent Hebrew scholars, their scholarship may subconsciously have been tinged with theological preconceptions in choosing precisely the word in English to meet the needs of theological translation from the uncritical Hebrew. Mistranslation began early and is persistent.

It is some very simple instances which I shall give, such as are apparent to one of very limited knowledge of the Hebrew text of the sacred books. Any one knowing merely the Hebrew alphabet and comparing a few Hebrew words with the words used by the theologians to translate them possesses the whole secret.

"ADAM" MEANS ONLY "MAN"

The word "Adam" as the proper name of a man is a deception of the theologian translators of Genesis. The original Hebrew text, which a schoolboy can follow in the excellent beginner's textbook, Magil's Linear School Bible, [Joseph Magil, Linear School Bible (Philadelphia: Joseph Magil Publishing Co. 1915).] says, not "Adam" as a proper name, but "ba-adam," the-man, a common noun. (There are no capital letters in Hebrew.) We will notice some instances of this.

In Genesis 1: 26 occurs the first mention of man, the first use of adam: "And Elohim [gods] said, Let us make man [adam] in our image"; "and Elohim created ha-adam [the-man] in his image" (1: 27) male and female both together.

In chapter 2: it is said in the translations that Yahveh formed the beasts of the field out of the ground (adamah), "and brought them unto Adam" (2: 19); "and Adam gave names. ... but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him" (2: 20). But the Hebrew text mentions no "Adam"; it simply reads that Yahveh brought. the animals "unto ha-adam (the-man), and "haadam [the-man] gave names," etc.

In Genesis 2: 7, "Yahveh formed ha-adam [the-man] out of the dust of ha-adamah [the ground]." And so throughout the Hebrew Bible "man" is "adam" (not "Adam"), and "ground" is "adamah." Man is called in Hebrew adam, because he was formed out of adamah, the ground: just as in Latin man is called homo because formed from humus, the ground, -- "homo ex humo," in the epigram of Lactantius. It may be instanced that the prophet Ezekiel many times represents Yahveh as addressing him as "ben adam" (son of man) -- the identical term Jesus so often uses of himself long after.

As the whole of the "sacred science of Christianity" is built and dependent upon the factual existence of a "first man" named Adam, the now attenuated ghost of this mythical Adam must be laid beyond the peradventure of resurrection. The texts of the Hebrew books will themselves effectively lay the ghost.

In Hebrew adam is a common noun, used to signify man or mankind in a generic sense; the noun for an individual man is ish, and so the sacred texts make manifest. The distinction is exactly that of Mann and Mensch in the Teutonic languages. A few out of thousands of instances must suffice.

Chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis afford a number of these instances, as above seen, but these may be repeated along with the others, to get a fair view. "Elohim said: 'Let us make adam'" (1: 26), and "Elohim created ha-adam," male and female (1: 27). In chapter 2: "and there was not adam to till the adamah" (2: 5);

"and Yahveh-Elohim formed ha-adam [the-man]. ... and ha-adam became a living soul" (2: 3); and Yahveh-Elohim placed in the garden "ha-adam whom he had formed" (2: 8); and "Yahveh-Elohim took ha-adam" (2: 15), and commanded ha-adam" (2: 16); and said "it is not good for haadam to be alone" (2: 18); and made the animals and "brought them to ha-adam, ... and whatsoever ha-adam should call them" (2: 19); and "ha-adam called names; but for ha-adam he did not find an help meet" (2: 20); and "Yahveh-Elohim caused a deep sleep upon ha-adam" (2: 21), and from his rib made the woman, and he "brought her unto ha-adam" (2: 22); and "haadam said, ... and called her woman [Heb., isshah], because out of man [Heb., ish] was she taken" (2: 23); 'therefore shall a man [ish] leave his father. ... and cleave unto his isshah (2: 24); "and they were both naked, ha-adam and his isshah" (2: 25).

Chapter 3: "And Yahveh-Elohim called unto ha-adam (3: 9); "and ha-adam said, ha-issah whom thou gavest me" (3: 12); and Yahveh-Elohim said to ha-issah, thy longing shall be unto thy ish" (3: 16); "and to adam he said" (3: 17); and "ha-adam called the name of his issah Havvah [life], because she was the mother of all living" (3: 20); and "Yahveh-Elohim made for adam and for his issah coats of skins" (3: 21). And Yahveh-Elohim said, "Because ha-adam has become like one of us" (3: 22); therefore "he drove out ha-adam (3: 24). Thereupon "ha-adam knew his wife Havvah, and she conceived, and bore Kain; and she said: I-have-acquired [Heb., kanithi] a man [ish] with Yahveh" (Gen. 4: 1). Lamech said to his wives, "I have killed a man [ish]" (4: 23). Chapter v is "the book of the generations of adam: in the clay that Elohim created adam; male and female created he them, and blessed them, and called their name adam" (5: 1, 2); "and adam lived ... and the days of adam were and all the days of adam were" (5: 3-5). In these latter verses adam is used indifferently without the article, and the translators write it Adam, as a proper name; but all the previous and subsequent usage shows it is the same common noun for mankind. In the next chapter 6: "ha-adam began to multiply upon the face of ha-adamah" (6: 1); and "the sons of the gods saw the daughters of ha-adam (6: 2); "And Yahveh said, My spirit shall not strive with adam ["Adam" was dead] forever" (6: 3). And Yahveh "saw the wickedness of ha-adam" (6: 5), and he repented that he "had made haadam" (6: 6); "And Yahveh said, I will destroy ha-adam, both adam and beast" (6: 7); "and all adam perished" (v2: 21). And Noah was "a just man [ish]" (6: 9). Yahveh said to Noah: "And surely your blood will I require of your lives; at the hand of ha-adam; at the hand of ish will I require the soul of ha-adam" (Gen. 9: 5). The "Egyptians are men [adam] and not God [El]" (Isa. 31: 3); "God [El] is not a man [ish] ... neither the son of man [ben adam]" (Num. 23: 19); prophets are ish ha-elohim (men of the gods) (Judges 13: 6); "put not your trust in the son of man [ben adam]" (Psalm 146: 3). All through the Hebrew Bible adam, ha-adam, is for generic man; ish for individual man; Adam never is a proper name, except in the post-exilic genealogies of Chronicles.

"LIVING CREATURES" AND "LIVING SOUL"

Another signal instance of the practice of false translation at critical points for dogma occurs in these first two chapters of Genesis. The Hebrew word for soul is nephesh always, and it properly means nothing else but soul wherever used. Ha-adam called his wife's name Havvah [life], "for she was the mother of all living." In chapter one we are given the account of how the gods (Elohim), on the fifth day, created "the moving creature that hath life" and "every living creature," out of the waters (1: 20, 21); and on the sixth day "the living creature" out of the ground (1: 24); and he gave to ha-adam dominion over "everything ... wherein there is life" (1: 30). All these renditions are untrue: in each of the four instances the Hebrew is plainly nephesh hayyah-"living soul"-as is stuck into the margin of the King James Version. The significance of this appears below.

In chapter two Yahveh-Elohim (2: 7) formed ha-adam out of the dust of ha-adamah, and-in wonderful contrast to these lowly "living creatures" (nephesh hayyah) -- "breathed into his nostrils mishmath hayyim [living breaths], and ha-adam became a living soul [nephesh hayyah]." So here we have the humble "living creatures" (nephesh hayyah) of the dumb animal world contrasted with "Creation's micro-cosmical masterpiece, Man," endowed out of hand by Yahveh-Elohim with a "living soul" (but the self-same nephesh hayyah), and thus the crowning work of creation, but "little lower than the angels" (Psalm 8: 5)! And then immediately afterwards Yahveh-Elohim, wanting to provide an "help meet" for his wonderful "living soul," out of haadamah formed and brought to ha-adam "every living creature" (again nephesh hayyah), for the-man to choose a she-animal for his wedded wife! But the "living soul" man refused to be satisfied with a female "living soul" animal wife; so Yahveh resorted to the rib expedient to provide a human "help meet" for his masterpiece! So reads in Hebrew the truth-inspired revelation of Yahveh, spoken by "holy men of old as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"! And thus we see that all "living creatures," animals, fishes, fowls, had or were nephesh hayyah (living soul, exactly like the-man; or the-man, with Yahveh's breath of life in his nostrils, became a simple "living creature" (nephesh hayyah) like all the other animals.

It is perfectly evident that the nephesh hayyah man was regarded by the inspired writer as no higher in the order of creation than any other nephesh hayyah or animal "living creature." For he represents Yahveh as creating all the beasts of the field for the express purpose of providing the-man with an "help meet" from

among them, a female animal consort by which to fulfill the divine command, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth"!

THE "FLOOD" CONTRADICTIONS

To return to the contradictions of inspiration. The history of Noah's Flood shows the same conflicting compound of Elohist and Jahvist stories. Only one will here be noted. In Genesis vi Elohim commanded Noah, and told him, "of every living thing of all flesh two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; and they shall be male and female" (6: 19); and in 6: 22, the Elohist assures us: "Thus did Noah, according to all that Elohim commanded him, so did he"; that is, he took in two of every kind into the ark.

But in chapter 7 it is Yahveh who speaks, and it is recorded: "And Yahveh said unto Noah, Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee; and they shall be male and female" (6: 19) and in 6: 22, the Clean by two, the male and his female" (v2: 2, 3) and in 7: 5 the Jahvist states: "And Noah did according to all that Yahveh commanded him"-that is, Noah took into the ark seven (or maybe fourteen, seven male and seven female) of all kinds of clean beasts and of fowls, and two of all the others. But this enumeration is again contradicted by the inspired Elohist: "Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of everything that creepeth upon the earth, there went in by two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and his female" (Gen. 7: 8, 9, 15); thus is restored our faith in the scriptural accuracy of the animal rosters of the toy Noah's arks of our trustful childhood.

It is curious to note that the distinction between "clean" and "unclean" animals was never heard of until the Levitical law of kosher was prescribed by Moses, as is alleged, about a thousand years later (Lev. 11.). How did Noah know the difference?

A remarkable circumstance, illustrating the great piety, if reckless improvidence, of Noah, may be noted in this connection. The very first thing Noah did after he and his family and his animals landed in the neck-deep mud and slime of the year's Deluge was to build an altar and offer up a thanksgiving sacrifice to the loving God who in his providence had destroyed all his creation except the little Noah family menage. It is recorded that Noah took one each "of every clean beast and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar" to Yahveh there in the mud (Gen. 8: 20). We have noted that it is curious how Noah knew anything about kosher animals, first defined by Moses. But the prime wonder is, as there were only two of these different kinds of animals and fowls ("the male and his female") in the ark, and Noah killed and burnt in sacrifice one (whether male or female) of each kind, how the species was ever afterwards replenished on the earth. Revelation-as so often at crucial points-is silent on this wonder.

A mystery of the ages in connection with the Flood is how Noah's venerable grandfather Methuselah survived the universal cataclysm which destroyed all life except the Noah menage and menagerie in the ark. Methuselah did not die until a year or more after the Flood-fourteen years after according to the Septuagint. It is recorded that Methuselah was 187 years old when his son Lamech was born (Gen. 5: 25), and he lived for 787 years afterwards, dying at the ripe age of 969 years (5: 26, 27). Lamech was 182 years old when his son Noah was born (5: 28, 29). When the Flood began, Noah was in his six hundredth year, or, to be exact, he was 599 years, one month, and seventeen days old (v2: 11); and Noah lived for 350 years after the Flood, and was 950 years old when he died (9: 28, 29). Methuselah was alive when the Flood began and when it ended, if the Bible record is true: 1. From the birth of Lamech to the beginning of the Flood was (182 plus 599) 781 years; and from the birth of Lamech to the end of the Flood was 782 years. If Methuselah lived after he begat Lamech 782 years he survived the Flood. Or, again:

2. From the birth of Methuselah to the beginning of the Flood was (187 plus 182 plus 599 years) 968 years; the Flood ended a year later, when Methuselah was 969, and he died at that good old age. Or again: 3. From the birth of Methuselah to the death of Noah was (187 plus 182 plus 950 years) 1319 years. As Noah died 350 years after the Flood, from the birth of Methuselah to the end of the Flood was (1319 minus 350 years) 969 years, the age of Methuselah at his death, after the Flood.

As Noah shut his own aged grandfather out of the ark, it is a holy wonder where and how Methuselah spent that watery last year of his advanced old age.

THE TOWER OF BAB-EL

The historical sketch given in Genesis x-xi of the gathering of the nations in the Plain of Shinar, their ambitious project of building Bab-el-"a Gate of God"-to reach to heaven (11: 4), and the consequent "confusion of tongues" by Yahveh, is quite as confusing as the resulting babel of their strange new tongues.

Vainly, it may be remarked, may one seek to understand why a fatherly God, who would not let a sparrow fall to the ground without pitying concern, should have wrought this grievous affliction upon the new population of his earth just at the time when they would seem to need all the aid and comfort they could render each other in order to repair the devastating damage wrought by the yet recent Flood, only about 144 years before. But speculation aside, we will carefully note the recorded facts of sacred history.

Chapter x tells of the families and descendants of the triplet sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japhet; and how their prolific offspring, in only about 144 years since the Flood, had grown into many different nations; and how these nations, of which about a score are particularly named, with their great cities, were "divided in their lands, every one after his tongue"-which would imply that each nation already spoke a different language; that there were, indeed, as many tongues as there were nations sprung so suddenly from the three sons of Noah. This inference that there were already as many different languages as there were nations would seem to be strengthened by the repetition of that positive statement three times, after the account of the off-spring of each of the three sons of Noah. For the sacred record, after each catalogue of off-sprung nations, asserts that thus the several nations "were divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations" (Gen. 10: 5, 20, 31). And for a final assurance it is in the closing verse averred: "These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations; and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the Flood" (10: 32). And all these nations were descended from three sons of Noah, in only 144 years; though it took the seed of Abraham 215 years to attain to merely seventy souls.

And in the same inspired chapter x we read of the founding by these numerous nations of extensive kingdoms and of their building of great cities-including Babel itself (10: 10), and Nineveh (10: 11), and a dozen others named in the inspired record. And it is recorded that these several large kingdoms extended from Assyria on the east unto Gaza, by the Mediterranean Sea, on the west (10: 19), many hundreds of miles; and all these wonders of nations and kingdoms and cities in 144 years of Bible time since the Flood. But, then, when one thinks of what the Yankees did in France in just one year, faith is encouraged.

Had one read this in some less inspired and sacred chronicle, some more human record, less would be the surprise when one reads the first verse of the very next chapter: "And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech." Next follows a truly remarkable migration; all the people of the earth, all these widely scattered nations in their great kingdoms and cities scattered from Euphrates to the sea, suddenly abandoned home, and city, and kingdom, and strangely journeyed from the east (though many must have come from the west, from towards the sea) and "they found a plain in the land of Shinah; and they dwelt there" (11: 2) camped in the open plain, without house or home. "And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick; ... and let us build us a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto Heaven; lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (11: 3, 4). We need not stop to wonder why these nations had left their kingdoms and cities to come out in the plain and build one city for them all; nor how, speaking each a different language, they could talk understandingly together to concert such ambitious projection.

Yahveh heard of this project, and, with natural curiosity, he "came down to see the city and the tower" (11: 5) which were abuilding. And Yahveh said, to someone not named: "Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language" (instead of the many nations and many tongues of the immediately preceding records). "Go to, let us [who besides Yahveh is not specified] go down [though he was already come down], and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech" (11: 6, 7). And this Yahveh is said to have straightway done, and he "scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off to build the city" (11: 8); and it is further recorded:

"Therefore is the name of it called Babel: because Yahveh did there confound the language of all the earth" (11: 9).

It may be wondered which of them called it Bab-el, for all their languages now at least were different, and what would be Babel in one of them might be a foreign word meaning the Bowery, or Hoboken, or Hell in some of the others. And it is a little curious that Bab-el should mean "confusion" (Heb., bael); for already there was a

city, built by Nimrod, the mighty hunter, named Bab-el (Gen. 10: 10); and we know that in Assyrian, Hebrew, Arabian, and other Semitic languages, Bab-el means "Gate of God," just as Beth-el is "house of God"; and Bab-el is exactly the native and Hebrew Bible name of what we know as Babylon, the city or Gateway of the God El, or Bel, certainly there an entirely pagan deity. But as Moses-if he lived at all-was "an Egyptian man," and probably spoke only the Egyptian language, his mistaking the philology of Hebrew words may be excused. What great sin all these new inhabitants of the earth had been guilty of, to bring on them this new great vengeance, is not revealed: mayhap by trying to build a tower to reach to heaven, they provoked a "jealous God" by an effort to reach him in such a direct and unorthodox fashion, though as yet the world had not received the revelation of the only possible route to enter heaven, belief.

JACOB'S LADDER, AND BETH-EL

Notably higher than the abortive Tower of Babel is the justly famous ladder of Jacob, which reached from earth actually into heaven, so that Yahveh and the winged angels passed back and forth upon it. True, Jacob dreamed all this; but then, "Life is a Dream," and are not many of the most historical facts of the Bible admitted therein to be dreams? Such was Abram's, of the promise and the covenant; and Joseph's, he of the coat of many colors, about the sun and the moon and the eleven stars; such also was that of the other Joseph, the carpenter, about the paternity of the Virgin-born Child of Yahveh. And Jacob's wonderful ladder was at least

5,883,928,333,800,000,000,000 miles in length to reach from earth to heaven, as is elsewhere shown.

Shortly after Jacob had hoaxed the blessing and the inheritance from his blind father, Isaac, thus robbing his elder brother Esau of his dearest rights, Jacob started off to look for a wife, and was on his way toward Haran. Being overtaken by night, he slept on the wayside, a stone for his pillow. In his dream he saw the ladder which reached to heaven, with the angels; and Yahveh appeared to him and renewed the Promise. On awakening, Jacob recalled his dream, set up the stone pillow for a pillar (mazzebah), "and he called the name of that place Beth-el; but the name of that City was called Luz at first" (Gen. 28: 10-19).

The event is quite otherwise related in Genesis 32. Here Jacob had just tricked his heathen father-in-law Laban by the famous device whereby all the cattle were born "ringstreaked, speckled, and grizzled" (Gen. 31: 8-12); had stolen away in the night with his wives and the cattle; and after sundry incidents, on his way somewhere (32: 1), he passed over the ford Jabbok (32: 22). Here stopping alone over-night, "there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day" (32: 21,); and the stranger, who appeared to be Yahveh, changed Jacob's name to Israel, which means Soldier of God-though Jacob was fighting with God. All this happened by the ford Jabbok, which name Jacob changed to Peni-el (Gen. 32: 24-30). It is a bit mystifying to read a little later that Yahveh met Jacob somewhere near a place called Padan-Aram, and without any fight at all, and without any apparent reason at all, changed Jacob's name to Israel; and Jacob, on his part, set up a stone which he had not slept on, for his wives were along and he slept with them, and called the name of the place Beth-el (Gen. 35: 9-15). But the name of the place was already Beth-el, for Yahveh had said to Jacob: "Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there" (35: 1); "so Jacob came to Luz, that is Beth-el" (35: 6); and such had been the name of the place when Abraham camped there two hundred years before (Gen. 12: 8, 13: 3).

JACOBS BARGAINING VOW

A very instructive feature of this biography of Jacob is the curious instance of his well-known commercial instinct, here recorded in connection with the last mentioned bit of sacred history. For Jacob vowed a vow to Yahveh (which in the Bible is a very solemn thing, but which was coupled here with a bargaining condition precedent), saying: "If Elohim will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house, then shall Yahveh be my God" (Gen. 28: 20, 21). This seems to prove that Jacob had not yet adopted Yahveh. And Jacob makes a peculiar offer of bribe to Yahveh, saying: "And of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee" (28: 22), -- which no one can deny was even to a God a liberal commission in return for wealth bestowed.

In this proposal Jacob anticipated both the rule and the reason of the law, laid down some five hundred or a thousand years later: "Remember Yahveh thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deut. 8: 18) -- a reason often suggested for loving Yahveh. By some it has been thought that this exemplary bargain of Jacob served later as the approved precedent for the priestly system of tithes decreed by Moses (Lev. 27: 30-32

), and everywhere and always since commanded and cajoled from all the faithful. In any event, the constant ecclesiastical refrain has ever been the same as that represented in Scripture as of the daughters of the horse-leech: "Give, give" (Prov. 30: 15); and the preferred measure has been that of Jacob's offered bribe to Yahveh of the tithes.

SUNDRY OTHER CONTRADICTIONS

In addition to these larger contradictions pointed out in a small part of Scripture and many others which remain yet to examine, there are numbers of minor flat contradictions, of which a few may be cited.

It is recorded, "And Yahveh spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Ex. 33: 11); but just below, where Moses is reported as asking Yahveh to show himself to him, Yahveh replied: "Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live" (33: 20). But Yahveh evidently desired to be reasonably accommodating; so he had Moses hide in a cleft of the rock, and Yahveh covered Moses with his hand; then Yahveh "passed by," and took away his hand, and let Moses see his "back parts," for, he said, "my face shall not be seen" (33: 22, 23). How Yahveh could "pass by" and still keep Moses covered with his hand is not explained; but it seems to confirm Yahveh's repeated description of himself as being of "a mighty hand and an outstretched arm."

There must be some mistake, however, in regard to the fatal consequences of seeing Yahveh. Holy Writ is full of recorded instances of "seeing Yahveh face to face." Yahveh celebrated the making of the covenant by a banquet on Sinai to Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders, "and they saw the Gods [ha-Elohim] of Israel," and "they beheld the Gods, and did eat and drink" (Ex. 24: 9-11).

When Joshua crossed over Jordan between the parted waters, whether with the original hosts of Yahveh or with their offspring, "an increase of sinful men" (Num. 32: 14), Yahveh commanded him to take twelve stones out of the middle of the river, "out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm," and to set them up "in the lodging place where ye shall lodge this night" (Josh. 4: 3) for a memorial; and it is stated that Joshua had the twelve stones carried "over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there" (4: 8), which was "in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho" (4: 20). But in the very next verse it is averred: "And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the Ark of the Covenant stood: and they are there unto this day" (4: 9), sticking up out of the waters in the middle of the river. It is curious, that the stones were piled up in the middle of the river at the place where the priests had stood; for that is the very place where the stones were to be taken from, as Yahveh commanded in 4: 3.

In 2 Samuel 24: 1 it is recorded: "Yahveh moved David to number Israel and Judah"; of the same incident it is recorded in I Chronicles 21: 1 that "Satan provoked David to number Israel" - a strange confusion of personages.

In 1 Samuel 16; the first meeting of Saul and David is related: "an evil spirit from Yahveh troubled Saul," and music was recommended to him as having "power to soothe the savage breast"; "a son of Jesse" was also recommended as a good musician, "cunning in playing, and a mighty man of valor, and a man of war." So Saul sent messengers to Jesse, saying "Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep"; and Jesse sent David to Saul, who saw him now for the first time, and David became Saul's amour-bearer.

But in the next chapter David is introduced to Saul as if never heard of before, as the youngest of eight sons of Jesse. Three older sons of Jesse were in Saul's army, while the "mighty man of war," David, stayed home tending his father's sheep; his father sent him to the camp to carry food to his soldier brothers.

Here David saw Goliath and heard his braggart defiance of the "living gods" of Israel, and David wanted to fight him; this was reported to Saul, and "Saul sent for David" (17: 31), thus for the first time meeting David. Saul expostulated with David, saying:

"Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for thou art but a youth, and he is a man of war from his youth" (17: 33), apparently discounting the immediately preceding description of David as "a mighty man of valor, a man of war" himself. But greater surprises follow. Every child in Sunday school knows the heroic encounter between David and Goliath; how the stripling David went out unarmed save with a sling and some pebbles against the fullpanoplied giant; how David put a pebble in his sling as he ran forward, "and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the

earth" (i Sam. 17: 49); and David took Goliath's sword and cut off the dead giant's head (17: 51); and David took the head "and brought it to Jerusalem; and he put his armor in his tent" (17: 54). David, a country shepherd, just come to camp to bring dinner, would hardly have had a tent; and surely he did not take Goliath's head to Jerusalem; for Jerusalem was the stronghold of the Jebusites, and not till David was seven and a half years king, many years after, did he enter even a small corner of Jerusalem, Sion.

But the tale is entirely robbed of the romance and heroics by the flat contradiction of the whole episode; David did not kill Goliath at all. Some forty years later, when Saul was long since dead, and when David was king and at war with the Philistines, "there was again a battle in Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaareoregim, a Bethlehemite, slew Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam" (2 Sam. 21: 19)! Here the translators slip in another "pious fraud": the verse is made to read "slew the brother of Goliath"-the words the brother of being in italics to indicate to the knowing that they are not in the original; nor are they, as any honest scholar will admit. The Revised Version fairly omits "the brother of," but puts these words in the margin, with a reference to 1 Chronicles 20: 5. Here it is quite differently related that "Elhanan the son of Jair slew Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, whose spear staff was like a weaver's beam." Further confusion is furnished by the duplicated verses about the giant in Gath, with six fingers and six toes on each hand and foot, who like Goliath "defied Israel," and "Jonathan the son of Shimeah the brother of David slew him" (2 Sam. 21: 20, 21, and 1 Chron. 20: 6, 7).

As for Saul's death, in 1 Samuel 31 it is related that in a battle with the Philistines, Saul's army was defeated, and Saul was wounded and in danger of capture; so Saul ordered his amour-bearer (clearly not David), to kill him, but the latteefused;

"therefore Saul took a sword and fell upon it" (31: 4); and "so Saul died" (31: 5). But in 2 Samuel 1 the story is quite otherwise: Saul made this request of a young Amalekite (1: 8), who "happened by chance" (1: 6) upon the scene of battle at Mt. Gilboa (therefore not Saul's amour-bearer), and this stranger complied with Saul's request and killed Saul (1: 10), and took his crown and bracelet to David, who rewarded him by murdering him on the spot (1: 15).

This must suffice for the present; many, many other contradictions abound in the inspired records. But these instances of patent contradictions suffice to illustrate the constant violation of the two rules of reason and of law which I have quoted, and to demonstrate that at least one version of each of these inspired conflicting records is wholly wanting in truth.

IS IT GOD'S WORD?

CHAPTER 3: THE PATRIARCHS AND THE COVENANTS OF YAHVEH

THE PATRIARCHS AND THE COVENANTS OF YAHVEH

THE SPLENDID CIVILIZATION OF ABRAM'S TIME

THE "PROMISE" TO ABRAHAM

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THE PROMISE RENEWED TO JACOB

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WHY THIS "PIOUS" FRAUD?

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THE FEARFUL AND WONDERFUL "PLAGUES OF EGYPT"

THE PATRIARCHS AND THE COVENANTS OF YAHVEH

IN the year 1996 B.C. according to the chronology of Bishop Ussher, or just 352 years after Noah's Flood, there was born a heathen Chaldee who was christened Abram (Abu-ramu, an ordinary Babylonian name meaning "exalted father"). Abram's father Terah was at that time seventy years old (Gen. 11: 26), and the sacred text (Gen. 11: 32) tells us that he died at the age of 205 years, just as Abram was celebrating his 75th anniversary. But if Terah was seventy years old when Abram was born, and died at 205 years of age, in Haran, Abram must have been 135 years old when, immediately after the death of Terah, he left Haran to go into Canaan (Gen. 21: 4, 5; Acts 7: 4). But our text (Gen. 12: 4, 5) declares:

"And Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran; ... and into Canaan they came"; thus making a difference of sixty years in the recorded age of Abram.

The Terah-Abram family were Chaldean nomads, living in tents, and having some cattle and sheep, which Abram helped tend. On their own initiative the family had started west, "to go into the land of Canaan" (Gen. 11: 31), but stopped on the way and dwelt, until Terah's death, at Haran. Up to this time the Terah-Abram family, like their Chaldean neighbors, were of course heathens, who had never heard of Yahveh-"they served other gods" (Josh. 24: 2), wandering about and herding cattle, with nothing unusual in their lives, except that Sarai, Abram's sister and wife, was barren, and gave him no hopes of a posterity to preserve his name and to worship his ancestral numen.

THE SPLENDID CIVILIZATION OF ABRAM'S TIME

At this time, despite Noah's then recent Flood, which "destroyed everything from upon the earth" (Gen. 7: 23), the Chaldean, Assyrian, and Egyptian kingdoms all about him were and for centuries had been mighty and highly civilized nations, with a culture and a literature preeminent in the cultured East. Books and libraries abounded, in which were graven tablets and monuments preserving their most ancient records and sacred legends, all of which long antedated the sacred Hebrew lore, and many of which sound suspiciously like the actual prototype and source of the inspired Bible records of the descendants of Father Abram.

The Assyrian libraries of Abram's own country contained riches of the most primitive literature, dating from prehistoric, antediluvian times, or about 7000 years B.C. Among the ruins of its ancient cities some 300,000 writings and inscriptions have been discovered, of which only about one-fifth have yet been published; but even these contain more than eight times as much literature as the Hebrew Old Testament. One of the famous Assyrian Books, the Babylonian Epic of Creation, begins very like Genesis:

When the heavens above were not yet named, Or the earth beneath had recorded a name, In the beginning Deep was their generator, The Chaos of the Sea was the mother of them all."

Out of this primeval chaos the great god Bel brought forth Ansar and Kisar, the upper and lower firmaments; in a death-struggle between Bel-Merodach, the supreme creator god, and the chaos-dragon Tiamat, the latter was slain, and out of its divided body the earth and the seas were created by the victorious Bel, who established their laws and orderly government. The heavenly bodies were next set up to rule the day and night and to determine the seasons; plants and animals were then created; and finally, in innocence and purity, the first parents, Adamu and his wife. Then followed their temptation by the dragon Tiamat, their fall and curse, the subsequent sinfulness of the people of the earth, and the ensuing Deluge, which destroyed all except the pious Khasisadra or Xisuthros and his household, who escaped in an ark which he was warned by the friendly god Ea to build, and into which he took with him, by divine command, "the seed of all life," to preserve it for future regeneration. The waters overwhelmed mankind; the ark stranded on Mt. Nizir in Armenia; the Chaldean Noah sent out, one after the other, a dove, a swallow, and a raven, the last of which returned not, having found dry land; whereupon the pious Xisuthros went forth from the ark and made a thanksgiving sacrifice of some of his animals, but not so improvidently as did Noah; the repopulation of the earth proceeded; and the presumptuous people began the building of a great Tower of Babel to reach to heaven, to the wrath of the great god Anu, the Father.

"In his anger also the secret counsel he poured out; To scatter abroad his face he set; He gave command to make strange their speech; Their progress he impeded."

All this has a very familiar and "inspired" sound to pupils of a modern Christian Sunday school, whom it is quite unnecessary to warn that this is nothing but crude mythological fables of the heathen god Bel. It is, of course, only the merest casual coincidence that it sounds very much like the really true and inspired history which, a millennium or more afterwards, "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," by way of revelation from their God Yahveh.

Among these venerable records of the past, too, is the most perfect of the Chaldean monuments yet unearthed from the debris of the ages, the beautiful black diorite stele of Hammurabi, king of Abram's own native country about 2350 B.C., or some three or four hundred years before the advent of that pagan patriarch. On this pillar of stone is engraved this monarch's now celebrated code of laws, a thousand years before Moses got his famous tables of stone on Sinai, writ by the finger of the jealous God Yahveh of the Hebrews; on Hammurabi's stele it is the Babylonian God Bel from whom, through the sun-god Shamash, Hammurabi' receives this code of divine laws. In the preamble of his code he styles himself King of Righteousness, the self-same title as that of Abram's Bible friend Melchizedek, the heathen Jebusite King of Salem, -- "priest of El-Elyon, God Most High" (Gen. 14: 18); and the code ends with a series of blessings for those who will obey the laws, and a long crescendo series of curses against him who will give no heed to the laws or interferes with the words of the code. All this again saviours of Biblical Sunday school lore, and is maybe another singular coincidence.

The noblest of the sciences, astronomy, was a favorite of Chaldean research at the time, and long before the time, of Abram; Chaldean libraries contained records showing expert knowledge of the skies, chiselled on enduring stone or stamped on burnt tablets of clay, dating from the time of Sargon of Accad, about 3800 B.C., some fifteen hundred years before Noah's Flood. The stars were numbered and known by name, and the constellations were set in their glorious array; eclipses of the sun and moon were accurately predicted. The mysterious zodiac was invented by the Chaldeans and had assumed its present order, a millennium before good old Father Abram roamed the Chaldean plains so uncivilized and superstitious as to make ready to murder his heaven-sent child at the instigation of an idle dream or an inspired nightmare.

Such briefly was the high state of civilization which, at the time oueview opens, prevailed in the Chaldean country, and which then or a little later pervaded the land of Canaan, as is shown by its monuments and by the celebrated Tell-el-Amarna tablets. While in Egypt, where the descendants of Abram migrated 215 years later,

civilization was in glorious splendor: as far back as the first dynasty, the calendar had been astronomically calculated and established, in the year 4241 B.C., about 240 years before Adam; and no break in the history, monuments, and records of Egypt occurs since that remote time. (See Cath. Encyc., Vol. 5: p. 336; Breasted; Ancient Times, p. 45). But the nomad Abram is not known to have had any schooling or to have been able to read and write; while some of his actions show him to have been far behind the culture of his times and country.

THE "PROMISE" TO ABRAHAM

In the year 1921 B.C. Yahveh, who seems to have been a total stranger to the pagan Chaldean Abram up to that time, and had not been even mentioned since the Tower of Babel some hundreds of years previously, of a sudden appeared to Abram, and told him, for some reason not recorded: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee" (Gen. 12: 1) -- which is the very thing that Abram had already started to do of his own motion; for the whole family several years before "went forth from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there" (Gen. 11: 31).

Another mistranslation occurs in this connection. The English text of Gen. 12: 1, reads, "Now Yahveh had said unto Abram, Get out of thy country," etc., as if this command had been given before the Terah-Abram family had left Ur "to go into the land of Canaan," and as if they had set out in consequence of such divine command. But the Hebrew text simply reads: "And Yahveh said unto Abram" (v-yomer Yhvh), exactly as in every other instance where the English correctly reads (as to the verb) "And Yahveh said."

The promise is here at Haran first made, and it is thus stated: And I will make thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; ... and in thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12: 2, 3).

So Abram again, disregarding Yahveh's rather cruel command to leave his family and kindred (Gen. 12: 5), took the trail for Canaan, where they duly arrived at Sichem (12: 6). Here at Sichem Yahveh again appeared to Abram and renewed the promise: "Unto thy seed will I give their land" (Gen. 12: 7), this being the first identification of the "land which I will shew you"-made after Abram was already there. Abram then moved on and "pitched his tent near Beth-el" (12: 8;

13: 3), though this place is said to have first been so named by his grandson Jacob, its name having been changed from Luz (Gen. 28: 19; 35: 6, 15).

A famine soon occurring, as so frequently happened in this "land flowing with milk and honey," Abram took his wife, Sarai, who was about ninety years old, but evidently attractive, and went to Egypt. The only thing which divine revelation vouchsafes us of this trip is the amorous passages between Sarai and the Pharaoh of the land (Gen. 12: 14-16), which is omitted here as bearing a scent of scandal in patriarchal high life. The same kind of incident occurred afterwards, with Abimelech (Gen. 20), with the connivance and even at the instigation of Abram, which does not speak well for his concern for the morals of his wife or for his own sense of decency and dignity, but it was well paid (Gen. 12: 16; 20: 16). Isaac likewise, with his wife Rebekah, some seventy-five years later visited the same good King Abimelech, where a like sportive incident occurred with great pecuniary profit to Isaac (Gen. 26).

THE EGYPTIAN SLAVERY PROVISIO

After Abram's return from Egypt, enriched with the reward of Sarai's sporting with the Pharaoh (Gen. 12: 16; 13: 2), Yahveh came to Abram again and indulged in a bit of pleasant hyperbole, saying:

"Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou shalt be able to number them: so shall thy seed be; I give thee this land to inherit it."

The inspired historian then tells us:

"And he [Abram] believed in Yahveh, and he counted it to him foighteousness" (Gen. 15: 6).

But in the next breath (15: 8), Abram negatives this assurance, for he expresses his doubts and requires proofs, asking:

"O Lord Yahveh, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?"

-thus seeming to be not quite so believing. So, while Abram was in a deep sleep, Yahveh gave him a sign, or Abram dreamed that Yahveh gave him the sign (15: 17), which might have proved anything else or nothing at all just as well, but it is pleasantly related, with accompaniments of the horror of a great darkness. Then and there Yahveh radically qualified his former direct and simple promises of inheritance by a proviso (15: 13), of servitude and affliction in a strange land for four hundred years, but promising that "in the fourth generation" (15: 16) they should come into the promised land with great substance, the booty of the "spoiling of the Egyptians."

The territorial features of the promise were amplified this time, the boundaries of the promised land being defined with almost the precision of a modern treaty: "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the River of Egypt unto the great River, the River Euphrates"; and Yahveh names ten nations over which they should rule (Gen. 15: 18-21), including the Canaanites and the Jebusites.

We may pass over Abram's barbarous treatment of Hagar and his illegitimate Ishmael, in sending them into the wilderness to die of starvation because of the barren-wifely jealousy of Sarai and by the personal command of his God; though we may pause a moment at the inspired picture of Hagar, with the loaf of bread, and bottle of water, and her little bastard Ishmael all on her shoulder, wandering in the wilderness of Beersheba, and, when the water is spent, casting "the child under one of the shrubs," and going aside and weeping, saying: "Let me not see the death of the child." It is very affecting; but when we look more closely at the inspired texts of Genesis, we see (16: 16) that Ishmael was born when Abram was eighty-six years old; that both were circumcised when Abram was ninety-nine years old and Ishmael thirteen (Gen. 17: 24, 25), the year before Isaac was born, when Abram was one hundred and Ishmael fourteen (Gen. 21: 5); that it was at the "great feast" which Abram made when Isaac "was weaned" (Gen. 21: 8, 9) several years later that Ishmael was caught "mocking Sarah," and was cast out into the desert with Hagar, and thus that the "child," which Hagar carried "on her shoulder" and held in her hand, along with other impedimenta, was quite sixteen or nineteen years old, when the angel interposed and provided a well of water for them, saying:

"Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand"; and some time afterwards Hagar "took him [Ishmael] a wife out of the land of Egypt." In due course Ishmael, perhaps, had a daughter, with respect to whom another tangle of inspiration may be noted. It is related that Esau married three wives "of the daughters of Canaan," one of whom was "Bashemath, Ishmael's daughter" (Gen.

36: 2, 3); she being thus his own cousin. But again it is otherwise related that Esau married two Hittite girls, of whom one was "Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite" (Gen. 26: 34); whereas in the former list of three one of them is called "Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite." Whose daughters, then, were Bashemath and Adah? Even an inspired scribe may get his names and dates confused.

THE PROMISE OF ISAAC

In the mean while, Yahveh was pleased to visit Abram and repeat his promise of "all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession," but the promise was burdened this time with what lawyers call a "condition precedent," and which Yahveh termed an "everlasting covenant," but evidently of the kind that does not "run with the land": "Every man child among you shall be circumcised, when he is eight days old; and the uncircumcised man child shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my Covenant" (Gen. 17: 9-14). And Yahveh changed Abram's name to Abraham, "for a father of many nations have I made thee." When Abraham supposed that this meant through Ishmael, Yahveh told him no, but that Sarah his wife should bear him a son, to be named Isaac; at which statement Abraham fell down in a fit of laughter, taking it all for a Jahvistic joke; but Yahveh confirmed his assurance and declared that Sarah should bear that child "at this set time in the next year" (Gen. 17: 17-21).

This promise was later confirmed by three angels; and when Sarah, who was behind the tent-door listening in, heard it, she laughed out-right, saying: "After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord [Heb., adonai] being old also?" for it had ceased to be with Sarah "after the manner of women." And when the angels heard her laugh behind the door, they-no, it is Yahveh who unexpectedly becomes interlocutor, he not having been as yet identified among the three men-angels. Yahveh asks: "Wherefore did Sarah laugh?" and Sarah denied it and said, "I laughed not"; and Yahveh said, "Nay, but thou didst"; and we know not where this "passing the lie"

between the Lord and the Lady would have led, had not the angel-men suddenly left and Yahveh abruptly changed the subject (Gen. 18: 10-16).

ISAAC'S DUBIOUS PATERNITY

In this connection a subtle suspicion as to the paternity of Isaac intrudes itself. Yahveh had promised Abraham: "And Sarah thy wife shall have a son" (Gen. 18: 10). But the inspired record is silent as to any performance or attempt thereat on the part of the aged patriarch; and Yahveh himself, when Sarah laughed behind the tent door that her "lord is old also," reassured her, "Is anything too hard for Yahveh?" (18: 14) And it is afterwards recorded (Gen. 21: 1, 2) that "Yahveh visited Sarah as he had said, and Yahveh did unto Sarah as he had spoken, for Sarah conceived and bare Abraham a son in his old age." So the record is somewhat ambiguous as to whether Abraham or Yahveh is to be credited with the paternity of the young Isaac, though the more positive indications favor the latter. And many ancient mythologies credit their gods with like visitations to fair human women. But, in any event, Sarah had her "pleasure," and she died happy "in Kirjath-arba: the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan" (Gen. 23: 2) another bit of geographic data which proves that Moses did not write the story, for the name Hebron for this place did not exist until Caleb captured Kirjath-arba (Josh. 14: 13-15) and changed its name some seven hundred years later, to Hebron.

THE PROMISE RENEWED TO ISAAC

To Isaac Yahveh renewed the promise, saying: "Unto thee, and unto thy seed, will I give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swear unto Abraham thy father" (Gen. 26: 3). Isaac and his people dwelt for a long time in the country of the Philistines, enjoying the hospitality of its King Abimelech; so great and many, indeed, are Isaac's people said to have been, that Abimelech and the chief of his army went to Isaac and complained, and said: "Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we" (Gen. 26: 16). This curiosity may be borne in mind when we notice the migration to Egypt of the Jacob family, but seventy strong, including women and children, and remember how, after the exodus of the millions of Chosen out of Egypt, they were time and again conquered and oppressed by these same Philistines.

THE PROMISE RENEWED TO JACOB

The promise was repeated by Yahveh to Jacob, in his dream of the ladder, with the same glittering assurances. Yahveh said, or Jacob dreamed that he said: "The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth" (Gen. 28: 13, 14).

A striking peculiarity of the promise is that it was given invariably in a dream; we shall see, in the event, that it was in effect largely of such stuff as dreams are made of.

At Peniel (Gen. 32: 28-30), or at Padan-Aram (Gen. 35: 9), Yahveh changed Jacob's name to Israel, and repeated his promise, "To thee and to thy seed will I give the land"-which was at the time owned and occupied by "seven nations more and mightier" than all Israel, as the inspired record often avers.

THE MIGRATION TO EGYPT

In Bishop Ussher's year 1706, or 215 years after the original promise to Father Abraham, the Jacob family migrated into Egypt, having multiplied to only seventy persons [Stephen says:

"threescore and fifteen i.e., seventy-five] souls" (Acts 7: 14).] in all the 215 years since Abraham; though we have just seen that Abimelech had complained to Isaac many years before that his Israelites were "much mightier" than the whole Philistine nation (Gen. 26: 16). It is important to get this and its sequences straight, if the inspired texts can be coaxed into intelligent semblance of consistency.

Let us examine the inspired record. Jacob had twelve sons, each of whom married or "took" women and had children. The record and genealogies are set forth in Genesis 46: where they are stated under the caption: "And these are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt" (46: 8) -- "Jacob and all his seed with him" (46: 6); and after naming them all (46: 9-25), the record avers: "All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls were three score and six; and the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were three-score and ten," or seventy (46: 26, 27). Nothing in the Bible is more positively stated.

AMAZING MULTIPLYING

The Jacob family, seventy strong after 215 years since Abraham, went down in the year 1706 B.C. to sojourn in Egypt. Here they settled in the "land of Goshen" (Gen. 4v2: 6), a sort of original ghetto of about the size of a small American county, assigned to them because they were shepherds and cattle-rustlers, "for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians" (46: 34).

In Egypt the Chosen soon became a race of slaves, under circumstances truly remarkable, and utterly incredible anywhere outside the Bible. In due course of nature "Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that [first] generation.

And the Children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them. Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we" (Ex. 1: 6-9); so he proposed making slaves of them, and proceeded at once to carry this plan into effect (1: 10, 11) without opposition.

We know through revelation that the Chosen sojourned in Egypt 430 years (Ex. 12: 40); and Yahveh, whose word is sure, said: "Of a surety ... they shall afflict them four hundred years" (Gen. 15: 13), as is vouched for by the high priest in Acts 7: 6. The oppression naturally began only when the Chosen were made slaves by this Pharaoh "which knew not Joseph" (Ex. 1: 8), and it lasted four hundred years; this necessarily dates the beginning of the bondage from only thirty years after the arrival of the Jacob family; so that in these mere thirty years the seventy had become "more and mightier" than all the empire of Egypt! Passing strange indeed. And, stranger still that without a word of protest or a blow of resistance this "More and mightier" Chosen People should submit to be made a race of slaves by a weaker and inferior nation, passeth all but inspired understanding.

THE "SOJOURN" IN EGYPT

In Egypt the Chosen People were totally forgotten by their Yahveh for 215 years, or 350 years, or 430 years, or whatever other length of time they were there, for here again the inspired record reads several and diverse ways.

In Genesis 15:as we have seen, when Abram was in his deep sleep and in the "horror of a great darkness" (Gen. 15: 12), Yahveh said to him, or he dreamed that Yahveh said: "Know for a surety that thy seed ... shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years" (15: 13); and Yahveh added: "But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again" (15: 16), Yahveh giving the unique and seemingly irrelevant reason for this four-century affliction of his Chosen that "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (15: 16).

The original promise is dated in the margin, according to Bishop Ussher, 1921 B.C., and the date of the migration into Egypt as 1706 B.C., a lapse of 215 years; the date of the exodus out of Egypt is given as 1491 B.C., indicating a "sojourn" in Egypt of only 215 years. This must be a mistake of the good bishop, for the inspired text (Ex. 12: 40) expressly says: "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years"; while the same verse in the Revised Version even more explicitly reads: "Now the sojourning of the Children of Israel, which they sojourned in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years," which proves that they must have passed the full tale of 430 years in Egypt from the migration of the seventy under Jacob to the exodus under Moses. But the check-up of the "four generations" gives us only a total "sojourn" of 350 years, as we shall now see.

THE "FOUR GENERATIONS"

The Chosen were, in any event, to "come hither again" into Canaan, said Yahveh, "in the fourth generation" (Gen. 15: 16); but they did not if the fourth generation, which left Egypt, all perished during the forty years in the wilderness. We shall inquire into this later.

These "four generations" are set out in the inspired record with minute genealogical detail of name and family, birth and age (Exodus 6: 16-20), running down the line of Le6: one of the sons of Jacob who migrated into Egypt with the seventy, in the year 1706 B.C., by Bishop Ussher's chronology. We will examine this genealogy.

Levi was one year older than Judah, and therefore perhaps forty-three years old when the Jacob family went down into Egypt. According to the recorded genealogy, which I shall only briefly summarize, Levi was 137 years old when he died (Ex. 6: 16); his son Kohath, through whom the descent runs, was 133 years old when he died (6: 18); his son Amram, father of Aaron and Moses, was 137 years of age also when he died (6: 20); his son Moses was 80 years old when he led the exodus from Egypt (Ex. 7: 7), in the bishop's year 1491 B.C. With the greatest liberality of allowance in order to "accommodate" the inspired record, if Kohath had been a yearling infant when his father Levi brought him into Egypt (Gen. 46: 11), and if Kohath had begun his sojourn in the last of his 133 years and if Amram had begotten his son Moses in the last of his 137 years (as is of course possible in the Bible, although it would have been more remarkable than the hundred-year-old paternity feat of Abraham, which required a "special dispensation of providence" to procreate Isaac), yet these extreme numbers, plus the eighty years of Moses at the time of the exodus, total only 350 years instead of the 430 years of the inspired record of Exodus 12: 40.

Moreover, Amram's wife, Jochebed, the mother of Moses, was "the daughter of Levi whom her mother bare to Levi in Egypt" (Num. 26: 59); hence she was Amram's aunt, his father's sister (Ex. 6: 20). Levi, as we have seen, was at least 43 years old when he went into Egypt, and he died there at the age of 137 years (Ex. 6: 16); so that he lived in Egypt 94 years. If therefore his daughter Jochebed had been born only in the last year of the 137 of Levi's life, which was 94 years after his arrival in Egypt, and if the "sojourn in Egypt" were 430 years, Moses, who was 80 years of age at the exodus (Ex. 7: 7), must necessarily have been born -- (430 minus 80) -- in the 350th year of the "sojourn"; and his mother Jochebed, would at that time -- (deducting the assumed 94 years of "sojourn" before her birth) -- have been at least -- (350 minus 94)

256 years old, somewhat liberally over the allotted ages of the patriarchs in those degenerate days; and with Sarai, some six hundred years previously, "it had ceased to be after the manner of women," in the matter of child-bearing even at 90 years of age.

Whether the 'Sojourn in Egypt' were 430 years, as the Scripture time and again says, or 215 years as the apologists for this tangle say, or 350 years, as the inspired figures work out, it is true, as the inspired record says, that their Yahveh had entirely forgotten his Chosen People for all this time; until, perchance, at last, he "heard their groanings, and Yahveh remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (Ex. 2: 24).

And, reciprocally, for all these centuries, the Chosen People of Israel were heathens utterly ignorant of the Yahveh of their heathen Father Abraham: for Abraham and all the patriarchs (as we shall clearly see) all the time "served other gods" (Josh. 24: 2), and they all, while in Egypt and for ages after the exodus, worshipped and continued to "worship the gods of the Egyptians" (Josh. 24: 14).

This total and mutual ignorance of Yahveh and his Chosen, is proved by the fact that when Yahveh after 430 years finally "remembered" his people and came down into the burning bush to see Moses about the exodus business, and introduced himself as "the God [Elohe] of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Ex. 3: 6), Moses did not at all know or recognize him, nor had he or his people ever heard of him, for Moses had to ask, "What is thy name?" (3: 13); for, said Moses: "Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of thy fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them?" (Ex. 3: 13) A more completely "Unknown God" could not be imagined than this of the Chosen People of Yahveh, the God who had forgotten them; though it seems strange for a God to forget, particularly his own peculiar and Chosen People for over four centuries.

THE "INEFFABLE NAME" REVEALED

To Moses' very agnostic query, "What is thy name?" the stranger God replied: "I Am that I Am: and be said, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you" (Ex. 3: 14). If Moses had been born and brought up in Egypt, and were indeed "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7: 22), and if he could have understood Yahveh speaking Chaldean-Hebrew, this name, or designation, should have sounded very familiar to Moses as well as to the Pharaoh, for it is exactly the current "ineffable name" of supreme deity in Egypt, Nuk Pu Nuk, as is explained under the title "Jehovah" in the Catholic Encyclopedia and in the New International Encyclopedia. [See also Bonwick, Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought (London:

C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1878), p. 395; Godfrey Higgins, *Incalypsis* (London: Longman, Rees, Orne, Brown & Longinan), Vol. 2: p. 17; Ernest de Bunsen, *The Keys of St. Peter* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1880), p. 38.]

But this vague cognomen was evidently not at all informative to Moses, nor later to the elders, and was puzzling to the Pharaoh (Ex. 5: 2). Indeed Moses did not obey Yahveh, but oddly enough reported another name. Moses fared ill on his first trip to the elders and to the Pharaoh; and when he returned to report to the God, he addressed him simply as Adonai (my Lord-the same exactly as Adonis of the Pagans); and Moses accused him to his face of "evil entreating" the people, and of not delivering them at all (Ex. 5: 22, 23). Thereupon the God said, "Now thou shalt see what I will do to Pharaoh"; and he asserted that his real name was Yahveh; and he explained that he had always appeared to the good old patriarchs by the name of El Shaddai (Heb., God my daemon, rendered in the English translations as "God Almighty"), but that he had not been known to them by his real name of Yahveh (Ex. 6: 2, 3).

A "PIOUS FRAUD" OF TRANSLATION

Let us quote this highly important declaration of Yahveh in the exact words in which he made it, as it involves another truly remarkable instance of Jahvistic lapses memory, as well as one of the most notorious "mistakes of Moses" in all Holy Writ, and the most flagrant and persistent of the intentional falsifications of the ecclesiastical translators and editors of the Bible, -- the deceptive motive for which will be made clear:

"And God [Heb., Elohim] spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord [Heb., anoki YHVH = I am Yahveh]:

"And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty [Heb., El-Shaddai, God my daemon], but by my name JEHOVAH (Heb., YHVH) was I not known to them" (Ex. 6: 2, 3).

This positive assertion from the mouth of the Hebrew God is belied by scores of contradictory instances, of which a sufficient number will be cited from the Hebrew texts, concealed as they purposefully are in the English and other translations.

Here we have the averment of the Hebrew God himself to the effect that here, for the first time since the world began, is "revealed" to mankind his "ineffable name" of YHVH, here printed as JEHOVAH in capital letters in the Bible translations. And in the Bible translations, from "In the beginning" of Genesis 1: 1 to these verses of Exodus, and thence to the end of Malachi, the name Jehovah or Yahveh never (or but half a dozen times) appears: always and only we read the title "the Lord" or "the Lord God" (for Yahveh Elohim), falsely used for the actual six-thousand-times reiterated name of the Hebrew deity. This usage conceals the fact that the personal name YHVH of the God is used thousands of times in the Hebrew texts, and thus apparently "harmonizes" the whole Hebrew Bible with the statement (Ex. 6: 3), "By my name YHVH was I not known" to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

To one who can but spell out words by the Hebrew letters, this "pious fraud" is apparent. "The sacred name," says the Catholic Encyclopedia, "occurs in Genesis about 156 times; this frequent occurrence can hardly be a mere prolepsis" (Vol. 8: p. 331); and it adds: "in round numbers it is found in the Old Testament 6000 times, either alone or in conjunction with another Divine name" (Id., p. 329). Beginning with Genesis 2: 4, where it is first abbreviated YY, the name Yahveh runs throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. Scores of times the three patriarchs named used the name Yahveh, and speak to and of their tribal deity by his name Yahveh, as well as by the designations of El, Elohim, Elohe, and by the title of address Adonai (my Lord), the form in which superiors are always addressed.

A very few specific instances among many, out of the Chaldee mouths of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, will serve to expose the falsity of the translation-and then the motive therefore.

The very first appearance of the strange deity to Abram is thus recorded: "Now Yahveh had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country," etc. (Gen. 12: 1), though the translators make it read: "Now the Lord had said."

Again: "And Abram said, O Adonai Yahveh [my Lord Yahveh], what wilt thou give me?" (Gen. 15: 2, 8).

And Yahveh says to Abram: "I am Yahveh that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees" (Gen. 15: 7).

And again: "And Abraham said unto his servant, I will make thee swear by Yahveh, the Elohe of the heaven and the Elohe of the earth" (Gen. 24: 3).

As for Isaac: "And Yahveh appeared unto him and said, Go down into Egypt" (Gen. 26: 2). "And Isaac said, Truly now Yahveh has made room for us" (Gen. 26: 22). And again he builded an altar there, "and called upon the name of Yahveh" (Gen. 26: 25).

As for Jacob: at the ladder the God appeared and said to Jacob: "I am Yahveh, the Elohe of Abraham, the Elohe of Isaac" (Gen. 28: 13). Again: "And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely Yahveh has been in this place" (Gen. 28: 16). And again: "And Jacob vowed a vow and said, if Elohim [the Gods] will be with me ... then shall Yahveh be my God" (Gen. 28: 20, 21). Some half dozen times the name Yahveh is correctly rendered "Jehovah," mostly where this rendering is forced by the compounding of the name Yahveh with another word or name, as in Yahveh-nissi (Ex. 17: 5); Yahveh-jireh (Gen. 22: 14); Yahveh-shalom (Judges 6: 24); where it cannot well be rendered "Lord-nissi," etc., and the translators are obliged for any sense at all to render it truly as "Jehovah-nissi," etc. And in Psalms and Isaiah, in a few instances, the name appears, as where David sings: "That they may know that thou alone, whose name is Jehovah [Yahveh] art most high [elyon] over all the earth" (Psalms 133: 18); and where Isaiah says: "For the Lord Jehovah [Yah Yahveh] is my strength" (Isa., 12: 2); though even here Yah is not rightly rendered "Lord."

However, as some 430 years had elapsed up to the incident of the burning bush since anybody had used the name at all, or had even mentioned the God, it is not to be wondered that one's memory, even Yahveh's, was a bit rusty in the matter of names. The real blame, and shame, rests on the deceptive translators: "The false pen of the scribes hath wrought falsely" (Jer. 8: 8, R.V.). But it didn't matter to Moses anyhow, for he was a heathen who had never heard the name either way, and a fugitive murderer, his first recorded act being the murder of an Egyptian, for which crime he fled from justice into the Midian desert (Ex. 2: 12), where he married the daughter of the heathen priest of Midian, by whom he had one (Ex. 2: 22), or two (Ex. 18: 3) sons, as later we shall notice. But Moses's marrying the Midianite is an error, or he became a polygamist; for we are told that Moses "had married an Ethiopian woman" (Num. 12: 1), a Negress, to the great scandal of his family, and in flagrant violation of his own prohibitory law against marrying heathen and strangers.

A CURIOUS MUDDLING

The most curious feature of this fable of the burning bush, betraying the utter childishmindedness of the inspired historian, is the muddled use he makes of the divine name of his newfound deity. It is in exodus 3: 13 that Moses asks the strange new God:

"What is thy name?" and in reply "Elohim said unto Moses: I Am that I Am"; and he said, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: I Am has sent me unto you" (3: 14). It is not until Moses returns from his first trip to the elders and the Pharaoh that the God is made to make the pretended first "revelation" of his "ineffable name", Yahveh (Ex. 6: 2, 3).

In Exodus 1 and 2: and up to 3: 6, the deity is spoken of as Elohim, ha-Elohim (gods, the-gods); but in verse 7 it is Yahveh who told Moses about his patriarchal covenant, and ordered him to bring his people out of Egypt. Then, after telling Moses that he is "I Am" (3: 14), straightway "Elohim said unto Moses: Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: Yahveh, the God of your fathers. ... has sent me unto you: this [Yahveh] is my name forever" (3: 15) -- thus anticipating by three chapters the first revelation of his name Yahveh (Ex. 6: 3). And the God again says:

"Go, and assemble the elders of Israel, and say unto them: Yahveh, elohe of your fathers, has appeared unto me, the elohe of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (3: 16). Also "thou. and the elders of Israel shall come unto the king of Egypt, and you shall say unto him, Yahveh, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, let us go, we pray thee, a journey of three days into the wilderness, and let us sacrifice to Yahveh our God" (3: 18). But Yahveh did not say "the God of the Hebrews"; for there were no Hebrews at that epoch.

Moses replied that they would not believe or hearken unto him, "for they will say, Yahveh has not appeared unto thee" (Ex. 4: 1); a curious telepathic knowledge of a name they had never heard. Some ten or a dozen times the name Yahveh is again used in this chapter; and in verse 10 Moses uses both his name and the title of address, "my Lord." "And Moses said unto Yahveh, Adonai [my Lord]"; and Yahveh replied: "Am I not Yahveh?" (4: 12); "and he [Moses] said, Adonai ['O Lord]" (4: 13) -- "and the anger of Yahveh glowed against Moses" (4: 14). So Moses and Aaron went to the Pharaoh and said: "Thus hath said Yahveh, elohe Yishrael, Send away my people," etc. "And Pharaoh said, Who is Yahveh; I know not Yahveh" (Ex. 5: 1, 2)

and so several times in chapter 5: always the name Yahveh appears-but always falsely translated "the Lord." Then in chapter vi comes "And Yahveh said unto Moses" (6: 1); then: "And Elohim said unto Moses, I am Yahveh" (6: 2); and in verse 3 the novel revelation of the supernal name Yahveh, as if never heard of in Hebrew before; and as never heard of in the false translations before or after.

WHY THIS "PIOUS" FRAUD?

Why this persistent falsification in the Holy Word of God? First, as pointed out, and as must be apparent, with purpose to conceal the contradiction of Yahveh's "revelation" in Exodus 6: 3. But there are other very signal motives for falsification. These I submit, not in my own words, but as capital admissions of two high theological authorities.

The distinguished Hebrew scholar, Rev. Charles P. Fagnani, D.D., Professor of Scripture in Union Theological Seminary, denies thus the Christian Godhood of Yahveh: "The god who is the hero of these [Genesis] stories is not the Supreme Cosmic God, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we live, and move, and have our being, but the tribal god of the Hebrews, according to their earliest and crudest conception of his character. "He is known by two names: Elohim, meaning god, in general, and Yaho. The latter is a proper name, like Asshur, Moloch, Baal, etc. He is only one god out of many. Every nation and people had one or more gods. The Hebrews were forbidden to worship any other god but Yaho.

"Yaho is generally but less correctly given as Yahveh and Jehovah (better Yehovah)." "To use the word God or Lord God instead of Elohim or Yaho is misleading and disastrous. It conceals from the unsuspecting reader that the un-Godlike sayings and doings recorded are those of an imagined, primitive deity, not those of the God of the New Testament." (Fagnani, *The Beginnings of History according to the Jews*, pp. 18-19; Boni, New York, 1925)

This leaves the pagan god Yahveh and his pretended "Holy Word" a myth and fables.

The learned doctor, after a number of other significant admissions that revealed Genesis tales are "patently early myths and naive, childish, primitive folklore" (Id., p. 23), with evident gusto quotes the Shavian epigram, "Fundamentalism is Infantilism," and comments: "Whatever we call it, it means complete paralysis of the intelligence, resulting from irrational surrender to the blight of theological dogma" (Id., p. 24). But it may be in turn remarked that Modernism is immeasurably worse as a display of arrested development of once-awakened mentality than ever Fundamentalism was. The Fundamentalists are victims of their own perfect and correct logic from false premises; their theology is unimpeachably true if Genesis and the Bible be true. The Modernists, who repudiate Genesis, Adam, Eve, the fall, the curse, the Virgin-birth, the resurrection, and hell, either are wholly wanting in the logical faculty, or have not the courage of their convictions of the fundamental fallacies of their Bible.

Another scholarly divine says of this habitual concealment of the name Yahveh in the Bible translations:

"Various motives may have concurred to bring about the suppression of the name. ...

An instinctive feeling that a proper name for God implicitly recognizes the existence of other gods may have had some influence" (Encyc. Brit., Vol. 15:p. 311-d). But as Yahveh himself and all his book explicitly and a thousand times recognize the existence, power, and effects of other gods, this apologetic reason cannot excuse the pious fraud. A more frank admission of the reason for falsely rendering Yahveh as "Lord" is given as "the preference [by the Jewish translators of the Septuagint] for a term that should not bring to mind the old tribal deity after a more transcendental conception had been gained" (New int. Encyc., Vol. 12:p. 625). But a "conception," however transcendental, is merely a human mental process, not a divine revelation. It is only a refinement of previous myth and remains mythological.

A PECULIAR TEST OF PROPHECY

At the burning bush Yahveh commanded Moses: "Go, bring the Chosen out of Egypt." But Moses was dubious of the commission of the new-found Deity, and also feared to return to the jurisdiction where he had committed the murder. So Yahveh reassured him: "Go, return into Egypt; for all the men are dead who sought thy life" (Ex. 4: 19).

And Yahveh gave Moses a very peculiar ex post facto kind of proof of the validity of his present commission, assuring him:

"Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain" (Ex. 3: 12); which mountain was Horeb, or Sinai, the shrine of the pagan moon-god Sin, somewhere in the Arabian wilderness, where Moses then was, tending the sheep of his heathen father-in-law (Ex. 3: 1).

And Yahveh thereupon told Moses of his promise to the fathers, and told him to report it to the elders of Israel-proving that neither Moses nor the elders of Israel had ever before heard of Yahveh and his everlasting covenant of 645 years before to Abraham:

"And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt, unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites" (Ex. 3: 17); which peoples, as Yahveh himself and Moses several times assert, were "seven nations greater and mightier" than all Israel (Deut. 4: 38). The Pharaoh is quoted as complaining four hundred years before: "Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we" (Ex. 1: 9); Yahveh, again on the contrary, expressly says that his Chosen of Israel "were the fewest of all people" (Deut. 7: 7).

SOME ASSURANCES OF SUCCESS

Yahveh God of Israel further told Moses to gather together the elders of Israel, and to go to Pharaoh and give him a false reason:

"Let us go three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice unto Yahveh our God" (Ex. 3: 18); and added that he knew that Pharaoh would not let them go; and that Yahveh would then smite Egypt with all his wonders-the plagues-after which the Pharaoh would let them go. And the same God of Israel told Moses that he, God, would help the Chosen to cheat the Egyptians and enable them to steal all their jeweler and clothes-"and ye shall spoil the Egyptians" (Ex. 3: 22). This would be wicked enough on the part of Ali Baba and his forty thieves, or of Barbary pirates, and under any ordinary code of human law would be common crime, and the instigator would be criminal "accessory before the fact"; but this is the Holy Bible, and Yahveh is called holy and just.

This advice did not at once appeal to Moses, who had been well brought up in the court of Egypt, although now a fugitive murderer; and he objected that the elders would not believe that Yahveh had appeared to him and told him these things. So the mighty Yahveh resorted to conjure, turning a stick into a snake and the snake back into the stick-a trick that the conjurors of Egypt afterwards quite outdid (Ex. 7: 10, 11).

So Moses was persuaded, and he took his heathen wife and two sons (Ex. 4: 20; 18: 3), or one son (Ex. 2: 22; 4: 25), or left them all at home (Ex. 18: 2, 3), and started on the trek across the desert to Egypt, carrying the conjuring rod with him. And the parting word of the God to Moses was a direction to tell Pharaoh: "Israel is my son, even my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn" (Ex. 4: 23). And maybe for practice in slaying, for no otheason appears, the God soon sought Moses himself for his first victim; for as Moses, with his wife and one child passed by a certain inn on the way, Yahveh the God waylaid Moses "and sought to kill him"! (Ex. 4: 24). But he was saved, apparently by a bloody exorcism of his wife Zipporah (4: 25). This episode further proves that Moses was a heathen, ignorant of Yahveh and his "everlasting covenant" of circumcision, without which "that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant" (Gen. 17: 14).

CONJURING CONTESTS

Having escaped this assassination, Moses went on to the elders and told them what Yahveh had said; and he performed all the wonder-works which Yahveh had taught him so that the people should believe, and they believed. Then Moses and his spokesman or publicity man, Aaron, went to the Pharaoh, and repeated to him Yahveh's ingenuous plea for a three days' holiday in the wilderness to worship the new-found Yahveh. But the Pharaoh had never heard of Yahveh; and he said: "Who is Yahveh, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I know not Yahveh" (Ex.

5: 2); and he drove Moses and Aaron out, and redoubled the tasks of the Israelite slaves.

The elders and the people thereupon complained to Moses of the evil case which had befallen them on his account, and said to Moses: "Yahveh judge you" (Ex. 5: 21)! And Moses went back to Yahveh, and accused

him roundly of doing evil to the people, and of outright lying, saying: "Neither hast thou delivered thy people at all" (Ex. 5: 23). But the God said: "I am Yahveh" (Ex. 6: 2); and he sent Moses back to the Pharaoh with the same demand, assuring Moses that he would "harden Pharaoh's heart" so that he would not let the children of Israel go, until all the wonderful works of desolation, destruction, and death which the sacred pages now relate ad horrendum had been performed.

THE FEARFUL AND WONDERFUL "PLAGUES OF EGYPT"

Almost skeptical wonder is caused, in these modern times, by the series of inspired narratives of the famous plagues of Egypt. One is astonished at the preliminary miracle, the transformation of Aaron's rod into a snake and back again, which Yahveh wrought in order to prove to Pharaoh that Yahveh was indeed the Lord. But the Pharaoh was not taken aback by this at all, for at his call his sorcerers and magicians turned theiolds into snakes (Ex. 7: 10-12), and honors thus far were even, although it is true that Aaron's rod swallowed up all the rods of the other conjurers. It is difficult at this distance of time and altered faith to quite understand the feat of Aaron's rod swallowing the otheods after they were turned from snakes to rods again, the swallowing act being more natural and reasonable while they were all snakes.

The next wondeecorded is Aaron's stretching out his rod that had been a snake but was now a rod full of otheods that had been snakes and causing every drop of water in all Egypt to turn into blood. But the Pharaoh's heathen enchanters again did the very, same miracle (Ex. 7: 19-22). The principal marvel of this conjurer's miracle, it would seem to a detached observer, is that they could perform this second trick at all, as all the water in the kingdom, including that of the river Nile and that in every pool and vessel in the land, was already pure blood by the miracle of Aaron. The sacred text does not pause to explain this.

The same curious phenomenon occurs with respect to the third plague, Aaron's conjuring up frogs out of the waters, which were not waters but blood. The frogs came "and covered the land of Egypt," and filled the river, the land, and the houses of Egypt. When it is straightway recorded that "the magicians did so with their enchantments" (Ex. 8: 5-7), one can only wonder where those enchanters' frogs came from, and what they covered, and how, seeing that Egypt was already full of frogs. At all events, honors were again even between Aaron and the enchanters. And the smell that they produced between them was something awful (8: 14). Like miracles on the part of Yahveh and Aaron were performed in the plagues of the lice (8: 17, 18) and of the flies (8: 24), to the utter suffering of the Egyptian people, but all the glory this time was Yahveh's and Aaron's, as this was more sorcery than the Egyptian magicians had at their command on such short notice. So the enchanters and magicians all dropped out of the contest and left the field undisputed to Yahveh's and Aaron's plagueful miracles. This was just as well, for a few days afterwards they all got boils and blains (Ex. 9: 11), and could not have worked their magic to advantage.

A plague of very remarkable consequences is next recorded in the inspired story. The Lord God of the Hebrews turned his attention to afflicting the dumb animal kingdom, which seemingly had little or nothing to do with the controversy between the King of Heaven and the Pharaoh of Egypt. The God sent a "very grievous murrain" on the Egyptian cattle of every kind, "and all the cattle of Egypt died" (Ex. Think of it! in all Egypt, horses, asses, cows, oxen, sheep, camels, except those of the holy Israelites, all killed! Then, lo! no sooner had all the animals in the kingdom died, than the Lord Yahveh sent a plague of boils and Mains "upon man and upon beast," including the Egyptian magicians (9: 10, 11) whose conjuring had been out-done by the miracles of Aaron. As the beasts were already all dead of the murrain (9: 6), it may be wondered what was the point sending boils and blains upon them.

But the very next plague showed that an unrecorded miracle must have intervened overnight, for all the dead animals are recorded as come to life. The proof of this unrecorded miracle is clear and logical: for Moses announced, after all the animals had died of the murrain (Ex. 9: 6) and then had been infested with boils and blains (9: 9), that on the next day he would bring on a "very grievous hail" (9: 18); and he considerably, this time, gave ample notice and chance of escape, and warned the Egyptians to gather up their cattle at once and get them under cover; for upon every man and beast which was left out in the open the hail should come down, and they should die; and some of the cattle were herded in, and some were left out in the fields (9: 19-21). So those cattle killed of the murrain must have been resurrected overnight, or there would have been none alive to be herded in or left out to be killed again. The hail came as scheduled, mingled with fire, and smote man and

beast and every herb of the field, and broke every tree of the field, and destroyed Egypt (9: 24, 25). Some may think this a good deal like poaching on the covenant of the rainbow, whereby Yahveh had promised no general destruction again by rain; but hail is rain frozen hard, and Egypt was not all the world; so there was a reasonable degree of difference. And when the Pharaoh saw the wrack and ruin of the hail, he said: "Yahveh is righteous" (9: 27), as he might not have said if he had seen the Flood- another difference.

The plague of the locusts comes next in the sacred text; terrible swarms of these scourges blew up on the evil-laden east wind, so "that one cannot be able to see the earth" (Ex. 10: 5), and "covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened" (10: 15); and "they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left" (10: 15). As every herb and tree in all Egypt had been already destroyed by the hail (9: 25), the locusts must have had pretty poor picking.

One is puzzled by the famous plague of Egyptian darkness which Yahveh next in his providence sent upon the doomed land-"even darkness which may be felt" (Ex. 10: 21). So dark it was for three whole days that it was as if they were nights, only much more so, for so thick was the darkness that lights could not be seen, except by the Chosen, who had light in their dwellings and could see as well as ever. To all human reasoning, this would seem to have been an excellent opportunity for the Chosen to have taken French leave under cover of the darkness; and this would have rendered unnecessary the fearful massacre of the first-born to soften Pharaoh's heart so often hardened by Yahveh to prevent him from letting the people go.

This fatal climax of plagues is indeed terrible to contemplate. The angel of Yahveh, God of heaven, swept through the land of Egypt with a flaming sword dripping human and animal blood, and slaughtered the first-born of every family of Egypt, from the palace of the Pharaoh to the very prisons (Ex. 12: 29). And what is more curious, the angel slaughtered also the first-born of all cattle, although the cattle were already dead of the murrain (9: 6), of the boils and blains (9: 10), and of the hail (9: 19-25). But wonders were as plentiful as black-berries in those days.

One may well wonder why it was that after each terrible plague the God of the Hebrews "hardened Pharaoh's heart," even when he was very eager to let the people go; and why this God, "long-suffering and plenteous in mercy," did not use his influence to soften the Pharaoh's heart to let the children go in peace and in a hurry; for several times, after a peculiarly harrowing plague, the Pharaoh urged Moses and Aaron: "Go, and serve your God"; but every time the God said: "I have hardened his heart, that I might shew these my signs before him." After the plague of darkness and a stormy passage between Pharaoh and Moses and Aaron (Ex. 10: 24-29) the latter doughty plague-invokers left the presence of the Pharaoh with a direful threat of what was to come (Ex. xi), and went forth to prepare for the great massacre of the firstborn and for the exodus of the people from blood-stricken Egypt.

IS IT GOD'S WORD?

CHAPTER 4: THE WONDERS OF THE EXODUS

THE WONDERS OF THE EXODUS

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THE WONDERS OF THE EXODUS

The exodus is so wonderful, and so humanly impossible that its accomplishment by Providence deserves our especial attention. We will therefore attentively review its wonders, which are superlative if one Bible wonder may excel another; they differ in wonder as one star differeth from another star in glory.

"IN THE FOURTH GENERATION"

The exodus took place in the "fourth generation" from the time of the original migration into Egypt. We have seen the four degrees from Jacob: Le6: Kohath, Amram, Moses. Making extreme allowance for length of life, we have been able to sum up only 350 years for the "sojourn in Egypt," though the inspired text says 430 years; at all events, the exodus was "in the fourth generation" (Gen. 15: 16).

Watch the Chosen People grow and multiply: "Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now Yahveh thy God hath made thee as the stars of the heaven for multitude" (Deut. 10: 22). The seventy Jacobites who migrated into Egypt were the slow increase of the 215 years since Abraham. According to the schedule in the text (Gen. 46: 8-27), of these 70 there were 68 males and two females: Jacob and his twelve sons; their 51 sons (grandsons of Jacob); four sons of two of the grandsons (great-grandsons of Jacob); and two females, Dinah, daughter of Jacob, and Serah, daughter of Asher and grand-daughter of Jacob. Joseph and his two sons by his heathen Egyptian wife were already in Egypt, but are included in the seventy; two of the sons of Judah, Er and Onan, were killed by Yahveh in Canaan before the migration (Gen. 38: 3, 7, 10; 46: 12). These 51 living sons of the twelve sons of Jacob who came into Egypt give an average of 4 1/4 male children to each of the sons of Jacob; none of the twelve is recorded to have had any children, sons or daughters, after their arrival in Egypt, except the one daughter to Le6: Jochebed, who married her nephew Amram, father of Moses (Ex. 6: 20), and was thus the mother of Moses and his great-aunt. Adding the four great-grandsons of Jacob to the 51 grandsons makes 55 male descendants of Jacob; these, together with Jacob and his twelve sons and the two women, make up the total of seventy, though this does not include the wives of

the twelve. But it is stated: "all the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt ... besides Jacob's sons' wives ... all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten (Gen. 46: 26, 27). Assuming that all the 55 male descendants of Jacob who came into Egypt married and had only sons for children, or sons to the average of 4 1/4, and that this average held through the four generations, the Hebrew population in Egypt would naturally augment in about the following manner: The first generation (offspring of the twelve) that came into Egypt was 55 males; liberally allowing five male children each, the second generation, sprung from these, would number 275; the third generation, offspring of the second, would number 1375; the fateful "fourth generation," that of Moses and the exodus, would reach the sum total of 6875 male persons. This liberally estimated natural increase is obviously exaggerated; it allows five male children to each male of the four generations, and takes no account of females, who would naturally be quite half of each generation, to furnish wives for the contemporary generation and mothers for the next. Moreover, it errs in discounting mortality and assuming that each male of each generation would live at least until he was married and had his five male children. Thus the actual total of males must be less than the 6875 above allowed. Even on the impossible hypothesis that not one died throughout the four generations of 215, or 350, or 430 years, so that all would be living at the time of the exodus, the grand total would be but 8580 persons. But we know, of course, that this assumed immunity from death is not true, for "Joseph died, and an his brethren, and all that [first] generation" (Ex. 1: 6); and it is a safe assumption that most of the first three generations died before the exodus. Any rational rearrangement of these obvious vital statistics, allowing anything short of fabulous increase, could make no appreciable increase in the totals stated. Even if we begin the count of the "four generations" with that succeeding the original 51 sons and four grandsons of the 12 sons of Jacob, and count their 275 assumed offspring as the first generation, we should then have: first, 275; second, 1375; third, 6875; fourth, 34,375 altogether. But this would be a fifth generation to "sojourn in Egypt," and therefore unscriptural.

THE HOSTS OF THE LORD OF HOSTS

Hear now what "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" to tell us about the numbers of this exodus. The inspired record, after relating the "spoiling of the Egyptians" by the Chosen says: "And the Children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about 600,000 on foot that were men, beside children. And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle" (Ex. 12: 37, 38)! Only about a year later (Num. 1: 1), at Sinai, the formal census of this warrior host was taken, of every male "from 20 years old and upwards, all that were able to go forth to war in Israel; even all that were numbered were 603,550" (Num. 1: 45, 46)! Even in this host the Levites were not numbered (1: 47); when afterwards they were separately numbered, "all the males from a month old and upward were 22,000" (Num. 3: 39). On the very conservative, and quite inadequate, basis of estimating these warrior-males to be but one out of every four of the old men, women, and children, we should have a Hebrew population of 2,414,200 souls, not counting in the 22,000 Levites and the great mixed multitude of slaves and camp-followers who accompanied the hosts of Yahveh. The Jewish Encyclopedia and most accepted authorities estimate the total numbers of the exodus to be about 3,000,000!

SOME PREGNANT FIGURES

If the sacred historian had taken his stylus and a scrap of papyrus and calculated a bit, he would have figured out that in order to accomplish this prodigy, each of the 55 males of the first generation in Egypt must have had 40-odd children each, about equally divided between males and females; each of these 20-odd males must have had again 40-odd children, male and female, and so on to the fourth generation, in order to have produced 603,550 soldier-men twenty years of age and over, or the total of 2,414,200 (or more) children of Israel who set out from Egypt.

But the inspired history nowhere indicates any such prodigious prolificness among the Chosen People in Egyptian slavery. The highest number of children in one family anywhere noted during the "sojourn" is the five daughters of Zelophebad; Amram had only three children, Moses, Aaron, and Miriam; Aaron had four sons (two of them killed by Yahveh) and no daughter.

The mothers of Israel were also evidently of the Hebrew race; it is hardly probable that the Hebrew slaves were permitted to marry the free native women; if this had been customary, the Syrian "seed of Abraham" would have been sadly mixed in 430 years. Indeed, that the fact was otherwise is implied by the inspired statement (Ex. 1: 19): "the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women" in child-birth, which clearly indicates that the wives of the Chosen were also of the Chosen. It follows that it is out of the seventy only that the 2,414,200 and more of the exodus could have sprung, and it is evident that they could not. At best, 8000 is a liberal calculation, if not one of them had died in the 430 years; and Yahveh himself, immediately after the exodus, says that his Chosen were "the fewest of all people" (Deut. 7: 7).

But we will not discount the inspired arithmetic, and will accept its figures, which lead to some highly interesting considerations. Where and how did these children live, and move, and have their being in Egypt-at that time (1491 B.C.) the mightiest and most splendid empire of the world? This is the first puzzle. Already, shortly after the death of Joseph, the "new king which knew not Joseph" is found complaining to his people: "Behold, the children of Israel are more and mightier than we" (Ex. 1: 9); and he therefore made slaves of this more numerous and more mighty race, and set them to building his treasure cities and to other construction jobs, for which Egypt had long been famous, as witness the Great Pyramid, built (3933 B.C.) but a few years after the celebrated garden of Eden was closed down in the fall. All this host of Israel could hardly have lived in the cities along with their masters, as there were probably no cities large enough to contain them. They were necessarily scattered in the country, and for the curious reason that these poor slaves at the time of the exodus owned several millions of sheep, horses, and cattle, "even very much cattle, and great areas of land would be required to pasture them all.

Let us look the sheep in the face. Moses told the children, in instituting the passover, on the eve of the Exodus: "Take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover" (Ex. 12: 21). These lambs were to be without blemish, a male of the first year," and were to be taken, every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house" (Ex. 12: 3); though if a household were too little to eat a whole lamb, the next-door neighbors might be invited to share it. Very liberally allowing ten persons to one lamb, 2,414,200 persons would require 241,420 male lambs of the first year for this one day's passover sacrifice. There would probably be as many female lambs of the same year, which would make 482,840 first-year lambs, to say nothing of the sheep and goats. Sheep-raising statistics show that, in average flocks of all ages, the total number is about five times that of the increase of one season's births; this would give us exactly the same number of sheep as of Hebrews, 2,414,200. Modern sheep-raisers seldom have grazing lands which will support more than two sheep to the acre. Allowing five to the acre for biblical Egypt, 482,840 acres of land, or 754 square miles, nearly two-thirds the area of the state of Rhode Island, would be required merely for pasturing the sheep of the slave Israelites, not allowing for their other cattle and horses, none of which had been killed in the plagues, and of which the children of Israel had large "flocks and herds, even very much cattle." So the children must have been scattered through the land and have considerably overflowed the bounds of their original ghetto of Goshen in order to tend their herds-if slaves could be allowed to own property and to attend to their own affairs.

THE AMAZING PASSOVER

All Scripture, besides being "given by inspiration of God," is said to be "profitable for instruction"; we find other curiously instructive features of this exodus passover. In Exodus 12 we have the tangled and marvelous story. Yahveh tells Moses that "in the tenth day of this month" the people should "take every man a lamb, ... and ye shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening"-of the fourteenth day; and "of the blood, strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses wherein they shall eat it." For the ceremony he gives particular directions: "And thus shall ye eat it: with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste" (12: 11). It is here ordered that there should be a four-day interval between the "taking" on the tenth day of the month, and the killing on the fourteenth day; but Yahveh overlooks this, or changes his mind, for he says: "For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt. ... And this day shall be unto you for a memorial" (12: 12, 14). "Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel," and told them to take "a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover," and strike the blood on the door posts

(12: 21). "And it came to pass that at midnight Yahveh smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt" (12: 28). This clearly proves that the entire passover transaction, from the first commands of Yahveh about the lambs to the massacre of the first-born at midnight took place all on one day, and at latest on the tenth day the four-day interval is forgotten and eliminated. But how was such a thing possible? We see the two and a half million people scattered over an indefinitely large territory; Yahveh appears sometime during the day (the tenth), and tells Moses and Aaron: "Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel," giving them life-and-death orders and minute passover cooking instructions, which they must perform that same day "in the evening" in order to escape the massacre of the first-born. Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and repeated the instructions to them. There were no telephones or radio broadcasting plants in those days to help disseminate this order in all its details to the head of every family of Israel, scattered throughout Egypt, or Goshen, or the Delta, or wherever they were, so that they might pick out 241,420 first-year male lambs without blemish, kill and cook them, according to entirely new recipes (12: 8-10), and strike the blood, in this novel way, on the door posts, so that, says Yahveh, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." How these fateful orders were ever delivered "unto all the congregation of Israel" in that fraction of a day Yahveh only knows, as it is not revealed unto us in his Holy Word.

THE MARCHING ORDERS

But this is not all of this bit of Scripture, given for our instruction. That same night "at midnight Yahveh smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, and the firstborn of the cattle," of the Egyptians (Ex. 12: 29), though these same cattle had already been killed by each of several prior plagues: "all the cattle of Egypt died" of the murrain (Ex, 9: 6); then these dead cattle had boils

(9: 9); then they were all killed over again by the hail (9: 25). As soon as this fatal decree of Yahveh was executed, that midnight, "Pharaoh rose up in the night [that same night] ... and he called for Moses and Aaron by night [that same night, after midnight], and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve Yahveh as ye have said; and be gone" (12: 31) -- "and bless me also" (12: 32), he added, maybe ironically. As "the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men" (12: 33), haste became the order of the day, oather of that same night.

As soon as the royal leave was thus granted to Moses, after midnight, he must at once get the marching orders to the scattered millions of Israel. These were in their respective homes throughout the land, dressed and ready, in "watchful waiting" for they knew not what as yet, since it could not be known what effect the massacre of the first-born would have upon the Pharaoh; and the people were under strict command: "And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning." But in some strange and unrevealed way, whether by miracle or telepathy, the divine command through Moses to all the millions of Israel went broadcast (the second time in one day) to borrow "all the clothes and jewellery they could, and to "spoil the Egyptians" (12: 36); after which they should all mobilize immediately at the great city Rameses. So that self-same day, somehow, all the hosts of Israel, 2,414,200 of them, with "their dough before it was leavened, their kneading- troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders" (12: 34), their plunder, their old and decrepit, their babes and sucklings, their sick and infirm, their women in confinement and childbirth (for in such a population there are scores of births every hour, and the inspired word tells us that "the Hebrew women are lively" in this) -- the whole mixed multitude, driving with them their "flocks and herds, even very much cattle, there was not an hoof left behind," at the divine command, began the world's greatest one-day feat.

First, from all Egypt, east, west, north, south, "the hosts of Yahveh" gathered at Rameses. Such a mobilization is without a single parallel in history, sacred or profane, since Noah's animals flocked from the four corners of the earth into his famous ark, for which they had a whole week. Arrived at Rameses somehow, behold, "even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of Yahveh went out from the land of Egypt" (12: 41). That there may be no doubt about it, the divine assurance is vouchsafed a second time in the same chapter: "And it came to pass the selfsame day, that Yahveh did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies" (12: 51); and they marched from Rameses across the desert sands to Succoth, which, according to the Bible maps, seems to be about thirty miles. But apparently this was not "out of the land of Egypt"; it was

evidently yet in Egypt, on the western border of the Red Sea. For when Pharaoh and his army "pursued after the children of Israel" (Ex. 14: 8), the children were still on the Egyptian side, and the miracle of the "parting of the waters" of the Red Sea had to be performed to enable the hosts of Yahveh to cross to the eastern or Arabian side of the Red Sea.

THE HOSTS ON THE MARCH

The hosts of Yahveh went not like a straggling rabble of fugitive slaves, hastening to escape, but proud in formal marching array, as armies march. If they marched in close order, as many as fifty abreast, with an interval of only one yard between their serried ranks, there would have been 48,284 ranks, which would form a column twenty-eight miles long! But the truth is even more remarkable, if the Bible is accurate on the point; for the Hebrew text says: "And the children of Israel went up by five in a rank out of the land of Egypt" (Ex. 13: 18; see marginal note) -- which would make the column 280 miles long! Such a multitude, with all its encumbrances, could not possibly march through the desert sands very many miles a day--say ten, fifteen, or twenty at the most. (The American army of chosen foot-troops marches only twelve to fifteen miles a day under average conditions.) Moreover, the front ranks must march the whole 28 (or 280) miles before the rear ranks could even start. So hardly half of the "hosts of Yahveh" could even get away that first day, even if they had started early. But they had first to gather at Rameses from all over Egypt--several hundreds of miles in length--and we know not how much of that wonderful day they occupied in the rendezvous; the whole host could not possibly reach Succoth, somewhere, according to the text, "Out of the land of Egypt," till the second or third day, or the next week, or the next month, even if they could all have mobilized at Rameses on that "selfsame day," as they are said to have done. How many interminable miles the column was stretched out by the millions of sheep and cattle, not marching in close battle array, of course, unless divinely herded, we have no revelation, nor adequate data to compute.

What the millions of cattle fed upon in the prolonged hike to the Red Sea, across the desert sands, with scant vegetation, divine revelation does not tell. Nor were the children much better provided for; they had only a little unleavened dough on their shoulders, "because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual" (Ex. 12: 39).

A remarkable circumstance may be noted here: these fugitive slaves are represented as having slaves of their own which they carried away with them. Their provident Yahveh, in his ordinance of the passover, the very first law he ever gave them, as they fled from slavery in Egypt, made provision for the observance of that pious ceremony by "every man's servant that is bought for money," after the bloody violence of circumcision had been perpetrated upon him (Ex. 12: 44).

THE HOSTS AFRAID OF WAR

Wonders such as these never cease in the providence of Yahveh to his Chosen People Israel; the relation of such wonders by the sacred writers is incessant. When the "hosts of Yahveh" got to Succoth, Yahveh was afraid for them, and "led them not through the way of the Philistines, although that was near; for Elohim said, Lest peradventure, the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt" (Ex. 13: 17); although they were 603,550 armed warriors, and were being led expressly to the armed conquest and extermination of "seven nations greater and mightier" than all Israel! So "Elohim led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea: and the Children of Israel went up harnessed [armed] out of the land of Egypt (13: 18).

Where did these fleeing slaves get their arms--swords, spears, shields, bows and arrows, armor, for 603,550 soldiers? Slaves are not usually allowed to keep arms, nor to be so trained that on one day's sudden notice they can, presto, change from a horde of slaves to soldiers who march out "by their armies" full panoplied for war. And if they were armed soldiers going forth to conquest, under the personal command of their God, a notable "Man of war," why should they "repent if they see war," between other peoples, and wish in fright to return to slavery? Revelation is silent on these mysteries. And despite of all Yahveh's concern for his warriors "lest they see war," they had not been three months out of Egypt before they had war with the Amalekites at Rephidim, when Aaron and Hur had to hold up the hands of Moses all day before the Israelites could finally win the battle (Ex. 17: 8-13).

THE RED SEA MASSACRE

Yahveh was not yet satisfied with plaguing the Egyptians and with showing off his terrible and holy wonders upon them. He had bloodily baited Pharaoh into letting his slaves go; half a dozen times Pharaoh in terror had "inclined to let the people go," but Yahveh had interfered and "hardened Pharaoh's heart that he should not let them go." And when the Israelites finally got away and Pharaoh was happily rid of them, Yahveh devised another wholesale destruction, to his own honor, and said: "I will harden Pharaoh's heart that he shall follow after them, and I will be honored upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, that the Egyptians may know that I am Yahveh" (Ex. 14: 4). The tragedy of the Red Sea and the death by drowning of the hosts of Pharaoh do not concern us now; but it is interesting to note that as soon as the valiant warriors, 603,550 strong, saw the hosts of Pharaoh, also very suddenly mustered, appear in pursuit, "they were sore afraid; and the children of Israel cried out unto Yahveh," and they cravenly said:

"Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians; for it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness" (Ex. 14: 10, 12) -- a different cry, this of 603,550 armed warriors of Yahveh, from that of one later patriot who fired his country's heart with the words: "I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!" And through their whole sacred history the people of Yahveh blubbered and wailed at every trial and in every time of danger, real or fancied.

THE CHILDREN WAIL FOR WATER

Only three days after this Red Sea massacre Yahveh's Chosen People got further into the wilderness of Shur, and "found no water" (Ex. 15: 22); whereupon they wailed again and started an insurrection; then moved on to Marah, the waters of which were so bitter they could not drink, and they wailed again, and cried: "What shall we drink?" (15: 24). So Yahveh made the bitter waters sweet for his crying children, and brought them on to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water, and seventy palm trees; and the whole 2,414,200 Israelites, all their camp-followers, and their millions of cattle encamped there by the twelve wells under the seventy palm trees (15: 27). This is the last natural water supply they saw until thirty-eight years later they happily encountered a well of Beer! (Num. 21: 16). They were supplied miraculously with water only twice, or once with the phenomena recorded in two ways. The want of water is no metaphor in that "desert land," in that "waste howling wilderness," as it is often described, "that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water" (Deut. 8: 15); the Children of Israel wail and cry: "Why have ye brought up the congregation of Yahveh into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die [in] this evil place? ... neither is there any water to drink" (Num. 20: 4, 5).

SMITING THE ROCK FOR WATER

After leaving the twelve wells of Elim, the Israelites came into the wilderness of Sin, in the middle of the second month after the passover, and started a bread riot, which was quieted by the miracle of quails and daily manna (Ex. 16). Then they marched on to Rephidim, and at once rioted because "there was no water for the people to drink," and they were about to stone Moses to death.

Yahveh here came to the rescue, and told Moses to take his wondrous rod and "smite the rock in Horeb" and bring water from it; and Yahveh stood upon the rock to watch the performance. Moses smote the rock, the waters gushed out, and the people drank; and Moses "called the name of the place Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel." This is related in Exodus 17: and is said to have occurred in or near the wilderness of Sin, some three months (Ex. 16: 1) after leaving Egypt, in 1491 B.C.

But in Numbers 20: under the marginal date 1453 B.C. (that is, 38 years later), the same or a very similar story is told again, but differently. For "then came the children of Israel into the desert of Zin [instead of Sin], in the first month," and stopped at Kadesh; and "there was no water for the congregation"; so they wailed and rioted again, because they and their cattle were like to die. This time Yahveh told Moses to take his rod and go with Aaron to a certain rock, and "speak ye to the rock"-instead of using the rod to smite it. But Moses was annoyed this time, and he meekly yelled at the Israelites: "Hear now, ye rebels" (20: 10), and instead of gently speaking to the rock, as Yahveh had commanded, he "lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice," and the waters gushed forth abundantly.

But now Yahveh was angry with Moses and Aaron, and he said to them: "Because ye have not believed me, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them"; and the sacred writer informs us: "This is the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with Yahveh" (20: 13). Here we have the desert of Sin and the desert of Zin, and two waters Meribah, but thirty-eight years apart, and each with entirely different circumstances; which was which? Let him unravel who is curious. In either event, so far as revealed, this is about all the water that the millions of Chosen and their millions of cattle had to drink in the terrible wilderness for almost forty years.

FOOD RIOTS-HEAVENLY MANNA AND QUAILS

As for human food and cattle-feed, this mystery of the ages has never been satisfactorily solved by revelation or speculation.

The children of Israel started out, as we have seen, with only a little unleavened dough, "neither had they prepared for themselves any victual" (Ex. 12: 39); and of course they carried no cattle-feed. One naturally wonders what they and their cattle had to eat until "on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of Egypt" they reached the wilderness of Sin (Ex. 16), Here was their first recorded food riot; the whole congregation rebelled, crying: "Would to God we had died by the hand of Yahveh in Egypt, when we did sit by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (16: 3)! It is curious that they should die with hunger when they had at least 2,414,200 sheep and "very much cattle" along with them. That the sheep alone, with nothing at all to eat or drink, thrive and produced at least 241,420 male lambs every year of the forty years in the wilderness for the annual passover feast is another divine mystery. And it is truly a marvel, when the Chosen had started out with only a little dough on their shoulders, quickly consumed raw, and then for forty years were complaining and rioting because they had no bread to eat, where they ever got the tons of "fine flour" with which to make the famous "shewbread" for the altar of Yahveh, and the untold amounts of "unleavened bread" which they must eat in their feasts, and the "fine flour" they were required to offer with their countless sacrifices; to say nothing of the great quantities of oil accompanying them, or of the millions of animals and birds for the manifold and interminable sacrifices which they are said to have made all through the forty years in the wilderness. Amos questions (5: 25) and Jeremiah denies (v2: 22) flesh sacrifices in the wilderness. And as we shall soon see, the Aaron family were simply gorged with meat from these sacrifices, which they were under dire obligation to eat at all hazards.

However, when the Israelites started their food riot, Yahveh was merciful, and said he would "rain bread from heaven" (Ex. 16: 4) for his children; but Moses misinterpreted or exaggerated the message, and reported to them: "Yahveh shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full" (16: 8). Yahveh graciously amended his promise to conform to the version which Moses had reported. And this is the way that Yahveh fulfilled his bounteous promises: that evening "quails came up, and covered the camp" (Ex. 16: 13), and in the morning heavenly manna, which had very peculiar qualities, and tasted "like wafers made with honey" (Ex. 16: 31) or else "the taste thereof was like the taste of fresh oil" (Num. 11: 8), but whether olive oil, castor oil, kerosene oil, hair oil, or oil of saints is not revealed. Anyhow the children of Israel didn't like it at all as a steady diet. This is all they had to eat however for forty years, as the quails were a special treat for one day only; we hear them at their next food riot longing for the leeks and onions and garlic of Egypt, and saying: "There is nothing at all, besides this manna" (Num. 11: 6); and again they said: "Our souls do loathe this light bread" (Num. 21: 5); and, odd as it is, "they wept in the ears of Yahveh, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat?" (Num. 11: 4).

Passing strange was this danger of starvation in the presence of several million sheep and cattle, unless, indeed, the poor beasts were so starved themselves as to be not fit to eat. And Moses explicitly had these cattle in mind; for when Yahveh promised him flesh for the children of Israel to eat, he reasoned thus with Yahveh: "The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?" (Num. 11: 21, 22) To starve to death under such circumstances! And "the anger of Yahveh was kindled greatly"; and he graciously promised: "Ye shall not

eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; But even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you" (Sum. 11: 19, 20)!

So, in his loving-kindness and bounteous providence, Yahveh provided a quail feast on prodigious scale; for "there went forth a wind from Yahveh, and brought quails from the sea" (perhaps flying-fish, for sea-quail are not known on the market, at least in these days); and note this: those quails fell and were stacked up on the face of the earth "as it were a day's journey round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth" (Num. 11: 31)! This simple inspired narrative, related in one Bible verse, and about which I never heard a single sermon in my life, is the most stupendous miracle of Divine bounty in all sacred history, and peremptorily challenges our admiring attention.

MIRACLE AND MATHEMATICS

Let us figure a bit on this astonishing fall of quails, and see how far figures, which do not lie, may be an aid, or a handicap, to faith. The quails were stacked up "two cubits high" for a distance of "a day's journey round the camp." A Bible cubit is 22 inches; two cubits are therefore 44 inches. A biblical "day's journey," according to the Jewish Encyclopedia, is 44,815 meters (1 meter is

39.37 inches, or 1.1 yards), which equals 49,010 yards, 27.8 miles. Now, the camp of Israel (laid out as indicated in Numbers 2: and glowingly described by Balaam in Numbers 2iv) was, according to accepted calculations, twelve miles square. It would be crowded, with about 16,800 persons to the square mile; the densest population in the worst slums of any modern city is only some 25,000 to the square mile, in many-storied tenement houses. And this doesn't allow a square foot for the millions of cattle.

Around this camp, twelve miles square, on all its four sides, lay heaped these miraculous quails, piled 44 inches high. Assuming, for the sake of a minimum of miracle, and therefore of strain on faith, that this stack of quails began close to the four sides of the camp and extended for 27.8 miles in every direction, we have a solid square of quails measuring from one outer edge to another 67.6

miles, deducting of course the twelve-mile square occupied by the camp in the center. The solid mass therefore covered 4569.76 square miles, from which deducting the 144 square miles of the central camp leaves us 4425.76 square miles of quails piled 44 inches high. This stack of quails thus covered an area by 500 square miles larger than the whole states of Delaware and Rhode Island, plus the city of Greater New York! Such is the bounty of Yahveh, or such the boundlessness of inspiration. As to the space occupied, one quail, packed tight by the weight of the mass, might be compressed into about 3 inches of space each way, which would amount to 27 cubic inches of space per quail, or 64 quails to the cubic foot of space throughout the mass. Now, a surface of 4425.76 square miles, heaped 44 inches high with objects each occupying 27 cubic inches would make a considerable mass, which we must reduce to terms.

One linear mile contains 5280 feet; one square mile therefore contains 27,878,400 square feet. The whole area of 4425.76 square miles would equal 123,383,107,584 square feet. Each square foot being covered 44 inches, or 3.66 feet, high with quails, each quail occupying 27 cubic inches of space, with 64 quails to the cubic foot, the total would be 452,404,727,808 cubic feet of quails. A bit of ready reckoning, on this conservative basis, gives us just 28,953,902,579,712 quails in this divine prodigy of a pot-hunt! Ever soul of the 2,414,200 of the "hosts of Yahveh" therefore had the liberal allowance of 11,993,167 quails. We can well believe, if the Children of Israel had to eat so many quails, even in "a whole month," that, as Yahveh promised or threatened, they would "come out at your nostrils and be loathsome to-you!"

It was a prodigious task to harvest all those quails; indeed, inspiration tells us, "the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails: ... and they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp" (Num. 11: 32). This must mean all around within the camp; for the quails were already spread abroad for 67.6 miles "round about the camp" outside. Indeed, as these wonderful quails stretched for nearly 28 miles, a whole day's journey, on every hand around the camp, an ordinary uninspired mind cannot grasp the process by which the millions of Chosen ever accomplished the incessant going back and forth, out and in, the hundreds of thousands of times necessary to harvest their marvelous crop of quails. And how quails covering compactly an area of 4425 square miles could be "spread abroad," when garnered in, in the 144 square miles of the camp, already crowded with tents and people, or where they ever put the feathers and "cleanings," is another holy wonder-if the whole affair were not simply a matter of simple faith. And it is

curious where the 2,414,200 Israelites stood to be able to get at the quail-picking; and how each person could gather up 11,993,167 quails in 36 hours, which would require them to gather up, each one, 335,366 quails per hour, or 5589 quails ever minute, or nearly 94 quails per second of uninterrupted time, leaving them no time to carry the quails the average 28-miles into camp to spread them abroad, and no time to eat, or sleep, or sacrifice, or die, which over 1700 a day did, or to bury their dead, or to be born, as the comparison of the two censuses shows 1700 a day were, or for any other of the daily necessities of camp-life.

Devoutly conjuring away all these trifling speculations, let us behold the climax of tragedy which capped this miracle of divine bounty. Yahveh had promised his flesh-famishing Children flesh to eat for "even a whole month," until they should be so gorged with eating quail that it should come out loathsomely at their nostrils; and Yahveh's divine word would seem to be inviolable. But when each of the children of Israel had gathered up his ration of twelve-million quails, and started with great joy and hunger, as we may imagine, after thirty-six hours' hungry wait, to eat them, lo! "while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of Yahveh was kindled against the people, and Yahveh smote the people with a very great plague" (Num. 11: 33), and untold numbers of the Israelites were slain by their bounteous loving heavenly Father! And this simply because they "lusted" for something to eat besides that loathed, oily-honey manna. Whether the miraculous quails were divinely instilled with miraculous venom and gave Yahveh's Chosen wholesale ptomaine poisoning, or whether it was simply another case of Jahvistic slaying, so abundant in his sacred record, the divine revelation leaves us unadvised. In either event, Yahveh seems to have violated his sacred word, or at best "kept the word of promise to the ear, but broke it to the hope," as his children did not get their promised "flesh to eat for even a whole month," nor at all.

THE MOSES FAMILY

When Moses started on his divine mission extraordinary to the Pharaoh of Egypt, and of course before the exodus, he took along "his wife and sons" (Ex. 4: 20), whose names are not there given.

A very few months later, when Moses had led the children of Israel into camp at Rephidim, his father-in-law (Jethro or however named), who lived somewhere neaephidim, "took Zipporah and her two sons" and went to pay a visit to Moses at the camp. The two sons are now named, according to the Hebrew, American Indian, and other savage usage of naming children in commemoration of some notable event:

"the name of the one was Gershom; for, he said, I have been an alien in a strange land: and the name of the other was Eliezer; for the God of my father, said he, was mine help, and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh" (Ex. 18: 3, 4). The name of the first son thus commemorated the sojourn of Moses in the land of Midian, whither he fled after he murdered the Egyptian, and where he married Zipporah, daughter of Jethro, heathen priest of Midian. The name of the second son commemorated the exodus from Egypt and deliverance "from the sword of Pharaoh." But as the exodus had taken place only a couple of months before, it is curious how this son of Moses, born we know not how long before Moses left Midian "to go unto Pharaoh," could have a name commemorative of an event which had just, in the providence of Yahveh, come to pass.

WHO PROPOSED THE JUDGES OF ISRAEL?

Another incident of inspired narrative is also connected with this visit of Jethro, as related in Exodus 18. Moses was very much over-worked with the strenuous task of trying to run the whole encampment alone and to hold in the "stiff-necked and rebellious people," and be "sat to judge the people from the morning unto the evening"; for Moses said: "I judge between one and the other, and I do make them know the statutes of Yahveh and his laws." But this was at Rephidim, before the "hosts of Yahveh" came to Sinai, where the "statutes and laws of Yahveh" are said to have originated; so Moses is mistaken in talking about making known such statutes and laws even before he knew them himself, which, as we shall see, he never did. Moreover he admits that he was very unsuccessful in his teaching, for forty years later he complains to his followers: "Yet in this thing ye did not believe Yahveh your God" (Deut. 1: 32).

However, his good pagan father-in-law felt sorry for Moses, and said to him: "The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away. ... for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone." And Jethro further said:

"Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel"; and this was his advice to Moses: "Provide out of all the people able men. ... and place such over them, to be rulers" over different sections, "and let them judge the people at all seasons. ... So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father-in-law, and did all that he had said. And Moses chose able men, ... and they judged the people" (Ex.

18: 17-26). Certainly Jethro is entitled to the credit for this plan, which he originated. We might therefore be surprised, if all sense of surprise had not been paralyzed in this search of the Scripture, to find Moses in his harangue to the people by Jordan (Deut. 1: 9-19) bragging about the institution of judges as a device all his own and begun at Horeb, at a later date. Moses there says: "I spake unto you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone. How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden, and your strife? Take you wise men, and I will make them rulers over you. And ye answered me, and said, The thing which thou hast spoken is good for us to do. So I took the chiefs of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you." Both of these inspired stories cannot be accurate, whatever one may think as to the historicity of either.

THE TENTS OF ISRAEL

In Egypt the Chosen, though slaves, lived in houses: they escaped the passover massacre by smearing blood on the "door posts of their houses"; the Egyptians, being highly civilized, with great cities, lived also in houses, not in tents. Yet we find the 2,414,200 Chosen, from Succoth on through the forty years' journey, encamped in tents; scores of times these tents are mentioned in the sacred texts. We will inspect these tents with the eyes of faith.

The encampment of spreading tents must have presented a beautiful and impressive spectacle, for, when he saw it, "Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel abiding in his tents according to their tribes; and the spirit of Elohim [Gods; Balaam was a pagan] came upon him. And he took up his parable," and said:

"How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as the trees of lign aloes, ... and as cedar trees beside the waters" (Num. 24: 2-6). But this glowing record of the encampment of tents flatly contradicts another inspired text, which is the foundation of one of the great sacred festivals of the Chosen even to this day, the Feast of Tabernacles, a little later instituted (Lev. 23: 40-43) by Yahveh himself. Here Moses commands the Chosen to take, every year at harvest time, "boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brooks," wherewith to construct "booths"; and, says Yahveh, "ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites shall dwell in booths: That your generations may know that I made the Children of Israel to dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am Yahveh your God." The waste howling wilderness "where no water is," could not, of course, afford trees such as these "goodly" ones, nor any trees at all, and certainly not trees enough to build "booths" for forty years for 2,414,200 Chosen People. However this may be, they never observed the dwelling in booths till after the "discovery" of the Book of the Law, and the return from the captivity-"since the days of Joshua unto that day had not the children of Israel done so" (Neh. 8: 17). This is an indication that the law of Moses had never existed through all those ages.

If the Israelites were in the wilderness at all, and lived in anything, it was in tents. So for a moment we will consider these tents, and the holy camp, and several curious features connected with their encampments. Where did the Chosen get their tents, and how did they manage to lug them along on their flight out of Egypt?

The inspired history tells us that they fled in such haste that they carried only unleavened dough and their kneading troughs bound up in their clothes on their shoulders, without even any victuals (Ex. 12: 39); there is not a word about heavy and cumbersome tents. Tents are heavy, with canvas or hair-cloth, ropes, poles, and pegs; in the U.S. Army a little "dog-tent" merely to shelter two soldiers lying down, is divided between its two occupants as luggage. But these tents of the Israelites must have been big family affairs, for men, women, and children to live in with decency and some degree of comfort, and they must have been very heavy. How did the Israelites carry them? But first, how did they get them? As they lived in houses in Egypt, it would be remarkable if each family, awaiting marching orders for the promised land, which until a single day previously they had no premonition of, should have had a tent in the garret.

And how many tents must they have had? To crowd indecently ten persons, male and female, old and young, sick and dying, into each tent would have required at least 241,420 large and heavy tents, to be lugged in their

first flight, and for forty years wandering in the wilderness. We are nowhere told that the children of Israel had horses, or knew how to ride; it seems that 750 years later the Chosen could not ride horses even if they had had them, foab-shakeh offered them, on behalf of the King of Assyria, "two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them" (2 Kings 19: 23). And while it is said (Deut. 29: 5) that in the whole forty years "your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot," yet we are not told that tents were thus providentially preserved. How the clothes and shoes of the little children who started on the forty-year tramp sufficed for them as they grew larger, unless the clothes and shoes expanded along with their skins from year to year, has become an old joke. No such Providence is recorded as to the tents of Israel.

THE GREAT ENCAMPMENTS

As for their encampments, who shall justly estimate their size and extent, for a host of two and a half million people, with all their slaves and camp-followers, and with more than that number of sheep and cattle? The question would be of no concern if it did not involve some further strains on faith. Every one of the forty-two times the camp was pitched (Num. 33), there must be suitable space found for some 250,000 tents, laid out (Num. 2) regularly four-square around the holy tabernacle, after that was constructed, and with the necessary streets and passages, and proper spaces between the tents. A man in a coffin occupies about twelve square feet, six feet by two. Living people would not be packed in their tents like corpses or sardines; they must have at least, say, three times that space, thirty-six square feet or four square yards each. A tent to house ten persons with minimum decency must occupy therefore an average of forty square yards.

If the 241,420 such tents were set one against another, with no intervening space or separating streets, they would occupy 9,656,800 square yards, or over 1995 acres of ground; a little more than three square miles. But the desert was vast, there was no need for such impossible crowding; ample room was available for seemly spacing of tents, for streets and areas, for the great central tabernacle and its court, and for the 22,000 Levites, not counted in the soldier-census, who must "pitch round about the tabernacle," as well as space for the rounding up of the millions of cattle.

These allowances for order, decency, and comfort would much extend the circuit of the camp, and make more reasonable the accepted estimate that "this encampment is computed to have formed a movable city of twelve miles square," or an area of 144 square miles, which is certainly modest for a population equal to that of Chicago, which covers 198 square miles. The tabernacle stood in the center, thus six miles from the outskirts of the camp in either direction.

SOME FEATURES OF CAMP-LIFE

So much for the lay-out of the sacred encampment. What is the point of faith involved? Whenever a sacrifice of sin-offering was made by the priest, a daily and constant service, "the skin of the bullock, and all his flesh, ... even the whole bullock shall he carry forth without the camp unto a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn him on the wood with fire" (Lev. 4: 11, 12). This was the personal chore of the priest himself, of whom there were oddly three, Aaron and his sons Eleazar and Ithamar. And there were thousands upon thousands of sacrifices, for every imaginable thing and occasion; and the carcasses and offal of the slaughtered cattle must always be taken "without the camp" and burned, by these three poor priests, and Father Aaron was over 80 years old. So these chores would keep them going, time after time, six miles out and six miles back, lugging heavy and bloody carcasses and offal through the main streets of the camp, incessantly, and leave them no time for their holy, bloody sacrifices of myriads of animals, as described in Exodus 29, and all through Leviticus. Moreover, the entire garbage, refuse, ashes, and filth of every kind of two and a half million people and millions of cattle must be constantly and with extreme care carried outside the camp, practically under the awful threat of annihilation; for "Yahveh. thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee" (Deut. 23: 12-14); and everybody who reads the Bible knows what the Chosen's enemies used to do to them whenever their Yahveh wasn't looking closely after them.

These inspired verses enshrine, too, for our admiration, material details: even the ordinary personal necessities of nature must be relieved "without the camp," and covered up by digging with a paddle (Deut. 23: 13); the 603,500-odd valiant soldiers of Yahveh were commanded by Yahveh: "Thou shalt have a paddle upon thy

weapon" for this digging operation! There must have been an advance revelation of the peculiar pattern of these funny weapons, with a spear-point on one end and a scavenger-paddle on the other, for the Chosen to have got them manufactured to special order by the arinourers of Egypt. And it is to be wondered how the non-combatants, women-folk and little children, did their digging on these occasions, unless they borrowed some warrior-paddle not then in use, or had a paddle-armed soldier for an escort when they went perforce "without the camp." Just think for a moment, and then admire the strange providence of Yahveh: two and a half millions of his Chosen People, old and young, sick and infirm, men, women, and children, trotting at all hours of day and night, from the more central parts of the encampment some twelve miles out and back, to find a suitable spot "without the camp" to respond to their several calls; and often even before they got back home, having to turn and trek all over again! And every mother's son and daughter of the "hosts of Yahveh" must make an average of six miles, both ways, several times daily.

Moreover, as Yahveh got angry with his Chosen, whom he had repeatedly promised to bring into Canaan, and as he caused every one of them, except Joshua and Caleb, to die in the wilderness, there were on the average 1700 deaths and funerals per day for forty years, at the rate of 72 per hour, more than one for very minute of every day and all the corpses must also be carried "without the camp" for burial, an average of six miles going and returning. And as the census taken at the end of the forty years shows but a slight decrease in numbers from that taken at the beginning, the entire host was renewed by a birth-rate of over one a minute for forty years; and all the debris must be lugged without the camp and disposed of. Verily the Chosen had their troubles.

THE "BURNING QUESTION" OF FUEL

There is also the question of fires and fuel. The myriads of sacrifices and burnt offerings at the tabernacle, besides the wasteful burning "without the camp" of practically entire animals, and that too when the children of Israel were straying and rioting for "flesh to eat," required many fires and hence much firewood. Where, there in the "waste howling wilderness," did they get so much fuel? -- a burning question nowhere answered by revelation. In the Arabian wilderness at certain seasons, and always at night, when the fiery sun had set, the cold was fearfully intense; the Chosen must have been grievously beset to find firewood to keep themselves from freezing, and it is never once recorded that stove-wood was miraculously provided either to keep them warm or to cook manna, to say nothing of the big quail feast. The inspired Word tells us much of the fires and of the ashes, but vouchsafes nothing about the immense forests which must have been required to supply a population like that of modern Chicago with firewood for heating, cooking, and burning hecatombs every day for forty years.

IS IT GOD'S WORD?

CHAPTER 5: THE FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS

THE FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS
THE MISTAKE ABOUT THE PRIESTS
THE TWO CENSUSES IN THE WILDERNESS
SOME CENSUS ODDITIES THE LEVITES
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WAR WITH BASHAN
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SPORTING WITH MOAB
CENSUS TAKING
EXPEDITION TO MIDIAN
"MOPPING UP"

THE FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS

IN the third month after the hegira from Egypt the hosts of Yahveh came to the "desert of Sinai, and pitched in the wilderness, and camped before the mount" (Ex. 19: 1, 2). This was Mt. Sinai (named for the pagan moon-god Sin), also confusedly called Horeb, and sacred as the "Mount of God,"-though in Hebrew it is called Harha-Elohim, the "Mount of the Gods."

Mt. Sinai is said by the Bible dictionary, with a marvelously developed bump of locality, to be "156 miles southeast of Cairo, Egypt"; but the Encyclopedia Britannica says that the sacred writers locate the place "only by aid of the imagination" (Vol. 25: p. 138), and that the "Mount of Yahveh" has never been identified. Even the identification of Sinai, however, would prove none of the stories of Yahveh to be true, any more than Olympus proves the existence of Zeus.

But if anywhere, Mt. Sinai was in Midian, in the country of Jethro, and near the site of the burning bush; for Yahveh had said:

"When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve ha-Elohim [the Gods] upon this mountain" (Ex. 3: 12). And it was in the "great and terrible wilderness," at a choice locality where the 3,000,000 Chosen People could spread their 12-mile square camp and corral their vast herds of sheep and cattle; and a mountain of such special and peculiar shape that the Chosen could build a fence around it (if they had the timber), or in some other way "set bounds about the mount" to keep the people and the cattle away from its fatal sides, lest Yahveh "break forth upon them, and many of them perish." It was also fearfully fenced off with a taboo of terror from the curious: "whosoever toucheth the mount shall surely be put to death," stoned or shot through, even beasts, declared Yahveh (Ex. 19: 12, 21-24).

After these remarkable precautions for mystery and secrecy, the Chosen were required to be "sanctified," an operation consisting of washing their clothes (Ex. 19: 10) -- though where in the wilderness they got the water for laundering when they were rioting for water to drink is not revealed-and of three days' mortification of the flesh by abstaining from their one and only recorded pleasurable pastime in the wilderness the carnal

knowledge of their women (19: 15). These mystic directions were given by Yahveh to Moses on the day of arrival at Sinai, when Moses, without being invited, and apparently without knowing that Yahveh was there, made two informal calls on Yahveh (19: 3, 8). On the second Yahveh said that he would "come down in sight of all the people" on the third day thereafter. But it was not Yahveh alone whom Moses visited on these occasions; the Hebrew text distinctly says: "And Moses went up to the Gods [ha-Elohim], and Yahveh called unto him from the mountain" (19: 3).

Just how these things did pass at that mysterious place, the different appearances of Yahveh and the numerous errand-boy trips of eighty-year-old Moses up and down the steep mountain during a year's time, is a veritable Chinese puzzle, which we need not try to work out. In any event, Moses went down and "sanctified the people" in the manner and form indicated, and built the fence. On the third day, Yahveh, amid thunders and lightnings, descended in fire upon the mountain, which "was altogether on a smoke"; and Moses went up for the third visit (19: 20).

When Moses had hardly got to the top of the mountain, Yahveh, without so much as "Good morning, Moses," told him: "Go down, charge the people" about washing up and sanctifying and making the fence around the mountain (19: 21, 22). Moses expostulated that this had already been done (19: 23); but Yahveh cut him short, saying: "Away, get thee down" (19: 24); so, meekly enough, "Moses went down unto the people, and spake unto them" (19: 25), though apparently he did not tell them of Yahveh's peculiar command to do what had already been done three days before, as Moses had reported to him (19: 23).

THE MISTAKE ABOUT THE PRIESTS

Before seeking to unravel what next is related, we may note another big mistake that Yahveh made. In sending Moses back to do what had already been done, Yahveh expressly commanded: "And let the priests also, which come near to Yahveh, sanctify themselves" (19: 22); and he told Moses that Brother Aaron might come up with him next time; but, said Yahveh, "let not the priests and the people" try to come up (19: 24). This is a remarkable slip on the part of Yahveh, for there were no priests at that time; the priesthood was not instituted until later in the Sinaitic proceedings, when Aaron and his four sons were designated to be the first priests (Ex. 28: 1), and it was made death for any one else to presume to act as priest. As further proof of there being no priests yet, we find Moses, after delivering the first batch of "law" (Ex. 24: 4, 5), himself building an altar under the hill, twelve phallic mazzebot, and sending "young men of the children of Israel" to do the priestly job of making burnt offerings and sacrificing peace-offerings unto Yahveh; for all the Chosen were at that time "a kingdom of priests" (Ex. 19: 6) -- every man his own priest. And Brother Aaron, as a priest, during Moses' next forty-day sojourn up on the mountain, made gods of the golden calves, and sacrificed to them, thus again proving that there was no "law" as to "priests of Yahveh," and that "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" was not yet law.

The puzzles of the giving of the law, and the ten commandments, here at Sinai, we reserve for consideration in another chapter, and will proceed with the wonders of the wanderings in the wilderness.

THE TWO CENSUSES IN THE WILDERNESS

Before leaving Sinai, in the beginning of the second year of the exodus (Num. 1: 1), Yahveh ordered a census to be taken of "every male from twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel" (1: 3); and they were so numbered by Moses and Aaron. If the all-knowing Yahveh, who is reputed to number even all the hairs of the head, had simply stated the number himself, it would have saved his inspired recorder much trouble besides some suspicions of padded returns. Indeed, this is exactly what we are surprised to find is revealed as having happened, in very curious anticipation of the formal and tedious census enumeration. For, at Sinai, some months before the taking of the first census, Yahveh ordered assessments to be laid on the people for the expenses of making and outfitting the holy ark and tabernacle; and he commanded: "When there thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto Yahveh, that there may be no plague among them when thou numberest them" (Ex. 30: 11, 12) -- a very persuasive argument to pay up. Consequently there was levied upon every soldier of Israel "a bekah for every man, that is, half a shekel, ... for every one that went to be numbered, from twenty years old and upward, for

603,550 men" (Ex. 38: 26) -- the exact number disclosed by the first census when it was later taken. So the whole labor was unnecessary.

The census was taken by tribes, and curiously enough, every single tribe polled even numbers of hundreds except one, Gad, which had an odd fifty in its tally.

Again, at the end of the forty years' wandering in the wilderness, and just after the massacre of the plague of fiery serpents, another like census was taken in the plains of Moab, near Jordan; and here the inspired total is rightly given as 601,730 (Num. 26: 51). Evidently the birth-rate had not quite kept pace with the natural mortality and the frequent large massacres by Yahveh of his Chosen. In neither census were the Levites numbered in these totals, as we shall presently notice.

SOME CENSUS ODDITIES

Several curiosities of these two censuses may be briefly noticed. We have seen how extraordinary are the inspired vital statistics which serve as the basis of the accepted figures showing that seventy persons had expanded in only four generations into quite two and a half millions or more. The editor of the Self-Interpreting Bible appends a note to the first tabulation of returns, saying: "If to this number (603,550) we add the Levites, and all the women and children below twenty years of age, it will make about three millions of Israelites, besides the 'mixed multitude'"! But in order not to impose upon Providence, we will be content with our more modest figures.

One of the sons of Jacob migrating into Egypt was Dan. For him, the first generation was one son, Hushim (Gen. 46: 23), and he had no other, for in the second census lists (Num. 26: 4-2) the "sons of Dan" constitute but one family, here called Shuhamites. In the returns of the first census, however, the number of Danites, males of military age, was 62,700 (Num. 1: 39): in the second census their number is recorded as 64,400 (26: 43): all these offspring (only males over twenty fit for war), of one son in three generations! To accomplish this prodigy, Hushim or Shuham and each of his sons and grandsons must each have had over eighty children of both Sexes. And it is curious that the offspring of the one son of Dan should be nearly twice as many as those of the ten sons of Benjamin, who numbered only 35,400 warriors in the first census (Num. 1: 3,7), and 45,600 in the second (26: 41).

THE LEVITES

As the sons of Levi, or the Levites, came early into prominence, we may briefly follow their family genealogy. In Genesis, "the sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari (46: 11), are among the 70 Jacobites who migrate to Egypt; these three were the first generation, named again in Exodus (6: 16). The second generation is enumerated by names in Exodus 6: 17-19: two sons of Gershon, four sons of Kohath, and two sons of Merari; a second generation of eight persons. The third generation is partly accounted for in Exodus 6: 20-23. Three of the four sons of Kohath (6: 18) increased to eight: two sons of Amram (Aaron and Moses); three sons of Izhar; and three of Uzziel. The fourth, Hebron, is not credited with any sons; thus the third generation so far as named is only eight persons. The same names of these generations are recorded in Numbers 3. Assuming that the two sons of Gershon and the two of Merari showed the same increase, four each, then all the male Levites of the third generation would be sixteen persons. For the fourth generation, we have only the record of the two sons of Amram, Moses and Aaron, the first of whom had two sons, the latter four. At the same rate of increase, the sixteen males of the third generation would amount, in the fourth--that is, at the first census--to 48 persons (male and female) -- or, rather, to 44, as the four sons of Aaron were numbered, not with the Levites, but as priests. Yet the inspired word of Yahveh says that the number of Levites of "service age," from thirty to fifty years, amounted to 8580 (Num. 4: 47, 48), and all the males (Levites) "from a month old and upward," were 22,000 (Num. 3: 40); at the second census they numbered 23,000 (26: 62). And this was only the males; there would naturally be about the same number of females, or some 45,000 Levites. We have seen that the total number of male "sons of Levi" of this fourth generation was approximately forty-four souls.

THE MOTHERS OF ISRAEL

We have noted already the returns of the first census, at Sinai, giving 603,550 warriors over twenty years of age, 22,000 male Levites, and an estimated total of nearly 2,500,000 the hosts of Yahveh. Now the credit of this whole story is impeached by another inspired contradiction. Yahveh had first claimed to himself, as sanctified, or devoted, "all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine" (Ex. 13: 2), in commemoration of his massacre of the first-born of Egypt (13: 15). But later Yahveh changed his mind (Num. 3: 41, 45), and said: "Take the Levites for me, instead of all the first-born among the children of Israel"; and he ordered Moses: "Number all the first-born of the males of the children of Israel from a month old and upward, and take the number of their names" (3: 40). Moses did so, and reported the number of male first-born to be 22,273 (3: 43). These first-born were not simply the first-born sons of their fathers, who might polygamously have many other sons by different mothers; they were the first-born of the mothers as well-"the first-born that openeth the womb." Thus there could have been, at the very most, 22,273 mothers of Israel in the host who had sons, and naturally a like number- 22,273 -- of fathers. Now, the male sons of all order of birth, "from twenty years of age and upward, able to bear arms in Israel," (who of course included many first-born sons), are averred to have been 603,550: the other males, those under twenty years of age and over military age and the unfit for service, would bring the total males to approximately one-half of the total host of 2,414,200, or about 1,207,100 males; all of whom must of course have had Hebrew mothers. For 22,273 mothers to have 1,207,100 sons would require every mother in Israel to have an average of fifty-five sons; and, naturally, about as many daughters! But as the average mother of Israel has been seen to have averaged three or four sons-but the whole thing is too preposterous to be worth more figuring: and with only 22,273 son-bearing women to 1,207,100 men, about one man in some scores could have a wife and male children! We change the subject.

THE PUZZLE OF "SAME" OR "NOT SAME"

When Yahveh first spoke to Moses in regard to the Chosen People, he said: "I am come down to deliver them and to bring them" to the land of promise (Ex. 3: 8); and he told Moses to lead them thither, and assured him: "Certainly I will be with thee" (3: 12). At Sinai, just after the golden calf incident, Yahveh said to Moses: "Depart, and go up hence, thou, and the people, unto the land which I swore I will give thee" (Ex. 33: 7); but, said Yahveh: "I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiff-necked people." He promised, however, to send his angel, and hornets to drive out the inhabitants (23: 23, 28) -- the "seven nations more and mightier" than Israel. Thus, in the year 1491 B.C., the land was promised distinctly and positively to this identical "host of Yahveh" which had just come out of Egypt, and Yahveh promised Moses that he, Moses, should lead the hosts into the promised land.

Now for the performances. We pass to the Book of Numbers. The hosts left Sinai and marched forward promptly and without much incident to very near the borders of the promised land, quite ready to enter it, and camped at Kadesh (Num. 13: 2,3). Kadesh (Heb., holy) is thus the first station of the forty-two in the wilderness; but in the list of stations in Numbers 3i3: Kadesh is the last, just before Mount Hor (33: 36, 37). The arrival at Kadesh, the first Station, was a little more than a year after the Israelites left Egypt (Num. 10: 11, 33; 20: 1). From Kadesh Moses, at the command of Yahveh (Num. 13: 1-3), sent the twelve spies "to spy out the land of Canaan." The majority report of the spies was of an alarming nature: "We saw giants there, in whose sight we were as grasshoppers" (13: 33). Thereupon all the people "lifted up their voice and cried, and wept that night," crying: "Would to God we had died in Egypt, or in the wilderness" (14: 1, 2), and they wanted to elect a captain and go back.

Yahveh had now one of his frequent bursts of anger, and said:

"I will smite them with pestilence," and kill them all; but Moses cajoled Yahveh out of his fatal purpose by an argument to his divine vanity, saying: "Now, if thou shalt kill all the people as one man, then the nations which have heard of the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because Yahveh was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness" (14: 16). Yahveh, seeing the force of this, compromised by swearing: "As I live. ... surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, ... save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. But your little ones, ... them will I bring in; ... but as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in

the wilderness forty years" (14: 21, 23, 30-32). So Yahveh commanded Moses, "To-morrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea" (14: 25).

We need not here follow their unhappy rambles of nearly forty years, until "in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month" (Deut. 1: 3), we find the "hosts of Yahveh" --Yahveh only knows where. According to verse 1, "These be the words which Moses spake [at this time] unto all Israel on this side of Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red sea"; that is, west and south of Jordan, and yet a long way from the promised land. But in verses 3 and 5, it is averred that all the following words, chapter after chapter long, (the same as those referred to in verse 1) "Moses spake unto the children of Israel, on this side Jordan, in the land of Moab," which is to the east of the Dead Sea, very near their promised goal; so near, indeed, that Moses says (9: 1) in that same speech: "Hear, O Israel, Thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess" the land. Moses guessed wrong, as it was not till some six months and more later, after his death, that the children of Israel crossed over, under Joshua. Nothing short of Infinite Wisdom can, it is believed, unravel all these inspired tangles of revelation. Wherever it was, there Moses delivered his famous harangue, reviewing first the forty years' wanderings, and falling into inextricable contradictions of statement. As to the identity of the "hosts of Yahveh" now assembled with those who came out of Egypt, the inspired record reads much like the maiden's game, plucking daisy petals and reciting, "He loves me, he loves me not, he loves me"-different with every sacred page we turn, and frequently different in several ways on the same page.

Moses begins (Deut. 1: 6) as if he were speaking to the identical host which left Egypt forty years before and encamped under Sinai: "Yahveh our God spake to us in Horeb"; "And I spake unto you at that time" (1: 9); "And I commanded you at that time all the things which ye should do" (1: 18); "And when we departed from Horeb" (1: 19) we did this and that, and ye suggested, and I sent spies to spy out the land; and "ye murmured in your tents" (1: 26) and "Yahveh heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and swore, saying: Surely there shall not one of this evil generation see that good land" (1: 34); and "Moreover, your little ones, they shall go thither, and unto them will I give it" (1: 39); and so on through this and the next chapter; "we" and "ye" did this and that, until "the space in which we came from Kadesh-Barnea, until we were come over the Brook Zered, was thirty-eight years; until all the generation of men of war were wasted out from among the host, as Yahveh swore unto them" (2: 14). First, "ye" and "we" are the same host that left Egypt; then that host is all dead, and "ye" and "we" are a different host altogether: id est, the now-grown-up "little ones" of the original host and the after-born. Later (5: 2, 3) in the same harangue, it is positively stated that the host to whom Moses was then and there speaking was the identical host whom he had led out of Egypt, and who hadn't died off at all: "Yahveh our God made a covenant with us in Horeb [at Sinai, thirty-eight years before]. Yahveh made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day"! Either these are bald contradictions, or there was an unrecorded resurrection of all the dead whose "carcasses fell in the wilderness" to hear this swan-song of Moses, and his review of their manifold sins and shortcomings. Again (8: 2, 4) in the same harangue the inspired historian contradicts his former story of the death of the original hosts during the forty years, and explicitly admits that they are alive: "And thou shalt remember all the way which Yahveh thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness. ... Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years." The original host must have survived, for the clothes and shoes of the original children, which were miraculously preserved and enlarged with the growth of the wearers, would hardly have comfortably fitted, as hand-me-downs, the bodies and feet of the deceased original wearers' children. Again (Deut. 11: 2, 3, 5, 7, 10) the assertion of identity is made in unequivocal terms: "And know ye this day: for I speak not with your children which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of Yahveh your God, ... And his miracles, and his acts, which he did in the midst of Egypt unto Pharaoh; ... And what he did unto you in the wilderness, until ye came into this place; ... But your eyes have seen all the great acts of Yahveh which he did. ... For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out." So inspiration has here got its stories mixed again; Yahveh evidently kept not his oath about destroying all his children and scattering their carcasses in the wilderness; the record of the second census cannot be true when it recites: "Among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. For Yahveh had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb ... and Joshua"

(Num. 26: 64, 65). A more remarkable "confusion of tongues" is hard to find in all the inspired history, since Babel.

THE TABERNACLE AND ITS ACTIVITIES

Yahveh and Moses spent a good part of forty days on Sinai, again without eating or drinking (Ex. 34: 28), engaged in framing plans and specifications for the tabernacle or sanctuary, in which were kept the holy altar and the wonder-working ark, and in devising the whole system of priests and priestly services. The tabernacle, as described in Exodus 26: was a portable tent about 18 feet broad by 54 feet in length, with a door in one end. It and the ark, with their furnishings, must have been marvels of luxurious beauty (or the product of remarkable imagination) -- with gold, and silver, and brass, and blue and purple and scarlet fine linen cloths, and precious stones galore. One may wonder where all this finery--the property of slaves--came from, in the wilderness, unless it was a part of the spoils "borrowed" from the Egyptians; but we are told that the children of Israel hurried off with nothing except their bundles of clothes and kneading-troughs and a little dough (Ex. 12: 34).

The tabernacle was to stand in the center of a court, or yard, about 180 feet long by 90 feet broad (100 X 50 cubits; Ex. 27: 11, 12), surrounded by silver-fellated pillars about 7 1/2 feet high. It was known as the tabernacle of the congregation, and was the central point of the camp. The area of the court-yard was 1800 square yards, and that of the tabernacle 108 square yards. Deducting the area of the tabernacle from that of the court-yard leaves a free space within the court-yard of 1692 square yards. Why all these details? All Scripture is important, and several wondrous tales hang thereby.

In Leviticus 8: 3-5, as in many similar passages, Yahveh said unto Moses: "Gather thou all the congregation together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Moses did as Yahveh commanded him; and the assembly was gathered together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." This congregation, or assembly, as appears in scores of places, was the whole people, the entire "hosts of Yahveh," more than 2,414,200 strong, as is also proved by the verses to be cited below. It is needless to calculate; the millions of the Chosen, packed their tightest, would have extended for miles around the tabernacle, even if the hundreds of thousands of surrounding tents would not prevent such a massing. It cannot be perceived, as the inspired Word relates, how "the assembly was gathered unto the door of the tabernacle."

Here as often elsewhere, it is said: "And Moses said unto the congregation"; in Deut. 1: 1, it is more explicitly stated: "These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel"; and in 5: 1: "And Moses called all Israel and said unto them"; and, most explicitly, in Joshua 8: 35: "There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them." A wayfaring man, though a fool, need not be told that Moses could not speak nor Joshua read so that the hundred-thousandth part of "all Israel" could hear them, or get anywhere near the door of the tabernacle: unless, indeed, the truth is that the total horde of fugitive slaves, if it ever existed at all, was no more than the three to five thousand to which nature would have increased the original seventy in four generations.

SACRIFICES

The Book of Leviticus is almost wholly a code of most elaborate and burdensome regulations of priestcraft and bloody sacrifices. One grows dizzy and nauseated in simply scanning the sanguinary catalogue of burnt-offerings, meat-offerings, peace-offerings, sin-offerings, trespass-offerings, of superstitious and blood-reeking butchery, which fills these pages. Nearly every act of life and of death involved some propitiatory sacrifice, thousands of them every day, on the part of these more than two millions of poor victims of their Yahveh. Whole regiments of priests would seem to be required for these holy services. How many priests does divine revelation afford us for these millions? Three!

"Thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death" (Num. 3: 10); a murderous priestly monopoly in the Moses family, limited to Brother Aaron and his sons in perpetuity, under penalty of death.

Skipping all the other multitudinous kinds of sacrifices which kept this holy trinity busy (if they ever got time to make them at all), let us take one species, upon which we can calculate with some probability from our

inspired data. If Yahveh kept his awful word of wrath and killed off the entire original millions who set out with Moses from Egypt, with the exception of the "little ones, your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil," (Deut. 1: 39), and if the balance of the millions who reached the promised land were born during the forty years in the wilderness, then, as we have seen, these births must have averaged some 1700 for every day of the forty years.

Now, according to the Holy Law of God, child-bearing was the worst of defilements: the mother was "unclean" for forty or eighty days according as her child was a boy or a girl; for forty or eighty days she must undergo a humiliating "purification"; she must "touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled"! Then, at the end of that God-imposed penance, "she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest, Who shall offer it before Yahveh, and make an atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed from the issue of her blood" (Lev. 12: 6, 7). A sin-atonement and purification for obedience to Yahveh's very first command: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth"! But it was good "graft" for the priests who ordained it.

These lambs and turtle-doves must be slain, cleaned, washed, burnt, the blood smeared on the bloody holy altar, and the offal and feathers "carried without the camp" (Lev. 1: 10-17), twelve miles there and back. If Aaron and his two sons worked like Trojans every second of their time, day and night, without stopping to eat or sleep, and took only five minutes for each of these elaborate bloody ceremonies, three going on unceremoniously at the same time, they could perform only 36 sacrifices in an hour, or 864 in all the twenty-four hours of the day; for 1700 births 3400 sacrifices would be required, 1700 burnt-offerings and 1700 sin-offerings a day. And where these 1700 spring lambs and 1700 pigeons or turtle-doves per day, and the water to wash them, came from is also a divine mystery -- with the children always crying and rebelling for meat to eat and wailing for water to drink. The Israelites did not carry bird-cages containing turtledoves in their hasty flight from Egypt, and no miracle of grace, blowing pigeons into camp like the quails, is recorded in sacred Scripture. We needn't go into the details; the poor priests must have worked so fast and furiously killing, skinning, cleaning, cutting up, and sprinkling blood that the motions of their hands and arms, like the spokes of a mighty fly-wheel, could not be followed with the naked eye; only the eye of faith can follow such a performance. They far exceeded the record of Samantha skinning eels-one eel in the air all the time. And all this butcher-work must be performed "in the court of the tabernacle," and "at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation," in the very center of the great camp. The court of the tabernacle would accommodate few scores of people, and probably fewer lambs being led bleating to the slaughter.

But, the divine law of compensation was strikingly exemplified here: the laborer was indeed worthy of his hire. These three poor over-worked bloody drudges of priests were bounteously rewarded, in the matter of eating, if they eveeally found time to eat. Out of many bounteous provisions of Yahveh's law for his monopolist priests, one (Num. 18: 9-11) may be cited to show the munificence of Yahveh to his holy servants: "This shall be thine of the most holy things, reserved from the fire: every oblation of theirs, every meat-offering, [etc., etc.,] which they shall render unto me, shall be most holy for thee and for thy sons. In the most holy place shalt thou eat it; every male shall eat it." All this and much more "I have given [unto Aaron and his sons], by a statute forever," Yahveh decrees. Aaron at first had four sons, but two of them, Nadab and Abihu, were early slain by Yahveh because they put "strange fire." into their censers (Lev. 10: 1, 2); this left but Aaron and two sons and their families to enjoy the daily offerings of the 2,414,200. And as Yahveh had commanded, he must be obeyed: these countless thousands of offerings daily must be eaten, by the three and their families, and "in the most holy place of the sanctuary."

Moses must have suspected that they were violating this divine edict and not eating all they ought to eat: the remains of a goat sin-offering were missing from the sanctuary larder, with no signs that Aaron's sons had done their duty by it. So "Moses diligently sought the goat of the sin-offering, and, behold, it was burnt: and he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron which were left alive, saying, Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin-offering? ... ye should indeed have eaten it in the holy place, as I commanded" (Lev. 10: 16-18). And all this time, with the priests in danger of dyspeptic over-gorging, the millions of Chosen were rioting for "meat to eat" and sighing for the flesh pots of Egypt, while they were being rationed for forty years on the oily

mana, "which our soul loatheth." Such is the providence of Yahveh, or the abundant perquisites of priestcraft-or, more likely, the exuberance of inspiration.

MORE OF THE PRIESTS AND LEVITES

A like munificence towards his holy priests is shown by the allotment to them a little later (Josh. 21: 19) of "thirteen cities, with their suburbs," when there were but two sons of Aaron, who was now himself dead, and only one of them, Phineas, had a son. The priests were thus as bountifully supplied with residences as with victuals. The Levites, too, received their full share of the bounties of Yahveh. They were the Chosen of the Chosen, as a reward for their holy zeal at Sinai, when Moses was angered about the golden calf: he "stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on Yahveh's side? Let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him"; and at his command they proceeded to "consecrate themselves to Yahveh" by slaying "every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor," and massacring 3000 [The Vulgate says 23,000.] of Yahveh's naked children (Ex. 32: 26-28). Now, if there were 8580 Levites (Num. 4: 48), every man of them evidently did not "consecrate himself" in murdering one of only 3000, if there were only 44, the 3000 assassinated would seem to have deserved their fate for submitting to it. It may be noted that Aaron, who made the golden calf, was not among the massacred, nor was he ever punished; the Levites, who did the bloody work, were of his own family.

For this pious service, the Levites were not numbered among the common tribes, but separately; they were then appointed "over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death" (Num. 1: 47-51). At the first census, as we have seen, these Levites, "from thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old, every one that came to do the service of the ministry ... in the tabernacle of the congregation, even those that were numbered of them" were 8580 -- a whole army brigade to do the kitchen-police work and tend the pots and kettles of this little 18-by-54,-foot tent in the wilderness, and to lug it and its holy ark from place to place, while only three priests were provided to do all the heavy work of the service. And the Levites were made perpetual pensioners on the bounty of all Israel, and were assigned forty-eight cities and their suburbs for their residence (Num. 35: 7). How, scattered in forty-eight cities, these 44 or 8580, or 22,000 "sons of Levi" in the fourth generation could be "pitched about the tabernacle," as they were commanded by Yahveh (Num. 1: 53), so as to be handy with their daily chores of blood-washing and kettle-scraping, we can only wonder. We may reflect with interest on the providence of Moses in getting Yahveh to settle these rich perquisites in perpetuity and exclusive monopoly upon his own kith and kin: for the priests were his sons and the Levites were his nephews. Here is an inspired precedent for the nepotism of modern politics.

SOME JAHVISTIC MURDERINGS

All the miseries, and rebellions, and abominations of the Chosen People of Yahveh during these forty years in the wilderness, or all the murderings inflicted upon them by their merciful Yahveh, cannot be recounted for number and contradictoriness. Yahveh himself denounced his Chosen as a "stiff-necked and rebellious people"; and on the theory, perhaps, that "whom Yahveh loveth he chasteneth," he made their lives a miserable failure; time and again they wept and wailed and wanted to die. Yahveh liberally answered this prayer; and several special providences to the people of Yahveh assisted in this work of death and destruction.

Two sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, just consecrated priests, and possibly not yet skilled in their new functions, put the wrong kind of fire into their sacred incense-burners, and there came forth ire from Yahveh and devoured them. The compassionate God commanded their bereaved father not to mourn for his murdered sons, "lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people" (Lev.

10:

1-6). The son of a widow swore, and Yahveh ordered the congregation to stone him to death (Lev.

24: 11-14); and then, wholly ex post facto, for the first time decreed a law against the offense (24: 15, 16).

The people murmured, saying: "Who shall give us flesh to eat?"; and when Yahveh heard of it, "his anger was kindled, and the fire of Yahveh burnt among them throughout the camp" (Num. 11: 1); and later, for a like offense, he smote his people with a very great plague. How many were massacred by the fire and the plague

Yahveh, who committed it, only knows. A man gathered sticks on the tabooed sabbath; Yahveh was speedily consulted as to his fate, and he commanded all the people to stone the culprit to death.

Again, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and 250 "princes of the assembly" in this "kingdom of priests and an holy nation" wished to act as priests against the monopoly of Aaron and Sons, saying to Moses and Aaron: "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy." Moses retorted that Yahveh would show them "who is holy." So the "jealous God" caused them all to stand aside "in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children"; and at his potent word, "the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses [but they were only tents], and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods.

They ... went down alive into Sheol, and the earth closed upon them; and they perished from among the congregation. ... And there came out a fire from Yahveh, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense" (Num. 16: 32-35). This is a truly signal vindication of the God of all mercy who "visiteth the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and the fourth generation." But our faith is somewhat affected by the flat contradiction, a few chapters later, where the inspired history is repeated, "notwithstanding, the children of Korah died not" (Num. 26: 11). The next day, because "the people murmured" about this massacre, saying: "'Ye have killed the people of Yahveh," the good God said: "Consume them as in a moment," and he sent a plague and murdered 14,700 of them (Num. 16: 49). Because Moses smote the rock instead of simply speaking to it, he was prohibited from entering the promised land, despite Yahveh's oft-repeated promises. The Chosen People tired of their steady diet of manna, and said: "Our soul loatheth this light bread"; so "Yahveh sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died" (Num. 21: 6) -- the statistics of this massacre not being preserved.

Just before entering the land of promise, some of the Chosen took to loving some of the daughters of Moab, "and the anger of Yahveh was kindled against Israel, and Yahveh said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before Yahveh against the sun, that the fierce anger of Yahveh may be turned away from Israel" (Num. 25: 4-7); and 24,000 of Yahveh's children were murdered and their heads strung up, to appease the angry God.

THE RAPE OF MIDIAN

The most revolting villainy in history, sacred or profane, if it were not attributed to so merciful a God, and one of the biggest fables extant, but for being related in the Holy Word of Yahveh, which is alleged to be unexceptionably true, is recorded in Numbers 31, when Yahveh's valiant warriors warred with Midian, the land, be it remembered, of one of Moses' wives, and of Jethro, his father-in-law, where Moses had lived many years as a fugitive murderer. Midian, as shown on Bible maps, was far away beyond Sinai, in the Arabian desert; the hosts of Yahveh were at this very time, immediately before the death of Moses (31: 2), in "the camp at the plains of Moab, which are by Jordan near Jericho"- therefore several hundred miles from Midian, with all the great wilderness of their forty years' misery stretching between. Of a sudden Yahveh said to Moses: "Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites" (31: 2), though only Yahveh knows what the Midianites had done to Israel or to Yahveh to merit the monstrous barbarities now inflicted upon them. Moses told off 12,000 of his warriors, 1000 for each tribe, and "sent them to the war" (31: 6).

These are the wonderful accomplishments of the 12,000, which quite pale the exploits of the celebrated 10,000 of Xenophon. They marched across the hundreds of miles of wilderness, "warred with Midian," slew all the male Midianites, slew the five kings of Midian (rather numerous royalty for a small desert tribe), and slew poor old Balaam, him of the talking ass (though he lived hundreds of miles away at Pethor in Mesopotamia); they took all the women of Midian captives, with all their little ones, and took all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods; they burnt all their cities, and all their goodly castles, with fire (it is a question how many "cities" and how many "goodly castles" a tribe of Bedouins living in a corner of the desert would have); and they took all the spoil, and prey, both of men (but they had already slain "all the males"; 31: 7), and of beasts; and they brought the captives, and the cattle, and the spoils back hundreds of miles across the wilderness into the camp near Jericho, and delivered all to Moses. And, if anything could be more wonderful, all this was achieved without the loss of a single warrior.

These 12,000 wonderful soldiers of Yahveh took, according to the inspired account, about 100,000 human captives, women and children, over 675,000 sheep, more than 72,000 beeves, and over 61,000 asses (31: 32-34), 9, total of over 808,000 head of live animals, and brought them all across the deserts, "where there was no water," for some three hundred miles to the sacred camp. Yet with this addition of live-stock to their already great flocks and herds, "until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan" (Ex. 16: 35), "we have nought save this manna" (Num. 11: 6).

When the meek and holy man of God saw the multitude of female captives alive, "Moses was wroth with the officers of the host," and in his holy wrath he demanded: "Have ye saved all the women alive?" (Num. 31: 14, 15). Then, in the name of his God, the Merciful, he gave this bloody order, which if given by an Apache war-chief crazed by Christian fire-water, would have damned him and his tribe and the "Great Spirit" of his tribe to execration forever: "Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves" (31: 17)! So records the Holy Word of Yahveh, writ by "holy men of old as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The Chosen of Yahveh, to the eternal glory of God, straightway put into pious execution this holy command, and butchered some 68,000 women and young children; then these "peculiar treasures unto Yahveh" took the remaining 32,000 young virgins to glut their hallowed lusts upon in God-ordained rape! Verily, as the Psalmist sings, "the commandment of Yahveh is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Ps. 19: 8). And Yahveh got his fair share of the accursed booty, human and animal alike (Num. 31: 36-42).

THE WONDERFUL LAST DAYS OF MOSES

Let us pause here a moment, while we recover as best we may from this inspiring revelation of Yahveh's Holy Word, and cast a rapid glance at the rush of divinely appointed events to their great consummation, the triumphal entry of Yahveh's Chosen-this "kingdom of priests and an holy nation"-into the promised land. Surely, after keeping his Chosen People for forty long years in miserable watchful waiting, Yahveh amazingly expedited events for the bungling finish.

On the "first day of the fifth month of the fortieth year" after the memorable exodus from Egypt, Aaron died in Mount Hor (Num. 20: 28; 33: 38); though Moses himself, in amazing contradiction, elsewhere records that Brother Aaron died in Mosera, just after leaving Sinai, thirty-nine years before (Deut. 10: 6). However this may be, Moses uttered his last harangue "in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month" (Deut. 1: 3), and died promptly thereafter, "on Nebo's lonely mountain, this side of Jordan's wave" (Deut. 3iv). Thus just six months to the day elapsed between the deaths of Aaron and Moses. Let us now see what a miracle or muddle of impossibilities happened, in Yahveh's inspired history, in these short and eventful six months.

MOURNING FOR AARON

1. Upon the death of Aaron, "all Israel mourned for Aaron thirty days" (Num. 20: 29). This leaves five months.

WAR WITH CANAAN

2. Then, Arad, King of the Canaanites, made a foray against Israel, and took some prisoners (Num. 21: 1). Israel made a vow to Yahveh that if he would deliver the Canaanites into their hand, "then I will utterly destroy their cities" (21: 2); Yahveh accepted the bloody bargain, and Israel warred against the Canaanites, "and utterly destroyed them and their cities" (21: 3). This, as we shall soon see, is not true; for all through their sacred history we find Israel at war with the Canaanites: in Judges 3: after the "conquest," it is expressly stated: "Now these are the nations which Yahveh left, to prove Israel by them [although he had repeatedly declared he would destroy them all]: ... namely, ... all the Canaanites; ... and the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites" (Judges 3: 1, 3, 5). But, for the sake of "Proving" the rapid march of the events of our inspired history of the last five months, we will assume the "Gospel truth" of the inspired record. This attack by Arad and the retaliatory war of utter extermination of the Canaanites and all their cities must have reasonably taken a month's time, by ordinary human military campaign standards. This leaves us four months.

TEN ENCAMPMENTS

Then the children of Israel "journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom" (Num. 21: 4). It may be remarked that, according to Bible maps, the land of Edom lies just east of the Canaanites, and Mount Hor is about between the two countries; each is 150 miles or more from the Red Sea, across the trackless deserts to the west; so that to go from the territory of Canaan by way of the Red Sea to reach Edom, would be much like going from New York City to Albany to get to Brooklyn. On this journey the people "were much discouraged because of the way," and rioted because there was no water nor bread, and declared their loathing of the heavenly manna. Yahveh retaliated by sending fiery serpents, which murdered many thousands of them, until Moses made his famous brazen serpent, which allayed the plague (2; , 49). They then set forward, and made nine encampments, including that at the well of Beer (21: 16), which greatly rejoiced the thirsty children, and which they celebrated by a rather spiritless drinking-song. Ten encampments, allowing but three days for each and the intervening marches, would easily occupy another month. This leaves us three months.

From the last encampment, at Pisgah, in the land of Moab (Num. 21: 20), farther north of Edom and more distant from the Red Sea, the children sent messengers to Sihon, King of the Amorites, to negotiate passage through his lands, which was refused. The two peoples thereupon went to war; Israel smote the Amorites with the sword, took all their cities, and conquered their whole country; and "Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites" (21: 21-31). One would reasonably allow a month for these diplomatic negotiations and the ensuing war of extermination, to allow nothing for the "dwelling" in the land. Thus two months remain.

WAR WITH AMORITES

WAR WITH JAAZER

5. Then Moses sent spies to Jaazer, fought against it, took all its villages, and drove the inhabitants out (21: 32). This conquering expedition may well have taken a couple of weeks. We have then a month and a half remaining.

WAR WITH BASHAN

6. Next the hosts of Yahveh "turned and went up by the way of Bashan," engaged in a war with the redoubtable giant King Og, "smote him, and all his sons, and all his people, until there was none left him alive: and they possessed his land" (21: 33-35).

This episode is recorded more in detail in Deuteronomy 3: 3-6:

"We took all his cities, ... three score cities. ... All these cities were fenced with high walls, gates, and bars; beside unwall'd towns a great many. And we utterly destroyed them, ... utterly destroying the men, women, and children, of every city." As Og was a great giant who had a bed 16 1/2 feet long (preserved as proof in the Municipal Museum of Rabbath: Deut. 3: 11), we may suppose that he and his people, a considerable nation, occupying sixty walled cities, put up a sturdy fight; so that this war of extermination may not unreasonably have cost the hosts of Yahveh six weeks. This would complete the entire tale of six months between the death of Aaron and the great harangue just preceding the death of Moses; and the whole time would appear to have been pretty well filled with these divinely chronicled historical events, all crowded into one chapter (Num. 2i). But we are surprised to find several more chapters of this History of Numbers filled with exploits recorded to have taken place after the conquest of Bashan and before the swan-song of Moses-events which must have occupied many weary months or years of any history but that of Yahveh.

THE EPISODE OF BALAAM

1. In the very next chapter, Numbers 22: the hosts "Set forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab on this side of Jordan by Jericho" (Num. 22: 1). We may observe that the writer, here as so often elsewhere, was hazy about his geography; for, according to all the Bible maps, Moab lay along the lower half of the Dead Sea, east of the sea, and to the south of the brook Arnon, the northern boundary of Moab; "for Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites" (Num.

21: 13), and thus about midway the length of the Dead Sea. Jericho is some distance north and west of the northern end of the Dead Sea, opposite the land of the Ammonites, north of Arnon, and not on the border between Moab and the Amorites, who were far to the south and west, near the wilderness of Paran. We are told that Balak, King of Moab, being greatly frightened at the approach of the devastating hordes of Yahveh, bethought him of the expedient of securing the services of the celebrated prophet of Baal, Balaam, to "come curse Israel," which, to tell the truth, Israel seems to have richly deserved. The story involves several tangled considerations of high improbability.

Balaam may have been a Midianite. The Midianites, as we have seen, inhabited the extreme southeast of the Arabian peninsula, some three hundred miles across trackless deserts from Moab. By some odd chance, "elders of Midian" were visiting "elders of Moab" (possibly a pagan church conference of Baalites). King Balak sent these two companies of elders "with the rewards of divination in their hands" to solicit the religious services of Balaam, a prophet of Baal, to "come, curse me this people" (Num. 22: 6, 7). And the elders came unto Balaam, "to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people" (22: 5); hence, one would suppose from these texts, at his home town in Midian, though no river is known in the deserts of Midian, for there is "the waste howling wilderness, where no water is." But the inspired geographer tells us, to our further surprise, in a reference to this incident, that Balaam was "of Pethor of Mesopotamia" (Deut. 23: 4), some hundreds of miles eastward, beyond the River Euphrates. In whatever direction, Balaam's home was several hundred miles from Moab by the Dead Sea. At the very least, it must have taken the messengers some ten (or forty) days to make the trip, on their slow asses, across the deserts.

When they arrived and delivered their message, "God [Elohim, gods] came unto Balaam" (Num. 22: 9), and had a dream-talk with him, and asked: "What men are these with thee?"-as if an all-knowing God ought not to know without asking; and God commanded Balaam not to go (22: 12). So Balaam "rose up in the morning" (showing it was all a dream), and refused to accompany the ambassadors, now "princes of Balak" (22: 13), whereas they were plain pagan "elders" (22: 7) when they set out. The embassy returned to Moab, maybe another ten-day journey, and reported the refusal (22: 14). But Balak was in sore straits, and sent another embassy of princes, "more, and more honorable" than the first; and they made the ten-day trip again to Balaam, and repeated the invitation and offer of reward. But Balaam, prophet of Baal, loyally replied: "I cannot go beyond the word of Yahveh my God" (22: 18); the "Yahveh Elohim" of Balaam being none other than the Midianitish god Baal, the rival and abomination of Yahveh, or El, the Hebrew Deity, although the inspired historian makes no distinction between them. Again "God [Elohim] came unto Balaam at night," and told him in a dream: "If the men [who were spending the night in town before returning] come to call thee, rise up, and go with them" (22: 20). So Balaam, taking God at his word, "rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab" (22: 21); "and Elohim's anger was kindled because he went" (22: 22) -- a strange caprice for a just God "in whom there is neither variableness nor shadow of turning." This makes the fourth ten- (or forty-) day trip back and forth, forty days for travel alone, at the minimum reckoning. And when Balaam arrived at last, the long, tedious, and fruitless proceedings of blessing and cursing-both equally ineffective-must have taken up several days additional (Num. 22: 24). At least a month or six weeks must have been consumed by this Balaam episode, for which we have no available room in the period under consideration. The whole period of action was only five months, for the first month was spent idly mourning for Aaron (Num. 20: 29), -- who is twice spoken of as dying thirty-nine years before.

SPORTING WITH MOAB

2. After this failure of strategy, King Balak and Balaam went their respective ways; the hosts of Yahveh entered Moab, "and Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab" (Num. 25: 1). To "abide" in a place would seem to indicate a considerable permanence of residence. This indication is strengthened by the fact recorded of the amatory relations of the Chosen with the "daughters of Moab," as it must have taken some time for these strangers to become acquainted and to get into the good graces of the fair daughters of the land, as well as to adopt the worship of the land and become "joined to Baal-peor," so as to "kindle the wrath of Yahveh" (25: 3), who was notoriously "slow to anger." Yahveh ordered a great massacre of his children, saying to Moses: "Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor" (25: 5), and "Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before Yahveh against the sun"; and 24,000 of

the Chosen were massacred, not, it seems, by cutting off their heads, but by a plague which Yahveh sent (25: 9). Here we have an indefinitely long time saddled upon the already overcrowded six months between the deaths of Aaron and Moses.

CENSUS TAKING

3. Then "it came to pass after the plague"-how long after is not revealed-that Yahveh commanded Moses (Num. 26: 2) to take a second census of the hosts of Yahveh, "all that are able to go to war in Israel, from twenty years old and upward." As the time required to take the census of 601,730 soldiers is not stated, we will not count it in this score.

EXPEDITION TO MIDIAN

4. After several chapters of new laws said to have been handed down by Yahveh through Moses, we have the inspired history (Num. 31) of the fearful expedition, already described, of the twelve thousand against Midian, three hundred miles away across the wilderness, and the utter destruction of the Midianites, including the luckless Balaam, who was now evidently in Midian instead of at Pethor of Mesopotamia. Surely such a great military achievement as this, including a march of six hundred miles through scorching deserts, a return trip with thousands of women and children and nearly a million cattle, and the destruction of a whole nation, must have taken a month or six weeks at a minimum allowance,

"MOPPING UP"

5. After all this, time was found for the very elaborate parcelling out and settling of the whole East Palestine country

"the kingdom of Sihon king of the Amorites, and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, the land, with the cities thereof in the coasts, even the cities of the country roundabout," all to the east of the river Jordan-upon the tribes of Reuben and of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, who did not want to go west over the river (Num. 32: 16-42). Moses stipulated with them for their military aid in the further conquest, and gave them the land; and they "built" (probably rebuilt, as all the cities of these two kingdoms are said to have been "utterly destroyed") fifteen "fenced cities," named in the text (32: 34-38), and a number of "sheep-folds" for their "very great multitude of cattle." Moreover, what is more remarkable (for every city had been utterly destroyed when they captured the kingdoms), they made military campaigns against Gilead, "and took it, and dispossessed the Amorite which was in it" (32: 39) -- though every inhabitant had already been massacred; and they captured a number of villages and small towns, and settled their families in all these places throughout the eastern borders of the Jordan before making ready, as they had agreed with Moses, to "go armed before the children of Israel" to help conquer the promised land west of Jordan (32: 32). Such operations of allotment, city-building, family-settling, and further conquest must have consumed considerable time, a month, six months, a year-how can one tell, when "the ways of Yahveh are past finding out?" and we have no revelation on the point, except that it was all within the six months already replete with notable events. There was a long delay in order to "build cities," and not only cities, but walled, armed cities, although sixty of them had just been captured (Deut. 3: 3-5); and such defended cities were necessary for defense against the inhabitants of the land of Og, King of Baslian-of whom "none was left him alive" (Num. 21: 35); for the warriors of the tribes who were going to settle in these eastern districts asked time, before crossing Jordan to the conquest, to build walled cities to leave their families in, so that "our little ones shall dwell in the fenced cities because of the inhabitants of the land" (Num. 32: 17).

The closing cantos of Numbers are largely devoted to detailed plans for the allotment and settlement of the territories east of Jordan, among the remaining warrior tribes and the kitchen-police Levites-when the hosts of Yahveh, captained by Joshua and, convoyed by an angel and the hornets, should have triumphantly possessed the land which Yahveh had so often promised to go before and prepare for them. Just how all these divine promises and covenants were performed, we shall soon see. First we pause to consider briefly but wonderingly the Puzzling problem of the giving of the law at Sinai, in the first year of the exodus.

IS IT GOD'S WORD?

CHAPTER 6: THE "TEN COMMANDMENTS" AND THE "LAW"

THE "TEN COMMANDMENTS" AND THE "LAW" DIVERGENT DECALOGUES

THE TABLES OF STONE

THE FIFTH MOUNTAIN TRIP

THE FIRST TABLES OF STONE

THE INCIDENT OF THE GOLDEN CALF THE SECOND TABLES OF STONE

THE ACTUAL "TEN WORDS" THE LAW OF THE DECALOGUE LAWS OF SLAVERY AND MURDER

CANNIBALISM AND HUMAN SACRIFICES OTHER DIVINE MOSAIC LAWS MOSES NOT THE "LAW-GIVER"

THE "LAW" OF LATE PRIESTLY ORIGIN THE "FINDING" OF THE LAW THE LAW AND THE REFORMS

POSITIVE PROOFS AGAINST MOSES BIBLE HISTORY DISPROVES THE "LAW OF MOSES"

THE "TEN COMMANDMENTS" AND THE "LAW"

EVERYBODY in Christian communities knows, supposedly, and many can even quote the "ten commandments" given by God to Moses on Sinai, and hung neatly framed in all well-conducted Sunday schools, Christian and Jewish alike, for here the two faiths are at one. But to discover the genuine "ten commandments" in the Hebrew Scriptures is an exercise for the ingenuity of Aristotle. Even more intricate and hopeless is the task of unravelling the mysteries of the "law of God by the hand of Moses," said to have been delivered amid the clouds and thunders and lightnings of Sinai. An examination of the texts of the "Five Books of Moses" demonstrates that Moses did not promulgate these commandments and laws; and even cursory review of the religious history of Israel confirms us in believing that they were quite unknown for nearly a thousand years after Moses. If any solid ground for judgment can be arrived at from the study, it is that some elementary precepts of law existed from earliest times in Israel, as everywhere, and were not unnaturally attributed to the traditional "lawgiver" Moses. Later the priests framed the very elaborate and cumbrous system of ritual and offerings, and to give it currency and sanction, affirmed it to be law given by Yahweh on Sinai through Moses; just as the laws of Hanimurabi were represented as given by the great god Bel through the sun god Shamash, and the Koran of Mohammed and the Book of Mormon, if not the Baker-Eddy "revelations" of Science and Truth, were God-given.

DIVERGENT DECALOGUES

There are generally recognized to be two, but, as we shall see, there are actually three, versions of the "ten commandments"; and the giving of the "law" is quite variously reported by the Elohist and Jahvist scribes. As the decalogue is for the most part reported in the same language in the two usually recognized versions, I shall call attention only to the points of material difference in their texts, and then consider the third version.

It is first set out in Exodus 20: 2-17, and is repeated in Deuteronomy 5: 6-21. The first verse of the Elohist version begins: "And Elohim spake all these words, saying"; then follow the reputed "ten words"; and this is the first law recorded in the Book of Exodus, except as to the Passover and slavery in chapter 12. The fourth commandment, regarding the Sabbath day, contains several important differences in the two versions. In the Elohist version (Ex. 20: 8) it begins. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." The Yahweh version (Deut. 5: 12) reads: "Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as Yahweh thy God commanded thee."

The Elohist continues (Ex. 20: 10)

"in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates."

But the second version, instead of simply "nor thy cattle," adds (Deut. 5: 14)

"nor thin ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle"; and after the words "thy stranger that is within thy gates," adds:

"that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou."

This is not all. In the Exodus version, after the words "within thy gates," the reporter adds, as the "reason for the rule" (Ex. 20: 11)

"For in six days Yahweh made heaven and earth. ... and rested the seventh day: wherefore Yahweh blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

But the second version, after adding the words "may rest as well as thou," gives an entirely different statement of the "reason" (Deut. 5: 15) thus:

"And thou shalt remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and Yahweh thy God brought thee out thence by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm: therefore Yahweh thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day."

There are several other noticeable differences between these two versions. In the first (Ex. 20: 12) it is commanded: "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which Yahweh thy God giveth thee." In the second version this is amplified, thus: "Honour thy father and thy mother, as Yahweh thy God commanded thee: that thy days may be long, and that it may go well with thee, upon the land which Yahweh thy God giveth thee" (Deut. 5: 16).

In Exodus the four commandments, "Thou shalt not kill, commit adultery, steal, and bear false witness," are stated in four separate verses (13-16) in both the English and the Hebrew texts; and each begins: "Thou shalt not"; in the English version of Deuteronomy the four commandments are stated in separate verses (5: 17-20), though they are all in one verse (5: 17) of the Hebrew text, and each, after the first, reads: "Neither shalt thou." The commandment "Thou shalt not covet" begins in Exodus (20: 17): "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife"; in Deuteronomy (5: 21; in the Hebrew, 5: 18) it begins: "Neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's wife; neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's house," and adds "his field," which is not in the Exodus version. These may seem small differences, but they are differences. Yahweh is not reported as having given two sets of "ten words"; and what he said only once, he could not have said in two ways; Yahweh himself asserted that he did "write upon these [second] tables the words which were in the first tables, which thou breakest" (Ex. 34: 1). Revelation should at least be consistent and accurate. But now to the origins and substance of the "ten commandments," if we may discover them.

Yahweh, as we have seen in Exodus 19, sent Moses immediately back down the mountain after their third conference, with a few curt words about sanctifying the non-existent priests and building the already built fence; and with not a word as to any law or commandments or tables of stone. "So Moses went down unto the people, and spake unto them" (19: 25) is the ending of the chapter.

Then immediately follows chapter 20, headed by the Bible editors "The Ten Commandments," and beginning with the words: "And Elohim spake all these words, saying" (20: 1); and what the Gods spake was the ten commandments, first or Elohist edition! Moses was not on the "Mountain of the Gods" at that time at all, but had just come down to report about the priests and the fence.

And "all these words" which Elohim "spake" were not only the so-called "ten words" of the decalogue (Ex. 20: 3-17), but four whole chapters (Ex. 43) of law on many subjects, much of it very puerile and barbarous. And as Elohim "spake all these words, saying" (Ex. 20: 1) them to Moses, clearly they were not written by the finger of Yahweh on two tables of stone -- not at this time anyhow.

These four chapters of other "law" immediately following the Elohist version of the ten commandments begin (Ex. 20: 22) with the words: "And Yahweh said unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel"; and chapter 21 begins: "Now these are the judgments [laws] which thou shalt set before them?" (21: 1). It is explicitly recorded that "Moses came and told the people all the words of Yahweh" -- the whole four chapters of law told to the entire 2,414,000 of them; "and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which Yahweh hath said will we do" (Ex. 24: 3), though they never did, in all their idol-worshipping Bible history.

Divine revelation then informs us that, after thus telling them to all the people, "Moses wrote all the words of Yahweh" -- evidently during that night, for he then "rose up early in the morning" (24: 4), and he "took the book of the covenant [which he had just then written], and read in the audience of the people" and the people again promised to perform it all (24: 7). And Moses immediately, after receiving orally, repeating orally, writing into a Book of Covenant, and promulgating the law forbidding the making of "any likeness of anything" in

heaven, earth, or hell, and the bowing down to the gods of the heathen -- "but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images" (mazzeboth; Ex. 23: 24) -- rose up and builded his altar under the hill, "and twelve pillars" (mazzeboth, Ex. 24: 4). This is more evidence that the law denouncing this very thing was not given through Moses the very day before, and did not yet exist.

THE TABLES OF STONE

Evidently now the whole thing had been finished -- the so-called ten commandments, followed by four whole chapters of "law" (Ex. 43), had been duly spoken by Yahweh, while apparently Moses was down in the camp, after his abrupt dismissal from his third visit to Yahweh. And not yet a word about any tables of stone.

Here occurs an odd episode, a dinner-party or banquet given by the Gods to celebrate, apparently, the giving of the divine law. For as soon as the last words were spoken, Yahweh extends this invitation: "And unto Moses he said: Come up unto Yahweh, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel"; but he adds this curious limitation: "and prostrate yourselves afar off. And Moses shall come near unto Yahweh, but they shall not come near" (Ex. 24: 1, 2). Moses reported the invitation; then, as above related, he told the people all the new laws; then wrote them in a book; and then read the book to all the people. After this, Moses and the other invited guests, all seventy-four of them, went together up the mount (this being the fourth climb for Moses), quite disregarding the orders for all but Moses to stay afar off. And then and there, it is related, "they saw the Gods [ha-elohim] of Israel, and they ate and they drank" (Ex. 24: 11).

During this celebration of the "giving of the law" Yahweh very unexpectedly turns to Moses and summons him for a fifth conference, saying: "Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and," said Yahweh, here for the first time referring to this matter, "I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them" (Ex. 24: 12); though all these commandments are already on record as having been dictated by Yahweh and written in a book by Moses and taught to the people several chapters earlier, following his third mountain-climb and return to camp.

THE FIFTH MOUNTAIN TRIP

So Moses went up again, for the fifth time, into the Mount of the Gods, and Yahweh kept himself hidden from Moses for six days in a cloud (Ex. 24: 15, 16), while Moses had to pass the time as best he could in the dark. On the seventh day Yahweh called Moses into the cloud, "and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights," without anything to eat or drink (Ex. 24: 15-18). The next seven chapters (25-31) are entirely taken up by the almighty Architect of the universe in dictating minutest details of drafting plans, of carpentry, upholstering, tailoring, and general handicraft for making a most holy tabernacle and ark, gaudily adorned with, evidently, stolen Egyptian finery, for that is all they had. Full instructions are given for all the sacred ceremonies, such as killing a ram and putting some of its blood upon the tip of the right ear of Brother Aaron, and upon the tips of the right ears of his four sons, and upon the right thumbs and right big toes, and then sprinkling the blood on the holy altar of Yahweh (Ex. 29: 19, 20), and such like holy mysteries. And the Mighty God concocted a special kind of patent perfumery which should be "holy unto Yahweh," and laid down the fatal penalty: "Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people" (Ex. 30: 34-38) -- murdered for the glory of the God.

All this was the work of Infinite Wisdom for forty days -- instead of teaching these holy ones civilization and humanity, and common decency and honesty, and, most of all, to tell the truth, instead of the atrocious things they say about God in what they presumptuously call his Holy Word. Four times amid the awful fires and thunders of Sinai the fateful injunction was reiterated by the God: "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk"; and reams of stone tablets, or whatever other writing material was used, were covered with childish medicine-man hocus-pocus for telling whether a poor victim had leprosy, or some other loathsome infection, with maudlin incantations for his "purification," if by chance he recovered from it, all alone and unattended, in the filthy lazaretto outside the holy camp; but there is never a single word from the All-Wise God, the "Great Physician," who calls himself "the Lord who healeth thee," about how to cure leprosy and other diseases, or how to prevent them; nor a word anywhere of hygiene, sanitation, useful sciences, or any of the common humanities. If a few of these things had been laid down for the Chosen, they might have been, to their lasting

advantage, somewhat less of a "peculiar people" and have escaped the ravages of some of the plagues which have devastated their promised land from that time to the present time.

THE FIRST TABLES OF STONE

At the end of these forty days, Yahweh, we are told, "gave unto Moses two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of Elohim" (Ex. 31: 18); and presumably containing all the "law and commandments which I have written" (Ex. 24: 12), about which Yahweh spake when he invited Moses up for this fifth meeting, and which Moses had already written in his book of the covenant (Ex. 24: 4) after his third mountain trip.

It is evident, if anything can be evident from these muddled records, that these first tables of stone did not contain the "ten commandments" of chapter 20; but contained only, if anything, the building plans and specification for the tabernacle and the ark (Ex. 25: 40), and the other matters set out, drawn up during the forty days of the fifth trip up the "Mountain of the Gods" and detailed in chapters 25-31, as we have seen.

THE INCIDENT OF THE GOLDEN CALF

While Moses dallied forty-six days on the "Mount of the Gods" conning all those precious revelations of Yahweh's holy will, the Chosen got restless, and "wot not what has become" of Moses, and they demanded of Brother Aaron that he "make us Gods, which shall go before us" (Ex. 32: 1). Aaron took their jewelry, probably that stolen from the Egyptians several months before with their Yahweh's help, and melted it up and made the celebrated golden calf, designed no doubt after the sacred bull Apis of the Egyptians. And Aaron, high priest of Yahweh, proclaimed: "These be thy Gods [Elohim], O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (32: 4); and said: "To-morrow is a feast to Yahweh" (32: 5) -- proving that the calf represented Yahweh, and was celebrated by naked Baal-orgies to Yahweh (32: 25).

Yahweh, looking down from the Mount of the Gods, saw this and got very angry, and said to Moses: "Now let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them and that I may consume them." But Moses cajoled the Lord Yahweh, saying that the Egyptians would mock Yahweh about it; and he reminded Yahweh of his promise, and asked him to "repent of this evil against thy people" (32: 12). So Yahweh, who "is not a man that he should repent," thereupon (repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people" (32: 14)).

Moses thereupon rushed down the mountain into the camp, and in his own righteous wrath wilfully threw down and broke his two tables of stone (first edition), and smashed up the golden calf, ground it to powder, mixed the gold dust with water (where he got the water in the wilderness not being revealed), and made the 2,414,000 Chosen drink the very diluted mixture (32: 15-20).

The breaking of the two tables "written by the finger of God" is the greatest loss to humanity which all history records; the only specimen of the very handwriting of God ever in existence -- the most wonderful treasure of archaeology -- was irretrievably lost to mankind by this one peevish act of Moses. Yahweh next commanded the sons of Levi to "consecrate yourselves this day to Yahweh, that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day" (32: 29), and to take their swords, and "slay every man his brother, his companion, and his neighbour" (32: 27), throughout the camp and 3000 [The Vulgate reads: "about 23,000."] of the naked Chosen (32: 25, 28) were murdered. This is the second wholesale massacre attributed to the God "whose name is Jealous" (Ex. 34: 14).

This fearful punishment was inflicted for the pretended offense of making a "graven image" of Yahweh himself, as to which there was as yet no law if we accept the tables of stone as containing the "ten commandments"; for Moses, according to that theory, was yet on Sinai receiving the law, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image," when the golden calf was set up; and he rushed down from the mount and broke his tables of stone containing that very law before he had promulgated it. This was a case, therefore, not only of ignorantia juris on the part of the people, but of lex post facto on the part of the God. And, as we have seen, this was not a case of idolatry to "other gods before me," for the golden calf expressly represented the great Yahweh, whom the whole people, naked as in Baal worship, proclaimed: "These be thy Gods [Elohim], O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (32: 4); and "Aaron made proclamation, and said, To-morrow is a feast to Yahweh" (32: 5), proving their belief that they were worshipping the rescuer from Egypt,

and that they had no idea that Yahweh was any different from any other god, either in identity or in his form of worship.

But these first tables, broken by Moses, assuredly were not the "ten commandments" of Exodus 20 and of the Sunday schools. The ten commandments are short; these first tables of stone broken by Moses, which Yahweh declared contained "two tables of testimony" (Ex. 31: 18), whatever that was, were evidently rather lengthy. For when Moses rushed from the mount down into the camp to destroy the golden calf, "the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written" (Ex. 32: 15). As Hebrew writing is very abbreviated, consisting entirely of consonants in words mostly of only three letters each, two stone tables written on both sides would not have been required to contain the brief ten commandments, but might rather have been for the extensive "testimony."

THE SECOND TABLES OF STONE

Chapter 33 of Exodus forgets all about the broken first tables; and in it Yahweh breaks his promise and tells Moses that Yahweh will not go with his Chosen into the promised land, but will send an angel along instead, together with other matters immaterial to the subject in review.

Chapter 34 returns to the tables, and opens with the command of Yahweh to Moses: "Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon the tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest" (34: 1). Moses was ordered to bring them up into the mountain the next day (34: 2). Moses went up, for the sixth time, and took along the two new stone tables that he had made; and Yahweh talked at length, giving the substance of previous "law," but not saying a word of the "ten commandments" reported in Exodus 20 or Deuteronomy 5. These commandments wind up with the awful and wonderful command of the God: "Thou shalt not seethe [boil] a kid in his mother's milk" (34: 26)

But even these commandments Yahweh did not write on the second set of stone tables; but Moses did the work. They begin with the words (Ex. 34: 10): "And he [Yahweh] said, Behold, I make a covenant." Yahweh then states it orally (Ex. 34: 12-26); and then "Yahweh said unto Moses, Write thou these words [commandments]: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. ... And he [Moses] wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments" (34: 27, 28). Then Moses, after spending another forty days and forty nights with Yahweh without anything to eat or drink (Ex. 34: 28), brought the "two tables of the testimony" down, and "gave the people in commandment all that Yahweh had spoken with him in Mount Sinai" (34: 32).

THE ACTUAL "TEN WORDS"

Now, if there were ever any "commandments" written on tables of stone, these fifteen verses of Exodus 34 (12-26), contain them: it is expressly declared by Yahweh: "I will write upon these [second] tables the words that were written in the first tables, which thou brakest" (34: 1); and when Yahweh had finished the dictation, and told Moses: "Write thou these words," he verified their identity with the first tables by averring: "For after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel" (34: 27). The so-called "ten commandments" in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 are therefore not the genuine ten commandments written on the first and second tables of stone, nor was either set "written by the finger of God"; they were both, first and last edition, dictated to and written down by Moses. They were strikingly different from the so-called "ten commandments" of much later date. The original "tables" will be seen to contain only a ceremonial ritual, with but two commandments: the prohibition of "other gods," and the observance of the Sabbath, which are contained, among other things in the versions of Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5: in entirely different form and words. It is curious to note how nearly all the "laws of Moses," like many other ancient laws, run in series of tens -- the number being evidently derived from counting the fingers of the two hands -- as may be verified by checking them up in the Books of Exodus and Leviticus. The "ten commandments" most nearly resemble the "ten highest laws of Buddha"; there are also the "ten virtues of Brahma," enumerated by Manu.

We need not puzzle ourselves further with these inextricable tangles of inspiration. It suffices to show that the "ten commandments" as we are taught them in the Sunday schools are not the "ten words" of the two fabled tables of stone, and to demonstrate that the whole muddle of the "giving of the law" to and by Moses is a thing apocryphal and impossible.

THE LAW OF THE DECALOGUE

The very first avowal of the popular "ten commandments," reveals what in any other, "false" religion would be no doubt a terrible and iniquitous deity: "I Yahweh thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me" (Ex. 20: 5). A more hateful and diabolic character could not be drawn even by an inspired pen: the same implacable Deity who, according to the inspired fable of Eden, damned all humanity through the ages because an inexperienced woman, seduced by a talking snake, ate an apple in disregard of a whimsical prohibition, and then drowned nearly all creation in a fit of wrath over the misconduct of his own progeny, "the sons of the gods" (Gen. 6: 4), now writes in stone his stony-hearted decree that the unborn innocent shall pay the penalty of those guilty of not loving such a God! Thus Yahweh "repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them" (Deut. 7: 10).

The other enactments of the decalogue are mainly such as existed for ages in the codes of all the nations of antiquity and ever since, and needed no God to enact them; simply prohibitions against murder, adultery, theft, false testimony -- precepts common to all systems of even primitive law. The Babylonian code of Hammurabi, dating from about 2350 B.C., nearly a thousand years before Moses, may have been and probably was a model of them all. The only special feature of the reputed Mosaic code is that it was never obeyed, except in its most cruel and vicious precepts. In the supplementary legislation that followed, death was made the penalty for the slightest work on the voo-doodooed seventh day (Ex. 31: 15; 35: 2).

LAWS OF SLAVERY AND MURDER

The very next law after the decalogue is a brutal one of human slavery for this nation but three months escaped from four hundred years of slavery -- just as the very first edict after their escape treated of slaves of these fugitive slaves (Ex. 12: 44). Saith Yahweh: "Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them: If thou buy an Hebrew servant," so and so; if the slave be married and have children, they may be torn apart and separated; if the slave loves his wife and children and does not want to be torn away from them, "his master shall bore his ears through with an awl," and hold him in perpetual slavery. A man may sell his own daughter to be a slave (Ex. 21: 7), and it is broadly hinted that her master might indulge his lusts upon her with impunity. If a child of Yahweh kills his slave, "he shall not be punished, for he is his money" (21: 21). No God of mercy ever gave these execrable laws. The brute ex-slaves, now turned brutish slave-masters, framed them to justify their own inhumanity, and to give them "divine" sanction attributed them to their God.

The bloody code, with its key-stone *lex talionis* -- "life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe" (Ex. 21: 23-25) --reads as if dictated, not by a just and merciful God, but by the spirit of devils incarnate or of Apache Indians. Every man was made his own avenger: "The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer: when he meeteth him, he shall slay him" (Num. 35: 19); there was no criminal court known among these barbarian children of their barbarous God. And dice, or sanctified craps, were the God-prescribed method of detecting the unknown criminal (Ex. 25: 3, 30; Lev. 7: 8; Num. 25: 2, 21; 1 Sam. 14: 41), as well as for deciding civil lawsuits (Num. 25: 1, 55, 56; Prov. 16: 33). The "law of God" superstitiously and wickedly commands the murder of harmless old women: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Ex. 22: 18), though God knows there was no such thing as a witch! Countless cruel priestly and judicial murders have resulted through the ages from this "inspired" Bible mandate. This one sentence alone totally discredits the whole Hebrew Bible as the "Word of God."

CANNIBALISM AND HUMAN SACRIFICES

The most execrable and diabolic of the divine laws of Yahweh are the repeated enactments condemning his Chosen to cannibalism, the eating of human flesh, and ordaining and sanctioning living human sacrifices to appease the fierce wrath of the holy God. These infernal ukases consign the Heavenly Father of Jew and Christian to eternal loathing, as well as the inspired book which enshrines them.

Text after text of the inspired word of God relates to the custom of burning children as living human sacrifices to this Hebrao-Christian Moloch. True, some texts forbid the practice, but they are very late in Hebrew history, and testify by their iteration to the inveterate cult of human sacrifice. The instance of the God's command to Abraham to murder his God-engendered Isaac to the whim of the Monster of Hebrew mythology is too well known to need narrating; it is no palliation of the barbarity that a billy- goat was substituted just as the deluded

votary of Yahweh "stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son" (Gen. 22: 10); the god who would command a father to do such a thing and the poor obsessed fool who would obey are alike beneath contempt.

Jephthah was himself the "goat" of his God, as well as "a son of a harlot" (Judges 11: 1), when "the Spirit of Yahweh came upon Jephthah" (11: 29) to incite him to murder. "And Jephthah vowed a vow unto Yahweh ... that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me ... shall surely be Yahweh's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering" (21: 30, 31). The revolting murder of his own daughter as a burnt sacrifice to the Moloch of Israel, because "I have opened my mouth to Yahweh, and I cannot go back," is a blasting infamy to the God who instigated and accepted the murder, and who intervened with none of his usual meddlesome conjuring tricks to prevent it. It is recorded that the murdered maiden's father, in making this human sacrifice, "did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: ... and it was a custom [margin, ordinance] in Israel" (11: 39), thus testifying to the historical fact that human sacrifice was a customary thing in Israel, was established by divine "ordinance," and was practiced for ages among these barbarian people.

Here is the ordinance, the divine law of Yahweh, which commanded these sacrificial murders:

"When a man maketh a singular vow ... he shall not alter it, nor change it, a good for a bad, or a bad for a good. ... No devoted thing, that a man shall devote unto Yahweh of all that he hath, both of man and beast ... shall be sold oedeemed: every devoted thing is most holy unto Yahweh. None devoted, which shall be devoted of men, shall be redeemed; but shall surely be put to death" (Lev. 27: 2, 10, 28, 29).

Commenting on this abhorrent law of God, the pious editors of the Biblical Encyclopaedia, [New York, George H. Doran Co., 1907. 5 vols. (This is not the Encyclopaedia Biblica.)] betraying the prostitution of mind of bibliolaters seeking to "justify the ways of God to man," far from venting their loathing, thus slavishly display their maudlin exegetical wit: "(28) Devoted -- anything which by the law belonged to the Lord could neither be sold ... nor be redeemed by the vower. (29) surely ... death, in extreme cases, where death was proper and right, there was no alternative" (Vol. 1, p. 344).

Yahweh vengefully sent one of his frequent famines upon his Holy Land, "flowing with milk and honey," and it grievously afflicted his Chosen for three years, until the "man after Yahweh's own heart," David, "enquired of Yahweh" what it was all about. "And Yahweh answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites" (2 Sam. 21: 1), heathen enemies whom Yahweh had ordered to be exterminated. David cast about for a form of sacrifice potent enough to conjure away the wrath of his benign God, and to this Yahweh divinely guided him. He took two sons of Saul by Rizpah, and five sons of Michal, Saul's daughter and David's own wife, "who loved him" -- and "they hanged them in the hill before Yahweh; and they fell all seven together, and were put to death. ... And after that God was intreated for the land" (2 Sam. 21: 8, 9, 14); glutted with the butchery of human sacrifice to him, he graciously ended the famine. But what heart will not be wrung by the mother's woe of Rizpah, who "took sack-cloth and spread it ... upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night" (21: 10); the heart-broken mother of the God's victims despairingly lying over the rotting bodies of her loved sons for several months under the open skies, fighting off the scavenger birds and beasts from the poor carcasses of the human sacrifices to the Christian's loving Heavenly Father.

Rizpah disobeyed her God's repeated commands to eat her dead sons. The holy God of Israel, in his sacred Mosaic law, time and again imposes cannibalism, and of the most revolting kind: "Ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat" (Lev. 26: 29). "And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and thy daughters" (Deut. 28: 5357) -- the whole passage should be read for its refinements of gloating fiendishness. And again the holy God ordains these delicate repasts: "And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat everyone the flesh of his friend" (Jer. 19: 9). And again: "The fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers" (Ezek. 5: 10). There are other inspired passages of the same sort. The Bible commentators above cited reverently ratify the prediction with the comment, "Literally fulfilled" (Vol. 1, p. 340), pleased to be able to make citations to support their God's holy Word. Besides the testimony of the secular history of the Chosen People, concrete instances of cannibalism are related in God's book for confirmation of our faith and of our love for Yahweh: "The hands of the pitiful women have sodden [boiled] their own children: they were their

meat" (Lam. 4: 10). Again Yahweh sent a "great famine" upon his people. "And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my Lord, O King. And he said, If Yahweh do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? ... What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give me thy son, that we may eat him to-day, and we will eat my son tomorrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son" (2 Kings 6: 26-29). And the king, by his messenger to Elisha, truly said: "Behold, this evil is of Yahweh"; and he pertinently added: "What should I wait for Yahweh any longer?" (6: 33) Why? Con, you Jews and Christians, these divine precepts and examples of your holy Bible God, and remember the query of Job's wife: "Dost thou still retain thine integrity?" Forgive her for her suggestion to poor Job: "Curse God, and die" (Job 2: 9). Then kneel with lifted face to this Ogre of Israel and pray: "Our Father who art in heaven: Hallowed be thy name."

Cannibalism and its abhorrent, though vicarious, practice are still enjoined by this God on the morons of his Son Christ: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6: 53 et seq.)!

OTHER DIVINE MOSAIC LAWS

The Holy Law is a reeking priestly code, decreeing death and maiming for every violation of its superstitious voodooos. Abject subjection to the priest is rivetted upon the people by this inspired ukase. "The man that will do presumptuously, and will not harken unto the priest, even that man shall die" (Deut. 17: 12), a bloody enactment reiterated in scores of variations of fiendishness. If one's nearest and dearest, even "the wife of thy bosom," entice one to worship some milder deity than Yahweh, "thine eye shall not pity, neither shalt thou spare; but thou shalt surely kill; thine hand shall be the first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people" (Deut. 13: 6-10). But why pursue these revolting atrocities further? They are not the "law of God," but the savage enactments of the priests of barbarous tribes of primitive people, branded with the name of their pagan God Yahweh to give greater terror to superstitious heathens.

These priests were supreme and final judges of all crimes and civil controversies: "by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried" (Deut. 21: 9); though this seems to contradict the "lex talionis" and adjudications by sacred dice before noticed. Beautiful women captives of war might be forced to shave their heads and become the lust-slaves of their holy captors; if these holy ones did not find the expected "delight in her," she might be turned out of doors after being "humbled" (Deut. 21: 10-14). Of a stubborn son, a glutton or a drunkard, it is commanded that his father accuse him to the elders, "and all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die; ... and all Israel shall hear, and fear (Deut. 21: 18-21), as well they might. Other undefined deeds judged by the priests "worthy of death" are ordered to be punished by hanging on a tree (21: 22).

If one of the Israelites finds a bird's-nest, Yahweh ordains that the mother bird and her eggs or young must not be taken together, but she may be robbed of eggs or young with divine approval (Deut. 22: 6, 7). If a man marry a woman and "go in unto her," and is disappointed, and reports: "I found her not a maid," the father and mother of the young woman must hale her before all the elders in the public gate of the city, bringing along "the tokens of their daughter's virginity" (the words "the tokens of" are not in the Hebrew text). These holy wise-acres must there hold a sort of solemn ogling inquisitio de ventre inspiciendo on her person, and if the "tokens" incite their condemnation, "the men of the city shall stone her with stones that she die" (Deut. 22: 13-21); and so in cases of adultery, if the woman be married (22: 23, 24). A man having the misfortune to be sexually crippled is forever excommunicated from the holy congregation of Yahweh, and an unfortunate bastard unto the tenth generation (Deut. 23: 1, 2). The whole races of Animonites and Moabites are accursed for fanciful reasons; "thou shalt not seek their peace nor their good all thy days forever" (23: 3-6).

Yahweh established trial by ordeal for cases of suspected infidelity of a woman to her husband. The priest before whom the woman was accused was to make up a horrid concoction of "holy water," filthy dust from the floor of the tabernacle, and barley meal, mixed up with "bitter water that causeth the curse" into a "jealousy offering"; the priest then should make some conjurations "unto the woman, if no man hath lain with thee," and "charge the woman with an oath of cursing," saying: "Yahweh make thee a curse and an oath among thy people, when Yahweh doth make thy thigh to rot and thy belly to swell; And this water that causeth the curse

shall go into thy bowels, to make thy belly to swell and thy thigh to rot." To all this holy incantation the woman shall complaisantly say: "Amen, Amen." The holy priest then makes the woman drink the loathsome concoction; "then it shall come to pass, that if she have done trespass against her husband, that the water which causeth the curse shall enter into her, and become bitter, and her belly shall swell, and her thigh shall rot. ... But if the woman be not defiled, then she shall be free, and shall conceive seed. This is the law of jealousies" (Num. 5: 11-29). One would think this noxious dosing would be very efficacious to cause the belly to swell whether guilty or innocent, and the test worse than the suspicion or the offence.

Whole chapters of the "law of Yahweh" are filled with the incantations, purifications, and bans of fetishistic magic, such as conjuring sin and disease out of persons into animals. The inspired "law for leprosy and scall," in Leviticus 14 is a perfect jumble of twaddle for the "purification" of a cured leper and his clothes, house, and belongings. The priest is to take two live birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop; kill one of the birds "in an earthen vessel overunning water"; dip the live bird and the other things into the blood of the killed bird; sprinkle the leper seven times; and "let the living bird loose into the open field," charged with the disease. Then the leper, rid of the disease, must "shave all his hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows" (Lev. 14: 9), and bring two he-lambs to the priest for a "trespass offering." The priest kills one of the lambs, takes the blood and some oil, smears them on the tip of the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the big toe of the right foot of the leper, pours what remains of the oil over the leper, and presto, "he shall be clean." The poor live bird that has the dread disease is thus a sort of scapegoat for the sins, or misfortune, of the human victim. Chapters 12 and 15 are similar gems of maudlin incantations for the "purification" of the "uncleanness of women."

One of the strangest of the laws of Yahweh is that of the scapegoat sacrifice to the devil, as enacted in Leviticus 16. The word "scapegoat" is another false translation to hide what the New Standard Bible Dictionary calls "a vestige of primitive Semitic demonology"; the word used in Hebrew, and inserted in the margin of the Authorized Version, but frankly rendered in the Revised Version, is Azazel, a Hebrew name for the devil. The "sin offering" to Yahweh must also be offered to his great rival Satan. It is decreed that "the priest shall take two goats, and present them before Yahweh; ... And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two, goats; the one lot for Yahweh, and the other lot for Azazel" (Lev. 16: 7, 8); and on the scapegoat must the sins of the people be laid, and the goat then turned loose into the wilderness "to Azazel" (16: 10, 21, 22). This shows that the people of Yahweh also worshipped the devil. They continued to do so commonly at least as late as Rehoboam, who "ordained priests for the devils" (2 Chron. 11: 15).

Later a more dramatic scheme of ridding the holy people of sin was adopted by Yahweh. Two winged women, with "wings like the wings of a stork," gathered up all the sin they could get hold of, kneaded it into a "talent of lead," and passed it to "a woman that sat in the midst of the ephah" (a sort of big bushel-measure). Then the two winged females "lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven," and flew away with it to the land of Shinar, where they built a house for its permanent abode. Thus reads the sacred word of Yahweh by the mouth of the prophet (Zech. 5: 5-11).

Such are samples of the holy laws of the Infinite Wisdom of Yahweh. For enlightened legislation some might prefer even the Tennessee legislature to Yahweh and Moses.

MOSES NOT THE "LAW-GIVER"

From the innumerable "internal evidences" in the Hebrew Bible itself which we have pointed out here and there, it is demonstrated that Yahweh did not "give the law" to Moses on Sinai, or anywhere else, and that Moses did not write the "Book of the Law"; that Moses never even heard of the "law" attributed to him; in a word, that the books containing the "law" were not written until framed by the priests many hundreds of years after the time in which Moses is supposed to have lived, if he ever lived at all outside of legend. We have abundantly seen that the so-called "Five Books of Moses" relate many supposed historical facts which occurred, if they ever occurred at all, hundreds of years after the traditional time of Moses, who is said to have died in 1451 B.C. And we have seen many other such anachronisms in the other books of the Hebrew Scriptures, such as Joshua, Judges, Samuel, proving that they were not written until after the alleged facts had occurred, long after the times of the supposed writers. Better proof than that so plentifully furnished could hardly be desired to refute the claims of "inspired," or of very ancient, origin of these books.

THE "LAW" OF LATE PRIESTLY ORIGIN

What is true of the books containing the "law" is equally true, by internal evidences in the Bible, of the late and priestly origin of the "law" itself. The "Book of the Covenant," we are first told, in Exodus 24: 4, was written by Moses; later, in Deuteronomy, Moses several times (29: 20, 21, 27, 29) calls down upon the Chosen people "all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law" -- because they had "served other gods." Then, just before his death, he seems to have got out a new edition of his "compiled laws" for permanent record: "And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi which bare the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, and unto all the elders of Israel" (31: 9); and he commanded them: "Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of [inside] the ark of the covenant of Yahweh your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee" (31: 26).

Moses also particularly commanded them to assemble all the people every seven years, and read to them all the words of this law (31: 10-13). This "Book of the Law" was evidently a very sizable tome. And, as if foreseeing a time when the Chosen would have kings over them (though the thing was written long afterwards), Moses orders every such king, "when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this Law in a book. ... and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear Yahweh his God, and to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them" (Deut. 17: 18, 19). And it is decreed that every such king shall not "multiply wives to himself. ... neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold" (17: 17). But, by the clearest negative evidences of the texts, no king (until Josiah) ever had read such a book or ever saw or heard of read this "law," which positively forbade under terrible penalties everything which was the common and daily practice of their idolatrous cult; and all the kings, following the example of David and Solomon, did very greatly "multiply wives unto themselves," and with all their people habitually did everything which is so fearfully forbidden in the Book of the Law. This clearly proves their entire ignorance of it, and the impossibility of its existence during all the ages from Moses to the futile "reforms" of the good king" Josiah, when the Book of the Law was "discovered" by the priests of Judah.

It was at Sinai, in the first year of the exodus, that Moses, it is recorded, wrote the first edition of his Book of the Covenant; and forty years later that he made his revised edition and ordered the bulky tome laid up as a testimonial against the people in the Ark of the Covenant. Yet, when next we hear of it, Joshua built an altar unto Yahweh, of unhewn stone, "over which no man hath lift up any iron"; and on this very rough surface, "he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses" (Josh. 8: 32); and "afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law" (8: 34), to all the people. This is about the last word in all the Hebrew Scriptures, for about a thousand years, until Josiah, of this famous "law of Moses." When Solomon had built the temple, he put into it the ancient Ark of the Covenant, made by Moses; and it is said: "There was nothing in the Ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeh, when Yahweh made a covenant with the children of Israel" (1 Kings 8: 9; 2 Chron. 5: 10). And of this Solomon more explicitly says: "The ark, wherein is the covenant of Yahweh" (1 Kings 8: 21; 2 Chron. 6: 11). This "covenant" was clearly the covenant of circumcision, or that regarding the sabbath and "other gods"; not the "ten commandments" or the "law," so unknown until the find of Josiah. Never once again is it mentioned, or a single command of it observed, or knowledge of it seemingly suspected, in a thousand years, till the Book of the Law was "found" by Hilkiah the priest.

THE "FINDING" OF THE LAW

All are familiar with the "finding" by the late lamented Joseph Smith -- led thereto by the angel Moroni -- of the golden plates containing the text of the Book of Mormon, in the nineteenth-century United States. History repeated itself. In 2 Kings 22 is the relation of an equally notorious discovery. In the eighteenth year of the "good king" of Judah, Josiah, while repairs were being made in the temple, Hilkiah, the high priest, of a sudden "found the book of the law of Yahweh given by Moses," and by him ordered to be preserved in the Ark of the Covenant (Deut. 31, 2426). Hilkiah announced his "discovery" to Shaphan the scribe, and they took the great "find" to Josiah the king. This remarkable "discovery" was made in the year 623, B.C., 828 years after the death of Moses. So the first proof that this "Book of the Law" never existed until it was "found" by the priest is that for 828 years nobody had ever heard of it, nor is it once mentioned in Hebrew Holy Writ, and not one of its many holy laws and commands had ever been observed, by priest, king, prophet, or people of Yahweh. While

the deadly Ark was at Beth-shemesh, the whole town peeked into it, and evidently did not find the sacred relics, Aaron's conjuring rod, the pot of manna, the two tables of stone, or the Book of the Law. Yahweh murdered 50,070 of the citizens "because they looked into the ark of Yahweh" (1 Sam. 6: 19). But the book evidently did not exist.

This is further proved by the positive statement of King Josiah, to whom the book was at once taken and read: "When the king had heard the words of the book of the law, he rent his clothes" (22: 11); and he sent to "enquire of Yahweh ... concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of Yahweh that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do after all that is written in this book" (2 Kings 22: 13). Huldah the priestess, who was consulted, reported that Yahweh was very angry, "because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods" (22: 17), exactly as they had done during their whole history. This is highly significant; it never once occurred to this female prophet, nor to any of the many inspired prophets who infested all the history of Israel, to prophesy that the Book of Law was laid away in the holy Ark, and could be found for the looking! Josiah at once called all the people and priests together, and read to them the Book of the Law, and pledged them to keep and perform all the laws and commandments thereof, which their fathers had never before known or observed.

Josiah at once began a great series of "reforms," related in 2 Kings 23 and in 2 Chronicles 34: each one of which corresponds exactly with the various commands of the Book of the Law, as may be verified by consulting the marginal references and the texts referred to. Even the great celebration of the Passover, purporting to commemorate the exodus from Egypt, was quite unknown; the king specially ordered: "Keep the Passover unto Yahweh your God, as it is written in the book of this covenant"; and it is added: "Surely there was not holden such a Passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah" (2 Kings 23: 22).

THE LAW AND THE REFORMS

Among the reforms made by the king he destroyed the idols, the "pillars and groves," the "high places," [See Chapter 8.] which filled the land, the places where children were sacrificed to Moloch, the chariots of the sun, and all the accessories of the worship of the sun, moon, and stars. "He brought out the Asherah from the house of Yahweh [Solomon's temple] ... and he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that were by the house of Yahweh" (23: 6, 7); he destroyed even the holy altar which Jacob himself had erected to Yahweh at Beth-el (23: 15); and he removed the wizards, and those that had familiar spirits, and the teraphim, and all such; in each instance carrying out the detailed commands of the "law" as contained in the book just "found" by the priest, "that he might confirm the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of Yahweh" (23: 24). This tallying of "reforms" with the new-"found" law may be verified at a glance by checking the laws against the reforms, as set out in 2 Kings 23. The verses cited of chapter 23 show the reforms corresponding to the laws of the Book of Law in Deuteronomy: 2 Kings 23: 7, as to sodomites, in Deut. 23: 17, et seq.; 2 Kings 23: 8, 9, as to high places, in Deut. 12: 2; 2 Kings 23: 10, as to passing through fire, in Deut. 18: 10; 2 Kings 23: 11, as to horses and chariots of the sun, in Deut. 17: 3; 2 Kings 23: 14, as to phallic images and groves, in Deut. 16: 21, et seq.; 2 Kings 23: 21, as to the Passover, in Deut. 16: 5, 6; 2 Kings 23: 24, as to wizards, etc., Deut. 18: 11. In a word Josiah essayed to destroy at a blow the ancient religion and worship of the people, and to introduce quite a new system of worship devised by the priests, as described in the new book, a system never known or practiced in all the history of Israel from the days of Abraham, some 1500 years previously.

Now, it is quite impossible that this wonderful "law of Yahweh," said to have been given to Moses on Sinai, should have been in existence, right there in the Ark of the God, in the great temple, in the constant custody and care of the priests, and never have been known by any of the good judges, kings, or prophets of Yahweh for over eight hundred years. And the Hebrew Scriptures are full of conclusive proofs that every precept of this "law" was totally unknown to and unobserved by all the holy "men of God," prophet, priest and king, from Moses to Josiah, every one of whom continuously violated some or all of the most dreadfully prohibitory articles of the so-called Mosaic code.

POSITIVE PROOFS AGAINST MOSES

We will very briefly pass in review some of these proofs that this "law" was not instituted by Yahweh "by the hand of Moses," but was a priestly scheme written up about the time the Book of the Law was "found" by the high priest of Josiah, a millennium after the time of Moses. The first and most cogent proofs are to be found in the "Book of the Law" itself, said to have been laid down by Yahweh on Mount Sinai, written by Moses in the wilderness, and deposited in the Ark of Yahweh for a perpetual memorial and a law to the Chosen People in all their generations.

In the first place, the Book of the Law itself implicitly declares there was no such body of law in existence during the forty years' wandering in the wilderness, though it is supposed to have been given at Sinai in the very first year of the exodus from Egypt. And this declaration of the nonexistence of the "law" is curiously put into the mouth of Moses himself, in the fortieth year, just before the Chosen were to pass over Jordan into the promised land. Moses says: "And ye shall observe to do all the statutes and judgments which I set before you this day" (Deut. 11: 32). "These are the statutes and judgments which ye shall observe to do in the land, which Yahweh thy God giveth thee to possess it. ... Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes" (12: 1, 8). More positive evidence that the "law" had not been enacted forty years before on Sinai could not be, for that "law" left nothing to be done according to "whatsoever is right in his own eyes," but minutely prescribed and regulated every act of life.

But there are a couple of other specific instances of the non- existence of the "law" which may be cited for further proof. Notice first the words introducing the first instance: "And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness," the thing happened. If Moses spent forty years rambling around in the wilderness, and wrote his "Five Books" there, it is preposterous that he would relate an incident as specially occurring "while in the wilderness" -- all the incidents occurred there, according to inspiration. Evidently some scribe of many ages later wrote an old tale and inserted it in the general collection, and to give it good standing fathered it upon Moses "while the children of Israel were in the wilderness."

While in the wilderness, "they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. And they ... brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward [jail], because it was not declared what should be done unto him. And Yahweh said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp" (Num. 15, 32-36), and so they did. God never ordered a man to be murdered for picking up sticks, sabbath or no sabbath; and especially by a barbarous law which was not in existence when the offense was committed. The Constitution of every state in this Union forbids such an infamy. The text says there was no law on the subject when the man offended, so that he was held until Yahweh ordered his judicial murder. But the statement is wholly wrong, for it is also stated that two years before, at Sinai, it had been barbarously enacted: "Whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death" (Ex. 31, 15). Of course neither is true, and the two statements are totally contradictory; but the instance shows that the writer knew there was no "law" of Sinai for the murder of sabbath workers. Again, a man "blasphemed the name of Yahweh"; he was put in ward, "that the mind of Yahweh might be showed them"; Yahweh decreed: "He that blasphemeth the name of Yahweh, he shall surely be put to death" by stoning; and he was stoned (Lev. 24: 16). This shows there was no "law"; though the stone tables of Sinai decreed: "Thou shalt not take the name of Yahweh thy God in vain" (Ex. 20: 7).

BIBLE HISTORY DISPROVES THE "LAW OF MOSES"

That the "law of Moses" was not given on Sinai and preserved in a book kept by the high priest in the Ark of the Covenant, and that it did not exist until "discovered" by the priests of Josiah, and was in fact unknown and unobserved by all the holy "men of God" from Moses to Josiah may be further instanced. We will briefly review some of these manifold proofs.

Idols and idolatry were terribly forbidden in the "law of Moses." We may take the word of the prophet Ezekiel for proof of unbroken idol-worship of the Chosen People from the day they left Egypt with Moses to his own time -- all in violation of the pretended but non-existent "Mosaic" law. Ezekiel thus testifies: "Neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt" (Ezek. 20: 8); "their eyes were after their fathers' idols" (20: 24); and he quotes the Chosen as declaring: "We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone" (20: 32). This is conclusive that the Book of the Law, proscribing idolatry under penalties of punishment and death,

was nonexistent through all those ages until it was "found" by the priests of Josiah; that idolatry was the "orthodox" religion of Israel from the exodus to Josiah (as of course it was from the days of Abraham and before till the exodus); and was practiced, with the full approval of Yahweh himself, by all his holy "men of God," as we shall see, in utter oblivion of any "law" proscribing it.

In the next chapter we shall see in detail that the patriarchs, from Abraham to Moses, were ordinary idolaters and phallic worshippers of Yahweh and Baal, with their teraphim, ephods, mazzebahs, asherahs, high-places of Baal-worship and Moloch child-sacrifice and their simple earth or stone altars, where Yahweh "put his name" as a local Baal or Lord. Never once, until the Book of the Law, pretended to be given to Moses on Sinai, was "found," is there the slightest hint against all these popular heathen practices. After Moses and the pretended "law" of Sinai, the identical practices continued unabated and unrebuked, though the Book of the Law denounced them one and all in scathing terms, and threatened every imaginable woe for disobedience to them. The first thing Moses himself did after descending from Sinai and writing the "law" in his book and swearing the people to it was to erect the twelve phallic "pillars," or mazzebahs, for the twelve tribes of Israel, and send young men to offer sacrifices on earth-made altars (Ex. 24: 4, 5), though the very "law" he is said to have that day revealed enacts: "Thou shalt not plant an asherah nor set thee up a mazzebah, which Yahweh thy God hateth"; (Deut. 16: 22) and time and again decrees that no sacrifice shall be offered except by the holy monopoly of priests, and upon the sacred altar in the tabernacle of the congregation. His successor Joshua erected phallic pillars of stone, and built an altar of unhewn stone, on which he is said to have written the very "laws of Moses" forbidding such practices, and although Joshua was not a priest, he "offered thereon burnt offerings unto Yahweh, and sacrificed peace offerings" (Josh. 8: 30, 31), in violation of the "law." Joshua conjured the people to "put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the river [Euphrates], and in Egypt, and serve ye Yahweh" (24: 14) which proves idol-worship was unbroken from Abraham to the last days of Joshua. And he repeated: "Put away the strange gods which are among you" (24: 23); and the people promised they would, but they never did. Under the judges, continuously, the people "served Baalim," and "followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them; ... and served Baal and Ashtaroth ... they would not hearken unto their judges, they went a-whoring after other gods?" (Judges 2: 11-17, and throughout the book).

The story of Gideon and the fleeces (Judges 6), and the contest between Baal and Yahweh, are further proof of the popular cult persisting, contrary to "law." Even the "good" judges continued the forbidden sacrifices, as well as private persons, such as Manoah, father of Samson; and Yahweh sent down fire from heaven upon the altars to consume the acceptable sacrifices (Judges 13). Micah's golden ephod was a god in Israel, served by Levites for priests, "until the day of the captivity of the land" (Judges 18).

The great and good Samuel, when first met by Saul as he was hunting lost asses, was going "up to the high place," where the phallic "pillars and groves" were set up and Baal was worshipped, and where, on that day, the people were holding a sacred feast; "and the people will not eat until he come, because he blesseth the sacrifice" (1 Sam. 9: 13, 14); practices utterly banned by the "law" of Moses. Samuel sent Saul to meet and join "a band of prophets coming down from the high place [of Baal on the "hill of the gods"]"; and they shall be prophesying [raving], and the spirit of Yahweh shall come mightily upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy [rave] with them" (10: 5, 6); thus showing the unity of the worship of Baal and Yahweh, and the entire "orthodoxy" of high-places and phallic worship. And all the days of his life, Samuel "went from year to year in circuit" to the principal high-places, or Baal- altars of the country, and judged all Israel (7: 16); and though no priest, he continually made sacrifices and offered up burnt- offerings, all forbidden by the Book of the Law.

Saul, made king over the Chosen People by Yahweh's own special selection, continued the same practices (1 Sam. 13: 9, 10; 14: 25; et passim), and consulted witches, and was troubled with an "evil spirit from Yahweh." David was a "man after Yahweh's own heart," the most murderous, adulterous, lustful, perfidious, mendacious character in the Hebrew Scriptures. He practiced the phallic rites of divination with ephods and teraphim, and danced naked in public the phallic Baal-dance before the Ark of Yahweh; and when Michal, his wife, who was herself a heathen and kept a phallic teraphim (carved images of ancestors) for her private use and worship, rebuked him for it, he shamelessly retorted: "I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight" (2 Sam. 6: 22); and he notified her then and there that she should never have a child by him, but that he would bestow his amorous favours upon "the hand- maids of his servants."

For many years during the time of David, Yahweh's special delight, "the tabernacle of Yahweh, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt offering," and presumably the holy Ark containing the "law" banning all such things, were "in the high place at Gibeon" (1 Chron. 21: 29), in charge of "Zadok the priest, and his brethren the priests" (16: 39). David built an altar on the threshing-floor of Ornan, or Araunah, and offered sacrifices to Yahweh, which were so acceptable that Yahweh sent down fire from heaven upon the altar of burnt offering (21: 26). David christened it: "This is the house of Yahweh ha-Elohim [Yahweh of the Gods], and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel" (22: 1); all of which is forbidden in the Book of the Law, which was required to be copied and read by every king: but no king of all Jewry, until Josiah read the new-found book in his eighteenth year, ever saw or heard of "the Book of the Law of Yahweh." It was clearly not in existence.

Solomon was a worthy chip off the old block; he "loved Yahweh, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places" (I Kings 3: 3); and he "loved many strange women," besides his seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, all heathen. He built high-places and sacrificed to all the gods of his women, though Yahweh was "jealous" about all this, and threatened him trouble. And Solomon built the famous temple of Yahweh, erected by the heathen Hiram King of Tyre, which was adorned with the two notable phallic pillars, Jachin and Boaz, hung about with the phallic pomegranates, and surrounded with houses of sodomites and temple-whores, and abundantly provided with "pillars and groves" in the very house of Yahweh; and there they remained and were worshipped by all Israel till temporarily removed by Josiah, in accordance with the new-found Book of the Law, at the end of the period of Hebrew national existence.

The great prophet Elijah himself built up the ruined heathen altar at Carmel (I Kings 18: 30); and lamented to Yahweh because impious hands had "thrown down thine altars" in the land (19: 10), though all such altars were utterly tabooed by the Book of the Law as heathen Canaanitish devices. Isaiah declared, as a token of the triumph of Yahweh over the nations and their gods: "In that day there shall be an altar to Yahweh in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a mazzebah at the border thereof to Yahweh" (Isa. 19: 19).

While other prophets, Amos, Hosea, Micah, deplored the Canaanitish Baal practices performed at the altars of Yahweh, never once did they declare them illegal, as contrary to the "law of Moses," or seek to abolish them. Their efforts were solely directed toward bringing the Chosen People to devote these practices to Yahweh alone as a special God of Israel, to be worshipped by his Chosen to the exclusion of the gods of the other peoples. The kings of Israel and of Judah, from Solomon to Josiah, set up many other gods, and mazzebah and asherah, and the worship of the sun, moon, and stars, in the very temple of Yahweh at Jerusalem and in Samaria; and the people continuously and unquestioningly worshipped them.

All this could not have been rationally possible if any sort of monotheistic worship of "one God Yahweh," sole God of all the earth, had been the anciently established religion of Israel, decreed in a God-given "Book of the Law" to Moses, a holy legacy to the people, sanctioned by the fearful threats it contains against disobedience to its dread and holy commands.

It is needless to remark, with respect to the elaborate and intricate system of priestly functions and sacrifices contained in the Book of the Law and said to have been practiced in the forty- year wandering in the wilderness, that all this would have been utterly impossible in such surroundings, and during the centuries of struggling warfare and incomplete conquest of the promised land. It was all a priest-devised system, adopted late in the history of the kingdom, and given authority by being attributed to the direct command of "Yahweh by the hand of Moses."

Many other nations and peoples have had sacred books of law, revealed by gods or angels to pretended Prophets; the Koran of Mohammed and the Book of Mormon may be mentioned as more modern instances. This should suffice to demonstrate that the religion of the Hebrew Bible was none other than the universal phallic pagan worship, centered to a certain extent around a "jealous" Yahweh as the special, tribal El of his Chosen Israel, and forbidden by no extant "law of Yahweh" given to Moses on Sinai.

CHAPTER 7: THE "CONQUEST" OF THE PROMISED LAND

THE "CONQUEST" OF THE PROMISED LAND
BUT NOT CONQUERED
THE ABJECT SUBJECTION OF ISRAEL

THE "CONQUEST" OF THE PROMISED LAND

HAVING been duly impressed with the promises reiterated by Yahveh to his Chosen People, let us turn our attention to the wondrous manner of their fulfillment, as recorded in the inspired history. The promises are repeated so often, from Abraham to Moses, and with so many variant ifs, buts, conditions, provisos, circumlocutions, and contradictions, that it is difficult to select the most representative one. But a fair sample proceeds from amid the smoke and fire of Sinai:

"Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place, which I have prepared...

"For mine angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorities, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off; ... thou shalt utterly overthrow them. ...

"I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee.

"And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee.

"I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee.

"By little and little I will drive them out before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land.

"And I will set thy bounds from the Red Sea even unto the Sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee.

"Thou shalt not make no covenant with them, nor with their gods.

"They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee" (Ex. 23: 20, 23, 24, 27-33).

Under both the old and the new "dispensations," promises are always coupled with threats of penalties. There is a difference in favour of the old: its punishments are always temporal; those of the new are eternal as hell fire. It is the earthly body alone that suffers according to Yahveh's Old Will, and that has an end with life; in the New Testament of the gentle and loving Jesus, the penalty only attaches when life ends, and the immortal soul writhes out its expiation through all eternity. But even the Old is not wanting in picturesque detail of torture that does credit to a God distinguished for long-suffering, forgiveness, and mercy. Here is one typical hint to the Chosen:

"If ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all of these commandments. ... I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart. ... And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies. ... Then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. ... I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass: And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits. ... "I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins. I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your high ways shall be desolate.

"And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me; then will I also walk contrary unto you, and ... will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant: ... I will send the pestilence among you; and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. ...

"And I will walk contrary unto you then also in fury; and I will chastise you seven times for your sins. And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat.

And I will cast your carcasses upon the carcases of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you" (Lev. 26: 14, 16-25, 28-30)

Verily the old priests of Yahveh were fit prototypes of those of the new dispensation of love and mercy. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10: 31)!

Encouraged by the promises, and thus lovingly admonished to the fear of Yahveh, at last, after 685 long Years since Abraham of hopeful waiting, slavery and affliction, of suffering and of destruction, the Chosen People of Yahveh, in Yahveh's own leisurely way, finally

"On Jordan's stormy banks did stand, And cast a wistful eye On Canaan's fair and happy land, Where their possessions lie."

Now might they have some reason to expect, from the explicit terms of the divine covenant, that the Almighty Grantor would put them into immediate, peaceable possession of the long promised land. He had covenanted to send an angel and hornets on before them, to put "the fear of Yahveh" into the rightful inhabitants, and to drive them out well in advance of the arrival of the new and "peculiar" occupants. But now it appeared that the place was not "prepared" at all; the old inhabitants were still tenaciously in their walled cities and by their domestic vines and fig-trees undisturbed. The newcomers must yet do their own "preparing," driving out, and cleansing the land, by fire and sword, before they could even begin to possess and enjoy it. And the possession must be thorough; this was Yahveh's motto: "When I begin, I will also make an end" (I Sam. 3: 12). Yahveh, who was a "man of war" (Ex. 15: 3), would see to that, and even help with the angel and hornets, though he had not done so yet, as he had promised.

The task which confronted the newcomers, six hundred-odd thousand soldiers of Yahveh, all mighty men and valiant, armed with scavenger-paddle-spears (Deut. 23: 13), and with impedimenta of a couple of million or more old men, women, children, and camp-followers, was a war of extermination against "seven nations more and mightier" than they; seven highly civilized and powerful peoples, aggregating, according to the Mosaic estimate, at least twenty-odd millions, inhabiting a country of about 11,000 square miles, about the size of Belgium, practically the most densely populated country in the world, with its less than 8,000,000 people. Canaan then was nearly three times as densely populated. The God who had wrought such fearful wonders in Egypt, and brought out his Chosen with a "mighty hand and an outstretched arm," is under contract now to send one angel and hornets to help his soldiers drive these seven mightier nations out of their land! But they must not be all driven out or destroyed at once, or the wild animals would multiply against the new arrivals too rapidly (Ex. 23: 28, 29) -- in a country about as sparsely settled as New York City!

Yahveh, Man of war, the merciful God, as generalissimo of the armies of Israel, issued these notable orders of the day: "When Yahveh thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, [naming again the "seven nations greater and mightier"]; and when Yahveh thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: ...

"And thou shalt consume all the people which Yahveh thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them" (Deut. 7: 1, 2, 16).

These divine war orders, possibly even more drastic and diabolic than the brutal ones issued by a modern warlord, are repeated time and again in the inspired texts. These were about the only commands of Yahveh which his Chosen People ever so much as partially obeyed. We shall see in the sequel that the Almighty Yahveh did not deliver and drive out so completely as the Chosen had perhaps the right under the covenant to expect; nor were they able, despite the divine allies of angel and hornets, to massacre the home-defenders of the land to the degree of extermination which Yahveh ordered and promised. But scores of times the official report of battle after battle, and massacre after massacre, reads like this first one: "And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and sheep, and ox, and ass, with the edge of the sword. And they burnt the city with fire" (Josh. 6: 21, 24).

A little later the original orders were modified so as to give play to the holy lust and greed of Yahveh's Chosen, it being ordered: "Thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword; but the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself" (Deut. 20: 13, 14).

The Chosen were urged forward with this repeated divine assurance: "There shall no man be able to stand before you: for Yahveh your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon" (Deut. 11: 25). And just before Moses passed to his reward -- or was afflicted with his promised punishment -- above but not across Jordan, he put on record Yahveh's final reassurance: "Yahveh thy God, he will go over before thee, and he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them" (Deut. 31: 3). With this illusory promise on his lips Moses died.

Joshua succeeded to the command next under Yahveh; and he proceeded to cross over Jordan under circumstances that are reported in two ways. Beginning his campaigns of quasi-conquest with the famous fall of Jericho, where he "utterly destroyed all that was in the city," but kept the gold and silver and other loot for the treasury of Yahveh (Josh. 6: 21, 24), he swept on from massacre to massacres city after city being taken and burned by Joshua: "he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as Yahveh God of Israel commanded" (Josh. 10: 40).

Here we may begin to see in what fashion the glittering, sweeping promises of Yahveh were kept. A brief retrospect will recall to us the original simple promise of 685 years before to Abram, to give to him and his seed "the land to possess it." Later the "covenant of circumcision" was superimposed as a single condition; then 400 years of abject slavery in a strange land was imposed as a dismal preliminary, lengthened into 430 years by a bit of forgetfulness on the part of Yahveh. At last he "remembered" his people and his covenant, and he commanded Moses to lead the hosts of Israel out of Egypt into the promised land. This looked like a tardy start towards performance. But because the people got hungry and thirsty while camping for a year in the wilderness around Sinai, the "fierce anger of Yahveh was kindled" against them, and untold numbers of them were massacred by plague, fire and sword, and fiery serpents, and the entire millions of them were condemned to wander forty years in the wilderness until their carcasses were all scattered in the wilderness -- or were not, as the case may be. Then, at length, the children of Israel, or the children of the children, were sent across into the land which had been promised to be made ready and waiting for their undisturbed possession.

Yahveh repeatedly promised to accomplish this annihilation of the nations, and to help his Chosen People to execute this program of universal extermination. They were to possess the land completely, with no one to share it with them or to molest them in it, or to corrupt their holy lives by wicked examples of idolatry and whoredom. This precise reason, as justification for the extermination of millions, was expressly stated by Yahveh himself: "They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me" (Ex. 23: 33). The land was to have rest.

But after a number of preliminary massacres of extermination as above noticed, Yahveh and his Chosen seem to have slacked their murderous zeal, or to have failed in their ability to perpetrate their purpose, or else the exaggeration of their chroniclers was toned down. Joshua did not exterminate the Hivites, but made peace with them and spared the lives of the people, in direct disobedience of orders, and made them "hewers of wood and drawers of water to Yahveh" (Josh.

9: 27). He then helped these Hivites in a war made against them by the five kings, on the occasion when the sun stood still upon Gibeon and the moon in the valley of Ajalon (Josh. 10: 12, 13) so that the massacre might be completed. Then the kings of the Canaanites (already totally exterminated, Num. 21: 3) Amorites, Hivites (already enslaved "unto this day") Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, and others, leagued and went to fight against Israel. And the inspired record assures us that Joshua and his Israelites "smote them, until they left them none remaining. And all the cities of those kings, and all the kings of them, did Joshua take, and smote them with the edge of the sword, and he utterly destroyed them, as Moses the servant of Yahveh commanded" (Josh.

11: 8, 12). But the Jebusites continued to inhabit "Jebus, which is Jerusalem" (Judges 19: 10), until, at least, the time when part of the city was taken by David; and Jerusalem was certainly not destroyed until it was captured by the Babylonians. The Canaanites and others for centuries afterwards occupied the land. But it is solemnly declared: "So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that Yahveh said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war" (Josh. 11: 23).

This sounds like the thorough fulfillment of Yahveh's sacred promise and covenant. And for further assurance, inspiration itemizes the muster-roll of conquered lands and kings:

"And these are the kings of the country which Joshua and the children of Israel smote ... which Joshua gave unto the tribes of Israel for a possession according to their divisions;

"In the mountains, and in the valleys, and in the plains, and in the springs, and in the wilderness, and in the south country; The Hittites, the Amorites, and the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites" (Josh. 12: 7, 8).

A long list of countries and their kings which Joshua took and smote, of which thirty-one were on the west side of Jordan, is given in Joshua 12.

And time and again the inspired historian repeats the refrain, reckless of its verity: "And Yahveh gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And Yahveh gave them rest around about: ... there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; Yahveh delivered all their enemies into their hand" (Josh. 21: 43, 44).

BUT NOT CONQUERED

What is then our legitimate surprise to read, in the very next chapter of the sacred history that Yahveh himself negatives this whole Solemn record? In Joshua 13: 1, Yahveh says to Joshua: "Thou art old and stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be Possessed"; and a good part of chapter 13 is taken up with an account of "the land that yet remaineth" to be possessed -- being precisely the lands and cities just recorded as taken. Nor had a single one of the seven nations been destroyed and driven out, as so often promised, commanded, and proclaimed to have been totally accomplished. ~~

It is a number of times expressly declared: "Nevertheless, the children of Israel drave not out" the very several peoples named, "but they dwell among the Israelites unto this day" (e.g., Josh. 13: 13; 15: 63; 16: 10; 17: 12, 13). Even under the judges they "could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron" (Judges 1: 19). And as Joshua approached death, he gave this warning and admission: "That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you ... but they shall be snares and traps unto you and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land" (Josh. 23: 7, 13). Nearly the whole of Judges 1 (19-34) is a schedule of peoples whom the Chosen "could not drive out -- but they dwell among Israel to this day" -- very long afterwards. And it is by divine inspiration related: "Now these are the nations which Yahveh left, to prove Israel by them. ... namely ... all the Canaanites ... and the Hivites that dwelt in Mount Lebanon. ... And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of Yahveh. ... And the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites, Hittites, and Amolites, and Petizzites and Hizites, and Jebusites [precisely the nations who were so annihilated that "not a man was left of them to breathe"]: And they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods" (Judges 3: 1-6)! What a rare bit! One wonders what was the matter with Yahveh and his hornets.

This admission that the children of Israel "dwelt among" the seven nations proves that the 600,000 soldiers of Yahveh had not exterminated the 20-odd millions of inhabitants of Canaan, but remained a small and, as is now to be seen, conquered minority among their vengeful enemies.

For these several nations quickly took their turn in conquering and subjecting Israel. First, the King of Mesopotamia kept them in subjection for 8 years (Judges 3: 8); then the Moabites for 18 years (3: 14); then the oft-destroyed Canaanites enslaved them for 20 years (4: 3); then the Philistines for 18 years (10: 8); and again for 40 years (13: 1); and so on all but continuously until the time of David, though Yahveh had promised: "Ye shall reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over you" (Deut. 15: 6).

Thus the performance of the reiterated promise of complete inheritance is seen to be a dismal failure. The covenant of quiet and peaceable possession was equally illusory and unperformed. War between the soldiers of Yahveh and the seven nations was continuous under Joshua, was hardly interrupted during the four hundred-odd years of the judges, was Saul's chief occupation and the occasion of his death, and was so incessant and sanguinary during David's whole reign that he had no time and was too bloody-handed to build the phallic temple of Yahveh. As late as Solomon, six hundred years after the "conquest" of extermination by Joshua, these nations still dwelt in "thy land"; Solomon levied tribute on six of these same nations (I Kings 9: 15-23).

THE OBJECT SUBJECTION OF ISRAEL

The sacred record contains many instances, of which but a sample or two will be cited here, of the desperate straits to which Yahveh's heroes of the "conquest" were reduced by their exterminated enemies. In the days of Samuel the judge, the Philistines beat the Chosen so badly that the latter sought recourse to miracle or magic, and brought up the wonder-working Ark of the Covenant of Yahveh out of Shiloh, so that, they said, "when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies" (1 Sam. 4: 3). It is recorded that the Philistines were afraid when they heard of the advent of the Ark, and said: "Woe unto us, for Gods [Elohim] are come into the camp." Nevertheless, they attacked the soldiers of Yahveh at Ebenezer (which was not then in existence;

7: 12), killed 30,000 of them, and, to their own great misfortune, captured the Ark, which they kept until, to get well rid of it, they sent it back to the Chosen accompanied by suggestive golden images of emeralds and mice.

When Saul was king, the Ammonites besieged Jabesh-Gilead, a city of the Benjaminites, and the Chosen were so abjectly terrified that they immediately offered to surrender and become slaves of the Ammonites. Nahash, the Ammonite leader, replied that he would accept "on this condition. ... that I may thrust out all your eyes, and lay it for a reproach on all Israel" (1 Sam. 11: 2). The elders of Jabesh begged seven days' time in order to send throughout Israel for aid; and they said: "If there be no man [What of Yahveh or his hornets?] to save us, we will come out to thee" (11: 3), and suffer their eyes to be punched out and themselves to be made slaves! They then send out a wild call for aid to Saul; and when the tidings became known throughout Israel, "all the people lifted up their voices, and wept" (11: 4). King Saul sent swift couriers from Dan to Beersheba, commanding every man in Israel, under pain of being "hewed to pieces," to report at once for war. And, it is said, "the fear of Yahveh fell upon the people" (as well as, maybe, the fear of Saul's dire threats); and they "came with one accord," to the number of 330,000 men. The next day they defeated and drove off the Ammonites, who are reported to have waited complaisantly a whole week till a force could be raised in all Israel to destroy them!

How the Israelites could do this, an unarmed mob, as the following account proves, is one of the standing wonders not revealed. It will be noted that Saul's threat of death could raise in all Jewry but 330,000 men, about one-half of the alleged armed host that crossed the Jordan with Joshua. The truly God- forsaken condition of the Chosen People despite the celebrated "everlasting covenant," is shown by the following picture drawn by the inspired historian within two years after Saul was made king:

"The Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash. ...

"When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits. And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling. ...

And Saul numbered the people that were present with him, about six hundred men. ...

"Now, there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords and spears: But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock. ...

"So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan" (1 Sam. 13: 5-7, 15, 19, 20, 22).

From bad to worse the Chosen People had gone and yet went. Saul, under threat of death, had gathered an unarmed rabble of 330,000, which was reduced to only 600; this was in the year 1095 B.C. But a sudden temporary increase, which recalls the prodigies of the sojourn in Egypt, is recorded, with a notable contradiction. In 1017 B.C., when Yahveh in his anger (2 Sam. 24: 1) or Satan (1 Chron. 21: 1) "moved" or "provoked" David to number Israel, Joab took the census and reported that "of valiant men that drew the sword" there were in Israel 800,000, and in Judah 500,000 (2 Sam. 24: 9), a vast host of Hebrew soldiers further exaggerated by the historian of Chronicles, who records the returns of the same census: the "men that drew sword" in Israel were 1,100,000 and in Judah 480,000 (1 Chron. 21: 5). In the light of the other returns

noticed, we see that the war casualties and Jahvistic massacres of the Chosen People surpassed all human records.

Only sixty years later, in 957 B.C., in the civil wars following the death of Solomon, Abijah, successor to Rehoboam as king of Judah, in one battle is said to have had 400,000 "chosen men," and Jeroboam, King of Israel, to have had 800,000, all "being mighty men of valor" (2 Chron. 13: 3); and in this single fight "there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men" (13: 17), the casualties of Judah not being recorded.

That these figures are also "inspired" there is no doubt. There is no other such battle in all history.

In the brief space of fifty-six years yet later, these vast armies of Yahveh's Chosen had vanished like the hosts of Sennacherib; and when Benhadad King of Syria came against Israel with armies that "filled the country," "the children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids"; Ahab "numbered all the people, even all the children of Israel, being seven thousand" (I Kings 20: 27, 15).

Thus we see the Chosen People, the redoubtable soldiers of El-Sabaoth, whom he had brought in with a mighty band and outstretched arm -- and hornets -- and whom he had hedged about with an "everlasting covenant," reduced by the inhabitants of the land which was to be perfectly "prepared" for their sole possession to a dire state of misery and oppression. And Israel was the, "peculiar treasure" of Yahveh, his Chosen People; so warlike that the "Men of war" were alone numbered, and were captained by their Yahveh, the "mighty man of war," in person. The "everlasting covenant" of Yahveh may have been the original "scrap of paper."

CHAPTER 8: THE HEBREW HEATHEN RELIGION

THE HEBREW HEATHEN RELIGION

PHALLISM, OR SEX-WORSHIP

THE PRIMITIVE TRINITY

PHALLIC EMBLEMS

THE PATRIARCHAL PHALLIC IDOLATRY

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OTHER HEATHEN RITES OF YAHVEH

THE TEMPLE AN IDOL HOUSE

THE TEMPLE HARLOTS OF YAHVEH

PHALLUS HOMAGE

SANCTITY OF THE PHALLUS

THE SUPERSTITION OF WITCHCRAFT

THE BIBLE A GREAT "DREAM BOOK"

THE HEBREW HEATHEN RELIGION

THE first that we know of the Hebrew Yahveh, after the fabled Flood of Noah and the fabulous Tower of Babel, is his appearance to the Chaldean heathen Abram at Haran, telling him to move on west to the land of Canaan, which Yahveh then and there promised to give to Abram and his descendants as an inheritance and possession forever (Gen. 12: 1-3). With Abram we get our first Biblical initiation into the religion of the Semitic peoples and knowledge of the forms and ceremonies of their worship of El, Bel, or Baal, as the same deity might be called in their closely allied vocabularies.

In the Hebrew language, and throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, there is no word meaning "religion." The nearest approximation to the concept is the oft-repeated phrase "the fear of Yahveh." This priest-inspired fear was the only basis for the hated Yahveh -- cult which the priests strove to impose on the Baal-worshipping Israelites, who "feared Yahveh, and served their own gods" (2 Kings 17: 33, 39), and "did not believe in Yahveh their God" (17: 14).

It is important to fully understand this common Semitic religion and its forms of worship, which we shall see continued unchanged all through Bible times down to the end of the Hebrew record. The Hebrew Scriptures, in this respect, are certainly a revelation, in a sense all too little known to the casual reader or hearer of the Word of God.

PHALLISM, OR SEX-WORSHIP

The first notion of a supreme creator among early peoples was the great and glorious sun, giving light and heat and life; all early peoples, including the Hebrews, worshipped the sun, the beautiful, visible, shining agency of creation, as they did to the end, and as some primitive peoples do to this day.

Life was a wonderful thing to them, and creation the great miracle. Man discovered in himself the power to reproduce this miracle of creation, to recreate life; and the organ of procreation became from the earliest times an object of veneration and of worship, as the human representative of the divine Creator and Life-giver. The woman, too, or "womb-man" (as the derivation of the Anglo-Saxon word suggests), was an indispensable cooperator in this work of wonder, and almost equal veneration was paid to the organ by which she participated in the creative work and brought forth life. "Eve" was "Life" from the beginning of the human species. "And the man called his wife's name Havvah [Eve], because she was the mother of all living (Gen. 3: 20).

Hence, the human organs of life, symbolized as the "staff of life" and the "door of life," through which life entered and issued, were all through ancient history, Biblical and profane, and are at present among many peoples, sacred objects of worship.' Not only was it the soul of the Semitic religion, but of the religions of Egypt, [The Encyclopedia Biblica speaks of "the special sacredness of the generative organs," and says: "The organ of it in man could by the primitive Semites be taken as symbolizing the deity" (Vol. 3: col. 3453).] India, Greece, Rome, all Europe, and all primitive America. Its emblems have been unearthed in Missouri. We have many early Biblical illustrations of this ancient, Hebraic, Semitic, universal phallic worship. All the ancient monuments, as well as Hebrew Scripture, testify to the same customs. In Genesis, of the reputed sons of Shem, son of Noah, one was Asshur (Gen. 10: 22). This phallic name signifies, more or less, happy, fortunate, upright, erect -- unus cui membrum erectus est, vel fascinum ipsum. Asshur went forth, we are told, out of that land, "and builded Nineveh," and founded the great kingdom of Assyria, which perpetuates his name, for its name in Assyrian, and in the Bible, is Asshur. Asshur, or Asher, as the triune God was called in their mythology, became deified; he represented the virile agency of creation, and was the special divinity of the Assyrians. His divine consort, Ishtar or Ashtoreth, was the deified personification of the female principle of creation. The idol symbol under which they were worshipped was the Asherah, representing the creative union of Bel, or Baal, and Ashtoreth, and typifying "happiness."

THE PRIMITIVE TRINITY

The Assyrians, no less than the Egyptians, the Hindus, the Canaanites, the Israelites, the Christians, and many otheeligious peoples, had and have their Trinity, purely phallic in origin and significance. The phallus was noted to be not alone efficient in the work of procreation; its creative labors were shared by two coefficients, the two testes, or tests of efficient manhood. Hence these were likewise honored, personified, and deified, with distinctive names: the right one, supposed to be prepotent in the generation of a man-child, was named Anu, or On -- that is, "strength, power"; the left, or female-producing test was called Hoa or Hea. When Jacob's youngest son was born, his motheachel with her dying breath "called his name Ben-oni [son of strength]: but his father called him Benjamin [son of my right hand] (Gen 35: 18). Thus Anu and Hea completed the Assyrian, and Hebrew, Trinity, side by side with Asshur. This triad of the miracle of human procreation was represented by the triune symbol of the phallic cross in its most primitive, and natural, form:

HE-A-NU

S

S

H

U

R

A universal religious symbol, perpetuated under many variations of form, but always with the identical phallic significance: Its most conspicuous adaptations to-day are the sacred cross of Christ, and the Christian temple with its towering steeple and lateral transepts.

The Assyrian supreme masculine creator, Bel, was manifested in this male triad of Asshur-Anu-Hea, with the female creative consort, Ashtoreth, the whole symbolized and worshipped under the Symbolic Asherah. Bel, Ashtoreth, and the Asherah were integrally part and parcel of the fervent worship of the Hebrews in the land of Canaan, just as they had been in the land of Chaldea whence they came, and so continued to be from first to last, as their Scriptures vividly show.

The Assyrian Asshur was not the only one of the name to whom the Hebrew Scriptures introduce us. One of the sons of Jacob and of his wife Leah was given the name of his old Semitic ancestor; "and she called his name Asher, for, she said, "Happy am I" (Gen. 30: 13); and this Asher gave his phallic name to one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

A few more instances of identity with other Semitic peoples may be noted briefly. Of the offspring of the reputed triplet sons of Noah set out in Genesis 10:from Cush came the Ethiopians; from Mizraim the Philistines and the Egyptians; from Canaan the Canaanites; from Shem the Hebrews, the Assyrians, the Ishmaelites or Arabians, the Elamites, etc. From Lot, by his own daughters, sprang the Moabites, and Ammorites (Gen. 19:

30-37). Thus we see connected all the Semitic peoples, and with identical origin, traditions, deities, religion, and worship.

PHALLIC EMBLEMS

The universality of the phallus worship and the peculiar significance and sanctity of its emblems, especially the cross, the triangle, the spire. and the oval, are indicated in the universality of the use of these sacred emblems in nearly all lands and among nearly all peoples, both ancient and modern. The Christian emblem, the cross of Christ, is simply the ancient conventional emblem of the phallus and testes, and of the phallus in conjunction with the female "door of life," represented in every land and age, and especially in almost every hieroglyphic Egyptian record, where the "ankh" -- cross (cross and oval) is the emblem of life. This is exemplified in the name of Tut-ankh-amen, or "Life- image of Amen." The cross, in diverse forms, but with always the same phallic significance of "life," antedates Christianity by ages, and is found on the ancient religious monuments of many far- scattered peoples, even in prehistoric America.

Another favorite Hebrew and universal emblem is the triangle, the perfect representation of the pubic hairs on man and woman. The famous six-pointed star of David, the national emblem of Israel, and always to-day blazoned on the banners of Zion, is formed by superimposing the male on the female pubic triangle, and is of very sacred significance. The pyramids of Egypt, as of Central America, are faced by four triangles, representing in Egypt the "four great gods" purely phallic and very sacred.

Of like origin and significance are the Jewish manner of holding the hands in priestly blessing, the oval windows of Gothic churches, the heaven-pointing spires of Christian temples; all purely phallic devices, though to-day seemingly formal or conventional, as the pagan phallic origins are forgotten. We shall now observe some other phallic devices of universal heathen, and Hebrew, usage, out of the Scriptures.

THE PATRIARCHAL PHALLIC IDOLATRY

Abraham, the Chaldean of Ur, and the patriarchal family and tribes which he is said to have established were, in common with all their Semitic kindred, Semitic idolaters; he and his descendants worshipped phallic idols; and they retained and worshipped these same common Semitic idols through all their history down to the times of the last of the prophets, as the Hebrew Bible makes amply evident. We shall make some review of this phallic cult, so that the interested reader may appreciate what was this Hebrew religion and its God, now taken over by the Christian religion.

THE PHALLIC SYMBOLS OF SCRIPTURE

Principal among the idols or images of their Yahveh were, throughout Hebrew history, the phallic objects of worship mentioned a thousand times in the sacred pages under the euphemistic and misleading terms "Pillar" and "grove." These so popular and venerated emblems were nothing more or less than the phallic reproductions of the erect male organ of procreation, the symbolic "staff of life, and the receptive and fecund female "door of life," to euphemize them ourselves. In the English translations the term "pillar" is used for the representation called in Hebrew "mazzabah," of the male organ; and "grove" for the "asherah" or female organ of reproduction. For public and outdoor worship these images were of large size and bold design, often actual, sometimes conventional or symbolic, representations of the sex-organs. Smaller idols of the same nature, more for household worship, were images of Yahveh, the peculiarly sacred alias of the Hebraic El, with an enormous phallus, or male organ, erect in situ. The names given to these household images were "ephods" and "teraphim," words constantly occurring together throughout the Hebrew Bible to as late as Hosea 3: 4. These phallic idols were used for worship, and for the purposes of divination or oracular consultation with the God Yahveh, in seeking his advice and receiving his awful decrees.

Thus the religion and worship of the Hebrews and their Semitic neighbors were frankly and purely phallic. I shall illustrate this fact by a few instances from among hundreds in the Hebrew Scriptures. And first of the "pillars" and "groves" of almost universal worship.

THE "PILLARS" OR MAZZEBAHS OF YAHVEH

The first mentioned mazzebah, or "pillar," as it is deceptively rendered in the English translation, is the one piously set up by Jacob at the place where he dreamed of the ladder (Genesis 28); that he "took the stone he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar [mazzebah], and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Beth-el -- the house of God (28: 18, 19); and he said: "This stone, which I have set up for a mazzebah, shall be God's house" (28: 22). The same or a similar incident is recorded of Jacob at Padan-aram, when his name was changed to Israel (35: 14). Now, Beth-el was a very sacred "high place" and holy shrine throughout Hebrew history. It was a center of phallic idol worship, and as such was railed against by the later prophets, who were trying to reform the religion of Israel. They "cried against the altar in Bethel" (1 Kings 13: 4, 32); and Amos quotes Yahveh as commanding: "Seek not Beth-el. ... Beth-el shall come to nought" (Amos 5: 5); and Josiah, as one of his "reforms" in abolishing the phallic heathen practices of the Chosen, destroyed this holy phallic altar of Beth-el (2 Kings 23: 15), and burned the bones of its prophets and priests upon the polluted altar. This proves that the very sacred Beth-el was, from its beginning to its end, a place of heathen phallic Baal-Yahveh-worship, and somewhat discounts the eulogies heard upon it from modern Christian pulpits. Jeremiah declared: "The house of Israel was ashamed of Beth-el their confidence" (Jer. 48: 13). Again, following the hot family quarrel between Jacob and Laban over the stealing of Laban's phallic gods (teraphim) by Rachel, as an emblem of peace, "Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a mazzebah. ... And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and thee this day"; and he called it Mizpah, "for he said, Yahveh watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another" (Gen. 31: 5, 48, 49). This mazzebah was a representative of the sacred phallus, for which a tall or pointed stone, or even a heap of stones, was used when nothing else was available.

When Rachel died, in pious grief "Jacob set up a pillar [mazzebah] upon her grave: that is the mazzebah of Rachel's grave unto this day" (Gen. 35: 20). Moses, when he came down from flaming Sinai, where he is said to have received the fearful law of Yahveh, straightway, in celebration, "builded an altar under the hill, and twelve mazzebah [plural], according to the twelve tribes of Israel" (Ex. 24: 4). This proves that Moses did not receive the law there, for, but a few verses before, that law expressly declares: "Thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their mazzebah" (23: 24). But this evidently means the mazzebah of the other peoples, the seven nations named in verse 23, not those of Yahveh, which were not then prohibited, as Moses' act in erecting the twelve pillars (mazzebah) would indicate.

So all through the Hebrew Scriptures occurs mention of this popular phallic practice as perfectly proper and orthodox. A thousand years later the raptured vision of the great prophet Isaiah foresaw the glory of Yahveh in the heathen lands, and this is his ideal of the supreme emblem of that glory: "In that day shall there be an altar to Yahveh in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a mazzebah at the border thereof to Yahveh" (Isa. 19: 19). This is a further proof that there was yet no "law" of Yahveh condemning this phallic cult of the mazzebah, which Yahveh is quoted as having so fearfully denounced through Moses: "Neither shalt thou set thee up any mazzebah; which Yahveh thy God hateth" (Deut. 16: 22). Hosea speaks of the "goodly mazzebah" (Hos. 10: 1); and laments that the Chosen shall be deprived of them (3: 4).

These phallic "pillars" or mazzebah were regarded as the actual abiding-place of the deity who "put his name" on them; he verily lived in the stone, and it became sentient and possessed of faculties of sight, hearing, understanding, protecting. We have noticed the mazzebah which Jacob set up "for God's house" (Gen. 28: 22); and the mazzebah and stone heap which Jacob and Laban set up as a "witness" and "watch tower" between them, saying "this heap be witness and this pillar [mazzebah] be witness," to keep them from harming each other (Gen. 31: 45-52). And Joshua set up a great stone, and said unto all the people: "Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of Yahveh which he spake unto us" (Josh. 24: 26, 27). Samuel set up a "stone of help" (Ebenezer; I Sam. 7: 12). The superstition that deity, or spirits, or jinn resided in the sacred stones was almost universal among ancient peoples, and persists to-day among low tribes from Alaska to equatorial Africa.

And not only did the deity reside in the stones, but "stone" or "rock" was, and yet is, a favorite appellation of the Deity: Jacob calls Yahveh "stone of Israel"; Moses "the rock of our salvation," "the rock that begat me," "he is a rock"; and so says Samuel; and David says: "Yahveh is my rock; Elohim is my rock; my high tower, in whom I trust." Jesus says: "On this rock will I build my church," etc. All these inspired allusions are purely

phallic in terms and in signification; and so is our "Rock of Ages, cleft for me." There could be no clearer evidence that the phallus, and the stone representation of it, were regarded religiously as the emblem of deity.

THIS "GROVES" OR ASHERAHS

The "grove" (asherah) or graven representation of the female "door of life" also makes a very early scriptural appearance, and runs hand in hand or, in phallic parlance, "linga in yoni" with the mazzebah, through the whole Hebrew Bible. In Genesis 21: 33 it is recorded: 'And Abraham planted a grove [asherah] in Beersheba, and called there on the name of Yahveh, the everlasting God [E].' To use the deceptive euphemism "planted a grove," as if it meant the commendable horticultural work of setting out trees, instead of the actual "erected an asherah," or visual phallic image of the female "door of life" penetrated by the male "staff of life," is another instance of "pious fraud" on the part of the Bible translators.

The idea of planting a grove of trees, besides being actually false, is negated by so many expressions in sundry passages even in the English version of the Bible that the attempt to hide it becomes absurd. A few instances suffice to illustrate this: "And Ahab served Baal, and made a grove" (1 Kings 16: 33); under Jehoahaz "there remained a grove in Samaria" (2 Kings 13: 6); the children of Israel "set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree" (2 Kings, 17: 10); the Prophet Ahijah had already declared: "Yahveh shall smite Israel ... because they have made their groves, provoking Yahveh to anger" (1 Kings 14: 15). A grove of trees could not be planted under a tree, nor would such innocent and useful work of forestation provoke the Lord Yahveh to anger to the extent of smiting his chosen Israel. In every one of the passages cited, and in scores of others, the word used in the Hebrew Scriptures is asherah or the plural asherim, which was the name in Hebrew for the Semitic object of phallic idol-worship representing the conjunction of male and female sex- organs.

The proof in the concrete is close at hand and easy of verification. In the entrance hall of the Mercantile Library at St. Louis (where this is written), is an ancient stone slab from the walls of the Assyrian palace at Nippur. It is the Semitic, the Hebrew Scripture, asherah. The slab is so sawn, removed from its original place, as to split the principal object, the female "door of life," vertically into two parts; but one half of it is very plainly shown. The oval vulva is here represented, with a fanciful fan-shaped clitoris within its upper arched point, divided into seven whorls representing the days of the week; around the edge of the vulva are thirteen conventionalized tufts of the pubic hairs of the mons veneris, representing the thirteen "periods" of a woman in a year; while penetrating erect within the female "yoni" is the male "linga" or phallus. Besides this phallic asherah altar stands the winged genius of the shrine; in his outstretched hand he holds the usual offering of the pine-cone, emblematic of fecundity, and in his other hand he holds the conventional bag fined with like emblems, for votive offerings to this phallic Assyrian, Canaanitish, and Hebrew divinity.

It is this selfsame phallic device, the asherah, which, not in wall-carvings but in practical altar-form, filled the holy temple of Solomon at Jerusalem, for the worship of Ashtoreth, Baal, and Yahveh, and there remained in constant and fervid orthodox Hebrew worship until Josiah "cleansed the temple," and brought "forth out of the temple of Yahveh all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove [asherah], and for all the host of heaven" (2 Kings 23: 4). The Encyclopedia Biblica says: "The Asherah-post was esteemed divine -- a fetish, or a cultus-god -- as no one doubts that it was in Old Testament times" (Vol. 1:col. 332).

YAHVEH'S PHALLIC EPHODS AND TERAPHIM

Besides the mazzebahs and asherahs which abounded in orthodox Hebrew worship, the ephods and teraphim, before described as being smaller household idols of Yahveh with great standing phalli, were popular objects of the worship of Yahveh, very potent for conjuring and oracular prophecy.

The first mention of "teraphim" is in the interesting passage in Genesis 31: concerning Jacob and his pagan father-in-law Laban, and involving the modest Rachel, Jacob's wife and Laban's daughter. Inspiration tells us that "Rachel had stolen the teraphim that were her father's" (Gen.

31: 19); and Laban was very wroth and asked Jacob (31: 30): "Wherefore hast thou stolen my gods [elohim]." But Jacob protested and said: "With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live. ... For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them" (31: 32). Laban searched through all the household tents, and finally came into Rachel's tent. "Now, Rachel had taken the teraphim," says verse 34, "and sat upon them." The manner in which

these idols were ornamented, with the erect male phallus, is suggestive of the form and manner of devotion that Rachel was engaged in, "sitting on" the gods, and explains the naive excuse which she gave to her father for not rising politely when he came into her tent (31: 35). Laban "searched, but found not the teraphim" (31: 35). Gideon, the man of the gods, "made an ephod [of gold] and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it" (Judges 8: 27). This phallic idol was, at the time, expressly recognized as entirely proper and orthodox in the worship of Yahveh, who was personified by the image. The people had requested Gideon to set himself up as king and rule over them; but Gideon replied, "I will not rule over you; Yahveh shall rule over you." He called on the people for all their golden ornaments, and of these be made the golden ephod. The ephod was thus Yahveh or his idol. It was evidently the writer or editor of the Book of Judges, centuries later, who used the opprobrious term "went a whoring after" this sacred statue of Yahveh, which he says "became a snare unto Gideon and to his house" (Judges 8: 27).

In Judges 17 and 18 is the account of the idols of Micah the Ephraimite, which became famous: "The man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest" (17: 5). Afterwards he secured a Levite for this office, and said: "Now know I that Yahveh will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest" (17: 13). And the Danites came and consulted the ephod, or phallic image of Yahveh, in regard to their expedition against Laish; and they said to the Levite priest: "Ask counsel, we pray thee, of the gods [Elohim]" whether they should be successful, and the priest consulted the idol and reported: "Go in peace: before Yahveh is your way wherein ye go" (18: 1-6), again proving that Yahveh was worshipped and consulted through ephod idols. And when they had captured the city, and changed its name to Dan, and dwelt there, "they set them up Micah's graven image. ... an the time that the house of the gods [beth-ha-elohim] was in Shiloh" (18: 31) -- and there it remained and was worshipped "until the day of the captivity of the land" (18: 30), several hundred years later. This also proves that the Book of Judges was not written until after "the captivity of the land."

When David was on a foray against Saul, and had no weapon, he went to Ahimelech, the high priest (miscalled Abiathar by Jesus Christ in Mark 2: 26), in the house of Yahveh and got the sword of Goliath, which was "wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod" (1 Sam. 21: 9) or phallic statue of Yahveh. Once when Saul sought for David to kill him, the fair Michal, Saul's daughter and David's first wife, who "loved him," put one of her big phallic teraphim in the nuptial bed and covered it, while David, who was consequently supposed to be in the bed asleep, escaped (1 Sam. 19: 13).

That these teraphim were idols used in divination or in oracular consultation with Yahveh is plain from the passage of the prophet Zechariah: "For the teraphim have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams" (Zech. 10: 2). The Authorized Version in English uses the word "idols"; but the Hebrew and the Revised Version, more honestly, both use the word "teraphim."

THE SACRED DICE OF YAHVEH

The pious Hebrews had another sacred device, common to the heathen peoples of those regions, which is said to have been revealed by Yahveh himself to Moses on Sinai. This was the sacred oracular dice, urim and thummim, by which Yahveh revealed his holy will to his Chosen, and which the priest must carry in his "breastplate of judgment ... before Yahveh continually" (Ex. 28: 30). These oracular dice or "lots" were "cast" before Yahveh, and answered yes or no just as the Assyrian "tablets of destiny" did before Marduk, or Bel. Some random instances of the use of these sacred dice may be cited. Moses dedicated first Aaron (Ex. 28: 30), and later Joshua (Num. 27: 21), to use the urim and thummim; later still, he consecrated the sons of Levi: the Levites, for this office in perpetuity (Deut. 33: 8). Joshua used these dice as lots to detect Achan for his theft at the taking of Ai (Josh. 7). Samuel used them to select Saul to be king (1 Sam. 23: 9). Saul said unto Yahveh: "Shew the right; cast lots between me and Jonathan my son" to detect the person who had eaten during a battle with the Philistines, and the lot fell upon Jonathan, who then confessed (1 Sam. 14: 41-43). Sometimes this device failed, as in 1 Samuel 28: 6; for, "when Saul enquired of Yahveh, Yahveh answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets" (the three methods of divination or fortune-telling used to secure the will of Yahveh); it was then that Saul made his visit to the witch of Endor, to consult the shade of Samuel.

The pious King David "enquired of Yahveh" several times through the dice urim and thummim and by the phallic ephod of Yahveh. When he wished to know whether he should attack Saul, "he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod," and David inquired of it, saying: "O Yahveh God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant," and Yahveh replied to the satisfaction of David (1 Sam. 23: 9-12).

As late as the prophets Ezra (Ezra 2: 63) and Nehemiah (Neb. 7: 65), questions were not decided "till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim," to consult Yahveh for the answer --just like Greek oracle-mongers and Roman augurs. The superstitious and idolatrous Hebrews used these consecrated dice to decide even law-suits and legal controversies, a practice instituted on Sinai in Exodus 28: 30, and followed with the express approval of the Wisest Man, in two of his Proverbs. For Solomon says: "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of Yahveh" (Prov. 16: 33); and again he records this maxim of legal practice: "The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty" (Prov. 18: 18). As if the God of all wisdom would reveal himself and his will through such superstitious and childish devices, a sort of acrimonious craps-shooting. Dreams, dice, and prophets -- certainly a convincing triad foelation of the oracles of God! And witches, and wizards, and necromancers, and charmers, and dealers with familiar spirits, to assist!

OTHER HEATHEN RITES OF YAHVEH

Besides all the phallic worship and idolatrous practices above noticed, which were throughout their history associated with the cult of Yahveh, as a sort of special Hebraic Super-El or Baal, the Chosen People never even for a season gave up the common heathen idolatry into which they were born and bred and with which they were everywhere surrounded among their kindred peoples. We remember that Aaron made the golden calf at the very foot of Sinai while Moses was with the new-found god Yahveh (if he ever was); and Aaron proclaimed to the people, then but three months out of Egypt: "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." The golden calf was perhaps a reproduction of the sacred bull Apis of Egypt, though it is said that it was the symbol of Baal, derived from the Canaanites, and changed by the Hebrews into "a representation of Yahv'e" (Encyc. Bib., Vol. 1, col. 632). The Chosen People had known no other gods or forms of worship than those of Egypt for 430 years, and were common Chaldean idolaters before that time; and ever after leaving Egypt they followed the practices of their kindred peoples among whom they lived, and refused to pay any very particular attention to the new "jealous God" Yahveh.

Moses himself, in addition to the "twelve mazzebot" which he set up just after receiving a "law" against them, also made the famous brazen image of the fiery serpent, which healed the plague-stricken Israelites, and was preserved and worshipped as a god by them until it was finally destroyed by King Hezekiah; "for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it" (2 Kings 18: 4).

Gideon, as we have seen, also encouraged idolatry; his nickname was Jerubbaal, showing his dedication to the Canaanite- Hebrew Baal. The holy King David worshipped Baal religiously, and as the custom was in Baal-worship, danced the Baal-dance in public and naked, "with all his might" before the holy Ark of the Covenant of Yahveh; and his wife Michal, "looked through a window and saw king David leaping and dancing before Yahveh; and she despised him in her heart" (2 Sam. 6: 14-16). Absalom "reared up for himself a mazzebah [phallic "pillar"]. ... for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the mazzebah after his own name" (2 Sam. 18: 18). The wise Solomon, it is recorded, "loved Yahveh: ... only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places" (1 Kings 3: 3); the bamah or "high place" being the popular shrine of Baal-worship throughout Israel. King Solomon also "loved many strange women" of all the heathen peoples; and impartially he built a phallic temple for Yahveh and "an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab ... and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon," and went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians; "and likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods" (1 Kings 11: 1-8). Jeroboam, the first secessionist king over Israel, made two golden calves and set them up, one in Bethel and the other in Dan, saying, as did Aaron: "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (1 Kings 12: 28).

These heathenish practices were not confined to sundry "bad kings" who backslided from Yahveh; they were universal and constant throughout the rank and file of the Chosen, part and parcel of the orthodox worship of Yahveh: "For they also built them high places, and mazzebot, and asherim, on every high hill, and under

every green tree. And there were also sodomites in the land: they did according to all the abominations of the nations which Yahveh cast out before the children of Israel" (I Kings 14: 23, 24) -- only Yahveh never did cast them out; they stayed there until the Chosen were themselves carried into captivity.

The Books of Kings and Chronicles, and of the prophets are filled with these records of continuous idolatry under the successive kings of Israel and Judah, to the end of the national record. Even under the few, scattered "good kings" (i.e., Yahveh devotees), who made some reforms, it is always related, as of Joash: "But the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places" (2 Kings 12: 3). Asa "took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made"; he also removed his mother Maachah "from being queen, because she had made an asherah" -- "but the high places were not removed" (1 Kings 15: 12-14). The kings, however zealous for Yahveh they are reported, never once attempted to disturb the public idol worship of the people. Although the few "good kings" held personally, maybe, only to Yahveh, and some prophets thundered against other idols and other idolatry in favor of the "jealous God" Yahveh, the universal idol-worship of the Chosen People was never interrupted. Elijah, prophet of El-Yahveh, murdered the 450 prophets of Baal and 400 "prophets of the groves" (1 Kings 18), and wailed, in his solitude: "I, even I only, am left," of all the prophets of Yahveh. Later Jehu massacred every worshipper of Baal, although he continued the worship of the two golden calves of Yahveh in Bethel and Dan (2 Kings 10). Still the idol-worship thrived, and the Chosen People "did not believe in Yahveh their God."

This recital of instances must end; and will be brought to a close with some panoramic views of idolatry throughout the history of the Chosen People. In 2 Kings 17 this striking picture is presented:

"And the children of Israel ... built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city. And they set them up mazzebot and asherim in every high hill, and under every green tree: And there they burnt incense in all the high places [bamoth]; ... and wrought wicked things to provoke Yahveh to anger: For they served idols, whereof Yahveh had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing. ...

Notwithstanding they ... did not believe in Yahveh their God. ... And they ... made them molten images, even two calves, and made asheroth, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire [to Moloch], and used divination and enchantments."

This picture is drawn just at the close of the national existence, in the year in which the Children were first carried away into captivity. It is declared: "Yet Yahveh testified unto Israel and unto Judah, by the hand of every prophet, and of every seer, saying, Keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers. ... Notwithstanding they would not hear, like to their fathers, who believed not in Yahveh their God" (2 Kings 17: 13, 14).

This clearly proves that the few prophets; who "raved" against the "gods of the nations," which were also the gods of the Chosen People, were but as "a voice crying in the wilderness" against the popular religion, and were wholly without effect upon the prevalent popular practices, from Moses to the conquest by the Assyrians. The prophet Hosea (Hos. 3: 4), in bewailing the desolation coming upon his country, either bewailed or exulted in -- it does not clearly appear which -- the destruction of the national religion: "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without a mazzebah, and without an ephod, and without teraphim." This indicates the prevalence and entire orthodoxy of these national customs and objects of popular worship.

THE TEMPLE AN IDOL HOUSE

Just before the captivity we find the "good King" Josiah, he who "found" the Book of the Law, making a crusade against the idols. Solomon's great temple to Yahveh was the consecrated shrine of Hebrew idolatry and sex-worship. Josiah brought forth "out of the temple of Yahveh all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the asherah, and for all the host of heaven. ... And he brought out the asherah from the house of Yahveh. And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that were by the house of Yahveh, where the women wove hangings for the asherah".(2 Kings 23: 6, 7). "And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the [starry] host of heaven" (23: 5).

This is a graphic description of the polytheistic and phallic idolatry of the Hebrews, identical in every respect with that of all the other Semitic peoples among whom they lived. These records demonstrate that the Hebrew people never at any time before the return from captivity, knew or worshipped any such God as we are taught in modern Sunday schools was the "one true god" of Israel; but that they worshipped exactly the same El or Baal, and the same Elohim, or gods, as all the neighboring heathen nations. It is preposterous to pretend that the Hebrews as a nation were not heathen or pagan, like all their kindred and neighbors. We shall presently study the Hebrew "revelation" of their Yahveh at close range.

THE TEMPLE HARLOTS OF YAHVEH

There remain several aspects of Hebrew phallic worship which we shall briefly notice. One feature common to all the ancient religions was the consecrated women, or priestess-prostitutes, who were always in attendance in the temples and at the asherah ("groves"), to participate in the worship with the true believers who had the price of oblation. Their earnings in this sacred calling went into the "treasury of Yahveh," and were a large part of its legitimate income. True, the "law" prescribed: "There shall be no whore [qadeshah] of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite [qadesh] of the sons of Israel. Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of Yahveh thy God for any vow" (Deut. 23: 17, 18). But, this "law" was ex post facto, and totally unobserved, for the practice prevailed even in the holy temple of Solomon. The Hebrew word "qadesh," the name for the consecrated devotees of phallism, is exactly the same word as that for "holy" or "consecrated" or "sanctified"; it is used in the "ten commandments": "Wherefore Yahveh blessed the sabbath day and hallowed [qadesh-u] it" (Ex. 20: 11); and in the inscription on the golden crown of Aaron: "Holiness [godesh] to Yahveh" (Ex. 219: 30); and wherever this idea is expressed.

The first Bible mention of this cult is some five hundred years before the time of Moses, when the fair young widow Tamar, despairing of getting the man so often promised her, dressed herself in the garb of a "qadeshah" or temple-harlot, with a veil over her face, and went and "sat in an open place" where she knew that her father-in-law Judah would pass by; and Judah came by, and fell into her trap, with interesting sequel, related in Genesis 38. Later Moses, in instituting the religious observances of the Chosen People, thought it amiss that Hebrew young women and young men should engage in this religious prostitution, and hence the "law" above quoted, prohibiting them from acting the role of temple-prostitutes. So these sacred offices were usually filled by "the stranger within thy gate," and particularly by the Moabitish maidens and young men. While yet in the midst of their wanderings in the wilderness, "the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab, ... and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor" (Num. 25: 1-3); that is, to "Baal the hymen-breaker," so named because Moabitish maidens were wont to break their hymens on the idol-phallus before becoming qadeshoth, oeligious prostitutes. As to the qadeshuth, or official sodomites, who abounded among the Chosen People, as attested by many scriptural passages, the less said about these detestable attendants of the worship of Yahveh, the better.

When Solomon erected the temple of Yahveh, built from plans drawn by Yahveh himself (1 Chron. 28: 19), he made arrangements for the comfort of these consecrated temple-attendants, and for the convenience of the phallic worshippers. It is recorded: "And against the wall of the house he built chambers round about. ... both of the temple and of the oracle; even ... for the most holy place" (1 Kings 6: 5, 16). These side-chambers (tselaoth), the small size of which is stated (6: 6, 10), were the habitations of the qadeshoth and the qadeshuth. When the holy temple needed repairs, the "good King" Jehoash told the priests to use "all the money of the qadashim [translated dedicated things] that is brought into the house of Yahveh" (2 Kings 12: 4) for the work of repairs; but the priests stole it and did not make the repairs (12: 6). These chambers were broken down by Josiah: "And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that were in the house of Yahveh, where the women wove hangings for the asherah" (2 Kings 23: 7). Notwithstanding, so profitable a form of worship continued unabated in Israel, as in the rest of the heathen world.

PHALLUS HOMAGE

Of another phallic practice of the Hebrew religion, of universal sanctity among them and their Semitic neighbors, we have frequent testimony, from first to last, in their Scriptures. This was the solemn phallic form of oath prevalent among them. As the phallus was the object of most sacred reverence in Israel, as everywhere

else, the most solemn oaths and vows were taken upon it; the form of ceremony being for the person to be obligated to take in his hand the member of the person to whom he swore (euphemistically translated "put hand under the thigh"), and register thus his oath. As stated by a recent authority, "In exceptional cases the hand might be placed under the thigh of the person imposing the oath (Gen. 24: 2; 47: 29), as a sign of regard for the mystery of generation, whose source was God." [New Stand. Bible Dict., p. 630, art. Oath. The Encyclopedia Biblica says: "'Thigh' refers to the generative organ" (Vol. 3: col. 3453, art. Oath).

Josephus, Antiq., 1, 16, 1, describes how the ceremony was performed.] Thus, Father Abraham called his majordomo, and said to him: "Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: and I will make thee swear by Yahveh. ... And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swear to him concerning that matter" (Gen. 24: 2, 9). So Jacob, when he came to die in Egypt, called his son Joseph to him, and said: "Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh; ... bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt. ... And he swear unto him" (Gen. 47: 29-31).

This phallic practice was not confined to the ancient patriarchs; it prevailed throughout Bible history. When Solomon was crowned king over all Israel, the ceremony of taking the oath of allegiance is related in 1 Chronicles 29: 24: "And all the princes, and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of king David, gave the hand under Solomon." In other words, the spectacle was presented of all the mighty men of Israel lined up as at a Presidential New Year's reception, and filing by before the Wise King; as each came up he would take the royal phallus in his good sword hand, and with low obeisance pronounce upon it the solemn oath of fealty. In Lamentations, the weeping prophet bewails the dire distress of the Chosen People, and declares: "We have given the hand to the Egyptians, and to the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread" (Lam. 5: 6) -- taken the phallic oath of fealty to those foreign nations in return for protection and provisions. Other instances might be cited, but these suffice to show the time-honored practice, in private and in public, of all Israel. In modern times we evidence the solemnity of an official or judicial oath by putting the hand on the Bible, as a sacred thing, and kissing it. It is much the same in effect as the older custom, and very little different as a matter of taste.

SANCTITY OF THE PHALLUS

The sanctity attached by the Hebrew religion to the male organs of generation is clearly recognized by various passages of the law. These phallic organs must not be profanely touched or injured, and the injury or loss of any part of them wrought an excommunication from the worship of Yahveh. In Deuteronomy 25: 11, 12, the rigorous law enacts that when two of the Chosen are engaged in a street fight together, "and the wife of the one draweth near for to deliver her husband out of the hand of him that smiteth him, and putteth forth her hand, and taketh him by the secrets: Then thou shalt cut off her hand, thine eye shall not pity her." In chapter 23: 1, excommunication is pronounced against the unfortunate one: "He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of Yahveh." These two barbarous laws discredit the theory that a true and merciful God had anything to do with their enactment, or with the barbarous "Scriptures" which attribute them to him. But the One True Church of Yahveh to-day still holds to this phallic prohibition; and while it pretends to deny to its asexual ministers the natural exercise of these organs, its canons decree that its consecrated ones, from Yahveh's Vicar down, must be "perfect in all their parts"; and before the ceremonial "laying on of hands," it exacts a private and thorough examination, to satisfy Yahveh's and Peter's phallic requirements.

THE SUPERSTITION OF WITCHCRAFT

A brief reference to some other superstitions of the Hebrew Bible religion may be permitted. Witches, wizards, familiar spirits, and demons were as plentiful and popular as angels and devils in modern Christianity -- and as real. Yahveh, on Sinai, enacted (Ex. 22: 18): "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." When Saul was king, after the death of Samuel, he became virtuous for a while, and "banished those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land," on pain of death. This of course proves the existence of such unrealities. The Philistines came up against Saul, and he was very much afraid, and inquired of Yahveh what to do about it; but, as we have seen, "Yahveh answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets. Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her" (1 Sam.

28: 6, 7). A witch was as good an oracle of Yahveh as another, or better, to judge by the results. And they told Saul: "Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit, at Endor"; and Saul disguised himself and went to her by night, and he said to her: "I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee"; proving that the soul is immortal, and that witches can call up the dead from Sheol to earth. And Saul ordered her: "Bring me up Samuel." After some bargaining, the witch of Endor consented; and when the spirit was on her, she cried out: "I saw gods [elohim] ascending out of the earth." Then Samuel came up, and, talking as well as ever, said: "Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?" This is recorded as inspired truth in the "Holy Word of God." It is a ridiculous superstition; but it proves that the Chosen People of Yahveh revered and believed in witches; that the witches had the same supernatural powers as their Yahveh, and could also, through Yahveh, prophesy the future, -- "as Yahveh spake by me" (I Sam. 28: 17); and that the great El was, in their conception, nothing other or better than a sort of chief spirit among the many elohim (gods or spirits) which peopled their perfervid superstitious imaginations. Indeed, Yahveh is frequently called, "El, elohim of spirits," as in Numbers 16: 22 and 27: 16; and in Joshua 22: 22, "El elohim," the "God of gods, or spirits." Elsewhere he is "the El above all elohim," the "God above all gods or spirits"; and Paul calls him expressly "the Father of spirits" (Heb. 12: 9).

Hundreds of years after Saul, old Isaiah vapoured about the "familiar spirits" and the "wizards that peep, and that mutter" (Isa. 8: 19); and others of the inspired holy prophets share the same superstition. Yahveh is "jealous" of these competitors; and in Deuteronomy makes a sweeping prohibition of them all: "There shall not be found among you any one ... that useth divination, one that practiseth augury, or an enchanter, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer" (Deut. 18: 10, 11): all their practices were reserved for the priests and prophets of Yahveh alone. To cite but one other out of many instances, Manasseh, King of Judah, "used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards" (2 Chron. 33: 6). These superstitious beliefs and practices existed all through Bible times.

THE BIBLE A GREAT "DREAM BOOK"

As for dreams, it is idle to examine into any of them; the whole Bible, Old and New Testaments, is little more than a superstitious "dream-book," from Abram's dream that he should sacrifice his

only son Isaac, to the apocalyptic nightmares of John on Patmos. One of these latter was indeed a vision unique in Scripture: "Behold, there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman" (Rev. 12: 1).

Most of the principal inspired events in the Hebrew Scriptures were dreamed -- all its miraculous happenings were of such stuff as dreams are made of. Abraham dreamed the promise and the covenant, as did Jacob at the ladder; Joseph was a "Baal of dreams." Yahveh himself prescribes dreams as the preferred medium of revelation of his awful will: "If there be a prophet among you, 1:Yahveh, will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream" (Num. 12: 6). David dreamed, Solomon dreamed, Ezekiel dreamed, Daniel was the premier dreamer of them all. Jeremiah derides the whole horde of self-styled prophets gadding about the land crying: "I have dreamed, I have dreamed," and who prophesy [Heb., rave] lies (Jer. 23: 25, 26). That Jesus Christ was "conceived by the Holy Ghost" is an admitted dream (Matt. 1: 20). The book of the Revelation is all a dream.

The superstition that dreams were sent by gods as a revelation of their will was not limited to the Hebrew "revelation" of Yahveh; it pervaded antiquity, and prevails yet among low-civilized tribes. Zeus lay awake all one night on high Olympus devising trouble for the Greeks:

"At last, this counsel seemed the best, -- to send A treacherous Dream to Agamemnon, son Of Atreus. Then he called a Dream, and thus Addressing it with winged words, he said: Go, fatal Vision, to the Grecian fleet, And, entering Agamemnon's tent, declare Faithfully what I bid thee. ... At his head the Dream Took station in the form of Neleus' son. ... In such a shape The Heaven-sent Dream to Agamemnon spake ... He spake, and disappearing, left the King Musing on things that never were to be" (Iliad, Bk. 2: 1-47).

This false dream from Jove for the undoing of the Greek hero has a counterpart in the "lying spirit" sent by Yahveh falsely to "entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may ... fall at Ramothgilead" (2 Chron. 18: 18-22).

CHAPTER 9: THE PAGAN GOD -- AND GODS -- OF ISRAEL

THE PAGAN GOD -- AND GODS -- OF ISRAEL

PAGAN ORIGINS OF THE HEBREWS

THE HEBREWS WERE HEATHENS

"EL" -- "BEL" AND "BAAL"

"BAAL" IS "LORD"

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THE GOD OF ISRAEL AND THE GODS OF THE NATIONS

PAGAN BIBLE NAMES

THE PAGAN GOD -- AND GODS -- OF ISRAEL

THERE is (it may be) a God, the Supreme Architect, the Creator of the earth and of the fullness thereof, and of the wondrous "finite but unlimited" universe. Lord Bacon has said: "I had rather believe all the fables of the Legend, of the Talmud, and Al-Koran than that this universal frame is without a mind." Beautifully has the Psalmist sung: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." The works of God

In the later Hebrew Scriptures, there are many sublime outbursts of the highest and noblest concepts of Yahveh, as Creator God, as the Supreme Being, infinitely great and infinitely good. These, all of them, will be found to be simply fervid pious declamations; the occasional visions of a few ecstatic souls, denouncing the prevailing idolatrous practices of the whole people, and thundering their unheeded appeals for the worship of this ideal and "one true" God. This concept of Yahveh as "one only God" developed very late, however, in the history of Israel, perhaps a little preceding but mostly after the tribulations of the Babylonian captivity. This late-evolved God is very far from being the "Lord God" (Yahveh Elohim) of the Hebrews, as revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures and worshipped throughout their Bible history. Yahveh was but a mythological tribal God, as non-existent as Bel or Baal, or Zeus.

This Yahveh, this God -- or plurality of gods -- as revealed in the Hebrew sacred writings, will now be examined as revealed in the inspired texts, For the purpose of clearly distinguishing between the Hebrew tribal deity and the ideal but "unknown" God of our more refined concept, the Hebrew words El, Elohim,, and the name Yahveh are used in all references to the "revealed Deity of the Hebrew Scriptures, and in the quoted passages where the name Yahveh has been falsely rendered "Lord God."

PAGAN ORIGINS OF THE HEBREWS

Whatever they may have become later, indisputably the people known as Hebrews were a derived people, not always Hebrews, and not always votaries of the God Yahveh: both people and religion had a beginning. It is needful to go back to this beginning in order to get a proper perspective.

The name "Hebrew" is derived from Heber, a reputed descendant of Noah and ancestor of Abraham; just as the appellation "Semite," applied to the whole family of peoples of whom the Hebrews are one branch, derives from Shem, one of the triplet sons of Noah, and reputed common ancestor of the Semitic nations.

Abraham, when he first comes to our knowledge, was, as we have seen, a nomadic Chaldean Semite, of "Ur of the Chaldees," speaking, of course, only the Chaldean language. Naturally, like the rest of his people, he was a heathen or pagan. He came with his family into the land of the Canaanites, descended from Canaan, one of the

sons of Ham, another son of Noah, to follow the Scriptural genealogies. So, according to Genesis, these peoples were of like origin, living together in the same section of the country between Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean.

These peoples, the Babylonians, the Assyrians (originally a Babylonian colony), the Syrians, the Canaanites, the Hebrews, and later the Arabians, and the peoples generally of Palestine and western Asia, were all akin; they spoke practically the same language, and had practically the same religion and forms of religious worship -- the same God or gods. These historical facts, gathered from the Hebrew Scriptures themselves, and confirmed (except as to the Noachian traditions) by ethnological knowledge, are stated expressly to disabuse the mind of the common notion that the Hebrews were in some racial or practical sense a "peculiar people" and different from their kindred nations and neighbors. They "had Abraham as their father"; and Abraham was a native Chaldee who left his country and became the reputed founder of a branch of his people, long afterwards called Hebrews. Thus the racial and cultural identity is established.

The Hebrews were also called Israelites, because Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, after fighting all night, according to their legend, with the God, had his name changed to Israel. Now this is very significant of the whole nature and history of the Israelites. The word "Israel" is formed of the two Hebrew words *sarah* (to fight) and *El* (God). Jacob's new name, then, meant "fighter or soldier of God"; and, as we shall see, this same "El" or *Yahveh* was often called, in the Hebrew Scriptures, a "mighty man of war," and was indeed their war-god. In keeping with the religion, the Hebrews, throughout their history, were simply a nation of fighters or semi-barbarous soldiers, with *Yahveh* as their war-lord, and with primitive instincts of humanity or culture. They took their characteristics from their notions of their God, for like all primitive peoples they were very religious in their way; or else their notion of God took its form from their own characteristics: it is the same either way. Isaiah had the idea when he said: "Like people, like priest; like servant, like master; like maid, like mistress" (Isa. 24: 2); and he could exactly as well have added, "like God, like people," or "like people, like God" -- the terms are convertible. Goethe aptly hits off the truth:

"As anyone is, So is his God; And thus is God Oft strangely odd."

It is wrong to say "the God of the Hebrews," for *El* or *Yahveh* was but one of their many gods; the Hebrews had the same gods as their kindred and neighboring nations, and never in Bible times abandoned their "false gods" for the worship of any "one true and living God of all the earth," as *Yahveh* was ultimately "evolved" by some of the later prophets of Israel, after the captivity. This is abundantly proved by all the scripture writers and prophets without exception.

THE HEBREWS WERE HEATHENS

That the Hebrews had the same God and gods as the peoples around them, and were thus pagan idolaters or "heathen," their own Scriptures declare many times. Up to the reputed times of Moses this fact is indisputable, on the face of the record. Until the traditional "giving of the law" to Moses on Sinai, there is not the slightest hint in the Hebrew Scriptures, covering a space of 2500 years, that the *El* or *Yahveh* of the patriarchs was different from any other *El*, or had or claimed any different cult or form of worship. He never made any such intimation in all his reputed appearances and talks with men, from Adam to Abraham, and from Abraham to Moses.

That the patriarchs down to the time of Moses were ordinary idolatrous heathen is perfectly apparent from the inspired texts. As we have noted, Father Abraham was of Ur of the Chaldees, "the land of his nativity" (Gen. 11: 28); and presumably from the silence of the record had never heard of *Yahveh* until the God appeared to him at Haran and told him to emigrate to Canaan (Gen. 12: 1), though he had already voluntarily done so (Gen. 11: 31). The Chaldeans were Syrians, certainly not "peculiar" votaries of the God *Yahveh*, but ordinary idol-worshipping heathens, as naturally were also the ancestors and family of Abram, and all their fellow Syrians, as they are expressly called. Laban, the father-in-law of Isaac, is called "Laban the Syrian" (Gen. 31: 20, 24), and he and his family worshipped teraphim (Gen. 31: 30-35). Laban was "son of Bethuel the Syrian" (Gen. 28: 5); the name Bethu-el shows that "El" was a common Syrian or Chaldean god, who continued as God of the three patriarchs. Abram's grandson Jacob is called "a Syrian about to die" (Deut. 26: 5) when he migrated to Egypt, 250 years after Abraham. It was therefore seventy Syrians who went into Egypt, speaking the Chaldean tongue, and becoming in 430 years good pagan Egyptians. After Jacob and his family of seventy

migrated to Egypt, he and all his people continued regularly to worship "the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood [i.e., in Syria or Chaldea], and in Egypt" (Josh. 24: 14). After 430 years in Egypt, worshipping the ancient local gods, Moses had never even heard of the El-Yahveh: when he first met the strange God, at the burning bush, Moses had to ask: "What is thy name?" (Ex. 3: 13) so that he might report it back to the elders of the people in Egypt. Nearly a millennium after the death of Moses, we are expressly told that the Chosen People persisted in the worship of the foreign gods; "neither did they forsake the idols [elohim] of Egypt" (Ezek., 20: 8). This fact is many times declared to be the reason for their being "carried away into captivity."

In a word, until the Book of the Law was promulgated, in the time of Josiah, there was never a hint even that Yahveh was a "jealous God," nor that "thou shalt have no other gods before [i.e., in preference to] me," though this commandment admits the fact of "other gods." That whole part of the world, in other words, had the same gods and one common form of religion and worship; and the Israelites were identical in this respect with all the other kindred peoples, and persisted in being so until the return from captivity, as the record proves.

"EL" -- "BEL" AND "BAAL"

The word usually applied by the Hebrews to designate god, -- any god, true or false, Hebrew or heathen -- was the common noun El. By the Babylonians the word for god in general was Ilu, or Bel; with the Canaanites the form of the name was Baal. They are identical, the same common noun for the same idea of god or lord. It was simply a Semitic word meaning "Lord." This word for deity (El, god, spirit, lord; plural, Elohim, gods, spirits, lords), persists to-day: more millions of Mohammedans than there are millions of Christians and Jews combined prostrate themselves to the earth five times a day and cry the Arabian words: "Lo Illah, il Allah" -- "there is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet." This is the selfsame El, Ilu, Bel, Baal, of the Hebrews, Canaanites, Babylonians, and Assyrians. The Arabians are reputed to be descended from Ishmael ("God heareth"), the bastard son of Abraham and Hagar, and half-brother of Isaac; they to-day hold Abraham as their father, and speak the language nearest to the Hebrew; their "Allah," the Aramaic "Elah," is the Hebrew "El" or "Ilu," God, Lord. And yet the Hebrew-God Christians say that Allah is a false god, and Bel and Baal heathenish abominations.

But God is God in whatever language his name is named. We in English say "God"; the Teutons and their kindred call him "Gott"; the French call him "Dieu"; the Spanish "Dios"; the Italians "Dio"; the Portuguese "Deus" -- exactly the Latin word for God, which in its turn came from the Greek "Theos," and it from the Sanskrit "Dyaus"; but all are words for the same mythic God. The Hebrew, again, was "El" or "Ilu," the Babylonian-Assyrian "Bel," the Canaanite "Baal," the Arabian "Il"; all again the same god-name. These names were all only the common or generic name applied to deity, any god, even to departed spirits, or even as a title of respect, "lord" or "master," to living persons, by these kindred peoples, though the Bible and the Christians say that the El Yahveh was the only true God. But the Bible usage is quite to the contrary.

"BAAL" IS "LORD"

In the Hebrew Bible the ancient Semitic word baal, like the Hebrew adon, or the English "lord," in every sense, is constantly employed as a common noun meaning "lord," "master," or owner of this or that. Joseph is called by his brothers "this baal [master] of dreams," translated "this dreamer" (Gen. 37: 19); and again of Joseph it is said: "the archers [baalim of arrows] have ... shot at him" (Gen. 49: 23). A man is called baal or "master of the house" (Ex. 22: 7); again the "owner" of the house is baal (Ex. 22: 10). Certain "sons of Belial spake to the master [baal] of the house, an old man" (Judges 19: 22); the law says that "the ox shall be stoned and his owner [baal]" shall be free of blame (Ex. 21: 28); Job speaks of the owners [baalim] of a field (Job 31: 39). A "baal of hairs" is a "hairy man" (2 Kings 1: 8); "baalim of oaths" are "conspirators" (Neh. 6: 18); "baal of wings" is "winged creature." The lord and master of a wife is her baal or husband. Yahveh tells Abimelech that Abraham is baal of Sarah -- "for she is married to a baal" (Gen. 20: 3); and the law says: "If he were married [a baal], then his wife shall go out with him" (Ex. 21: 3). In the very next verse "adon" is used for "master" -- "if his master [adon] have given him a wife" (Ex. 21: 4). As a verb baal means "to marry"; the feminine form of the noun, baalah, is "mistress" or "a married woman."

YAHVEH IS BAAL

As the term is applied to deity, the word Baal, which is then always used with the definite article --the-Baal, the-Baalim -- retains its idea of lordship or ownership. The-baal was the local deity or "lord" who had "put his name" in this or that place, as the-Baal of Tyre, to whom Solomon's friend Hiram built a magnificent temple in his capital; the-baal of Lebanon, the-Baal of heaven; also often Baal-zebub, lord of flies; Baal-peor, the Lord hymen-breaker. Jerub-baal, "who is Gideon," died, "and the children of Israel ... went a whoring after the-Baalim, and made Baalberith [the Lord-of-the-covenant] their gods [elohim]" (Judges 8: 33); and it is revealed that the hosts of Israel went into the house of this their Lord of the covenant -- now called Beth-El-Berith (Judges 9: 46). This clearly shows El and Baal to be identical and interchangeable terms. David's son Beeliada (i Chron. 14: 7) elsewhere appears as Eliada (2 Sam. 5: 16), again showing that El, God, was regarded as the equivalent of Baal; as also clearly appears in the name Bealiah, meaning "Yahveh is Baal," or Lord (1 Chron. 12: 5). Crowning proof is the name given by David as a token of victory to a place where, he said: "Yahveh hath broken forth upon mine enemies ... Therefore he called the name of that place Baal-perazim" -- that is, "Baal, the lord of breaches" (2 Sam 5: 20). El-Yahveh-Baal was all one and the same, in those good old Hebrew Bible days. [See the dictionary of Bible proper names in any well-edited Bible for scores of corroboratory Instances.]

It was so exactly with the other word "El" Yahveh as the local lord or baal of sundry places or things rendered sacred by his "putting his name" thereon. On Sinai, Yahveh said to Moses: "In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee" (Ex. 20: 24; Deut. 12: 5; 1 Kings 8: 29, etc.) Thus Jacob said of the place where he dreamed that he saw the ladder: "This is none other but the house of the gods [beth-elohim]"; and he set up a phallic "pillar" or mazzebah, and called it beth-el -- "the house of God" (Gen. 28: 17-19). And elohim (gods) came to him in a dream and said: "I am the El of Beth-el" (Gen. 31: 13); and Jacob built there an altar and called the place Beth-el, "because there ha-elohim [the-gods] were revealed unto him" (Gen.

35: 7). Here the Hebrew text expressly uses the plural, noun and verb -- the-gods were revealed"; but the Authorized Version falsely translates: "God appeared unto him." The Revised Version correctly reads "revealed," but uses wrongly the singular "was."

The pagan Jebusite Melchizedek ("king of righteousness"), was "priest of El-elyon [most high God]" (Gen. 14: 18) -- which proves again that El was a common term for deity, pagan and Hebrew alike. Yahveh himself is frequently called El-Elyon -- "God Most High" -- the word elyon being an adjective simply meaning "high" or "lofty." Yahveh tells Moses that he is El-Shaddai (God my Daemon; Ex. 6: 3), as he is often peculiarly called; and in Joshua he is called Yahveh-Elelohim, translated "the Lord God of gods" (Josh. 22: 2), and so scores of times, proving that Yahveh was merely one El or God of or over the other gods or spirits which abounded in the Hebrew and neighboring pagan mythologies.

Gradually, towards the close of the Hebrew sacred history, particularly after the return from captivity, out of all this jumble of confused local baalim and elohim, evolved a more or less definite idea of the Hebrew Yahveh as a higher or super-el or baal above all the others; then as a supreme El or Baal or Lord of heaven and earth; and then as the One and Only True God, to the exclusion of all others as "false gods" or worse -- "all the gods of the heathen are devils" (Ps. 96: 5, Vulgate).

HA-ELOHIM YISHRAEL -- THE GODS OF ISRAEL

This brings us to the climax of "revelation" of the Hebrew Scriptures, which to many good Christians and Hebrews alike, brought up on professional translations, may well seem startling; but which will now be fully proved by the literal words of the Hebrew Scriptures -- the patent plurality of Hebrew gods in the revelation to man.

The English, Latin, Greek, and other versions "diligently compared and revised" by professional "divines," to which texts the acquaintance of the vast majority of people is confined, diligently and persistently conceal this cardinal fact under a form of translation designed to give us a belief in an Only One God of Israel from "the beginning," who created heaven and earth, and performed the many wonders related as revealed. But this is a pious fraud; for, according to the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures, in their original language, all the works of

creation and the many acts appearing in translation and in theology as of a One and Only God are attributed not to any One God, but to "the gods."

THE ORIGINAL HEBREW WORDS

It is no work of pedantic erudition but a simple and easy accomplishment for any one who will take the pains to learn the twenty-two consonantal letters of the Hebrew alphabet to recognize by sight and distinguish between four Hebrew words applied to the Hebrew God and gods, plainly printed in the texts of the "Word of God": first, their word El (Heb., S\$), meaning God or spirit-shade; the plural forms of that word, elohim (Heb., nli'l?14) and elohe (Heb., 6\$'lg&); then their name-word Yahveh (Heb., L%*#!|), or Jehovah, which is persistently falsely concealed and rendered in translation simply by the title "Lord"; and then the actual Hebrew-Chaldean word for "lord," which is "adon" (Heb., J'I\$). Equipped with this easy and elementary learning, we shall proceed to pick out and examine these four words in some of the principal instances where they occur in the Hebrew texts, and ourselves "diligently compare" them with the pious mistranslations of the English versions -- asking any scholarly "Doctor of Divinity" to deny the result if he truthfully can.

"THE GODS CREATED"

In the very first sentence of Genesis, the Book of Beginnings, we find the "revelation" of the plurality of gods - - elohim: In- beginning created ELOHIM [gods] the-heavens and-theearth" (Gen. 1: 1). The forms of the sentences show the order of the Hebrew words, and the hyphens indicate the combination of the particles "and," "the," etc., which are joined to the noun in Hebrew and written as one word; e.g., "theheavens," "andtheearth." "And-the-spirit [ruach, wind] of-elohim [gods] moved upon-the-face of-the-abys" (1: 2); "And-said elohim [gods], let-there-be light." And thus, for thirty-three times in the first chapter of Genesis, we read "ELOHIM" (gods) -- always plural, always "gods," but always translated "God."

There is proof of plurality which even translation cannot in this instance conceal: "And-said ELOHIM [gods], Let-make-us man [adam] in-image-our, after-likeness-our" (1: 26). And the words of the text indicate there must have been female gods, too; for it is recorded: "And-created elohim the-adam [man]; in-the-image of-elohim [gods] created-he-him; male-and-female created-he-them." This is reiterated for positive assurance: "In-the-day that elohim created adam [man], in-the-likeness of-elohim [gods] made-he-them; male-and-female created-he-them; and-blessed them, and-called name- their adam [man], in-the-day when they-were-created" (Gen. 5: 1-2).

Not one God, but a plurality of gods, from the very beginning of Hebrew Scripture is further proved by the familiar dialogue between the serpent and the woman: "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die; for elohim [gods] do know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods [elohim], knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3: 5). And the serpent spoke true; and when Yahveh-Elohim heard that the- man and the-woman had eaten the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge, he (they) said., "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil" (3: 22). Here certainly is one god speaking to another god or a whole assembly or Olympus of gods.

In the second, or Jahvistic, chapter, we first encounter the variants Yahveh and "Yahveh Elohim" (Yahveh being here, as often, abbreviated: "yy"), which distinguish the use of a second and very often conflicting source, as is elsewhere pointed out. The Elohist account of creation, using the word "elohim, ends with Genesis 2: 3; immediately the totally different "Jahvistic" narrative begins: "In the day [not the six days of the Elohist version] that Yahveh Elohim made the earth and the heavens" (2: 4). We find Yahveh Elohim thirteen times in the second chapter, doing a totally different work of creation -- always Yahveh Elohim, always plural, always "gods," but always misrendered "Lord God."

YAHVEH ELOHIM is the ordinary Hebrew "construct" form used to express the genitive, or possessive, case, there being no equivalent for "of" in Hebrew. "The relation of the genitive is regularly expressed by attaching the genitive noun to the preceding nomens regens in the construct state" (Gesenius, Hebrew Grammar, see. 114). The reader is already familiar with examples: beth-el, house of god; beth-ha-elohim, house of the gods; ben-adam, son of man, or of men; beni-ha-elohim, sons of the gods; Yahveh elohe- yishrael, Yahveh god of Israel; "Yahveh your God is elohe ha- elohim, and adonai ha-adonim, ha-el haggadol [God of the gods, and Lord of the lords, the great God]" (Deut. 10: 17). Yahveh-elohim therefore is simply "Yahveh-of-the-gods," "Yahveh God-of-gods"; precisely, "Yahveh one of, chief of, the gods." In the same way elohe is used in the "construct

state" for singular and plural, followed by the genitive of the governed noun, as in the examples just cited; for example, *elohe yishrael*, God of Israel; *elohe ha-elohim*, God of the gods; *Yahveh elohe-ka*, Yahveh thy God. Chapter 3 is composite, and we find sometimes *Elohim*, sometimes *Yahveh Elohim*; but always the plural; and so in chapter 4. Even more explicit are the words of chapter 5, where it is twice recorded: "And Enoch walked with THE-GODS [ha-elohim]; and (gods) [elohim] took him" (22, 24). And so of Noah, in chapter 6: "And Noah was a just man; he walked with the-gods" (haelohim; 6: 9). Chapter 6 is a veritable medley of composition, and of plurality of deity, beginning the fable of the Flood: "The SONS of the GODS [beni ha-elohim -- a Hebraism for 'the gods'] saw the daughters of men" (6: 2), and (6: 3) "Yahveh said." And again (6: 4): "The sons of the GODS [beni ha-elohim] came in unto the daughters of men, and they bore children unto them"; and (6: 5) "Yahveh saw." "The earth was corrupted before THE GODS [ha-elohim]" (6: 11); and (6: 12) "Elohim [gods] saw the earth"; and (6: 13) "Elohim [gods] said to Noah"; and (6: 22) "Noah did all that elohim commanded him." Here again, the word is always plural (except where we have *Yahveh*), always the gods, but it is always rendered "God."

"The sons of the gods" (beni ha-elohim -- a synonym for Gods) are frequently mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures: "the sons of the gods came to present themselves before Yahveh" (Job 1: 6; 2: 1); and "all the sons of the gods shouted for joy" (Job 38: 7). The God of the Hebrews was thus plainly not one God, but a plurality of gods and goddesses, who themselves, [Eneye. Bib., Vol. 4: cols. 4690-91; art. Son of God.] or whose children were of so sportive a nature that they corrupted the earth and brought on its fabled destruction by the Flood of Noah.

Now we have a singular confirmation of the plurality of the Hebrew *elohim* (gods), and of their identity with the *elohim* (gods) of the other heathen tribes and peoples thereabouts. In Genesis 20, Abraham takes Sarah, his wife, and journeys to Gerar, in the Philistine country, of which the king was Abimelech, whose name signifies "Moloch (or the king) is my father" -- certainly a heathen who knew not the supposed One-God, *Yahveh*, of Abraham. Abimelech, according to a jovial custom of the country, took Sarah and slept with her, thinking she was Abraham's sister, as he had falsely stated. Lo, "Elohim [gods] came to Abimelech in a dream" (20: 3) and warned him of the error of his way; and "the gods [ha- elohim] said unto him in the dream" (20: 6). Being a heathen, Abimelech would hardly dream of foreign Hebrew gods; they were clearly the same *elohim* with which he was familiar. Abimelech was scared sick; but Abraham "prayed unto THE GODS [ha-elohim], and *elohim* healed Abimelech" (20: 17).

In Genesis 22: 1, "it came to pass that the gods [ha-elohim] tempted Abraham" -- as he dreamed --to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice; and Abraham (22: 3) rose up and took Isaac and "went unto the place which THE GODS [ha-elohim] told him"; but fortunately at the critical moment (22: 11) "an angel of *Yahveh*" called out and checked his hand from the human sacrifice. When Isaac came to die, and Jacob, disguised to feel like Esau, came in to receive the stolen blessing, Isaac said: "You smell like a field which *Yahveh* has blessed" (27: 27); "may THE GODS [ha-elohim] give thee," etc. (27: 28). Then, in chapter 28: Isaac further says to Jacob: "And *El-shaddai* [God my Daemon] bless thee" (28: 3); "mayst thou inherit the land which *elohim* [gods] gave unto Abraham" (28: 4). Here, again, throughout, is the plural, "THE GODS," (always rendered "God") and a fairly clear distinction is always made between the particular *El*, *Yahveh*, and the plural *Elohim*, gods in general. Yet a little more, "to make assurance doubly sure" that the God of the Hebrews was "THE GODS" of the other heathens among whom they lived. Jacob had played his notorious cattle-breeding tricks on his heathen father-in-law Laban, who got angry and broke up the family arrangements. Thereupon "an angel Of THE GODS [ha-elohim]" (Gen. 31: 11), spoke to Jacob in a dream; and said: "I am THE GOD of Beth-el [ha-el-Beth-el]" (31: 13), and advised him to take secret leave of Laban, and return to his own country; and Jacob's wives, who were plain Chaldee heathens, said to him, "all that *elohim* [gods] said unto thee, do" (31: 16). Then Rachel, one of his heathen wives, daughter of the heathen Laban "stole the *teraphim* [phallic idols] which belonged to her father" (31: 19) and the Jacob family fled. Laban pursued after them for a week before he caught them; and "elohim [gods] came upon Laban the Syrian in a dream, and said," etc. (31: 24). And Laban said to Jacob: "Why hast thou stolen my GODS [elohim]?" (31: 30); and Jacob told Laban to search for them, and said: "Whoever hath THY GODS [elohim] shall not live" (31: 32). Laban searched, but Rachel had hidden the idols, and Laban could not find them. After a quarrel between them, Jacob invoked "THE GODS" (*elohe*) of his father Abraham for making peace between them; and he set up a phallic *mazzebah* ("pillar") for a testimonial

(31: 45), and invoked the GODS (elohe) of Abraham, Nabor, etc., to "judge between us" (31: 53). Then Jacob went on his way, "and angels Of THE GODS met him" (32: 1), and Jacob called them "the hosts of THE GODS" (32: 2). Thus all through these chapters and following ones, we find nothing but elohim, ha-elohim and elohe (gods) for heathen Laban's teraphim-gods and Jacob's gods alike.

At Jabbok Jacob fought with a stranger, who asked him his name; and the stranger changed Jacob's name to Israel, for "thou hast fought with GODS [elohim] and with men" (Gen. 32: 28); and Jacob called the place Peni-el ("face-of-God"; 32: 31), for, he said, "I have seen GODS [elohim] face to face." Jacob erected an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel (33: 20) -- "GOD OF THE GODS of Israel" -- positive proof of belief in a plurality of gods.

In chapter 3v the plurality of GODS, Hebrew and "strange" is further clearly shown: "Elohim [gods] said to Jacob, Go to Beth-el, and make there an altar unto THE GOD [ha-el] who appeared to thee when thou fleddest" (35: 1); then "Jacob said unto his household, Put away the strange Gods [elohe] which are in your midst" (35: 2); and "I will make there an altar to THE GOD [hael] who," etc. (35: 3); and "they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods [elohe]" (35: 4); and Jacob came to Beth-el and built an altar which he called "El-bethel, because there the gods [ha-elohim] appeared [Heb., were revealed] unto him" (35: 7). Thus distinction is clearly made between a particular el (god), and the generality of elohim or elohe, (gods) common to the heathen peoples of those parts.

Pharaoh dreamed a dream, and called on Joseph to interpret it. This "baal of dreams" (dreammaster), as his brothers called him (Gen. 37: 19), said to Pharaoh: "What ha-elohim [the gods] is about to do, he has told Pharaoh" (Gen. 41: 25); and "the thing is settled by ha-elohim" [the gods; 41: 28]; and "ha-elohim [the gods] is hastening to do it" (41: 33). Pharaoh certainly knew of no Hebrew only-one God, but all the gods of Egypt, and of them clearly he spoke, saying to his servants: "Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom is the spirit of elohim? [gods; 41: 38]"; and to Joseph he said: "Forasmuch as elohim has shewed thee all this" (41: 39). The elohim of Pharaoh and the ha-elohim of Joseph were clearly one and the same gods to whom they both appealed. To his brothers Joseph said: "It was not you that sent me hither, but ha-elohim [the gods]" (Gen. 45: 8); and "elohim [gods] has made me lord [adon] of all Egypt" (45: 9).

That the Egyptian Pharaohs by elohim meant only their own myriad gods is made evident by the incident of 430 years later, when the Pharaoh of that time commanded the Hebrew midwives to kill all the male Hebrew children as they were born; and it is twice said, "but the midwives feared ha-elohim" (the gods; Ex. 1: 17, 21). Surely these were none other than the gods of Egypt, for after 430 years in Egypt the Hebrew slaves knew of no other gods; even Moses knew not Yahveh and had to ask his name; and for centuries, down to the time of Ezekiel, "they did not forsake haelohim [the gods] of Egypt" (Ezek. 20: 8). It cannot be gainsaid that elohim is plural, and means and reveals more gods than one, wherever used either of Hebrew ha-elohim or of ha-elohim of Egypt and other heathen lands round about Israel.

PLURALITY OF GODS BETRAYED

Plural Nouns and Plural Verbs

All through the Book of Genesis we see "the-gods" of the ancient Hebrews, who are throughout just like the-gods of their heathen neighbors. It is but fair to say, for what it is worth, that the verbs used, for the most part, in the Hebrew texts with this plural elohim are generally in the singular number. The verb-forms "am," "is", "are," "was," "were," and such forms of the present and imperfect tenses of the verb "to be" are not used in Hebrew, as any one may see by glancing down any page of the Authorized Version of the Old Testament, where these words are always written in italics, signifying that they do not occur in the original.

But the actual verb plural-form (which in Hebrew is the tiny vav -- "u" -- tacked on the end, as we add "s" in English to form the plural of nouns), although mostly missing, is a number of times to be found, and is undeniable proof of the plurality of ha-elohim. Father Abraham himself avows this plurality: "When elohim [gods] caused [plural: hith-u] me to wander from my father's house" (Gen. 20: 13). Jacob built an altar at Luz, "and called the place El- bethel"; because there ha-elohim were revealed [plural: nigl-u] unto him" (Gen. 35: 7). And David makes the selfsame open avowal of the plural gods of Israel: "Israel, whom gods [elohim] went [plural: balk-u] to redeem ... from the nations and their gods [elohim]" (2 Sam. 7: 23).

The law says: "At the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established" (Deut. 19: 15). Here then is the fulfillment of the law: three witnesses, of the chiefest of Israel, have declared by inspiration the plurality of the gods of Israel. But there is more textual proof of plurality of the-gods of Israel. Moses uses the plural adjective with the plural noun *elohim*: "hath heard the voice of the living gods [*elohim hayyim*]" (Deut. 5: 26; Heb. text, 5: 23). And twice David threatens Goliath for defying "the armies of the living gods" (*elohim hayyim*; I Sam. 17: 26, 36). Here we have six times the textual admission of the plurality of *elohim*; the editorial blue-pencil overlooked the little "u" plural-sign of the Hebrew verbs and the unobtrusive "im" of the adjective; as, on the recently discovered throne of Tut-ankh-Amen, the zealous orthodox priests of the king undertook to change the numerous heretical mono-theistic Aten-signs blazoned thereon to Amen-signs of the orthodox faith, but in an instance or two overlooked the Aten-sign left unchanged through the ages, a silent but potent witness to the "One-God" heresy of Amenhotep IV and the youthful Tut-ankh-Amen, before he was forced by the priests back into the prevalent polytheism. The "Plural of Dignity"

The apologists for the use of the plural, *elohim* and *elohe*, reason that this is a "plural of dignity" -- a sort of divine "editorial we"; they even go to the length of saying that *elohim* connotes the awful sense of "Godhead." If so, there were scores of pagan god-heads-*elohim*.

But when the Hebrew Deity Yahveh alone speaks or is particularly spoken of, there is no hiding behind the anonymous "editorial plural," but always forthright "I" (Heb., *ani*, *anoki*), or the singular *El* (God), or the personal name "Yahveh." A few instances out of many hundreds must suffice.

Time and again the chief tribal Baal says, "Anoki *El*" and "Anoki Yahveh," "Anoki *Elshaddai*" (Gen. 17: 1; Ex. 3: 6); "Anoki ha-*el* beth-*el* (I am the God of Beth-*el*)" (Gen. 31: 13); "Anoki *El*, and there are no other *elohim*" (Isa. 46: 9); "I am *El*" (Isa. 45: 22). Yahveh descended in a cloud upon Sinai and proclaimed: "Yahveh, Yahveh *El*" (Ex. 34: 5-6). Moses often quotes Yahveh as saying: "Thou shalt worship no other *El*: for Yahveh, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous *El*" (Ex. 34: 14; 20: 5; Deut. 4: 24; 5: 9; et passim). Again, "There is none like *El*" (Deut.

33: 26); "This is my *El*" (Ex. 15: 2). Hagar said: "Thou art a god [*El*] of seeing" (Gen. 16: 13). Balaam said to Balak: "*El* is not a man [*ish*], that he should lie, neither the son of man [*ben adam*], that he should repent" (Num. 23: (Num. 23: 19). "God [*El*] who brought them forth" (Num. 23: 22); "When *El* does this" (Num. 24: 23); "Who hears the words of *El*" (Num. 24: 4); "*El* is my salvation; Yah Yahveh is my strength" (Isa. 12: 2); "Verily, thou art an *El* that hidest thyself" (Isa. 45: 15). Joshua says: "Hereby ye shall know that *El* is among you" (Josh. 3: 10).

This usage of *El* for a particular God, Hebrew or other, and of *elohim* and *elohe* for gods indiscriminately, as in hundreds of instances in this chapter and elsewhere, quite explodes the pious notions of an "editorial we" and "plural of dignity," and demonstrates the common polytheism of Israel and their neighbor heathens.

YAHVEH -- "E PLURIBUS UNUM"

Many "Other Gods" are Acknowledged

Hundreds of times in the ancient Hebrew sacred books the actual existence of the gods of the surrounding peoples is declared and vouched for by Inspiration; no one thing in Holy Writ is more frequent or more positive than the affirmation and recognition of "other gods" as actual living beings, save only the existence and the asserted superiority of Yahveh God of Israel. So numberless are the inspired texts voicing this unquestioned fact that sundry instances only, picked almost at random, can be cited here.

Yahveh was only God of Israel, as time and again is averred; his holy covenant, as it was first made with Abraham, was: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee" (Gen. 17: 7); and ever after he called himself and was simply called: "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," as, for example, he declared himself to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3: 6). Yahveh chose the "seed of Abraham" to be his "Chosen people"; he was to be their special, national God: "For thou [*Israel*] art an holy people unto Yahveh thy God, and Yahveh hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth" (Deut. 14: 2) -- as to whom Yahveh made no claims at all. But the Hebrew Yahveh, though

a "jealous God," demanding that his Chosen People worship him preferably or alone, and claiming superiority over all "other gods," yet admits the existence and divine personality of these "other gods," and recognizes their thoughts and powers, all but equal to his own.

On Sinai Yahveh solemnly commands: "I am Yahveh thy God, which have brought thee [Israel] out of the land of Egypt. ... Thou shalt have no other gods before [i.e., in preference to] me" (Ex.

20: 2, 3), but in perfect recognition of the other nations and their gods: "Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods" (Ex. 23: 32); and, "Thou shalt worship no other god; for Yahveh, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God" (Ex. 34: 14).

The holy law of Yahveh, promulgated amid the fires and thunders of Sinai, commanded reverent respect for all other gods. It is enacted by Yahveh: "Thou shalt not revile the Gods [ha- elohim], nor curse the ruler of thy people" (Ex. 22: 28) -- a solemn, positive recognition by Yahveh's divine law of the fact of other living gods. Again the law confesses the gods and their activities: "Thou shalt not bow down to their gods [elohim], nor serve them, nor do after their work; ... ye shall serve Yahveh thy God" (Ex. 23: 24). Never once in the law of Sinai, nor for a thousand years after, is there a denial or hint that "there is no other god"; but "other gods" galore are confessed. In the face of the commands of the "jealous God," his holy Chosen "feared Yahveh, and served their own gods" (2 Kings 17: 33, et seq.).

Moses, "the man of the gods [ish ha-elohim]" (Deut. 33: 1), himself, in his famous song of triumph, asserts only superiority for his Yahveh, and proclaims vauntingly: "Who is like unto thee, O Yahveh, among the gods?" (Ex. 15: 11). His father-in-law, Jethro, pagan priest of the gods of Midian, seeing some of the wonders of Sinai, admits to Moses: "Now I know that Yahveh is greater than all the gods" (Ex. 18: 11). Again, in his last speech, Moses exults to Israel: "For Yahveh thy God is God of gods [Elohe ha-elohim], and Lord of lords [adonai ha-adonim], great El" (Deut. 10: 1,7). Moses surveys the gods of the nations around, and appeals to Israel: "What nation is there so great, who hath GODS [elohim] so nigh unto them, as Yahveh our God is?" (Deut. 4: 7). By Joshua the God of Israel is proclaimed: "Yahveh God of gods, Yahveh God of gods [El elohim Yahveh, El elohim Yahveh]" (Josh. 22: 22) -- admitting the "other gods" and asserting simply Yahveh's superiority to them all, for "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods [elohim]" (Psalm 82: 1).

The Psalmist takes up the refrain, making it the burden of many a sweet song: "O give thanks unto the God of gods [elohe ha- elohim] O give thanks to the Lord of lords [adonai haadonim]" (Psalm 136: 2, 3); "For Yahveh is a great God [El]; he is to be feared above all gods [elohim]" (Psalm 96: 4); and "Thou. ... art Yahveh, exalted far above all gods" (Psalm 97: 9). Again he sings: "For Yahveh is a great God [El], and a great King above all gods [elohim]" (Psalm

95: 3); "Among the gods [elohim] there is none like unto thee, O Adonai [Lord]" (Psalm 86: 8); "All the gods [elohim] of the nations are Devils [elilim]; but Yahveh made the heavens" (Psalm 96: 5). But gods or devils, they are living actualities; and David calls on them as immortal beings to render homage to the Yahveh of Israel: "Worship him, all ye ELOHIM -- [gods]" (Psalm 97: 7) --not now elilim, devils. And the Wise Man Solomon echoes the refrain: "For great is our El above all elohim" (2 Chron. 2: 5).

So a thousand times the tongue and pen of Inspiration declare the living verity of "all the gods of the nations," Yahveh is simply a god "e pluribus unum" -- a "God above all the other gods"; not "One God of all the earth," until the later idea and dogma of Judaism evolved out of the tribulations of the captivity. But "out of nothing, nothing is made." In view of the reiterated admissions above noted and hundreds of others in the sacred texts, to contend otherwise is ostentation of unscriptural theology.

THE GOD OF ISRAEL AND THE GODS OF THE NATIONS

That Yahveh was only, and claimed only to be, the tribal god of Israel, and that he recognized "all the gods of the nations" as his contemporaries and fellow, though inferior, deities, is as true as anything in the Bible. All these tribal or national divinities were strictly territorial, and their sphere of activity, power, and jurisdiction was limited by the national boundaries to their own "chosen people." Two illustrations of this primal fact of Biblical mythology are recorded by inspiration in the Book of Kings.

Ahaziah, King of Israel, was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease. But the angel of Yahveh said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise,

go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron?" (2 Kings 1: 2, 3). Elijah repeated the query about the God of Israel, adding a message from Yahveh to Ahaziah: "Thus saith Yahveh, Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron, is it not because there is no God in Israel to enquire of his word? Therefore thou shalt ... surely die" (1: 16). And it is solemnly recorded: "So he died according to the word of Yahveh which Elijah had spoken" (1: 17). Post hoc ergo propter hoc!

Shalmanezzer, King of Assyria, destroyed the nation of Israel, or Samaria, in 721 B.C., and carried away bodily the whole ten tribes into perpetual captivity, leaving their land bare; he then re-peopled Samaria with colonies of other nations subdued by Assyria (2 Kings 17: 24). Yahveh, who had not saved his Chosen People, took it upon himself, as local Baal of the land, to harass the newcomers by sending "lions among them, which slew some of them" (17: 25). The colonists sent word to the great king, saying: "The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land; therefore he hath sent lions among them" (17: 26). The king therefore "commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence, and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner [Heb., mishpat] of the God of the land. Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Beth-el, and taught them how they should fear Yahveh" (17: 27, 28).

But this first recorded missionary expedition (barring Jonah's) failed, for the newcomers "feared Yahveh, and served their own gods" (17: 33), who are named in verses 30, 31.

Here it is recorded, that "every nation made gods of their own" (17: 29); the colonists from each nation, Babylon, Cuth, Hamath, and others, established the worship of the gods of their respective countries, now acclimated in Israel. As in the days of Moses the Chosen also "feared Yahveh," and worshipped the gods of Egypt and of "beyond the flood," and of the "Seven nations" among whom they dwelt. In the days of the judges, "the children of Israel ... served Baalim, and Ashtaroath, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook Yahveh, and served not him" (Judges 10: 6); they also "made Baal-berith [lord of the covenant] their god" (Judges 8: 33;

9: 4). Dozens of foreign, "strange gods" are named, and their activities indicated, far too many to relate; in a word, "all the gods of the nations" (Deut. 29: 18). These gods, like Yahveh, were "theiok in whom they [their chosen peoples] trusted"; and it is declared, as of Yahveh, that these other gods "did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings" (Deut. 32: 37, 38), as only actual living beings can eat and drink -- a very superstitious belief, but pertinent confession of their supposed divine reality.

Jeremiah complains that "the women ... make cakes to the queen of heaven, and ... pour out drink offerings unto other gods" (Jer. 7: 18). Rabshakeh asks: "Have [the gods of Hamath and of Arphad, the gods of Sepharvaim], delivered Samaria out of my hand?" (Isa. 36: 19); and he taunts Hezekiah of Judah: "Who are they among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that Yahveh should deliver Jerusalem?" (36: 20); and none could answer him a word (36: 21). Jeremiah accuses Judah: "According to the number of thy cities are thy gods" (Jer. 2: 28; 11: 13). Ahaz "sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him. ... But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel" (2 Chron. 28: 23). Yahveh threatened: "I will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt; and against all the gods of Egypt will I execute judgment" (Ex. 12: 12). This he did (Num. 33: 4), proving that they existed to be smitten. "Woe unto thee, Moab, people of Chemosh," cries Yahveh (Num. 21: 29). "Against Moab thus saith Yahveh Sabaoth, Elohe of Israel; Woe unto Nebo" (Jer. 48: 1); "Chemosh shall go forth into captivity with his priests and his princes together" (Jer. 48: 7). "Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth," asserts Isaiah (46: 1). Jephthah, "on whom was the spirit of Yahveh," said to the king of the Ammonites: "Yahveh Elohe Israel had dispossessed the Amorites. ... Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy elohé giveth thee to possess?" (Judges 11: 23, 24). Dagon "our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand" (Judges 16: 23). Thus the existence and power of the "other gods" is again and again admitted, declared, and illustrated.

Time and again Inspiration couples and distinguishes the rival deities: "I am Yahveh thy Elohe; fear not the elohé of the Amorites" (Judges 6: 10). "Chemosh thy elohé and Yahveh our elohé" (Judges 11: 24). Full authenticity is asserted for "Dagon our elohé" (I Sam. 5: 7); for "Ashtoreth, elohé [goddess] of the Zidonians, and Chemosh, elohé of Moab, and Milcom, elohé of the children of Ammon" (I Kings 11: 33); for "Baal-

zebug, elohe of Ekron" (2 Kings, 1: 2); for "the elohe [gods] of Sepharvaim" (2 Kings 17: 31); for "the star of your elohe Moloch" (Amos 5: 26); all "true and living gods" during all the centuries of the national life of Israel and Judah.

Allegiance could be transferred from one territorial god to another upon removing from one country to another; when Ruth would go with Naomi, she said: "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth 1: 16).

Regular tournaments or contests of power were staged between Yahveh of Israel and some of his rival gods. The conjuring contests between Yahveh and the magicians of Egypt have already been admired. Gideon staged an effective duel between Yahveh and Baal, in honor of which Gideon was nicknamed Jerubbaal (Judges 6: 25-32). The Philistines captured the "ark of the gods" (aron ha-elohim) of Israel, and brought it to Ashdod, "into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon" (I Sam.

5: 1, 2); and for several nights Yahveh knocked Dagon off his perch and broke his hands and head off (5: 4). When the Philistines saw this, their priests deserted their temple, saying: "The ark of the Gods [ha-elohim] of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god" (5: 7). The Philistines sent the ark back to the Chosen, with sundry suggestive tokens; and the holy ones of Yahveh carted the Ark to the heathen Beth-shemesh -- the house of the sun-god Shamash, and left it there (I Sam. 6: 9). The notable contest between Yahveh, represented by Elijah alone, and Baal with his four hundred priests (1 Kings 18) is another well-known instance. In all these contests Yahveh was triumphant, thus proving "among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Yahveh" (Psalm 86: 8; Ex. 15: 11; 2 Kings 18: 35; Psalm 77: 13, et passim.)

Moses even credits Yahveh with having brought Israel up to be his own "people of inheritance," while he "divided [i.e., set apart] unto all nations under the whole heaven," to be their gods, "the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven" (Deut. 4: 19, 20), establishing this form of idolatry in order to appropriate Israel to himself alone.

From the foregoing inspired "revelation," the conclusion is obvious and inevitable: all these "other gods" were, or were regarded by the inspired authors of the "Word of God" to be, as actually real and existent as was Yahveh himself; Yahveh was no more real and existent than any other of the "gods of the nations." All actually existed as gods of the respective nations, or else none of them had any existence outside the superstitious beliefs of the respective votaries. The "Word of God" inspiredly vouches equally for them all; with respect to all it is equally either true or not true. This conclusion is unescapable.

If these gods ever once existed, they all yet exist, for according to all accounts, gods are immortal. To deny the existence of Baal, Chemosh, or Dagon is to deny the existence of Yahveh; to admit Yahveh is to confess "all the gods of the nations." The same inspired record vouches for the one and the others.

It may be here suggested, in anticipation of a later chapter, that, since Yahveh, simply the tribal god of Israel, no more real and existent than Baal, Chemosh, Dagon, and all the "other gods of the nations," never himself existed except in imagination and Hebrew mythology, Yahveh could not have had a son, Joshua or Jesus; and therefore Joshiua-Jesus, as Son of Yahveh, is a mythological personage. This too is unescapable.

PAGAN BIBLE NAMES

All through the Old Testament the two names El and Yahveh appear, some preferring one, and some the other; and both inextricably connected with the Canaanitish form "Baal." The names of the Bible worthies are the clearest proof of this preference and combination of titles of their deity. The votaries of El bore his name: Israel, soldier of El; Reuel, friend of El; Samuel, Daniel, Ezekiel, Emmanuel, Elisha, Elihu, Elizabeth. The adorers of Yahveh or Jehovah chose his name: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joshua, Jehoahaz, Jehoshaphat, Jehu. Such names as Elijah and Joel combined the two.

The names of Baal and Bel shared the same honors: Gideon was nick-named Jerub-baal, which seems to combine Jehovah and Baal. The name of Abimelech, a son of Gideon, who set himself up briefly, during the days of the judges, as first king over Israel, means "Moloch is my father." One of the sons of Saul was named Eshbaal, "son of Baal"; one of the sons of David was Beeliada, "whom Baal has known" (1 Chron. 14: 7), and whose name is also given under the form Eliada (2 Sam. 5: 16), showing that El and Baal were interchangeable names. This is also shown in the name of one of the "mighty men" of David, Beal-iah,

"Yahveh is Baal" or Lord, and in Jezebel, both perfect combinations of the two heathen (Israelite and Canaanite) names for "Lord."

That Baal, Bel, and El were equivalent terms for "Lord," but that Yahveh preferred the figurative term "my husband" to the more formal "Lord," and that a customary name for Yahveh was "Baal," he himself is quoted as declaring: "And it shall be at that day, saith Yahveh, that thou shalt call me Ishi [my husband]; and shalt call me no more Baali [my Lord]" (Hosea 2: 16).

Not only the Hebrews, but all the Semitic peoples had this custom of compounding their names with that of their favorite deity, in the desire thus to secure the protection of the local Baal for their children. We may recall such names of Belshazzar, Hasdrubal, Hannibal. In more modern, Christian lands the names of saints, often a long string of them, are fondly bestowed on helpless infants with the like motive; just as others are named after uncles and other important relatives -- in the hope of favours, divine or human. The names cited and their significance are none of them fanciful; all but the last two are taken from among many others in the "Dictionary of Scripture Proper Names," printed in the back of every well-edited copy of the Holy Bible. They serve to prove further that the El or Yahveh of the Hebrew Bible was nothing more or less than a heathenish Semitic deity or local god, or "Baal," and was not in any sense a "One God of Israel" or of the whole earth.

CHAPTER 10: YAHVEH -- THE "TERRIBLE GOD" OF ISRAEL

YAHVEH -- THE "TERRIBLE GOD" OF ISRAEL YAHVEH AS A SUPERMAN EX NIHIL NIHIL
YAHVEH A LOCAL DEITY
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THE CHANGEFUL YAHVEH
YAHVEH REPENTANT
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THE LUSTS OF YAHVEH
YAHVEH THE WHITE-SLAVER
L'ENVOI

YAHWEH -- THE "TERRIBLE GOD" OF ISRAEL

THE revelation which is made in the inspired pages of the Hebrew Scriptures of the personality and characteristics of the Hebrew God, cannot but be amazing and even revolting to those whose concept of the God of the Bible is that of a God of mercy and truth. The portrait of their Deity which the Chosen People draw in the sacred pages will be here exposed to candid view, in the very words and lines in which it is drawn by inspired pens; the reader must be left to formulate his own convictions of the result. The revelation is written by inspiration of this selfsame God, and not by this reviewer of the record.

YAHVEH AS A SUPERMAN

First of all, the Hebrew God was to his Chosen People merely a man, or superman, human in form, functions, and attributes, with some attributes of a spirit or genie added, such as power to change shape at will, like the gods of Homer.

His human, or anthropomorphic, form and functions appear unequivocally from the beginning: "Elohim created man in his own image, in the image of elohim created he him." It is added: "Male and female created he them, ... and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Gen. 1: 27, 28). This would imply an hermaphroditic sexuality in the person of Elohim (as a single deity), or a female consort, or a plurality of Elohim, male and female, like the gods and goddesses of Olympus. In truth, Yahveh Elohim is often represented as having many offspring, referred to as "the sons of God" (or, of the gods -- *beni ha- elohim*). It is early recorded that "the sons of God [*beni ha- elohim*] saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives [*nashim*] of all which they chose" (Gen. 6: 2), and thus produced a race of giants and provoked the Flood.

This primitive Hebrew God-man, named Yahveh, used to come down to the earth and walk about, and talk to the people he had created; and he made coats of skins for Adam and Eve. He came down as a man and watched the Tower of Babel building (Gen. 11: 5); and a thousand times he came to earth in the form of man, to talk with people and to do this and that. At Horeb he stood on the rock and watched Moses smite it for water (Ex. 17: 6); and on Sinai "Yahveh descended in the cloud, and stood with him there" (Ex. 34: 5). To Moses he always appeared on Mount Sinai in the form of man -- "and Yahveh spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Ex. 33: 11); although in the same chapter this is contradicted, for Moses asked Yahveh to let him see him, and Yahveh replied: "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me and live" (33: 20). But as the God wished to be complaisant, as far as possible without danger of death, he put

Moses into a little cleft in the rocks, and placed his hand over Moses' face, and paraded by and showed Moses his man-like "back parts" (33: 21-23). Before this Yahveh had been more sociable and seeable, for after writing the tables of stone with his finger, he celebrated the occasion by inviting Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel, to a big banquet up on the "Mountain of the Gods"; and there "they saw the God [ha elohim] of Israel," whose feet were upon a paved work of sapphire stone; and they all "saw God, and did eat and drink" (Ex. 24: 10, 11). Moses has it recorded as notorious, even to the Egyptians, that "Thou Yahveh art seen face to face" (Num. 14: 14).

Yahveh came down as an angel and had an all-night wrestling- match with Jacob; and Jacob named the place Peni-el, "for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved" (Gen. 32: 30).

But there would seem to be some mistake about all this somewhere. For we have the positive assurance of John that "No man hath seen God at any time" (John 1: 18); though St. John the Divine contradicts this by his own claim to have made a visit to highest heaven, where he saw both God himself and his Son (two wholly distinct Persons), sitting side by side on the throne of glory, circled by a rainbow (Rev. 3: 21, 4: 2, 3); and John gives minute personal description of one or the other, or both -- it is all mixed and fairy-talelike: "His head and his hairs were white like wool; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass; ... and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword" (Rev. 1: 14-16) -- very much like a grotesque image in a Hindu temple. This description must be intended for Yahveh himself, as it is very like that given by Daniel when he too visited Yahveh (Dan. 7: 9), when the Son was not recorded as present. Daniel does not mention the two-edged sword sticking out of his mouth, but he does tell us that Yahveh "had wheels," which were as burning fire (Dan. 7: 9). Isaiah also either visited heaven or had a good long-distance view into it, for he assures us: "I saw also Yahveh sitting upon a throne" (Isa. 6: 1); and he reports that "the breath of Yahveh, like a stream of brimstone" kindles the fires of Tophet (Isa. 30: 33). Job (a heathen) says: "Now mine eye hath seen thee" (Job 42: 5). Amos saw him in quite a belligerent mood: "I saw Yahveh standing upon the altar: and he said, ... Cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword" (Amos 9: 1). Ezekiel also toured Jerusalem with Yahveh, whom he calls a man, measuring the city, Yahveh being in his usual form of man: "The man [Yahveh] stood by me" (Ezek. 43: 6); and "Then said Yahveh unto me" (Ezek. 44: 2); the arrangement of the texts identifying the man with Yahveh.

All this certainly proves, so far as any wonder in the Bible may be taken as proved, that many of the Chosen did see the dread Yahveh in very person, and yet lived to tell the tale. But, whether seated on his throne or parading around on earth, he was always and everywhere "very man" as well as "very God," as the all-knowing doctors of divinity assure us. And it proves, as do hundreds of sacred texts, that Yahveh was "revealed" and seen as having every bodily part, function, faculty, and attribute of mere man, though, like Jove, in very godly degree.

Yahveh is throughout the Book credited explicitly with human body and all its parts: head, hair, face, beard (which he shaves), eyes, ears, lips, mouth, tongue, nostrils, breath, shoulders, arms, hands, horns on his hands, fingers, legs, feet, loins, heart, bosom, bowels, "back parts," even "wheels;" he has voice, uses words, and speaks: "We have this day seen that God doth talk with man" (Deut. 5: 24). He sees, hears, smells, eats, drinks, reads, writes, blots out, touches, sits, rises, stands, walks, rides, wrestles, works, is weary, rests, plants a garden and trees, builds, wears garments and makes them for our first parents, makes shoes, teaches, cures, judges; he begets, forgets, remembers, he laughs, cries, shouts, sleeps, wakes, loves, hates, fears, is pleased, delighted, angry, in wrath, in fury, takes vengeance, is grieved, jealous, promises, threatens, repents, changes his mind, swears, takes oaths, deceives, lies, swears he will not lie, has a soul. He is a "man of war," and blows a trumpet, bends a bow, whets a sword, shoots, slays, throws down stones from heaven (Eke Jove), fights with a sword, bow and arrows, has a quiver full of arrows, and a whole armory of weapons with which to equip himself for war. He marches; "he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: and he was seen upon the wings of the wind" (2 Sam. 22: 11; Psalm 18: 10); "Yahveh rideth upon a swift cloud" (Isa. 19: 1), and also on horses and in a chariot. If Yahveh was not anthropomorphic, or of man-form, then the whole frame work of the Old Testament is wrecked, and every recorded appearance of Yahveh to the Bible historians, and all the talks of the God with man, from Adam to the end, including the giving of the Law to Moses, did not occur, and the stories of the appearances and the talks, which compose the bulk of the Hebrew Scriptures, are fabulous and meaningless.

Throughout this Hebrew "revelation" of their God, El or Yahveh is conceived as a man in all his form and parts, actions and passions; although, like Zeus and the gods of Olympus, he could and often did change himself into other forms, appearing as an "atmospheric" divinity, as in the burning bush, in the pillar of cloud and of fire, in thick clouds, in darkness, in smoke, in storms and winds, as a still small voice.

And throughout the New Testament, the Hebrew-Christian Yahveh is still represented as in form and act of a man. The evangelist Mark, who is the only one to mention the circumstance, says that at the ascension, Jesus was received up into heaven, "and sat on the right hand of God" (Mark 16: 19). He represents Yahveh and Jesus as two entirely distinct persons, both of human form, having separate hands and seats, and sitting separately on a seat. Stephen, becoming ecstatic and clairvoyant, saw "the heavens opened, and the Son of man [Jesus] standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7: 55, 56) -- no doubt meaning on the right-hand side. John also, in his apocalypse, beheld a throne in heaven, and "One sitting on it," and he "saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book" (Rev. 5: 1).

The "Apostles' Creed" likewise is inspired to advise us that Jesus, after rising from the dead and ascending into heaven, "sitteth on the right hand of God the Father, from whence he [Jesus] shall come to judge the quick and the dead" evidently leaving his Father Yahveh in heaven. This sounds to the ordinary understanding very much like two Gods instead of one God. The evangelist John, alone of all the Bible biographers (except for a passing remark of Paul in 2 Corinthians 3: 17), is unique in declaring that "God is a Spirit" (John 4: 24); but his notion must be doubted as contrary to all the rest of the inspired authority from Genesis to Revelation inclusive; even the Creed does not follow him.

EX NIHIL NIHIL

The God "revealed" in the Bible is therefore, by its every text and test, altogether a sort of magnified man, created by his votaries -- as were all the "gods of the nations" about them -- in their own form and image, with all their own traits and qualities, but magnified. There is, consequently, nowhere to be found a word of Biblical authority or precedent for the article of faith of all the great Christian creeds affirming, in their full knowledge of things unknowable, that "God is a Being without form, parts, or passions, and invisible" (see the Westminster Confession; Calvin's French confession; the thirty-nine Articles; the Methodist Articles of Religion.; the Baptist Declaration of Faith; et id omne genus) -- and therefore, a perfect Nonentity or Nothingness, if it be possible to conceive such a Being; the antithesis of Milton's shapeless "Shape, if Shape that can be called which shape hath none.

If these Protestant creeds appear to reduce the "Revealed" Godhead to nihility, they may be perfectly matched with these incomparable, and incomprehensible, mystic dogmas of the One True Faith, admitted to be directly inspired and revealed by Yahveh himself for our faith and wonder:

"Transcendentally one, absolutely free from composition, the Divine Being is not, and may not be conceived as, a fundamental substrate in which qualities or any other modal determinations inhere." (Cath. Encyc., Vol. 2: p. 63).

If this be considered a bit difficult for ordinary lay minds to grasp, relief may be found in this simpler affirmation of Nonentity: "God is a simple being or substance excluding every kind of composition, physical or metaphysical" (Cath. Encyc., Vol. 6: p. 614).

Or in the Divine assurance, from the same source: "The Three Persons of the Trinity are distinguished from all creatures by the three following characteristics: Absolute immateriality; Omniscience, and Substantial sanctity" (Id., Vol. 11:p. 309).

If this does not spell NOTHING, the human mind may despair of reconciling "absolute immateriality," which is one ineffable "quality" or "characteristic," with "sanctity of substance," which is another and a "material" one; or unravelling how one "Person" of an absolutely immaterial Triad of Nothing can be "consubstantial" with two other fractions of the same "Absolute Immateriality" -- to say nothing of the famous "homoousian" muddle, or of transsubstantiation, whereby the faithful eat and drink the material body and blood of "Absolute Immateriality." But this is a question for the learned divines who invented it all; common mortals may find comfort in their assurance: "It is manifest that a dogma so mysterious presupposes a divine revelation." One and all, however, True Faith and heretic, are in this particular totally un-Biblical. The God of the Bible, El or

Yahveh, is, upon all Bible revelation and authority, a man-god exactly like Bel, Baal, Osiris, Zeus, or Thor, in the pagan mythologies.

YAHVEH A LOCAL DEITY

Like Zeus and the other gods of Olympus, Yahveh had his special habitat on a high mountain, Horeb or Sinai (the seat of the pagan moon-god Sin), which is in Hebrew Scripture always called "the mountain of the Gods" (har ha-elohim; Ex. 3: 1; 24: 13, et passim). He also lurked in the Ark of the Covenant, carried about in tents: "For I have not dwelt in an house since the day that I brought up Israel unto this day; but have gone from tent to tent, and from one tabernacle to another" (I Chron. 17: 5). When the Chosen came into the promised land, Yahveh lodged wherever the Ark happened to get stranded; later he was localized, having his chief seat of presence and worship, first at Shiloh, and afterwards in the temple at Jerusalem, on Mount Zion (Ps. 74: 2; 76: 2). This location of the sanctuary was expressly commanded by Moses (Deut. 12: 5, 10, 11, 14), and all other places were forbidden. The dispute about worshipping at another place (Mt. Gerizim) instead of at Jerusalem was the crux of the schism of the Samaritans (John 4: 20, 21). But this command was in reality evidently not of Moses but of the priests, much later; for in Canaan Yahveh was essentially a local baal, or lord, and was worshipped, as we have seen and shall see, with all the Canaanitish phallic accessories, "on every high hill and under every green tree."

On Sinai Yahveh himself declared: "In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee and I will bless thee" (Ex. 20: 24); at the simple "altars of earth" which were then enjoined by Yahveh, but later prohibited by the monopoly of priests. So all through the record, Yahveh would "put his name," or nomen, here or there, in stone, or earth altar, or mazzebab, and was the recognized baal, or land-lord, of that locality, as Beth-el, Mizpah, or Eben-ezer.

YAHVEH A KING ELOHIM

The Hebrew El or Yahveh was also in a vague sense conceived as a sort of king-spirit, or king of departed spirits -- the "El of the elohim." Yahveh was known and worshipped by the patriarchs as El Shaddai (El my Daemon; translated "God Almighty"), as he calls himself (Gen. 17: 1, Ex. 6: 3; et passim). This seems very curious, for the word means, or is often used as meaning, demon or devil: "They provoked him [Yahveh] to jealousy with strange gods [elohim]; ... they sacrificed unto devils [shaddim], which were not gods [elohe]; to gods [elohim] whom they knew not, to new gods [elohim] that came newly up" (Deut. 32: 16, 17); "They sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils [shaddim]" (Psalm c6: 37); "And he ordained him [Rehoboam] priests ... for the devils [shaddim]" (2 Chron. 11: 15). Ezekiel speaks of the "voice of the Almighty [kol shaddai -- kol el-shaddai]" (Ezek. 1: 24, et passim), the form shaddai being a sort of genitive, "my-daemon."

Moses and Aaron address the Deity Yahveh directly as El Elohe -- "O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh" (Num. 16: 22); and again Moses calls him Elohe ha-elohim (God of the gods," Deut.

10: 17). He calls himself El Elohim Yahveh (Josh. 22: 22). Yahveh is himself quoted as saying: "Thou shalt not revile the gods [elohim]" (Ex. 22: 28). This term, elohim, was likewise applied to departed spirits. The witch of En-dor says: "I saw elohim [gods, spirits] ascending out of the earth" (1 Sam. 28: 13).

Oracles, supposed declarations of Yahveh's will, were pretended to be received from these "familiar spirits," subject to the King El, Yahveh, and elohim, as in the case of the witch of En-dor, and as is recognized by Isaiah: "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards: ... should not a people seek unto their God [Elohe]?" (Isa. 8: 19). Frequently the King-El sent "evil spirits from elohim" on this or that mission; as when "the evil spirit from elohim came mightily upon Saul, and he prophesied" (1 Sam. 18: 10). The term elohim was likewise applied to "other gods," as in the "first commandment" (Ex. 20: 3), to Chemosh, to Dagon, to Ashtoreth, to Baal-zebul, and all the other "gods of the nations."

YAHVEH AS A WAR-GOD

The celestial Yahveh was also par excellence El Sabaoth -- "the Lord of [the starry] Hosts." These, personified, were considered as his personal retinue; and they "fought on high for Israel." "They fought from heaven; the

stars in their courses fought against Sisera" (Judges 5: 20). When the King of Syria came to war against Israel, "Behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about" (2 Kings 6: 17). The warlike Psalmist sings that "the chariots of God [Elohim] are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; Yahveh is among them" (Ps. 68: 17). In Joshua, "Yahveh cast down great stones from heaven" (Josh. 10: 11), upon the Amorites, and killed more of them than the Chosen warriors slew by the sword, while the sun stood still all day to watch and aid the slaughter -- "for Yahveh fought for Israel" (Josh. 10: 14). All this is exactly as if lifted bodily from the Iliad of Homer, describing the battles of Zeus and the gods of Olympus on behalf of their favored Greeks or Trojans.

YAHVEH, WAR-GOD OF ISRAEL

These latteferences introduce what was the most definite and dominant concept of Yahveh found in the Hebrew Scriptures from Exodus until the end of the inspired record. Yahveh was par excellence their War-God, as was Zeus of the Greeks, and Thor and Odin of the barbarian Teutons, and as was their Gott till recently. Moses tells the fleeing soldiers to hold their hands off the pursuing Egyptians (of whom they were scared nearly to death; Ex. 14: 10), for "Yahveh will fight for you" (14: 14); and, jubilant over the destruction of the Pharaoh and his army, drowned in the Red Sea, he sings: "Yahveh is a man of war: Yahveh is his name" (15: 3). Miriam, sister of Moses, and the women take up the exultant refrain: "Sing ye to Yahveh, for he hath triumphed gloriously" (15: 21). Moses tells the soldiers of El when they go to battle against their enemies: "Be not afraid of them, for Yahveh your God is he that goeth with you to fight for you against your enemies, to save you" (Deut. 20: 1-4). In Numbers 21: 14, and sundry other places, several heroic exploits of the War-God Yahveh are mentioned as being recorded, evidently among a whole history of them, "in the book of the wars of Yahveh." When Joshua went up against Jericho, Yahveh himself came down "as captain of the hosts of Yahveh," with a drawn sword in his hand, and he gave in person the orders for marching around the city seven days blowing trumpets (Josh. 5: 13-15; 6: 2-5).

When David went out to fight Goliath, he called upon "Yahveh Sabaoth [the Lord of (starry) hosts], the Elohe of the armies of Israel" (1 Sam. 17: 45); and he said: "For the battle is Yahveh's" (17: 47). He sings of "Yahveh strong and mighty, Yahveh mighty in battle" (Ps. 24: 8); and again: "He breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear in sunder" (Ps. 46: 9). Isaiah says: "Yahveh Sabaoth mustereth the host for the battle" (Isa. 13: 4); and he prophesies: "so shall Yahveh of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion" (Isa. 31: 4), evidently with the celestial hosts, for he says: "As birds flying, so will Yahveh of hosts defend Jerusalem (31: 5) -- prophecies, by the way, which were not fulfilled.

Nehemiah encourages the returning exiles with the assurance: "Our Yahveh shall fight for us" (Neh. 4: 20). Zechariah declares: "Then shall Yahveh go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle" (Zech. 14: 3); and he says: "Yahveh shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning" (Zech. 9: 14). The battle-cry of the band of Gideonites, when they attacked the hosts of Midian, was "The sword of Yahveh and of Gideon." The phrase "the sword of Yahveh" is one of frequent use in the sacred texts; the title Yahveh Sabaoth ("Lord of Hosts") recurs an infinite number of times. The most potent piece of magic of the soldiers of El was the miracle-working Ark of the Covenant, within which the nomen of Yahveh-Elohim dwelt, and which they constantly carried before them into battle. The Egyptian and Babylonian monuments frequently show similar "Arks" of their war-gods, which they also carried into battle as the source of powerful witchcraft against their enemies. Thus we have seen that a warlike spirit is the dominant note of their conception of their Deity: "Yahveh Sabaoth is with us, the El of Jacob is ouefuge" (Psalm 66: 7).

PERSONAL TRAITS OF YAHVEH

This Hebrew El-Elohe-Yishra-el, as he is dubbed by Jacob (Gen. 33: 20), is beyond all odds the most hateful and execrable character in all literature, sacred or profane, according to the attributes of his Godhead ascribed to him by his own inspired biographers. The pagan gods of Greece are sung by Pope as

"Gods artial, vengeful, changeable, unjust, Whose attributes were rage, revenge, and lust."

The Hebrew-pagan God Yahveh has all the gods of Greece and of every known theogony paled into innocuous shades of villainy by comparison. Yahveh, to credit his inspired biography, is the greatest criminal on record;

he reeks with the blood of murders unnumbered, and is personally a murderer and an assassin, by stealth and treachery; a pitiless monster of bloody vengeance; a relentless persecutor of guilty and innocent alike; the most raging and terrifying bully; fickle and changeable as chameleon Fortune; a synonym for partiality and injustice; a vain braggart; a false promiser; an arrant and shameless liar "and the father of it." He has repeated fornications and adulteries to his credit, besides being a shameless procurer. Of every commandment except the self-glorifying first he is a chronic breaker.

Every particular of this, maybe to many shocking, description, is out of the inspired Bible. It is wholly out of the question, in this sketch, to review a tithe of the proofs of these divine attributes of Yahveh; his Holy Word is replete with them. But I promise to produce amplest "proofs of Holy Writ" for each one of these attributes, picked almost at random. Many instances of these several attributes of Yahveh have already been recounted, or will appear in other connections. Listen first to some generalities glittering with fiery terror.

YAHVEH A DEITY OF TERROR

Moses, who had occasion to know him quite intimately, if he is to be believed at all, declares:

"Yahveh thy God is a mighty God and terrible" (Deut. 7: 21); and "Yahveh is a great God, mighty and terrible" (Deut. 10: 17), a description repeated in nearly every book of Hebrew Scripture: by Nehemiah (Neh. 1: 5); by Isaiah many times; by David very often; by Jeremiah, as "a mighty, terrible one" (Jer. 20: 11); by Daniel, as the "great and dreadful God" (Dan. 9: 4); and so times without number.

In fierce and fatal wrath Yahveh surpasses gods and men: one of the most iterated phrases in the whole "Word of God" is "and the anger of Yahveh was kindled." Yahveh's own solemn words and acts belie altogether his vainglorious boastings, as when, for instance, Yahveh paraded himself on Sinai, before Moses, and proclaimed: "Yahveh, Yahveh El, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Ex. 34: 6). But at the very first encounter between Yahveh and Moses, at the burning bush, when Moses asked to be excused from going to Egypt and heading the fugitive slaves, "the anger of Yahveh was kindled against Moses" (Ex. 4: 14); and a little later, as he reluctantly went, Yahveh ambushed him behind a wayside inn "and sought to kill him" (4: 24). This incident scores one for Yahveh as an assassin. Long before that, to say nothing of Eden and the Flood, "Er ... was wicked in the sight of Yahveh; and Yahveh slew him" (Gen. 38: 7); and then, because "the thing which [his brother Onan] did displeased Yahveh. ... he slew him also" (38: 10). Yahveh "came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them. ... And Yahveh's anger was kindled because he went" (Num. 22: 20, 22). Even Balaam's ass had some remarks to make about the unjustness of it all (22: 28). Yahveh entered into a conspiracy for murder in heaven, and sent "a lying spirit" to deceive Ahab and entice him to his death in battle (1 Kings 22: 20-23).

A GOD OF BLOODY MURDER

The alleged atrocities which Yahveh wilfully and maliciously perpetrated by the universal destruction of the Flood, and on the Egyptians with his inhuman Plagues, the wholesale massacre of the first-born of Egypt, and the drowning in the Red Sea of the Pharaoh and his army, also score for his inhumanity and murders. David, a "man after Yahveh's own heart," extols the feat: "O give thanks unto Yahveh. ... To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for his mercy endureth for ever" (Psalm 136: 1, 10)! He is pictured as no less atrocious and murderous in his treatment of his own Chosen People, condemned to a miserable wandering in the howling wilderness for forty years and to extinction in death, simply because the people were frightened at the majority report of the spies sent to prospect in Canaan, and wept all night, and wanted to go home to Egypt (Num. 14: 1-4). Yahveh was "provoked," and his "anger kindled," and he said: "I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them" (14: 12); but Moses again held up the spectre of what the Egyptians would say -- "because Yahveh was not able to bring this people unto the land which he swore into them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness" (14: 16). Yahveh sees the point and relents, a little.

Just after the departure from Sinai, the people for some reason murmured, "and Yahveh heard it, and his anger was kindled; and the fire of Yahveh burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp" (Num. 11: 1). A little later, when the people lusted for meat to eat, "the anger of Yahveh was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased" (11: 10). Yahveh sent the holy oily manna, and quails; and when the Israelites began to eat them, "the anger of Yahveh was kindled against the people, and Yahveh smote the

people with a very great plague" (11: 33). Later, because the people got tired of eating manna, Yahveh in his anger "sent fiery serpents, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died" (21: 5, 6). Because his Chosen lusted for the Moabitish maidens, "the anger of Yahveh was kindled against Israel," and he murdered 24,000 of them (Num. 25: 9). Against the man who should worship any other god, "the anger of Yahveh and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie against him" (Deut. 19: 20); and the people must do this and do that, or not do this or that, all through the Book of Curses, "that Yahveh may turn from the fierceness of his wrath."

Because Achan kept out a few of the spoils at the battle of Ai, "the anger of Yahveh was kindled against the children of Israel"; and Yahveh ordered Achan, and his sons, and his daughters, to be stoned to death. The sons of Eli "lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle," and Eli reproved them; "notwithstanding they hearkened not to the voice of their father, because Yahveh would slay them" (I Sam. 2: 25); and Yahveh said: "Because ... he restrained them not," and he murdered them, and brought ruin on the whole house of Eli (3: 13, 14). Because Uzzah put forth his hand and touched the malignant Ark to keep it from jolting off the ox-cart when it struck a rut, "the anger of Yahveh was kindled against Uzzah; and Yahveh smote him, and he died by the ark of Yahveh." Because the men of Beth-Shemesh "looked into the ark of Yahveh" the murderous god slew 50,070 of them (I Sam. 6: 19). And "again the anger of Yahveh was kindled against Israel," for what reason I cannot clearly gather, "and he moved David to number Israel and Judah," and because David did so, Yahveh sent his only angel and murdered 70,000 of his Chosen, from Dan to Beersheba, in one day (2 Sam. 24: 15). Time and again Yahveh repeats the infernal commands for the indiscriminate murder of men, women, and children, the total extermination of the populations of the promised land by the savage soldiers of El: "Thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; ... nor shew mercy unto them; ... And thou shalt consume all the people which Yahveh thy god shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them: ... and [Yahveh] shall destroy them with a mighty destruction, until they be destroyed" (Deut. 7: 2, 16, 23). And his brutal soldiers execute his holy will to the letter, pitilessly; through ineffectively, for they never succeeded in exterminating the populations.

These ebullitions of Jahvistic temper and terror, and their trains of frightful murder, might be multiplied indefinitely; but these suffice to prove our point of constant rage, terrorism, and murder against the Hebrew Yahveh.

YAHVEH THE VENGEFUL

As for vengeance "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," is the crown-jewel of Yahveh's gorgonian Godhead. "Yahveh, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God" (Ex. 34: 14), "jealous for my holy name" (Ezek, 219: 25). Again, "Yahveh he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions, nor your sins" (Josh. 24: 19); "Yahveh is jealous, and Yahveh revengeth" (Nahum, 1: 2). One must not dare even to dislike him: "Yahveh repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them" (Deut. 7: 10). In his holy ten commandments he stigmatizes himself: "I Yahveh am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation" (Ex. 20: 5; 34: 7; Num. 14: 18; Deut. 5: 9). This is Yahveh's own law of relentless vengeance and persecution of innocent and guilty alike. Fortunately it is simply a monstrous "bluff," for, despite all its blood-curdling iteration, it was perfectly innocuous. The Jahvistic decree against "other gods" is repeated scores of times: "Ye shall make you no idols, nor mazzebahs [graven images]" (Lev. 26: 1), etc. Leviticus 26: 16-39 is a perfect hell of sulphuric penalties called down on the poor idolater, who naturally would prefer some milder deity to the terrible jealous Yahveh. "I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart. ... And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies. I will bring seven times more plagues upon you. ... I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children. ... I will walk contrary unto you also in fury. ... And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat" (Lev. 26: 16-29); so spake the longsuffering and merciful God. While most of these things did, quite deservedly, one might think, befall the Chosen People, it certainly "just happened," as it did to all the other nations about them, from their incessant bloody warfares. The sacred history itself makes this perfectly evident.

THE CHANGEFUL YAHVEH

There was no fulfilment of these brutal threats, which no kind of idolatry could justify; and this chronic "crime" of Israel was never punished, nor had anything to do with the disasters which befell the Chosen People. It would require a review of their whole miserable history to fully demonstrate this; but one humorous instance must suffice, in proof of the false promises and threats of Yahveh, and his constant fickleness. After several hundred years of unbroken idolatry, Solomon worshipped a variety of "strange gods" imported by his seven hundred wives, and "Yahveh was angry with Solomon" (1 Kings 11: 9). But Solomon was not stoned to death, as Yahveh's awful "law" commanded; he was not even "utterly destroyed"; Yahveh only said to Solomon: "I will surely rend the kingdom from thee. ... Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son" (11: 12, 13). And after the death of Solomon, when it did not much matter to Solomon anyhow, both the successors of Solomon, who divided the kingdom, were far worse idolaters than Solomon; and the kingdom was not rent from them at all; and the respective successors kept up unrestrained idolatry for several hundred years, until the end. Yahveh also told Solomon: "I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever" (11: 39); but they were afflicted, by incessant wars and captivities, till the end of the record. We will give Yahveh the credit for it.

Four or five hundred years before Solomon, Yahveh had declared his patience to be exhausted: "And Yahveh said unto the children of Israel, Ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more" (Judges 10: 13); but we find this same Yahveh saying through Samuel: "Yahveh will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased Yahveh to make you his people" (1 Sam. 12: 22); adding, however, from force of savage habit: "But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed" (12: 25)! They continued to do the same as ever, and were not consumed. Yahveh gave his plighted word to David, referring to Solomon: "He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever; ... my mercy shall not depart away from him" (2 Sam. 7: 13, 15). But immediately on Solomon's death the kingdom was split by the secession of Jeroboam, incessant civil wars followed, and both factions were finally wiped out by the Assyrians and other powerful enemies.

This was not because the Chosen served idols. The nations around them had no jealous Yahveh to punish them; yet they all went the same way of destruction. For as King Hezekiah, in terror of the Assyrians, wails: "Of a truth, Yahveh, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries" (Isa. 37: 18).

Rabshakeh, in his warning to Hezekiah, asks: "Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?" (Isa. 36: 18-20).

The truth is that Israel worshipped the same gods as the Assyrians and other nations, and never believed in or worshipped Yahveh, except as a local phallic baal, one of their many gods. Just at the time of the first captivity this fact is admitted: "they served idols as did the heathen whom Yahveh carried away before them" (2 Kings 17: 11, 12); and although "Yahveh testified against [them] by all the prophets, and by all the seers, notwithstanding, they ... did not believe in Yahveh their God" (17: 13, 14); but they persisted in idolatry and did not depart therefrom, "until Yahveh removed Israel out of his sight" (17: 23).

This idolatry is admitted to have been continuous from first to last, some seven hundred years: "Because they have done that which was evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day" (2 Kings 21: 15), therefore, says Yahveh -- in total disregard of his "everlasting covenant" with Abram, and the iteration ad nauseam of "I will not forsake my people for my great name's sake" -- therefore, said Yahveh, "I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies" (21: 14).

And yet the farce goes merrily on; in the last chapter but one of the old Jewish folk-book, the curtain is rung down to this same old tune: "For I am Yahveh, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith Yahveh of hosts" (Mal. 3: 6, 7) -- though to an unprejudiced observer it might seem that both parties would be glad for a mutual good riddance. And Yahveh takes this humorous loathing, longing, fickle, parting fling at his "lying children": "Ye are cursed with a curse; ... prove me now herewith, saith Yahveh of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing; ... and all nations shall call you blessed" (Mal. 3: 9, 10, 12)! All this and much more of the truth-inspired record proves the fickle inconstancy of Yahveh.

YAHVEH REPENTANT

This same and some other points may be further illustrated by Numbers 23: "Yahveh is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (23: 19). It would seem not. We have seen instances of fickleness, threats, changings, and repentings. Yahveh several times, as we have seen, in the wilderness, "repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people"; in Genesis "it repented Yahveh that he had made man on the earth" (6: 6); in I Samuel Yahveh says: "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king" (15: 11); in 2 Samuel, when Yahveh's murdering angel had slain seventy thousand men, and had stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, "Yahveh repented him of the evil," and stayed the angel's massacring hand (24: 16). And so on throughout, with this fickle Deity who boasts: "For I am Yahveh, I change not." But after so many instances of it, Yahveh himself complains to Jeremiah: "I am weary with repenting" (Jer. 15: 6).

THE FATHER OF LIES

Of bald lies attributed to Yahveh by his inspired biographers and votaries and lies instigated by this soi-disant God of Truth we have several edifying instances. The first lie on record is told by Yahveh; he threatened Adam: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2: 17). Adam ate the apple, and died of old age 930 years later. Yahveh told Moses to lie to the Pharaoh, as a pretext for escape, by saying that the people wanted to go "three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Yahveh our God" (Ex. 3: 18); but as Yahveh was a total stranger to the people and to the Pharaoh, the latter, when the inspired lie was repeated to him, was skeptical, and failed to take the bait. This hypocritical religious excuse seems to have been a favorite with Yahveh, or with the holy men who wrote his biography, for Yahveh suggested the same lie to Samuel, when he told this prophet to go to Bethlehem and find Jesse, and pick one of his sons for king. "And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And Yahveh said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to Yahveh" (1 Sam. 16: 2). In Exodus Yahveh tells Moses that the fleeing Hebrew slaves should lie to the Egyptians about "borrowing" their finery as a trick to rob their masters of all their jewellery and clothes; "and ye shall spoil the Egyptians" (Ex. 3: 22). We recall the "lying spirit" sent by Yahveh to the four hundred prophets in order to lure Ahab to death in a fatal battle (1 Kings 22: 20-23). Because of the majority report of the spies, Yahveh swore at his children, and in violation of his myriad promises avowed: "Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swore to make you dwell therein. ... and ye shall know my breach of promise" (Num. 14: 30, 34)!

His own prophet Ezekiel attributes all prophetic lies directly to Yahveh, and quotes Yahveh as shamelessly declaring: "If the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I Yahveh have deceived that prophet" (Ezek. 14: 9). With outrageous injustice Yahveh inflicts this punishment upon the deluded prophets whom he himself has deceived: "I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him." Several times Jeremiah frankly taxes Yahveh to his face with deception and lies: "Then said I: Ah, Yahveh! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem" (Jer.

4: 10); and again, "O Yahveh, thou has deceived me, and I was deceived" (20: 7). Jeremiah is so angry with Yahveh that he declares: "I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name" (20: 9); and for the climax, he puts it straight into the teeth of Yahveh: "Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar?" (15: 18). All this would seem to make Yahveh a rival with Baalzebub as the "Father of Lies" -- a glorious conception of the boasted "God of all Truth."

In Genesis, when Yahveh is enraged and threatens a general destruction, Abraham expostulates with him: "Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? ... "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (18: 23, 25). But this is a constant form of the injustice of Yahveh, if we believe his Book.

THE LUSTS OF YAHVEH

There is not much detail in the sacred record in regard to the "sportive tricks" of the Hebrew Jove, but what there is reveals the frequent practice. Yahveh had so many "sons" (beni ha-elohim) who were enamored of the fair daughters of men that this is given expressly as the reason for the monstrous injustice of Yahveh in destroying the whole of his creation in the Flood, instead of keeping his lustful sons at home in heaven.

But more explicit instances of Jahvistic paternity are recorded. Yahveh had promised a son to Abraham by his wife Sarah; but she laughed when she heard it, and said to Yahveh: "After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" Yahveh replied: "Is any thing too hard for Yahveh?" (Gen. 18: 12, 14) "And Yahveh visited Sarah as he had said, and Yahveh did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son" (21: 1, 2). The favorite phrase, "and so-and-so begat" is not spoken of Abraham. The barren wife of Manoah was visited by Yahveh "as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her." And Yahveh told her: "Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son"; and in due course "the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson" (Judges 13: 71 91 24). In another instance, five offspring are credited to Yahveh by one human woman: "And Yahveh visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters" (I Sam. 2: 21). Besides all this, we have the instance of the Virgin Wife of Joseph, whose natural suspicions of carnal, rather than Holy Ghostly, agency were aroused until he dreamed that Yahveh was the father of the unborn child. And Yahveh admitted: "Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee" (Heb. 1: 5; 5: 5).

YAHVEH THE WHITE-SLAVER

As a procurer Yahveh is a shining example for the white- slavers of all time. After first commanding that all men, woman, and children of the peoples of the promised land should be massacred and their property and cattle destroyed, Yahveh withdrew this proviso of his barbarous rules of war, and substituted: "Thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: But the women, and the little ones. ... and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof shalt thou take unto thyself" (Deut. 20: 13, 14); and the women and children were consigned to debauchery and slavery. The most signal single instance of Yahveh's utter depravity as a monster of murder and debauchery is on the occasion of the battle with the Midianites, when Master Procurer Yahveh delivered 32,000 captive maidens to the lusts of his holy People (Num. 3i).

I call attention to the lying sophistry of the inspired "justification" for this particular wholesale rape. When Moses saw the women and little ones brought captive into camp, "Moses was 'Wroth with the officers of the host. ... And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive? Behold, these caused the children of Israel ... to commit trespass against Yahveh in the matter of Peor" (Num. 31: 14-16), when, because "the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab," Yahveh massacred 24,000 of his "holy people" (Num. 2v). The women of Midian, several hundred miles away across the Arabian deserts, could have nothing to do with the sportings of the daughters of Moab with the holy ones; but we should naturally expect that Yahveh's command would be, "Smite all these women," and thus prevent further sin.

His brutal order is, however, naively sophisticated, and knavishly diabolic: "Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves" (Num. 31: 17, 18)! Note the inspired devilish illogicality of Yahveh: Ye have sinned against me by whoring with the Moabitish women; ergo, after killing all the male little ones, and their mothers, and "every woman that hath known man," keep the others, the best of them, the fresh and yet virtuous young Midianite maidens, 32,000 of them, for your holy selves! Verily, as the Psalmist sang, "the commandment of Yahveh is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Psalm 19: 8)! And Job pertinently queries: "Shall mortal man be more just than Yahveh? shall a man be more pure than his maker?" (Job. 4: 17). With such an example as Yahveh to enlighten human eyes, and piously to imitate, the wonder is that there are any saints in the calendar or virgins left alive. We shall notice later how Yahveh kindly acted as go-between for his holy prophet Hosea.

L'ENVOI

Here, astonished reader, hangs before you a pen-and-ink outline sketch of the Bible Yahveh. Every line of it is drawn, it is pretended, by a divinely inspired pen, at the infallible dictation of the Great Subject himself, and it is said to bear his own sacred seal of accuracy and authenticity. That there may be no mistaking it for a lurid portrait of the Devil, read Yahveh's own signature upon it: "I am Yahveh which exercise loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight" (Jer. 9: 24). But for this divine certificate of authenticity and good character, the casual observer must have recalled, as applicable to its original, the

horrible words of the Veiled Prophet of Khorassan, as he tore the silver veil from his blasted face before his deluded votaries:

"Here, see, if Hell, with all its powers to damn, Can add one blot to the foul thing I am!"

True, the braggart words of the certificate, and many others scattered through the sacred biography, sing praises of him as "the Holy God," "glorious in holiness" and in righteousness, and ascribe manifold goodnesses and mercies to him. But these are mere words of exaltation by fervid partisans -

"Deeds are bigger things than words are; Actions mightier than boastings"; and from "In the beginning" of Genesis, to the closing blast, "Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse," of Malachi, there is not to be found -- I challenge its production -- one single good, honest, true, faithful, decent, oighteous action which it is even alleged that this Hebrew Yahveh ever did or thought of doing. If the Veiled Prophet could make publicly the confession quoted above, may not a Christian, when now he has come to know his God, in contrition confess to himself:

"What a thrice-doubled dupe was I To take this Ogre for a God And worship this foul fiend!"

IS IT GOD'S WORD?

CHAPTER 11: THE HOLY PRIESTS AND PROPHETS OF YAHWEH

THE HOLY PRIESTS AND PROPHETS OF YAHVEH PRIESTS BEFORE MOSES

A "KINGDOM OF PRIESTS"

REVELATION OF PRIESTLY MONOPOLY

THE PRIESTLY PERQUISITES

THE HOLY FAKIR PROPHETS

THE FRENZIED PROPHETS

THE DIVINE TEST OF PROPHECY

SAMUEL, DEAN OF THE PROFESSION ELIJAH ELISHA

ISAIAH

JEREMIAH

EZEKIEL

DANIEL

YAHVEH'S HOWLING DERVISHES

PROPHETIC EROTICISM

PROPHETIC LYING FACTIONS

CONFESSIONS OF THE PROPHETS

THE PROPAGANDISTS OF CHRISTIANITY

THE HOLY PRIESTS AND PROPHETS OF YAHWEH

TURNING from the self-portrait of the Hebrew chief God, let us view the holy priests and prophets of Yahveh, the votaries of this Hebrew war-god. This examination will show the vague and shadowy notions of pagan deity which they held, as well as the cardinal characteristics of the whole priestly and prophetic hierarchy of Israel.

The system of priests will be seen to have been founded on the basic principle of idle life and greedy graft; while that of the prophets was in most cases the same, plus a crazed fanaticism such as distinguishes the holy fakirs of India and the howling dervishes of Arabia up to the present time. This priestly-prophetic gentry existed from the earliest times, always and in all ancient countries the object of special privilege and rapacious graft. When Joseph, son of Jacob-Israel, organized the first "corner" in food-stuffs, during the grievous seven-year famine in Egypt, he extorted all their money from the people, by profiteering, and all the lands in Egypt from their starving owners in exchange for food, until "the land became Pharaoh's; ... except the land of the priests only, which became not Pharaoh's" (Gen. 47: 20, 26). And priests have escaped all fiscal obligation to the civil state ever since.

PRIESTS BEFORE MOSES

The earliest scripture mention of a priest is a curious instance of confused theology, and illustrates the fact, already proved, that the Hebrew El Yahveh was common property of the Semitic heathenism. Abram, during his wanderings into Canaan, came to the heathen Jebusite city of Salem, which later became Jerusalem; and there he met Melchizedek, King of Salem, who is described as "priest of El-Elyon [the most high God]" (Gen. 14: 18). The name Melchizedek signifies "king of righteousness." He was a Canaanite heathen, and of course no priest of the Hebrew El-Yahveh, knowing nothing of any special El or Yahveh of Abram. Yahveh himself had first become known to Abram at Haran as he set out on his family migration to Canaan (Gen. 12: 1), since which time Yahveh had not further been heard of. Melchizedek, "priest of El-Elyon," at once recognized Abram as a brother pagan, worshipping the same God or gods as himself, and greeted him warmly: "Blessed be Abram of El-Elyon" (14: 19). The pagan King of Sodom joined the friendly group, and began bargaining about

the spoils of the battle; and Abram swore to him by their common God El-Elyon that he would justly close the bargain (14: 21, 22). Thus, clearly, El, exalted as El-Elyon, was a common Semitic deity, which the pagan Melchizedek served as priest just as Abram did, and the pagan King of Sodom shared the same religious cult. As Melchizedek was altogether a pagan priest, and is never shown to have been "converted" to Yahveh, it is curious that Paul several times avers that Jesus Christ was "called of God an high priest after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 5: 10).

This same Melchizedek was the most original of recorded personages; like the government mule, he was "without pride of ancestry or hope of progeny," according to the anonymous scribe the Epistle to the Hebrews. Here the Holy Ghost, speaking through the sacred writer, assures us that this pagan prototype of the Christ was born and lived "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life" (Heb. 7: 3)! It is added, for confirmation of faith, that he was "made like unto the Son of God" and "abideth a priest for ever." This comparison is not borne out in all details, for the Christ is said to have had a Ghostly Father and a carnal mother, and to have gone back to heaven alive after death, while Melchizedek, prototype, too, of the Wandering Jew, must still be serving somewhere as priest.

A "KINGDOM OF PRIESTS"

During the patriarchal times, down to the traditional "giving of the law" on Sinai, and for a thousand years afterwards, every man who pleased was his own priest and made his own bloody sacrifices: Cain, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Aaron, before and after the "law"; and Joshua, Gideon, and all the judges, Samuel, David, Solomon, and other kings, after the "law"; not one of them was specially ordained a priest. No sooner had the fleeing Chosen arrived at Sinai than Yahveh himself is recorded as proclaiming: "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Ex. 19: 6); that is, every man should be at liberty to act for himself as priest and make his own altars and sacrifices "for the atonement of his soul" unto Yahveh.

And under the very shadow of Sinai, the day after the first giving of the law to Moses, Moses himself "buildded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars [phallic mazzebahs] according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto Yahveh" (Ex. 24: 4, 5).

REVELATION OF PRIESTLY MONOPOLY

But Moses had been brought up in the royal-priestly court of Egypt and was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts 7: 22). Consequently Moses received a "revelation" from Yahveh that Brother Aaron should be high priest, and the four sons of Aaron should be priests: "It shall be a statute for ever unto their generations" (Ex. 27: 21; 28: 1) -- just as Mohammed afterwards reserved the priesthood for his own family. Yahveh complaisantly again decreed: "And thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office: for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations" (Ex. 4: 15).

Having got this divine commission in perpetuity for Brother Aaron's family, it was necessary to sanction it with awful Jahvistic pains and penalties, to prevent sacrilegious meddling with the monopoly. The penalty of death was therefore decreed for any interference with the priestly monopolists: "Thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and they shall keep their priesthood: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death" (Num. 3: 10)! And it was repeated: "The man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest, ... even that man shall die" (Deut. 17: 12). The priests of Yahveh were as jealously exclusive as was their God whose name was Jealous; and they were protected in their monopoly by the fatal enactment on Sinai: "He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto Yahveh only, he shall be utterly destroyed" (Ex. 22: 20); and these deadly penalties were enforced by their beneficiaries.

Of course, none of this ever historically happened; it was put into the mouth of "Yahveh by the hand of Moses" many centuries later, by Ezra or his priestly successors after the return from captivity, when the ritualistic priestly system was established in the restored remnant of the Jews to give sanction and sanctity to their exclusive system. None of the many priests named in the whole history after Aaron, from Eli to Hulda, the priestess who officiated at the "finding of the law," was of the monopolistic priesthood of Aaron; and none of them, nor of the many non-priestly sacrificers, Gideon, Saul, Samuel, David, and the kings of Judah and Israel,

who sacrificed to many "other gods" besides Yahveh, was ever "utterly destroyed" or put to death for either of these flagrant violations of "the law." This is good proof that "the law" prohibiting these practices under penalty of death was not existent through all those centuries. The recorded instances of infliction of these penalties were therefore clearly anachronistic and apocryphal, related only to terrify the "strangers who should come nigh" to question or to meddle with the "restored" priesthood.

Two of the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, who seem not to have been well initiated into the mysteries of their new office, put strange fire into their censers, "and offered strange fire before Yahveh"; and, lo, "there went out fire from Yahveh, and devoured them, and they died before Yahveh" (Lev. 10: 1, 2). Moses commanded Brother Aaron, in the name of Yahveh, that he and his family should not mourn for the murdered sons, "lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people" (10: 6). Thus decreed the God of all Compassion -- "even as a father pitieth his children."

We are given a horrible example of the jealousy of Yahveh in favor of his priestly monopolists which it is worth while to cite somewhat fully. Yahveh declared, as we have seen, that the whole holy nation of Chosen should be "a kingdom of priests" (Ex. 19: 6). Three of the renowned representatives of the Chosen, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with 250 of the "princes of the congregation," rose up before Moses and Aaron, and said unto them: "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and Yahveh is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of Yahveh?" (Num. 16: 2). Moses was very wroth, as was his wont, at this challenge of his family monopoly, and he taunted them, saying: "Seek ye the priesthood also?" (16: 10); and Moses challenged them to a contest of incense-offering, saying: "Yahveh will shew who are his, and who is holy" (16: 6). And Moses the meek "was very wroth, and said unto Yahveh, Respect not thou their offering" (16: 15).

Yahveh at first told Moses and Aaron to stand aside, and threatened to smite and consume all the rest of the millions of the holy congregation in a moment. But Moses evidently reflected that there would be nothing to the priestly monopoly if all the faithful were consumed; so he expostulated with Yahveh, saying: "O El, Elohe of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?" Yahveh-El-Elohe saw the point, and told Moses to have all the congregation keep away from the tents of "these wicked men"; and he put a taboo upon all their possessions, saying: "Touch nothing of their's, lest ye be consumed" (16: 26). Such taboos, of the perfect Hottentot type, riot throughout the holy pages of the Hebrew Bible.

The contest of incense-burning to which Moses had first challenged the anti-monopolists was called off; and Yahveh, after the people had stood aside, caused "these wicked men" to stand forth in the doors of their tents, with "their wives, and their sons, and their little ones," all doomed to a common massacre by the merciful Yahveh, who benignly avows that he visits "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." Then Moses stood forth and proclaimed: "Hereby ye shall know that Yahveh hath sent 'Me to do all these works" (16: 28); and -- behold the righteous judgments of Yahveh -- "the ground clave asunder that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods." So they "went down alive into the pit [Sheol], and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation" (16: 31-33). The wrath of Yahveh being not yet satiated, "there came out a fire from Yahveh, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense" to their compassionate God. At the further command of Yahveh, and as a fearful warning for all who should dare to meddle with the priestly monopoly, the censers in which these "wicked men" had offered their incense were beaten out into a brazen covering for the bloody altar of Yahveh, "to be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before Yahveh" (16: 40).

Even yet the wrath of Yahveh was not appeased. For on the morrow all the congregation of the Children of Yahveh murmured against Holy Moses and Brother Aaron, saying: "Ye have killed the people of Yahveh." Then Yahveh ordered Moses to stand aside, "that I may consume them as in a moment" (16: 46); and he sent a plague and killed 14,700 more of them (16: 49). Yahveh is indeed a merciful and a jealous God. One admission of the falsity of the record mitigates this wholesale murder; for inspiration elsewhere flatly contradicts the inspired assertion that "all their households" were swallowed up alive: "Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not" (Num. 26: 11).

To confirm the priestly monopoly of the Aaron family, Yahveh resorted to a rod-conjuring contest reminiscent of the contests in Egypt. He ordered Moses to take twelve rods, according to the twelve tribes, and write the name of the chief of each tribe on the respective rods, putting Aaron's name on the rod of the tribe of Levi: and to lay the rods up overnight. "And it shall come to pass, that the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you" (Num. 17: 1-5) --though their murmurings never did cease. So Moses took the twelve rods, representing the phallic "staff of life," and laid them up overnight in the tent where the Ark of the Covenant was housed; and, lo, on the morrow, "the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded ... and yielded almonds" (17: 7, 8)! Thus vindicated, 'Yahveh told Moses: "Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not" (17: 10). Who would not love such a benign Deity? The Chosen were filled with godly fear, saying unto Moses: "Behold, we die, we perish, we perish all. Whosoever cometh any thing near unto the tabernacle of Yahveh shall die" (17: 12, 13). To cap the climax of divine sanction for the priestly monopoly, and everlastingly secure the priests in their power and profit, Moses cajoled from Yahveh on Sinai this fatal and priestly decree: "The man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest, ... even that man shall die" (Deut. 17: 12). Thus were the priestly fetters firmly riveted on the neck of the superstitious people, where they have galled humanity until this very year of his Son Christ. But humanity is coming to know the truth, and the truth shall make men free.

THE PRIESTLY PERQUISITES

A large part of the "Five Books of Moses" is taken up with sacred prescriptions by Yahveh for the holy incantations and bloody ceremonials of the sect of priests, and for the enforcement of their sacred perquisites. Yahveh himself fully initiated Moses into the sacred mysteries of smearing the blood of victims on the right ear-tips and big toes of Brother Aaron and his sons, and in teaching them to dip their fingers in the blood of the victims (Ex. 29: 20; Lev. 14). But, naturally, the most important feature of the holy ministry was the rules and regulations of their divinely ordained spoils from all Israel.

This was a gigantic guerdon; for when the priestly assistants (the Levites) were "numbered at the commandment of Yahveh, all the males of the Levites were twenty and two thousand" (Num. 3: 39). It was ordained amid the fires and thunders of Sinai, that "No man shall appear before me empty when he cometh to make atonement for his soul" (Ex. 23: 15). No pay, no atonement.

It would be impossible, in this outline, to go into the details of the priestly system of tribute. Every act of life, from the cradle to the grave, must be accompanied by sacrifices and offerings, at which the priests must officiate, and for which receive their holy pay. There 'were sin-offerings, peace-offerings, trespass-offerings, and otheevenue-producing offerings too numerous to catalogue. In most instances, Yahveh got the "sweet savor" of the burnt smell of them, and the holy priests got the solid nourishment which the sacrificed animals afforded. These offerings were frequently simply "waved before Yahveh." After this ceremony, "it shall be thine, and thy sons' with thee, by a statute for ever; as Yahveh hath commanded" (Lev. 10: 15).

Chapter 7 of Numbers, with 89 verses, is a marvellous account of rich donations made to the priests by the principal leaders of the Chosen; these just-escaped slaves could only have stolen them when, a few weeks before, they "spoiled the Egyptians" -- unless indeed, it never happened at all, or occurred ages later, when the priestly system was well established and the "law" was "found" by Hilkiali the priest. Numbers 18 gives a precious view of this whole scheme of priestly rewards ordained to Aaron and his kin. A few lines must suffice: "All the best of [everything] have I given thee. And whatsoever is first ripe in the land ... shall be thine. ... Every thing devoted in Israel shall be thine. Every thing that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto Yahveh, whether it be of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the firstborn of man, ... and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem" (Num. 18: 12-15), for a fixed price, which the priests got. All the gold and silver spoils of war are declared "consecrated unto Yahveh: they shall come into the treasury of Yahveh" (Josh. 6: 19), for the priests. "And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance" (18: 21). Every time the people were "numbered," every one of them over twenty years old had to pay a half-shekel for "a ransom for his soul unto Yahveh, ... that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them" (Ex. 30: 12) -- a very fruitful source of income.

The first-fruits of all the land, and the best of everything else, "Without spot or blemish," and a tenth of everything were, in a word, the perpetual income of these holy servers of Yahveh. It is stated that a common resort of shiftless loafers of Israel shall be to come to a priest and bow down to him for a piece of silver and a loaf of bread, saying: "Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a piece of bread?" (1 Sam. 2: 36). The custom has ever since been popular.

THE HOLY FAKIR PROPHETS

The prophets, as described by Inspiration, were a precious set of lazy and worthless vagabonds of Israel, the exact counterpart of the howling dervishes and divination-mongers of their cousin Ishmaelites. In speaking of prophets one thinks naturally of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and such reputed "holy men of God": these are but a few signal ones out of thousands of unkempt and unclean loafers, who went publicly naked -- as did Aaron, Saul, Samuel, David, Isaiah -- or wore old bran-sacks for clothes -- like John the Baptist and others -- and wandered about begging, and selling sorceries and magic, and talking in a wild sing-song jargon of which they themselves did not know the meaning. The usual term to describe them was in the Hebrew language meshuggah (frenzied); they wandered about "prophesying," or, as the Hebrew word actually signifies (see the Revised Version) razing through the land. Their current Hebrew name was Nabi, which "signified to speak enthusiastically, 'to utter cries, and make more or less wild gestures,' like the pagan mantics" (Cath. Encyc., Vol. 12:p. 477, art. Prophecy, Prophet, and Prophetess). They were "seers," fortune-tellers, and diviners, through pretended dreams and trances, and by the use of sacred dice and arrows, and phallic images of Yahveh. The job of a prophet was a free-for-all occupation, which any one who pretended to feel the divine afflatus, or was a fluent liar, could take up at will and without license. The prophet Amos frankly states his own case, which was typical and has passed into a proverb: "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdsman; ... and Yahveh took me as I followed the flock, and Yahveh said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel" (Amos 7: 14, 15). Elisha, the baldpate, was a farmer, who when Elijah passed by, dropped his plough and ran after him, and became a prophet too. After this manner are many modern "divines" self-called."

Jeremiah describes their single qualification: "Every man that is mad [ish meshuggah], and maketh himself a prophet" (Jer. 29: 26). Hosea also declares the same truth: "The prophet is a fool, the man that hath the spirit is mad [meshuggah]" (Hos. 9: 7). Elisha is called "this mad fellow [meshuggah]" (2 Kings 9: 11). A thousand instances prove the truth of these candid admissions that the prophets were a rabble of frenzied fakirs. We have seen the example of Saul, when "the spirit of Yahveh came mightily upon him, and he prophesied" (Heb., raved), along with the whole band of howling, naked prophets (1 Sam. 19: 6); and frequently afterwards it is related of him: "The evil spirit from the gods came upon Saul, and he prophesied" (raved; 18: 10). Like the devils that came down from among the tombs, their name was Legion; they infested the land like the locusts of the Egyptian plague. Jeremiah describes them gadding about the country, crying: "I have dreamed, I have dreamed," and, saith Yahveh, "prophesying [raving] lies in my name" (Jer. 23: 25).

THE FRENZIED PROPHETS

The word "prophet," as a name for these nomadic conjurers and fortune-tellers, is a late Biblical term; they were originally called -- just as the fortune-tellers and trance-mediums of to-day describe themselves in their advertisements -- "seers"; people who "see things" in their imaginations, or pretend for pay to see them. Samuel, who well describes the grafting practices of this gentry, testifies to this: "Before-time in Israel, when a man went to enquire of the gods [ha-Elohim], thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer [roeh]: for he that is now called a Prophet [Nabi] was beforetime called a Seer [Roeh]" (1 Sam. 9: 9). We may note here another sidelight on Bible editorship: as the word "Roeh" ("Seer") is used throughout the Books of Samuel and elsewhere, it is evident that these books were compiled long afterwards, when "Nabi" ("raver," hence "prophet") was the word in current use, so that the original and then obsolete word, "Roeh," had to be explained.

THE DIVINE TEST OF PROPHECY

The ear-marks and badge of authenticity of a prophecy-monger are prescribed in the law, in terms of sufficient vagueness to allow considerable latitude of practice in the craft: "If there be a prophet among you, I Yahveh will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream' (Num. 12: 6) -- a test obviously lending itself to the objection afterwards made by Yahveh himself, through Jeremiah: "I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed" (Jer. 23: 25). Again, the credentials are thus prescribed by Yahveh: "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass. whereof he spake unto thee, saying [things idolatrous and mischievous]; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for Yahveh your God proveth you, to know whether ye love Yahveh your God. ... And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death" (Deut.

13: 1-5). Certainly an odd sort of roving commission and a barbarous punishment for the poor dupe of Yahveh. But a more comprehensive and soul-satisfying, though precarious test of the authenticity and veracity of the prophet is again laid down by Yahveh:

"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which [the prophet] shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.

"But the prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.

"And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which Yahveh hath not spoken?

"When a prophet speaketh in the name of Yahveh, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which Yahveh hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Deut. 18: 19-22)!

That this latter is the real, though negative, test of true prophecy, is not only thus averred by Yahveh, but he gives a remarkable example of its efficiency. When from the burning bush Yahveh ordered Moses to bring the Children of Israel out of Egypt, and Moses demurred, Yahveh reassured him: "And this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve the gods [ha-elohim] upon this mountain" (Ex. 3: 12). Though, by the same divine token, Isaiah prophesied

"presumptuously" and falsely when he told Ahaz that the two kings would fail before Jerusalem (Isa. 7), for the city was captured by them and nearly destroyed (2 Chron. 28).

This same safe test of prophecy is stated in its affirmative form by the shifty Jeremiah: "When the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that Yahveh hath truly sent him" (Jer. 28: 9). For how long, O Yahveh, must the expectant and impatient votary wait to know whether the "man of the Gods" [ish haelohim] has missed his guess or not, and his message was or was not of Thee? Isaiah prophesied a "sign" in the Virgin-born son Immanuel (Isa. 7: 14), and not till 750 years later, as Matthew says, was it "fulfilled which was spoken of Yahveh by the prophet" (Matt. 1: 22); whereas Jesus himself prophesied that his second coming would be in the lifetime of those hearing him speak (Matt. 16: 28) -- and in nearly two thousand years the event has not proved the truth of the prophecy. Full faith and credence may, however, charitably be awarded to these prophecy-mongers, at least until the event proves that "they speak lies in my name." Having thus satisfied our minds, if not our souls, as to the official character and tests of veracity of prophets, we will return to the revelations of their inspired methods of plying their sacred trade.

SAMUEL, DEAN OF THE PROFESSION

The great "meshuggah" Samuel was stark frenzied, like all of the howling bands of fakir-prophets with whom he paraded naked up and down the land. A graphic picture of them is given by Samuel himself, or whoever wrote his biography. David had fled from the wrath of Saul, and Saul "sent messengers to take David"; but as each squad of messengers came upon "the company of the prophets prophesying [raving], and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the spirit of the Gods was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied [raved]." After three details of messengers had "failed" in this way, Saul himself went on his own mission; and as he went, "the Spirit of the gods was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied [raved], until he came" to where all the others were assembled. The whole outfit were stark naked and raving; and Saul "stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied [raved] before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all

that night" (1 Sam. 19: 14-24). And by this token of rank insanity and phallic idolatry, was "Saul also numbered among the prophets," to the derision of the public.

Samuel himself was a well-known "seer," or fortune-teller and prophecy-monger, as appears from 1 Samuel 9. It is related, by divine inspiration, that Kish, the father of Saul, had several asses which had strayed, and he sent young Saul and one of the family servants to "go seek the asses." After beating the country-side for several days without success, when Saul was on the point of giving up and returning home, the servant said: "Behold now, there is in this city a man of the gods [ish-ha- elohim], and he is a man that is held in honor; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can shew us" where to find the lost asses. But Saul replied -- showing that he well knew the raison-d'etre of the fortune- telling craft -- that he had no money, nothing with which to pay, -- "there is not a present to bring to the man-of-the-gods" [ish- haelohim]. But the servant rescued him from this difficulty: "Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: that will I give to the man of the gods, to tell us our way" (9: 8).

As they went into the city, they met some girls, and asked them: "Is the seer [Heb., roeh] here?" And the girls told them that Samuel was in town that day, having come to town expressly to attend a big picnic sacrifice held by the people of the town in the Baalic high-place of the city, "for the people will not eat until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice" (9: 13). This, incidentally, proves the heathenish practices of this holy man of the gods, and of all the people; and proves that the "law" pretended to have been promulgated by Moses long before did not yet exist; for this "law" a thousand times denounces the "high places" as a heathenish abomination, and prohibits under penalty of death the performance of sacrifices by any but the holy monopoly of priests.

Saul and his servant started on their search for Samuel; and as they went along, they met a man to whom Saul said: "Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is." The man replied: "I am the seer." Samuel then invited them to dinner; and without waiting to be asked about the asses, he said: "As for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found." After several other matters which need not be related, Samuel told Saul a number of things which he should see as he returned along the road, among which was a "company of prophets coming down from the high place" (of phallic Baal-worship), playing a diversity of musical instruments, "and they shall prophesy [rave]" (10: 5). This proves precisely the wild and incoherent nature of "meshuggah" practice. And Samuel said to Saul: "The Spirit of Yahveh will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy [rave] with them" (10: 6). And so it came to pass; and when the people who knew Saul saw that he "prophesied [raved] among the prophets," they said: "What is this that is come unto the son of Kish." Is Saul also among the prophets?" (10: 11). Then they all went up to the phallic high-place together. All this I have stated at some length, in order to give a graphic idea, from the Sacred Scriptures, of what manner of men were these holy prophets of Yahveh, and what was the manner of their practices.,

ELIJAH

Elijah the Tishbite was a typical "meshuggah"; he was "an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of

leather about his loins" (2 Kings 1: 8); he lived in deserts and caves, and angels and ravens fed him; he saw and talked with Yahveh in great and strong winds which rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks, in earthquakes, in fires, and in a still small voice. He had a wonderworking phallic staff, with which he parted the waters of rivers so that he could walk across dry-shod; and he is said to have raised a dead child to life by laying the stick upon him (2 Kings 4: 29).

Elijah murdered two companies of fifty soldiers and their captains by calling down fire from heaven to consume them in order to prove "if I be a man of the gods" (2 Kings 1: 12); and he murdered the 450 priests of Baal and the 400 "priests of the groves" (asherah), for the same purpose. As Elijah himself admits: "I, even I only, remain a prophet of Yahveh" (1 Kings 18: 22); and as there were at that time only seven thousand persons in all Israel who "bent not the knee to Baal" and kissed not the Baalic phallus, as the sacred text says (1 Kings 19: 18), it would seem that this mighty "meshuggah" of Yahveh used drastic means to vindicate his very minor dignity and importance.

ELISHA

Even old Elisha, who had a double portion of the spirit of his partner Elijah shed upon him, could not get his prophetic conjuring up until he was put into a trance by music -- the instrument of prophetic trance being

preferably (and appropriately) the lyre, as is instanced in 2 Kings 3: 15. Elisha had Yahveh murder forty-two little children because, in their childish simplicity and want of good manners, they said: "Go up, thou bald head." As these two old cronies, Elijah and Elisha, walked along and talked one day, "behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" -- something more than a million light years distant. How these fiery objects could have come so close to Elisha without burning him or the mantle of Elijah, which fell from him as he went up, is not explained. Elisha organized a posse and beat the woods for Elijah for three days (2 Kings 2: 17), thinking evidently that the driver of the fiery chariot had kidnapped him. This would seem to discount the inspired statement that Elijah was visibly whisked away into heaven before the very eyes of Elisha.

Elisha continued to go about alone and do much potent magic, such as making an ax-head swim, "healing" water that tasted bad, by casting salt into it, and going into a weird trance until "the hand of Yahveh came upon him," in order to be able to "prophesy" to the kings, during a drought, that they could get water by digging the low valley of the Jordan full of trenches -- a trick that any farmer's prentice could have told them just as well.

ISAIAH

The great Isaiah was a "meshuggah of the meshuggahs." He admits it himself, and everything which he uttered attests it: he appears never to have had a lucid interval. He was certainly stark mad when, as he says, at Yahveh's dread command, he took the old bran-sack from off his loins and the shoes from his feet, and "walked naked and barefoot, three years for a sign and wonder [as indeed it must have been!] upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia" (Isa. 20: 2, 3); and he had not recovered when he wrote about it, or he would never have told it. Isaiah had chronic intestinal trouble, which may have been what caused him to be so "meshuggah"; for he groans "my bowels shall sound [or, Revised Version, "will boil"] like an harp" (Isa. 16: 11), and he says his loins are "filled with pain: pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth. ... My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me" (Isa. 21: 3, 4); and he despairingly avowed: "I will weep bitterly, labor not to comfort me" (Isa. 22: 4). No wonder he saw and said things which even Aristotle could not unriddle. His dream- book is entitled "The Vision of Isaiah"; and his raving "prophecies" are divided into paragraphs headed, in the English translation, "the burden of Jerusalem," of Egypt, of Babylon, etc. The Hebrew word of the original means "the oracle concerning"; like the "prophecies" of all the "meshuggahs," they are just as pellucid in style and innocent of intelligent meaning as the incoherent jargon of the Greek oracles of Apollo or of the Pythoness.

In the year in which King Uzziah died, Isaiah says he "saw Yahveh sitting upon a throne. ... Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly," and the whole place was filled with smoke, until Isaiah cried: "Lord, how long?" (Isa. 6: 1, 2, 11). Afterwards he saw Yahveh riding upon a swift cloud going to Egypt; it was on this trip that Yahveh was to be received triumphantly with an "altar to Yahveh in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a mazzebah ["pillar"] at the border thereof" -- a phallic device which he says "shall be for a sign and for a witness unto Yahveh Sabaoth in the land of Egypt" (Isa. 19: 19, 20).

In His frenzy, Isaiah calls upon the ships of Tarshish to howl (Isa. 23: 1); and says that the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed; that Yahveh with a great and strong sword shall punish Leviathan the serpent, and shall slay the dragon that is in the sea. He displays his inspired notions of cosmical geography by speaking of the "ends of the earth" (Isa. 4: 28; 41: 5) and the "four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11: 12) -- a bit of inspired ignorance which held the world benighted for centuries, to the great credit of inspired infallible church and its holy Inquisition, until heretical Columbus proved that uninspired pagan Pythagoras, Aristotle, Seneca, and Ptolemy were better diviners of the truth than was Yahveh's own Prophet. Burns sang of "rapt Isaiah's wild seraphic fire"; it is all that, and something less poetic besides.

But Isaiah, as is well known, did not write the Book of Isaiah, or wrote only fragments of it; the book is a patchwork of various authors and editors, covering two centuries and more after the death of Isaiah. The book describes itself as "The Vision of Isaiah" (Isa. 1: 1), and thus, according to the definition of the term "vision" in Numbers 12: 61 is confessedly a "dream-book" rather than a chronicle of actual happenings. The "visions" are supposed to have been seen "in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah," between the years 760-700 B.C., the latter year being accepted as that of Isaiah's death. But they include the story of the

murder of Sennacherib by his sons (Isa. 37: 37, 38) which occurred in the year 681 B.C. More notorious anachronisms are the references to Cyrus: "Babylon is fallen, is fallen" (Isa. 21: 9) -- captured by Cyrus in 538 B.C.; "That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd" (Isa. 44: 28); "Thus saith Yahveh to his messiah, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden" (Isa. 14: 1); "I will direct all his ways, he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives" (45: 13). This relates to the return from captivity, nearly two centuries after the death of Isaiah. Large portions of the book are post-exilic. Chapter 23 howls over the destruction of Tyre, which was wrought by Alexander the Great in 332

B.C. Some portions (e.g., chapter 63) are assigned by the scholars to a period as late as the Hasmonean, about 165 B.C. Consequently our prophet must be acquitted of many of the absurdities orthodoxy attributed to him, as well as robbed of the halo of ultra- sanctity ascribed to his "prophetic" oracles.

JEREMIAH

The Wailing Prophet, Jeremiah, was little less "meshuggah" than Isaiah himself. He says: "Since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil" (Jer. 20: 8). He also was diseased: he agonizes and cries out: "My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me" (4: 19); he cries aloud: "I am full of the fury of Yahveh; I am weary with holding in" (6: 11)! He avers that "Yahveh put forth his hand and touched my mouth, and said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth," and told him to "Go, cry against Jerusalem." Jeremiah fulfilled his divine mission to the letter; and then, for good measure, added his weeping Lamentations, in which he again complains: "Behold, O Yahveh; for I am in distress: my bowels are troubled" (Lam. 1: 20). And yet after these two pitiful appeals, the "Great Physician" did not so much as prescribe bitters for his poor sick prophet.

EZEKIEL

The most perfectly frenzied of the whole troupe of prophets, so far as the record goes, is Ezekiel. His regular diet seems to have been bread made of human dung; but for some unrevealed reason, Yahveh indulgently gave him a substitute of cow's dung, and commanded him: "Lo, I have given thee cow's dung for man's dung, and thou shalt prepare thy bread therewith" (Ezek. 4: 15). And he assures us that Elohe Yahveh "put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven" (8: 3); and that "the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of Yahveh" and things unspeakable.

Neither man nor beast, before or since, except maybe in heaven, ever looked like what Ezekiel tries to describe: "Every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. [Isaiah says (6: 2, 11), each one had six wings; but probably he couldn't see to count because of the smoke]. ... They four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle: Thus were their faces.

Their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning." They had wheels (or perhaps it was Ezekiel himself), and works inside like "a wheel in the middle of a wheel"; and they had fougings "full of eyes round about" (Ezek. 1: 6-18).

Ezekiel too had cramps of the stomach, even worse than Jeremiah's, if possible, for Yahveh made him eat the roll of a book, and fill his belly with it (3: 1-3); and it tasted in his mouth "as honey for sweetness." The apoplectic John of Patmos had to eat a similar book (or maybe it was the same one rehashed), which also tasted like honey, but which, says, made his belly bitter (Rev. 10: 10). Both instances are proof of the Shaksperian remark: "Things sweet to taste are to digestion sour." Their dyspepsia must have been something awful, to judge from the nightmare visions they had and the excruciating things they saw and uttered.

DANIEL

The greatest dream-book extant is that of Daniel, to which those of Isaiah and Ezekiel are only close seconds. Daniel avows that Yahveh endowed him with "understanding of all visions and dreams"; so that he was "ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers" in all the king's realm (Dan. 1: 20). He several times relates (e.g., in 8: 18) that "as [Yahveh] was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground," - his favorite attitude for wooing nightmare revelation.

He certainly saw some fearful and wonderful things: he describes his "control" as having a "face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass,

and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude" (10: 6). It is no wonder that all Daniel's "comeliness was turned ... into corruption" within him, all his strength left him (10: 8); and he had abdominal disorders, and pains in his head. He says: "I was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me" (7: 15).

Poor Daniel spent much time in "prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes" (9: 3), and would mourn for three full weeks at a time, without eating or making his toilet (10: 2, 3). It was enough to derange anybody. He would hear the terrible voice of Yahveh as he was in his deep sleep on his face, with his face towards the ground; and Yahveh would "set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands" (10: 9, 10); and while he was in this graceful but uncomfortable posture, on all fours, Yahveh told him many incomprehensible things, as Daniel himself frankly admits: "I heard, but I understood not" (12: 8). Nor has anyone else understood ever since. These visions' which he had, of "all the wonders' that would be," were very explicitly scheduled to come to pass within the very precise period of "a time, times, and a half" (12: 7) --whenever that is. I remark only that among the myriads of Babylonian monuments and records which have so far been unearthed and deciphered, thanks to modern science, the one which records how good old King Nebuchadnezzar, a heathen special friend of the Yahveh of Israel, by whom he was given the dominion of the earth (Jer. 27: 6-8), turned ox and ate grass for seven years has not yet appeared, nor is the name of the prince regent during that interregnum yet recovered. And no monument preserves the name of the inspired prime minister Daniel, or records the incidents of the lions' den or the fiery furnace. Perhaps all this will be found on the next monument or in the next court record to be translated by the scholars. Let us hope so, for the sake of dear old Daniel's veracity.

So far as profane history has yet discovered, however, none of these inspiredly related events happened as recorded. Nebuchadnezzar had no son and successor of the name of Belshazzar; there was no such king as Daniel's hero of the "handwriting on the wall," his last King of Babylon, slain at the great feast, from whom "Darius the Median took the kingdom" (Dan. 5.). Babylon was taken by Cyrus in 538 B.C. from Nabonidus, last King of Babylon. Darius (not a personal name, but a title, like "Pharaoh"), whose name was Hystaspes, was chosen king about 522 B.C., after the death of Cambyses, son and successor of Cyrus. He was a Persian, not a Mede. The whole Book of Daniel is simply a legend, a Jewish apocalypse, written, according to the consensus of scholarly opinion, in the Maccabean times, about 165 B.C. The fateful "handwriting on the wall" vanishes before our eyes in the shadows of myth, and Daniel's "prophecies," all ex post facto, go glimmering into the same limbo.

YAHVEH'S HOWLING DERVISHES

The so-called prophets, major and minor, are one and all typical examples of the howling dervish of the desert. Hear them howl! What a string of howls from the great howl-master Isaiah: "Howl ye, for the day of Yahveh is at hand" (Isa. 13: 6)! "Howl, O gate; cry, O city" (14: 31)! "Every one shall howl" (16: 7)! "Howl, ye inhabitants of the isle" (23: 6)! "Ye shall howl for vexation of spirit" (65: 14)! Jeremiah swells the refrain: "Lament and howl: for the fierce anger of Yahveh" (Jer. 4: S)! "All the inhabitants of the land shall howl" (47: 2)! Ezekiel, he who saw things inexplicable, joins in: "Cry and howl, son of man" (Ezek. 21: 12)! "Howl ye, Woe worth the day!" (30: 2). And the "minor league" joins the chorus: "Howl, ye inhabitants!" cries Zephaniah (Zeph. 1: 11); "Howl, O ye oaks of Bashan!" bellows Zechariah (Zech. 11: 2); "The songs of the temple shall be howlings!" howls Amos (Amos 8: 3). Joel not only howls himself, but wants everybody else to howl: "Awake, ye drunkards, weep and howl! Lament, ye priests! Howl, ye ministers of the altar! Alas, for the day of Yahveh is at hand! How do the beasts groan! Yahveh also shall roar out of Zion!" (Joel, passim). Poor Job -- but then he was not a prophet but a pagan, and it is not known how he got into the Bible. Job is the only one who does not howl; he wails: "My bowels boiled; ... the days of affliction prevented me" (Job 30: 27)! Micah exults in his frenzy, crying: "I will wail and howl; I will go stripped and naked: I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls" (Mic. 1: 8)

PROPHETIC EROTICISM

These prophets had other peculiarities which are not overmuch to their credit or to that of their Yahveh. Hosea was apparently the subject of neuropathic erotomania. His induction into prophecy was a vision in which

Yahveh commanded him: "Go, take thee a wife of whoredoms" (Hos. 1: 2), as he proceeds to do without any recorded reluctance. He has by her a couple of children, without being married. He has to make these children "plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband"; begging her to "put away her whoredoms ... and her adulteries" (2: 2), so as to indulge in them only with this holy one, who threatens to "strip her naked" (2: 3), if she doesn't quit them. But she kept it up; for Hosea tells us, she "went after her lovers and forgot me"; and Yahveh tried to help him win her back, for Yahveh says: "Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness" (2: 14). This kindly divine Go-between seems to have failed of success, for Yahveh tells Hosea: "Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress" (3: 1). This also he does without delay. This new ladylove seems to have highly pleased the amorous Hosea, for he tells her: "Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot and thou shalt not be for another man; so will I also be for thee" (3: 3). The erotic visions of Hosea quite rival the amatory Canticles of Solomon, and take all the romance out of Don Juan Tenorio.

Amos had visions likening Yahveh to a choleric fisherman, swearing unto his people by his holiness, "that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fish-hooks"; and while they didn't wear trousers in those days, he swears (perhaps of the posterity in pants), "and ye shall go out at the breaches" (4: 2, 3). He promises that Yahveh shall break out like a fire and devour Israel, and there will be none to quench it; and he says that Yahveh says he will command the serpent and it shall bite them (9: 3).

Jonah should be passed with a sympathetic tear; for surely he had great disappointment, after all his vicissitudes, in Nineveh's being spared after all, and had some reason to complain to Yahveh, "It is better for me to die than to live" -- as nobody these days doubts. He should not be expected to tell us about his experiences with much calmness of reason.

The rest of the herd of "minor" prophets likewise gadded about, with their various "burdens" sore upon them, preaching divine wrath and destruction in like frenzied and incoherent fashion, dealing damnation round the land. Malachi reaches the climax of low-comedy vengeance with the holy Yahveh's picturesque threat: "I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces" (Mal. 2: 3); and he winds up with the promise or threat of the "great and dreadful day of Yahveh," that shall burn as an oven, and shall burn up as stubble all those who do wickedly, and Yahveh shall "smite the earth with a curse" (4: 6). As if the infliction of the whole of Yahveh's dread and holy Word upon humanity were not curse enough already.

This ends the unprofitable tale of the prophets, told in their own frenzied, incoherent, fury-breathing jargon, and proves their just right to their title of meshuggah. All the foregoing is inspired revelation of what "prophesying" was among the holy fraternity of Hebrew prophets. We have an awesome idea of "prophecy" as the speaking by divine inspiration of the truths of God and the inspired revealing of the hidden things of the future, for so our Sunday schools teach, and pious "divines" preach. But "God's Word" reveals something quite different. All the frenzied fakirs whom we have seen wandering up and down, naked and crazed and "raving," were not "prophesying" truths of God no revelations of the future. Crazed to start with, and worked into a howling frenzy by wild "jazz" music of a barbarous kind (I Sam. 10: 5; 2 Kings 3: 15; et passim), they truly "raved" frothy and incoherent non-sense.

PROPHETIC LYING FACTIONS

With the division of the kingdom after the death of Solomon, followed by constant civil war and partisan hatreds, the prophets split into factions filled with hatreds -- just like some Christian churches at the time of the American Civil War; and they prophesied lies against each other patriotically. At one time Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, and Ahab, King of Israel, made common cause against the common enemy's the king of Syria; a story which illustrates several tricks of the prophetic trade (I Kings 22). Jehoshaphat asked Ahab to "enquire at the word of Yahveh to-day" about the expedition; and Ahab "gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go ... to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up." But these four hundred were prophets of Israel, and the King of Judah mistrusted them, and wanted one of his own party; so he asked: "Is there not here a prophet of Yahveh besides, that we might enquire of him?" Ahab replied that there was one, Micaiah, "but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil" (22: 8). Jehoshaphat insisted, however, and Micaiah was sent for. The messenger told him that all the other prophets had "declared good unto the king with one mouth," and asked him to speak good likewise. But Micaiah replied

that he would speak only "what Yahveh saith unto me." So when Micaiah came before the kings, he prophesied also: "Go up, and prosper; for Yahveh shall deliver the city into the hand of the king." Then Ahab, mistrusting, said to him: "How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of Yahveh?" (22: 16) Micaiah then retorted with this lying prophecy of conspiracy, which is a blasphemy against any real God of heaven: "Hear thou therefore the word of Yahveh: "I saw Yahveh sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him. ... And Yahveh said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? ... And there came forth a spirit, and stood before Yahveh, and said, I will persuade him. And Yahveh said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so"! And, said Micaiah, "Behold, Yahveh hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and Yahveh hath spoken evil concerning thee" (22: 19-23). What precious revelation of God!

It is curious that after Yahveh had framed this conspiracy, and inspired four hundred of his prophets to lie and entice Ahab to his death, Yahveh should be so careless as to let another of his holy prophets "spill the beans" by revealing the conspiracy. All that Micaiah got for his word of truth was the kingly order:

"Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with the bread of affliction and with water of affliction" (22: 27).

As Micaiah was led away to his doom, he fired this Parthian shot at Ahab: "If thou return at all in peace, Yahveh hath not spoken by me" (22: 28). And this time the event proved the case for Micaiah, for Ahab was struck by an arrow shot at a venture, and was killed (21: 35-37), and the other four hundred prophets of Yahveh were proved wholesale liars by the "lying spirit from Yahveh."

This scene is not the only instance of unbecoming jealousy and tribal hatred between these holy ones of Yahveh. The kings of Judah and Israel together besought the "word of Yahveh" from Elisha, and this venerable baldpate, being of the faction of Judah, scorned to deal with the king of Israel, saying: "What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother" (2 Kings 3: 13). But after expostulation by the king of Israel, Elisha spit back: "As Yahveh liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee" (3: 14).

An interesting instance of personal altercation and recrimination between two of the holy men of Yahveh is related by Jeremiah. This holy wailer had prophesied that the king of Babylon, in the pending war, would finish the destruction of Jerusalem; while a rival prophet, one Hananiah, had declared: "Thus speaketh Yahveh Sabaoth, the Elohe of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon" (Jer. 28: 2). The altercation proceeds through the chapter to this comical and fatal climax: "Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; Yahveh hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith Yahveh; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die. ... So Hananiah the prophet died the same year" (28: 16, 17)! An edifying instance, this, of post hoc, ergo propter hoc; and a first-class illustration of prophetic ethics, and the inodus vivendi of the whole holy class.

It is impossible to relate all the trumperies and lies and false prophecies of these inspired prophets of Yahveh; the Holy Bible is too full of them. Elisha told a bare falsehood, saying: "This is not the way: ... follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek" (2 Kings 6: 19); and he led the blinded messengers astray to capture and all but death. The false prophecy of Isaiah as to the outcome of the war between the kings of Israel and Syria against Judah, warped into a foretelling of Jesus Christ, will in due order be fully shown (Isa. 7).

Jeremiah tells several patent lies and makes false prophecies, besides being a traitor to his country; for instance, he agreed with the king to make a false report about their conference together (Jer. 3 . win, 25); and he prophesied falsely to Zedekiah that he should die in peace (34: 2-5), though he himself unblushingly relates that the King of Babylon captured Zedekiah, put out his eyes, and kept him languishing in prison until the day of his death (52: 10, 11). Every one of these "prophets" seems to have considered himself the only one who spoke the truth of Yahveh, and all the others impostors and liars, as they unanimously and eloquently testify in the only truthful utterances which grace their gibberish.

CONFESSIONS OF THE PROPHETS

The confessions of the Prophets of Israel of the truth about their sacred profession and fellow-professionals, priests and prophets, are extremely enlightening, and have the unique merit of being the only honestly true

things any of them ever said. It is like the fleeing thief's cry of "Stop thief!" pointing to another; or the cordial mutual recriminations of Catholic and Protestant, and sect and sect, denouncing the lies and heresies of all the others -- all alike false and mendacious, while each one for itself, Pharisaically, like old Elijah, says: "I, even I only, remain a prophet of Yahveh"! An acute and apposite observation is that of the historian of civilization: "It is interesting to observe the eagerness with which the clergy of one persuasion expose the artifices of those of another. By comparing their different statements, laymen gain an insight into the entire scheme." (Buckle, *History of Civilization in England*, Vol. 2 Pt. 1, chap. 2, note 78.)

Isaiah denounced the Chosen of Yahveh as a whole: "This is a rebellious people, lying children" (Isa. 30: 9); and then he said, "as with the people, so with the priest." And there is no difference in favor of the prophet. Ezekiel had a special divine mission by the word of Yahveh which came to him, saying: "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of Yahveh; Thus saith Yahveh: Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts. ... They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, Yahveh saith: and Yahveh hath not sent them" (Ezek. 13: 1-6), and "Thus saith Yahveh Elohim, when Yahveh hath not spoken" (Isa. 22: 28). These confessional exposures and denunciations run through the whole gamut of prophets, major and minor, embracing priest and prophet in the same sweeping, scathing anathema.

Hear the word of Yahveh out of the mouth of his holy prophets, each telling the truth about all the others. The master-"meshuggah" Isaiah makes this confession of their drunkenness and befuddled wits: "The priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment" (Isa. 28: 7). Jeremiah confesses the rapacity, mendacity, and fraud of the whole fraternity: "From the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely" (Jer. 6: 13); and chapter 23 entire is an inspired invective against them for the whole teeming catalogue of their crimes: "For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith Yahveh. ... And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err. I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hand of evildoers. ... Thus saith Yahveh of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: ... they speak a vision out of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of Yahveh. ... Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith Yahveh, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies; ... therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith Yahveh. ... And as for the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden [oracle] of Yahveh, I will even punish that man and his house; ... for ye have perverted the words of the living God" (Jer. 23: 11-36). He indicts the whole tribe of impostors and people: "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests beaule by their means; and my people love to have it so" (5: 31) -- God's truth to this very day!

In Lamentations (4: 13) is a lament "for the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just." Hosea confesses their bloodiness and immorality: "The company of priests murder in the way by consent: ... they commit lewdness" (Hos. 6: 9). Micah confesses the bribery and corruption of all Jewry: "The heads [of Israel] judge foeward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money" (Mic. 3: 11). Zephaniah confesses that "her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law" (Zeph. 3: 4). For they are all idolaters, admits Jeremiah: "The prophets prophesied by Baal" (Jer. 2: 8); and again: "Their priests and their prophets [say] to a stock, Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth (2: 26). By Malachi, the last of the "Meshuggahs," Yahveh addresses the whole tribe: "O Priests, that despise my name" (Mal. 1: 6)! The revolting record does not close with the Hebrew Scripture, but continues into the gentile era; it was the priests of Yahveh and the elders of the people who (it is said) delivered the Christ to the martyrdom of the cross.

THE PROPAGANDISTS OF CHRISTIANITY

That doughty pillar of Christianity, Simon Peter, he whose "ministry" was founded on the hope of exceeding great reward: "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" (Matt. 19: 27);

he who like a braggart swore that although all others should desert his Lord, he would stay by him to the end; who like a bully carried a sword to the place of prayer and smote off the ear of one of the Lord's captors, and then cowardly ran away from the scene of capture, and like a thief in the night sneaked along far behind to the place of trial; then like a craven thrice lyingly denied his persecuted Master; and then hypocritically wormed himself into the highest seat in the new priestly propaganda, and falsely wrested a self-serving meaning out of several meaningless mummeries of pretended "prophecy" -- this Peter delivers himself of a solemn bit of inspiration: "Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1: 21)! Oh, Innocence!

This seems highly inept in view of the many inspired definitions and characterizations of prophecy we have just heard from those who were professional prophets, and who knew a good deal more about it than Fisherman Peter did. There was no Holy Ghost on record in those days; but the old "meshuggahs" confessedly "followed their own spirit," as Ezekiel avers (Ezek. 13: 2), and Jeremiah confirms: "They prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart" (Jer. 14: 14); so that Yahveh himself declares, through Jeremiah: "I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten" (23: 40). This book helps Yahveh to that end. Thus Peter is seen to have erred in his interpretation of scripture; which is not to be marveled at, but rather excused, seeing that he was an "unlearned and ignorant man" (Acts 4: 13).

This Peter, this "rock" upon which the Christ punningly said that he would build his Church, was later expressly and scathingly repudiated by the Christ: "He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: Thou art an offence to me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matt. 16: 23). It was this same Peter who scoffed at the reports of the resurrection as "idle tales," and "believed them not" (Luke 24: 11); yet later, and to this day through his self-styled "successors," Peter himself is the prime sponsor for the alleged truth of these same idle tales.

Such are confessedly the Holy Prophets of Israel. These are the old fakirs and howling dervishes of Israel, over whom for a score of centuries the credulous Christian world has ecstasized, calling them inspired of God, and the almost divine oracles and ambassadors of their fictitious pagan Yahveh -- Jehovah. Upon their frenzied incoherent "ravings" the dogmatists of Christian theology, errantly, as we shall more than amply see, perverting their "ravings" into inspired "prophecies of Jesus Christ," have founded and built up the labored system of dogmas and creeds, sanctioned by dire threats of hell fire and eternal damnation to him who believes not their Holy Word.

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IS IT GOD'S WORD?

CHAPTER 12: BIBLE THEOLOGY AND MODERN TRUTH

BIBLE THEOLOGY AND MODERN TRUTH

GALILEO

WITCHCRAFT AND INSPIRATION

ANCIENT FAITH YET FULLY VALID

BIBLE THEOLOGY AND MODERN TRUTH

BEFORE essaying frankly, for the sake of truth, to "search the scriptures" of the New Testament, wherein, says the Christ, "ye think ye have eternal life" (John 5: 39), it is of prime importance to consider briefly the relations of those scriptures to the Church and to theological Christianity. Obviously, Bible and Church are vitally related and inseparable; they stand or fall, live or die, together. The inspiration and truth of the whole "Holy Bible, book divine" is the first postulate of every Christian creed. The "Apostles' Creed" enshrines for belief every "fundamental" of the Christian Bible faith. Not to attempt to cite every Christian creed in corroboration of this cardinal fact -- for all Christian sects it is basic -- I quote only the highest and most ancient authority in some of its most modern reaffirmations.

The Vatican Council thus states the dogma of infallible truth of scripture: "These books are sacred and canonical because they contain revelation without error, and because, written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they have God for their Author." More recently, Pope Leo 13:in his encyclical provid. Deus, thus reaffirms the Christian belief in the plenary inspiration: "It will never be lawful to restrict inspiration merely to certain parts of the Holy Scriptures, or to grant that the sacred writers could have made a mistake. ... They render in exact language, with infallible truth, all that God commanded and nothing else; without that, God would not be the Author of the Scripture in its entirety." Says the Catholic Encyclopedia: "The Church, according to St. Paul's Epistle to Timothy, is the pillar and ground of truth; the Apostles, and consequently their successors, have the right to impose their doctrine; whosoever refuses to believe them shall be condemned, whosoever rejects anything is shipwrecked in the Faith. This authority [called the magisterium, or teaching authority] is therefore infallible" (Vol. 15:p. 8). That is the inspired doctrine of the Church concerning the Bible and its "sacred deposit of faith" or "tradition."

This same dogmatic assertion of plenary inspiration and total infallibility of scripture -- which sounds oddly assured after the examination in the preceding chapters -- is more anciently expressed in a couple of precious excerpts from the Fathers: "Nothing is to be accepted save on the authority of scripture, since greater is the authority of scripture than all the powers of the human mind [major est Scripturæ auctoritas quam omnis humani ingenii capacitas," says St. Augustine in his work De Genesi. Equally credible and more graphic is the assurance of the great Church Father St. Ambrose: "Moses opened his mouth and poured forth what God said to him."

Credulous as may be all four of these dogmatic assertions, their conclusions are of the highest logical validity and truth -- if their scriptural premises be true. This is orthodox faith; it is essential Christian belief; and departure from it by one iota is not only heretical in faith, but un-Christian in fact. "Whosoever rejects anything is shipwrecked in the faith."

The modern "Liberalists" are sadly errant in their vaunted liberalism. They hold to Jesus as son of Yahveh and to his mission to "redeem mankind from the sin of Adam," while they deny that Adam existed and repudiate the virgin birth and resurrection of Jesus and throw hell into the discard. This is scriptural anarchy, and its votaries cannot be Bible Christians, however good as citizens.

An edifying instance of this straddling theology, which strives to run with the hares and hunt with the hounds, is afforded by an eminent metropolitan "divine" who conducts a daily column in one of the newspapers. In a recent instalment (June 12, 1926) a truth-seeker in the Bible Belt asks: "Do not chapters one and two of Genesis give the only origin of the universe which can be accepted by any one professing Christianity?"

Instead of replying boldly that the conflicting accounts are inspired Bible truth in toto, or of frankly stating that both are fables, the "divine" executes this specious bit of deceptive legerdemain: "The first chapters of Genesis contain a poetical account of the origin of the universe which any one who professes Christianity, or, for that matter, Judaism, can accept as a noble and beautiful treatment of the theme. But it is no more historic or scientific than Milton's Paradise Lost or Shakespeare's Hamlet. Your persistency in allying Christianity with the acceptance of the Genesis account can do little, as I see it, except injure the cause. ... A Christian is a follower of Jesus Christ who seeks to obey Him in all matters. ... The Bible shows us the Divine Creator at work. Modern science reveals His methods of creation. Why endeavour to confuse the issue?" The great Dr. Conman's reply is, of course, a gem of disingenuous ingenuity, illumining and solving, rather than confusing, the issue -- and is a typical utterance of the trimmers and reconciliationists of theological Modernism. These Modernists decry and deride what they term "medieval theology"; but medieval theology is Bible theology and the only orthodox and true theology -- if theology could be true at all. "Modern" theology can repudiate medieval theology with no more logical truth and reason than could medieval theology logically accept Copernicus and Galileo, and the long brilliant line of God's true prophets whom the inspired Church has persecuted and martyred through the past ages of faith for daring to proclaim God's truths which have impeached and destroyed its dogmas of the inspired truth of Hebrew and Christian Scriptures.

Briefly, and inadequately, I am going to recall here a few of the precious things of God "poured out through the mouth of Moses" to which the Church, fatuously but with unimpeachable logic has clung through the ages of faith, and with which the Church has opposed every revelation of God in nature through the powers of the human mind. These are only a few of the manifold phases of the eternal and triumphant "conflict between science and religion" -- between knowledge and the outpourings of God through Moses. Hu4ey puts it in an aphorism: "Every path of Natural Science is closed with the sign: 'NO THOROUGHFARE, MOSES.'" Moses, inspired by Yahveh, declared that heaven and earth, and all the fullness thereof, were created by Yahveh out of nothing in six days (or in one); that Adam ate the forbidden fruit of knowledge in Eden, whereby "sin and death entered into the world," and damned all humanity. Father Luther, with all the assurance of an eye-witness, asserts: "Moses spoke properly and plainly, and neither allegorically nor figuratively; and therefore the world with all creatures was created in six days." The Westminster Confession of Faith -- in full force and effect to-day -- specially lays it down as "necessary to salvation to believe that all things visible and invisible were created not only out of nothing but in exactly six days." The Catholic Father Peter Martyr clinched the whole matter by declaring, and with inexorable logic and truth: -- "So important is it to comprehend the work of creation that we see the creed of the Church take this as its starting point. Were this Article taken away, there would be no original sin; the promise of Christ would become void, and all the vital force of oueligion would be destroyed."

This is, indeed, the enormous fatal significance of the six days and the Fall, emphasized and explained by the alarmed outcries of the Church against the wonderful discoveries of the human mind in the fields of astronomy, geology, anthropology, and natural science, which wholly disproved their cherished dogmas of revelation, and discredited forever the basic tenets of the whole fabric of the Christian religion. Calvin, in his "Commentary on Genesis," argues that the Genesis account of creation is literally true, and warns those who dare to believe otherwise, and thus "basely insult the Creator, to expect a Judge who will annihilate them."

But modern knowledge, science, has proved beyond all contradiction of inspiration that these inspired truths out of the "infallible annals of the Spirit of God" are contrary to the facts; and makes it impossible for Adam and Eve and Eden to have ever existed. So here alone, with one great crash, the whole Christian plan of salvation, founded on the fable of Adam and the forbidden fruit, collapses to utteuin.

Moses again, by inspiration of Yahveh, asserts this goodly earth to be flat and square, with "four corners," and all its vari- colored inhabitants to be directly descended from his first man, Adam, through Noah and his three sons. The great pagan philosophers, by the power of their genius of reason, happily untrammelled by Hebrew revelation and Christian inspiration, declared with true inspiration God's truth that the earth was round, and that the antipodes could be and were inhabited by races of men. Centuries before Christ and before Columbus, Pythagoras taught the spherical form of the earth. Aristotle went further and demonstrated the rotundity of the earth by his Three Arguments, concluding: "So that from this it is manifest, not only that the form of the earth is round, but also that it is part of not a very large sphere" (De Caelo, 11, 14).

Seneca, who died in 65 A.D., in his *Naturales Questiones*, asks how great a way it is from the furthest shores of Spain to India, and answers that it is a space of a very few days if a fair wind drives the ship. One of his great tragedies gives striking expression to his prophecy:

"Venient annis, saecula seris, Quibus Oceanus vincula rerum Laxet, et ingens pateat tellus, Tethysque novos detegat orbes; Nec sit terris ultima Thule." (Medea, 2: 375.)

"There will come a time," he says, "in later years, when Oceans shall loosen the bonds of things, and a huge land shall lie revealed, and Tethys shall disclose new worlds, and Thule shall no longer be at the end of the earth." This is one of the most notable un-"inspired" prophecies on record. In a copy of the Tragedies of Seneca, belonging to Ferdinand Columbus, now in the Biblioteca Colombina, there is attached to these prophetic verses this marginal note: "Haec prophetia expleta et per patrem meum Cristoforo Colon, Almirante, anno 1492."

But no, this is impious heresy, contradictory of Holy Moses, and destructive of the Holy Church! "Scripture," avers the all-knowing Father St. Augustine, "speaks of no such descendants of Adam as the Antipodeans. Men could not be allowed by the Almighty to live there, since if they did they could not see Christ at his second coming descending through the air"; and, he says, the supporters of this geographical heresy "give the lie direct to King David and to St. Paul, and therefore to the Holy Ghost!" The Antipodeans, argues Father Procopius, according to a text of Luke, are theologically impossible. "If there be men on the other side of the earth, Christ must have gone there and suffered a second time to save them; and therefore there must have been, as necessary preliminaries to his coming, a duplicate Adam, Eden, serpent, and Deluge!" We see again, how the Christian "plan of salvation" depends confessedly and utterly upon Adam, the garden, and the talking snake! Father St. Boniface appealed to Yahveh's Vicar, Pope Zaebarry, to combat this heresy of the antipodes, of men who were beyond the appointed means of salvation; and the Pope, inspired of the Holy Ghost, issued his bull, embellished and fortified with passages from Job and the apocryphal "Wisdom of Solomon," against the heretical doctrine, declaring it "perverse, iniquitous, and against the soul" of whoever maintained it. And the Holy Ghost, speaking further through this bull, harshly condemned the good Saint Vergilius, who heretically held the earth to be round; declaring that such doctrine involved errors as to original sin and the universality of redemption; for, averred the Holy Ghost, if there were antipodes, the "otheace of men" could not be descendants of Adam and were not redeemed by Christ. In this conclusion I must confess that the Holy Ghost and His Holiness are right for once.

The holy Council of Salamanca solemnly decided against Columbus's theory of the rotundity of the earth and the antipodes, declaring that texts of Scripture and "the Fathers" were opposed to such an idea; that, as Father St. Augustine said, "If there were any antipodes, the Bible would have said so"; that the earth was actually a flat disk with a dropping-off place; and that if the world were round they would slide off! But Columbus persisted in his heresy; and his epochal voyages, and the circumnavigation by Magellan, proved once again that it is not safe to trust the Scriptures and the Fathers for inspired scientific knowledge.

Shortly after the return of Columbus from his first faith-shattering voyage, the Holy Church set itself up as the self-appointed dispenser of the New World which it had just declared through the Holy Ghost never existed; and God's Vicar, Pope Alexander 6: of savory memory, perpetrated his celebration bull "Inter coetera Divinae Majestati," in May, 1493, partitioning the New World between Spain and Portugal. As this touches a highly interesting event in American history, of far-reaching consequences, I shall quote from the notable bull, quite fairly turned into the vernacular from the original Latin, published in Volume I of "American Charters, Constitutions, and Organic Laws," published by the United States government. From page 42 I translate the papal grantor's inspired claim to divine power and infallibility in making the partition:

"... Out of Our mere liberality, and of Our certain knowledge, and the plenitude of Apostolic power ... and by the authority of Omnipotent God to US in Blessed Peter granted, and the Vicarship of Jesus Christ which we exercise on earth ---- "

by these plenipotentiary credentials and divine powers of attorney, his Holiness granted to Spain all the new lands discovered and to be discovered west of a line, dictated by the Holy Ghost, drawn one hundred leagues west of the Azores and Cape Verde Islands. But Portugal angrily protested and made threats, basing its protests and claims not upon the geographical "certain knowledge" of the Holy Ghost but upon sundry human discoveries in geography, which demonstrated such a line to be impossible, as there are about ten degrees of

longitude difference between the two groups of islands. So the two rival powers, by the Treaty of Tordesillas, amended the inspired but impossible geography of the Holy Ghost, and established the "Line of Demarcation" at 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands, a line corresponding to the 50th degree of longitude west of Greenwich, and striking the mainland of South America across the mouth of the Amazon River; thus making Brazil Portuguese, while the remaining half of the continent, west of "the Line" became Spanish, as they remain to this day.

Even after Magellan's triumphant voyage of 1519 around the globe had proved the errancy of Scripture, Fathers, and infallible Church, such redoubtable churchmen as Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin stuck to scriptural "revelation" and roundly denied sphericity, as do the holy followers of "Elijah II" Dowie at Zion City, Illinois, to-day. Another bit of geographical Bible lore may be mentioned here. Calvin, in 1553, persecuted and burned to death Serviettes because, among other things, in his edition of Ptolemy's "Geography," he spoke of the Holy Land as not a "land flowing with milk and honey," but mainly barren and inhospitable; Calvin declared that such language "necessarily inculcated Moses, and grievously outraged the Holy Ghost!"

But "the infallible annals of the Spirit of God" were not only discredited by geography and geology and the other sciences named; the science of astronomy gave the Holy Ghost a blow under which it has writhed for three centuries, and from which only the fatuous faith which reasons not nor doubts enables it yet to sustain a precarious credit among those who do not think adequately. The Holy Ghost, through a bull of Yahveh's Vicar, Pope Alexander 3: in 1163, forbade to ecclesiastics "the study of physics or the laws of the world," and decreed that any one violating this inspired command of Yahveh "shall be avoided by all and excommunicated."

There were immortal heroes of science who dared defy such inspired ignorance. Copernicus, truer prophet of God than Moses or pope, wrote his inspired revelation of God in the heavens, "The Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies," which in terror of Yahveh's Holy-Ghost-inspired Church he withheld from publication till the day of his death, May 24, 1543. Then with his dying breath he gave to the world the revelation that the sun is the center of the solar system, and that the earth and other planets revolve around it; and from the security of the border of the grave he defiantly dedicated his immortal work to His Holiness the Pope.

The inspired Roman Church quickly denounced the work as heresy, and condemned it to suppression "until his statement should be corrected" to conform to the Bible and to Ptolemy, who was a pagan, but whose geography and astronomy were held almost inspired by the Church. Luther screeched at Copernicus, calling him "an upstart astrologer": "This fool wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy; but sacred scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and not the earth." Melancthon, another great luminary of reformed inspiration, declared: "It is a want of honesty and decency to assert such notions publicly, and the example is pernicious." Calvin, in his "Commentary on Genesis," condemned all who asserted that the earth is not the center of the universe, and triumphantly appealed to Psalm 18: 1: "The world also is established, that it cannot be moved!" defiantly asking: "Who will put the authority of Copernicus above that of the Holy Spirit?" The founder of Methodism, John Wesley, declared that these new ideas "tend toward infidelity"; and a whole chorus of eminent "divines" -- Melancthon, Cardinal Bellarmine, Father Lecazre, and a swarm of other luminaries of the Church, both "reformed" and hopeless of reform -- launched their unanimous, bitter anathemas against the impious new discovery. With acute logic they demonstrated unanswerably how the dogmas of the Christian religion must perish before this one stupendous revelation of God in science.

"His pretended discovery vitiates the whole Christian plan of salvation. It casts suspicion on the doctrine of the incarnation. It upsets the whole basis of theology. If the earth is a planet, and only one among several planets, it cannot be that any such great things have been done for it as the Christian doctrine teaches. If there are other planets, since God makes nothing in vain, they must be inhabited; but how can their inhabitants be descended from Adam? How can they trace their origin back to Noah's ark? How can they have been redeemed by the Savior?" [Andrew D. White, History of the Warfare of Science with Theology, (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1925) Vol. 1:p.

134. From this great treasures much of the material of this chapter is taken.]

Upon what a string of "silly fancies" the whole "sacred science of Christianity" and the so-called "Church of God" dangle!

In 1618 and 1619 God's prophet Kepler published his immortal works "Epitome of the Copernican System" and "The Harmonies of the World." He lived in a Protestant country, where the Roman Church couldn't get at him. But the Protestant Consistory of Stuttgart solemnly warned him "not to throw Christ's kingdom into confusion with his silly fancies," and ordered him to "bring his theory of the world into harmony with scripture" -- as if truth could be harmonized with ignorant fables! A direr fate befell the illustrious Giordano Bruno, an apostle of learning and of the Copernican system. In the face of Holy Church he flung his immortal satire ridiculing it, "Lo Spaccio della Bestia Trionfante" ("The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast"); and after he had been confined seven years in its foul dungeons, the "Beast" threw his heroic but heretic body and his books to the flames of its Holy Inquisition, in Rome, 1600; but his soul and truth go marching on!

Galileo

All the world knows and blushes in shame at the ignominious spectacle which the inspired Church made of the venerable, truly inspired Galileo, haled before the Holy Inquisition, dressed in the sackcloth robe of a repentant criminal, there forced upon his knees before God's Vicar and his assembled cardinals, laying his hands upon the "Holy Evangelists," and invoking divine aid in "abjuring and detesting the infamous doctrine of the earth's motion and the sun's stability!" This Holy Inquisition, specially convoked by Yahveh's Vicar, Pope Paul 5: after a month's deliberations in solemn session with the Holy Ghost, in 1616, rendered its inspired unanimous decision: "The first proposition, that the sun is the center and does not revolve around the earth, is foolish, absurd, false in theology, and heretical, because expressly contrary to Holy Scripture. The second proposition, that the earth is not the center but revolves around the sun, is absurd, false in philosophy, and from a theological point of view at least, opposed to the true faith." Galileo was therefore commanded, "in the name of His Holiness the Pope and the whole Congregation of the Holy Office [i.e., the Inquisition], to relinquish altogether the opinion that the sun is the center of the world and immovable, and that the earth moves; and henceforth not to hold, teach, or defend it in any way whatsoever, verbally or in writing." A couple of weeks later the Congregation of the Index, at the instigation of the pope, rendered its decree that "the doctrine of the double motion of the earth about its axis and about the sun is false, and entirely contrary to Holy Scripture," and must not be taught or advocated. The decree condemned all the works of Copernicus and "all writings which affirm the motion of the earth," and placed them, and those of Kepler and Galileo, on the "Index of Prohibited Books," from which they were removed only in 1835!

In 1633 Galileo was again haled before the Inquisition, by order of Pope Urban 8: threatened with torture, and subjected to imprisonment by order of the pope. He was forced to pronounce publicly and on his knees this monstrous recantation:

"I, Galileo Galilei, being in my seventieth year, being a prisoner and on my knees, and before you, most Eminent and Reverend Lord Cardinals, Inquisitors-General against heretical depravity, having before my eyes and touching with my hands the holy gospels -- swear that I have always believed, and do now believe, and by God's help will for the future believe, all that is held, preached, and taught by the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church. ... An injunction having been judiciously intimated to me by this Holy Office, to the effect that I must abandon the false opinion that the sun is the center of the world and immovable, and that the earth is not the center of the world, and moves, and that I must not hold, defend, or teach in any way whatsoever ... the said doctrine, after it had been notified to me that the said doctrine was contrary to the Holy Scripture. ... therefore. ... with sincere heart and unfeigned faith, I abjure, curse, and detest the aforesaid errors and heresies, and generally every other error and sect whatsoever contrary to the said Holy Church. ... So help me God, and his holy gospels, which I touch with my hands. ... And in witness of the truth thereof, I have with my own hand subscribed the present document of my abjuration, and recited it word for word at Rome, in the Convent of Minerva, this 22nd day of July, 1633." [The Library of Original Sources, Editor-in-chief, O.J. Thatcher; (Milwaukee: University Research Extension Co.), Vol. 5: pp. 306-7.]

From this cringing attitude to which he was forced by the inspired vicar of Yahveh, the broken old prophet of the Architect God rose in righteous rebellion of spirit, and muttered back at his holy inquisitors the immortal "Ma pur' si muove!" ("But it does move, for all that!") and tottered out to his hastening death. The world knows, too, whether Holy Ghost or Galileo was right. In 1664, Pope Alexander 7 issued his inspired bull in which he "finally, decisively, and infallibly" condemned "all books teaching the movement of the earth and the

stability of the sun"; all works in which the arch heresy was taught or proposed were put upon the Index of Prohibited Books, and true faith was again triumphant on earth.

It is a curious commentary on inspiration and infallibility that the catalogue of the papal Index shows every single book published during all the Dark Ages of faith in which the genius of man sought to reveal God's true knowledge of himself through his works of nature, and to enlighten the human mind and spirit steeped in the dark superstitions of the Bible and the Church to have been banned and burned by the dictates of the Holy Ghost, because, forsooth, God's facts of nature contradicted and rendered ridiculous the ancient tales of Yahveh and "revelation!" Besides the epoch-making works of the great physicists and philosophers, scores of others, such as those of the great modern naturalists, of Linnaeus, of Geoffrey Saint-Hilaire, of Cuvier, of Lyell, of Buffon, appear in that catalogue of inspired ignorance. Buffon, just at the time of ouevolution for Independence, was forced by the inspired Vicegerent of Yahveh to subscribe and swear to this debasing formula of recantation: "I declare that I had no intention to contradict the text of scripture; that I most firmly believe all therein related about the creation, both as to order of time and the matter of facts. I abandon everything in my book respecting the formation of the earth, and generally all which may be contrary to the narrative of Moses." And his monumental *Histoire Naturelle* of forty-four volumes was put under the anathema of the Church in its Holy Index.

These unhappy instances of human ignorance are of no importance as such, for every day we learn things which we were ignorant of the day before, and thus we grow in knowledge. But the awful significance of these instances and all their kind is that the "Word of God" is the inspired source and fountain of all this ignorance and teaches it as "revelation" of truth; and the "Church of God," which claims to be daily taught and guided by the Spirit of Yahveh, perpetuated humanity in this ignorance under the pretense that the "Holy Ghost" advised it that all this mass of ignorance was the very truth of God, to doubt or deny which meant the terror of ecclesiastical curses and prison and rack and stake. That Bible and Church have in every single instance of conflict with science been defeated and proved in error, demonstrates that the Church is mistaken in its claims to be possessed of infallible scriptures and inspiration.

The Bible throughout, Old and New Testaments, and particularly the latter, teaches that sickness and disease are due directly to devils and demoniacal possession; Christ and his disciples cast out devils, and the sick were thereupon cured. There is never a word of medicine or surgery in all the Bible, except the fig-poultice for Hezekiah's boil, and the spit-salve in the blind man's eyes; and never a hint of the prevention oational cure of disease. The divine prescription is: "Go, cast out devils in my name and heal the sick." According to the Bible and the Church all plagues are specifically sent by God in punishment of sin. Yes, sanitary sin! against which there is not a single word in all Scripture, though it abounds in incantations and exorcisms and "purifications." The unwashed saints of Holy Church were very active agents of Yahveh in invoking and propagating God-sent plagues. The canon law, given by the Holy Ghost to its infallible Church, declared: "The precepts of medicine are contrary to divine knowledge," for, says Holy Writ: "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up" (James, 5: 14, 15). And so declares Father St. Ambrose: "The precepts of medicine are contrary to celestial science, watching and prayer"; a maxim reiterated throughout the ages of faith (id est, the dark ages).

The great Father Origen thus instructs us in celestial science: "It is demons which produce famine, unfruitfulness, corruptions of the air, and pestilences; they hover concealed in clouds in the lower atmosphere, and are attracted by the blood and incense which the heathen offer to them as gods." God save the mark! The quasi-divine Father St. Augustine adds for our faith in celestial science: "All diseases of Christians are to be ascribed to these demons; chiefly do they torment fresh-baptized Christians, yea, even the guileless, new-born infants!" Father St. Bernard warned his monks that "to seek relief from disease in medicine was in harmony neither with religion nor with the honor and purity of their order." The use of the crude pain-reducing anaesthetist of the times was opposed by the inspired Church; especially their use in childbirth was objected to as an attempt "to avoid one part of the primeval curse on women"; and in 1591, Lady Macalyane was burned alive on Castle Hill in Edinburgh for seeking aid foelief of pain in the birth of her two sons! The "Apostles' Creed," regarding resurrection of the body, discouraged anatomical study, and the Church forbade surgery to monks. All dissection was forbidden by decretal of Pope Boniface 8, and excommunication was threatened

against all who presumed to practice it, though the Christians tore millions of human bodies to bits on their infernal racks, and burned hundreds of thousands to ashes, thus rendering the bodily resurrection difficult if not precarious.

An awful case of belly-ache suffered by a pious nun is solemnly avowed by the Holy Father, Pope Gregory the Great, to have been caused by her having swallowed a devil along with a piece of lettuce which she was eating, she having omitted to make the sign of the cross (which is potent magic as a scare-devil); and this devil, when commanded by a holy monk to come out of her, derisively replied: "How am I to blame? I was sitting on the lettuce, and this woman, not having made the sign of the cross, ate me along with it" (Dialogi, lib. 1:c. 4)! This Gregory the Great, Yahveh's own anointed Vicar on earth, full of the inspiration of truth, is the same through whom the Holy Ghost made the formal revelation of purgatory; the same who stopped a pestilence in Rome by marching at the head of a procession of monks and priests, and saw Michael the Archangel shooting fiery darts of death into the Holy City.

All this is of a piece with the inspired bull in which Pope Calixtus, moved by mortal fear and the Holy Ghost, is said to have excommunicated Halley's comet. In 1618, "a comet caused an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, which would have destroyed Naples had not the blood of the Invincible St. Januarius withstood it" (see Cath. Enc., Vol. 8: p. 295). Thousands of like inspired narratives of the Holy Ghost and Holy Church abound; it would take whole volumes to contain them. Read the Catholic Encyclopedia.

WITCHCRAFT AND INSPIRATION

One of the most piteous and murderous superstitions in all the inspired "infallible annals of the Spirit of God," is the inspired revelation of witches. Many times it is asserted in this "Word of God poured forth by Moses" that witches, witchcraft, and sorcery exist and have wrought wonders on earth; and that God himself commanded that witches and sorcerers should be put to death without mercy. All the world but a Bible Christian knows that the persons who wrote that God told them by inspired revelation to state such things were mistaken, and truth was not in what they wrote. This is the alleged positive enactment of Yahveh on Sinai: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Ex. 22: 17) -- "or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer."

Wesley, the founder of Methodism was so saturated in this "inspired Word of God" that he declared, in substance, with all the assurance of a credulous intellect: "Unless witchcraft is true, nothing in the Bible is true" -- and I admit he told the truth, though in a contrary sense. Time and again in his Journals he voiced his abiding faith in witchcraft and ghosts. I quote a few precious excerpts with the suggestion that one so credulous of such hocus-pocus may not have been wholly illumined as to other matters. Wesley records a case of "possession" which he witnessed (apparently a young woman in an epileptic fit). Note his plaintive arguments and the typical clerical sneers at the scoffers:

"When old Dr. A--- R--- was asked what her disorder was, he answered 'It is what formerly they would have called being bewitched.' And why should they not call it so now? Because the infidels have hooted witchcraft out of the world; and the complaisant Christians, in large numbers, have joined them in the cry. I do not so much wonder at this -- that so many of these herein talk like infidels. But I have sometimes been inclined to wonder at the pert, saucy, indecent manner wherein some of those trample on men far wiser than themselves; at their speaking so dogmatically against what not only the whole world, heathen and Christian, believed in ages past, but thousands, learned as well as unlearned, firmly believe at this day, ... whose manner of speaking concerning witchcraft must be keenly offensive to every sensible man, who cannot give up his Bible!" [John Wesley, Journal, June 26, 1770; Works, Ed. John Emery (New York: Carlton Lenahan), Vol. 4: p. 333.

Again the great Methodist says: "I cannot give up to all the deists in Great Britain the existence of witchcraft till I give up the credit of all history, sacred and profane. At the present time I have not only as strong, but stronger proofs of this, from eye and ear witnesses, than I have of murder; so that I cannot rationally doubt of one any more than the other" (Id., Journal, May 22, 1776; Vol. 4: pp. 451-5). "With my latest breath," he says, "will I bear my testimony against giving up to infidels one great proof of the invisible world; I mean that of witchcraft and apparitions, confirmed by the testimony of all ages, ... against which the unaccountableness of it is no objection to those who are convinced of the littleness of their own knowledge" (Id., "Preface to a True Relation of the Chief Things which an Evil Spirit Did and Said at Mascon, in Burgundy"; Works, Vol. 5: p. 366 .)

The testimony of all history, sacred and profane, regarding many other superstitions of faith, has been (and in some particulars, among some classes of intelligence, yet is) as persuasive as was the testimony regarding witches and ghosts to Wesley; but witches have gone glimmering despite Bible and Church; and the whole Broken-crew of devils, ghosts (Holy and otherwise), and specters of Bible superstitions is fast trailing after them to oblivion.

Hear Wesley's natural history, spoken as if by full inspiration, of primitive wild animals: "Before Adam's sin none of these attempted to devour or in any wise hurt one another; the spider was as harmless as the fly!" He had never heard what science has of late revealed about this little filth-laden, disease-disseminating imp of the devil. It is so -- for Luther is positive that "Flies are the images of heretics and devils!" But to stick to witchcraft for a moment -- not indeed that witches fly in an age of electric light, but to illustrate the darkness of holy inspiration.

It may be doubted whether Wesley was fully inspired. But the Bible is admitted to be so; and Holy Church admits that itself is. Several of its divinely inspired vicegerents of Yahveh, "by virtue of the teaching power conferred by the Almighty, and under the divine guidance against any possible error in the exercise of it" (such is their holy formula), have from time to time during the ages of faith emitted God-inspired fulminations against the unholy practices of witchcraft and sorcery so often avowed as fact and denounced as the work of the devil, in Old and New Testaments alike. I shall mention but a few samples of the infallible teachings of the Holy Ghost on this subject, by which we may judge of other like inspired teachings on other subjects; remembering "falsus in uno," etc.

Yahveh's Vicar, Pope John 22: in 1317, in his bull (it is odd that Holy Church speaks, like the Irishman, always in bulls) "Spondent Pariter," and others of like tenor, complains that both he and his flock (i.e., of "sheep") are in danger of their lives by the arts of sorcery and witchcraft; he declares that sorcerers can send devils into mirrors and finger-rings, and kill men and women by a magic word; that they have tried to kill him by piercing a waxen image of him with needles in the name of the devil. He therefore calls upon all rulers, secular and ecclesiastical, to hunt down the miscreants who thus afflict the faithful, and he especially increased the powers of the inquisitors in various parts of Europe for this pious purpose. Yahveh's Vicar, Pope Eugene 4: in 1437, in another bull exhorted the holy inquisitors of heresy and witchcraft to use greater diligence against these human agents of the Prince of darkness, and especially against such of them as have the power to produce bad weather! Yahveh's Vicar, Pope Innocent 8: on December 7, 1484, perpetrated the famous bull "Summis Desiderantes," inspired by the divine command "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," exhorting the clergy to leave no means untried to detect sorcerers, and especially those who "by evil weather destroy vineyards" (he was evidently not a prohibitionist, -- as have been none of his inspired successors, this being the unique instance in ecclesiastical history in which these vicars of Yahveh have ever pretended to champion "personal liberty" of conduct or conscience). Armed with his manual "Malleus Maleficarum" ("Witch Hammer"), his witch-hunting inquisitors scoured Europe for victims, extorting confessions by torture, and murdering millions of victims of their fanaticism.

Similar bulls were inspired by the Holy Ghost and issued by Yahveh's Vicars, Pope Julius II in 1504, and Pope Adrian VI in 1523; tens of thousands of unhappy -- and innocent -- persons were thus piously destroyed because of the inspired but ignorant belief in witchcraft and sorcery. James I of England, "By the Grace of God, King, Defender of the Faith" -- he who instigated the "Authorized Version" of this old Jewish witch book, and to whom it is dedicated in terms of most disgusting adulation -- wrote a famous book of demonology, and used torture to get evidence of witchcraft with which to adorn its veracious pages. On the occasion of his august bride's being driven back by a storm at sea, Dr. Fian, under torture, with his legs crushed in the "boots" and with wedges driven under his finger-nails, confessed that several hundred witches had gone to sea in a sieve from Leith and had raised storms and tempests to drive back the princess! Sir Matthew Hale, in burning two witches to death, judicially declared that he based his judgment on the direct testimony of Holy Scripture! The Church still clings to its puerile superstition: "In the face of Holy Scripture and the teachings of the Fathers and theologians the abstract possibility of a pact with the Devil and of a diabolical interference in human affairs can hardly be denied." (Cath. Encyc., Vol. 15:p. 677; art. Witchcraft.)

ANCIENT FAITH YET FULLY VALID

Yet all the foregoing outpourings of Yahveh through Moses are of the most essential "fundamentals" of the Christian religion. They are Catholic and Protestant "truth" alike, and according to the creeds of them all, "necessary to salvation," to be professed and believed; they are Christianity. The truth is admirably, if presumptuously, expressed by the great Father St. Augustine: "Neither in the confusion of paganism, nor in the defilement of heresy, nor in the lethargy of schism, nor yet in the blindness of Judaism, is religion to be sought; but among those alone who are called Catholic Christians, or the orthodox, that is, the custodians of sound doctrine and followers of right teaching" (De Vera Religione, Chap. v). The Athanasian Creed, reaffirmed by the papal encyclical "Pascendi Dominici Gregis," in 1907, avers: "Whoever will be saved, it is necessary above all else that he hold to the Catholic Faith."

Faith is the "substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," as defined by the great dogmatist of the faith. The preceding pages have shown much of this "substance" very unreal, and as "evidence" of actuality to be less than nil. Some progressive and "modernist" theologians, indeed, would wave all this away as old stories, ignorant superstitions long since abandoned and forgotten by Holy Church, shining but discarded vagaries of "medieval theology." But truth is of all time; Bible and Church, in all of truth they ever had, are -- if ever they were -- as infallible, and hence as eternal, as truth -- the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. The same "Holy Ghost" inspires the Bible and presides over and inspires its infallible Church to-day as in its beginning and through all the dark ages of faith.

The Holy Ghost, unburdening itself through Pope Leo XIII in the encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, of August 4, 1879, the purpose of which was "the revival of scholastic philosophy, according to the mind of St. Thomas Aquinas," begins with the humorous assurance, that "the Church, although officially the teacher of revealed truth only, has always been interested in the cultivation of every branch of human knowledge"! It then demonstrates how such "philosophy prepares the motives of credibility in matters of faith, and explains and vindicates revealed truths. But the truths unfolded by reason cannot contradict the truths revealed by God; hence, although in the pursuit of natural knowledge philosophy may justly [How condescending!] use its own methods, principles, and arguments, yet not so as to withdraw from the authority of divine revelation!" The encyclical next shows, by extracts from many Fathers of the Church, "what reason helped by revelation" can do for the progress of human knowledge! (Cath. Encyc., Vol. 1, p. 177.)

As if fearful that these sacred truths might be discounted, if not impiously laughed quite out of countenance in this modern age of reason and of knowledge, the Holy Ghost has very recently and repeatedly gone to much pains and suffered no little skeptical ridicule, to reaffirm the eternal truth of all its dogmas, and its own and its inspired Vicars' total infallibility in all matters of faith or belief -- or credulity.

In the year 1870, the sacred Vatican Council, convoked by Pope Pius IX and presided over by the Holy Ghost itself, expressly avowed the immutability -- the stagnation -- the fossilization -- of religious truth in all its ancient and hoary dogmas and beliefs, which some threatened to reject as discredited superstition, averring: "The doctrine of faith, which God [i.e., Yahveh] has revealed, has not been proposed as a philosophical discovery to be improved upon by human talent, but has been committed as a Divine deposit to the spouse of Christ, to be faithfully guarded and infallibly interpreted by her." It embalms its petrified "Sacred Science of Christianity" as the eternal and unchangeable revelations of Yahveh, asserting: "The Successors of St. Peter have been promised the Holy Ghost, not for the promulgation of new doctrines, but only for the preservation and interpretation of the Revelations committed by the Apostles." All this was a sort of Socratic leading-up to the climactic formulation in writing of the terms of the inspired mandate granted of old orally by the Holy Ghost to its vicar-general on earth, and reiterating the venerable dogma of its own infallibility:

"Faithfully adhering, therefore, to the traditions inherited from the beginning of the Christian faith, we, with the approbation of the Sacred Council, for the Glory of God our Savior, for the exaltation of the Catholic Religion, and the Salvation of Christian peoples, teach and define, as a divinely-revealed dogma, that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra* -- that is, when he, in the exercise of his supreme apostolic authority, decides that a doctrine concerning faith and morals is to be held by the entire Church -- he possesses, in consequence of the Divine Aid promised him in St. Peter, that infallibility with which the Divine Saviour wished to have his Church furnished for the definition of doctrine concerning faith and morals; and that such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are of themselves, and not in consequence of the Church's consent, irreformable."

All this is as lucid of expression and inspiration as one could reasonably expect; and it expressly and Solemnly, in A.D. 1870, puts the Great Seal of Yahveh on all the bulls and claims of ecclesiastical inspiration and infallibility from the New Testament and the witch bulls, to the celebrated encyclical "Pascendi Dominici Gregis" ("Feeding the Lord's Flock") of Pope Pius X. Like Gregory 16: His Holiness finds his text in the horrified question of Augustine: "What is more deadly to the soul than the liberty of error?" and proceeds to place all liberty of thought under the curse of Yahveh God.

This monumental emanation of inspiration, put forth on September 8, 1907, reiterates the axiom of Holy Church: "Faith has for its object the unknowable"; and at great lengths proceeds to aver its own infallible knowledge of all these unknowable things; puts its ineffable anathema upon all the priceless truths of human knowledge acquired through the ages in defiance of Holy Church, and upon the precious boon of liberty of thought and conscience attained fearfully in spite of the Churches -- all of which the popish encyclical sneering dubs "Modernism," asserting that this "Modernism embraces every heresy against the inspired revelations of Bible and Church" (which, indeed, is true). It concludes with a sweeping formula of abjuration, to which all priests and clerical persons "are obliged to swear, reprobating the principal Modernist tenets" -- which, of course, include the utter denial of witches and sorcery, possession by devils, the flatness and stability of the earth, miracles, the inspiration of revelation, the virgin birth and divinity of Jesus Christ, the validity and justice of the plan of salvation, and a thousand like relics of ancient faith, incompatible with modern knowledge of the truth.

Thus in the twentieth century, the Holy Ghost itself, if Pius X -- now about to be canonized by his Church for his own miracles -- is to be credited with authentic knowledge of its true sentiments, harks back with conscious pride through the Dark Ages of Faith to its original fountains of inspired verity, and puts its seal of approval on the classic formula of faith: "Illa sola credenda est Veritas quae, in nullo ab Ecclesiastica et Apostolica discordat Traditione" -- "That only must be believed as truth which in nothing disaccords with the ecclesiastic and apostolic tradition!"

O, Fratres Ignorantiae!

IS IT GOD'S WORD?

CHAPTER 13: THE "PROPHECIES" OF JESUS CHRIST

THE "PROPHECIES" OF JESUS CHRIST

THE GOSPEL RECORDS The Miraculous "Virgin Birth" of Jesus

"VIRGIN" OR "YOUNG WOMAN"

THE "SIGN" OF A FALSE PROPHECY

Where the King was Born "Out of Egypt"

"Out-Hereading" Herod

The "Nazarene"

The Great Light He Bore Our Infirmities

The "Bruised Reed" "The King Cometh"

What is this One?

The "Potter's Field" JUDAS HANGED HIMSELF?

Parting His Garments

MARK'S APPEALS TO PROPHECY

To "Prepare the Way"

"Numbered among Transgressors"

LUKE CITES PROPHECY

"GENEALOGIES" OF JESUS

JOHN APPEALS TO PROPHECY.

A Prophecy Puzzle

"For Moses Wrote of Me" (Jesus)

Who Hath Believed? And Why Not?

A Cooking Lesson as "Prophecy"

THE "PROPHECIES" OF JESUS CHRIST

THROUGHOUT the four gospel biographies of Jesus, the Christ, there are frequent references to and quotations of sundry passages in the Old Testament, which are appealed to as "prophecies" concerning Jesus Christ, and are asserted to foretell his birth and death, as well as many incidents of his life, and to have been fulfilled by these several incidents. The Jews bad for centuries, ever since their captivity, lived in the fervent belief and expectation of a Messiah, an anointed king of the race and lineage of David, who should at last arise, overthrow all their enemies) restore the Kingdom of Israel, and reestablish the throne of David forever."

Gabriel assured Mary, with respect to her son: "God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever" (Luke 1: 32, 33). Many "pretenders" to the vacant Messiahship had from time to time arisen and asserted their false pretenses to be the promised Messiah; and even Jesus was not the last who arose to proclaim himself the Messiah or Christ. This Jesus himself declared: "For many shall come in my name, saying I am Christ; and shall deceive many. ... Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matt. 24: 5, 23, 24; Mark 13: 6, 21, 22). And the intervening verses between those cited are filled with a long catalogue of "great signs and wonders" which these pretenders should work in proof of their false claims.

How and why these false pretenders to Messiahship could "come in my name" -- in the name of Yahveh's genuine Messiah, who had already come and by his own "signs and wonders" had demonstrated to the satisfaction of all who believed them that he thus "fulfilled all the law and the prophets" and was indeed the Messiah and thus closed the lists -- is not at this day very evident. But, admittedly, the working of such "great signs and wonders" -- miracles -- was no authentic badge of Messiahship, but was the common stock in trade of any bogus pretender. Of this fact there are many scriptural assurances and instances besides the admission just made by Jesus.

A very curious instance of pretended Messiahship after Jesus, noted in the New Testament, was Simon Magus, the sorcerer, who notoriously "used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, from the least to the greatest," so that all the people said: "This man is the great power of God," and "of a long time he had bewitched them with sorceries" (Acts 8: 9-11). The case of Elymas Bar-Jesus is somewhat in point (Acts 13: 6, 8); as is also that of the "damsel possessed with a spirit of divination, which brought her masters much gain by sooth-saying" (Acts 16: 16), or common fortune-telling. And even greater "signs and wonders" were worked by common charlatans. Thus even total strangers to Jesus Christ, uncommissioned by him, disbelievers in him, common fakirs, could exercise the divine power of "casting out devils" in his name, to the great scandal of the disciples (Mark 9: 38; Luke 9: 49).

Yet all these miraculous powers were clearly not of God, and prove no divine mission or authority of the wonder-workers. To be sure, Nicodemus declares: "No man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him" (John 3: 2). And Jesus himself appealed to this very power of working "signs and wonders" as the culminating proof and patent of his divine authority and Messiahship, greater and more persuasive than the inspired assurances of his only human witnesses, the gospel-writers: "But I receive not testimony from man. ... But I have greater witness than John; for ... the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me" (John 5: 34, 36); and, "though ye believe me not, believe the works" (John 10: 38); and again, "Believe me for the very works' sake" (John 14: 11). But such "works," such "great signs and wonders," are proved by the Bible to prove nothing -- as Jesus himself has just admitted --except the great credulity of the people. And elsewhere Jesus denied positively that he ever worked any "signs and wonders," and refused to perform any (Matt. 12: 38-40; 16: 4; Mark 7: 11-13; John 6: 30). Jesus discounts his own claims for himself by declaring: "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true" (John 5: 31). The proof of the divine mission and authority of Jesus as the Christ must, therefore, derive from some more valid evidences than that of mere popular wonderworking.

With the testimony of "man," John and gospel-biographers, discounted; with his own testimony for himself declared "not true"; with the "witness of the works" discredited as being the common arts of charlatans and false pretenders, we must needs, in seeking satisfying evidences of the truth of claims that Jesus Christ is the true "promised Messiah" of the Hebrew prophets, turn to and examine these "prophecies," and the "internal evidences" of the gospels.

THE GOSPEL RECORDS

The Jews, the people who lived in the devout expectation of the coming of the Messiah and who are said to have seen all the "great signs and wonders" of Jesus, as well as of the numerous "false Christs" whom Jesus decried, did not believe in Jesus as Messiah and king. After the death of Jesus, when a new generation, which had not seen these "great signs and wonders," had grown up, the gospel biographies and epistles began to be written, to further the propaganda of the new faith. The Jews still looked for their Messiah, promised and prophesied, it is said, in their ancient Scriptures. Obviously there could be no Messiah who did not fulfil these various prophecies. Hence the very first obligation for any pretender to the Messiahship -- for the "false Christs" who, as Jesus avers, abounded -- was that he make himself fit into the "prophecies," or be made out by his propagandists to have done so.

Ample stores of alleged "prophecy of Messiah" were at hand, in the Scriptures. Of these prophecies the most curious feature, betraying a blood-relationship to Delphic oracles, is their utter meaninglessness, or their capacity to mean anything or everything according to the necessities of the person invoking them to serve selfish purposes or the cause he seeks to promote. One would think, it may be remarked in passing, that an All-wise God, intent upon revealing his awful purposes for the future of his Chosen People and in the instance of the Christ, for the redemption of all the human race -- would speak, not in "dark sayings," but in plain, intelligible Hebrew, so that everyone might understand the prophecy and recognize clearly its wonderful fulfillment. Thus only, one would think, could Yahveh's own test of true prophecy be intelligently and certainly applied when a question arose: "If the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which Yahveh hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously" (Deut. 18: 22). Rather, as we will see, the chief characteristic of prophecy, as of oracle, is lack of precision of meaning, which gives it a latitude of interpretation and lends itself admirably to even maladroit manipulation by everyone who raises the cry: "Lo,

here is Christ, or there." But the "prophecies of the Messiah." and the gospel interpretation of them, may now be let speak for themselves.

The Jews knew their Scriptures and what sort of "Messiah" they were promised: a lineal descendant of David King of Israel, who should himself be King of Israel and "establish the throne of David for ever" in the restored national land. Most special of all qualifications of promised Messiahship was: "He shall deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land" (Micah

5: 5, 6). None of the "false Christs" had met any of the "prophetic" prescriptions; and Jesus was hailed by the rabble as king but for one day. In beginning his campaign among the people, he sent forth his adjutants or disciples, and straitly commanded them: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles; ... But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10: 5, 6) So "he came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1: 11). But when his own received him not, and repudiated both his claim of Messiahship and his claim to be the actual virgin-born Son of God (which was not an attribute of the prophesied Messiah), "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13: 46), says Paul, who from being the chief persecutor of those who believed had become the chief propagandist of the new faith of dogma, formulated by himself.

The gentiles were the superstitious pagans of Palestine, Asia Minor, and parts thereof; they were steeped in belief in all the fables of all the gods of the heathen world. They knew nothing of the Jewish Scriptures or of the promised Messiah; they had no critical sense in religion, but, like Paul and his converts, "believed all things and hoped all things." A new God was to them just one more god among many. The Greeks had an altar erected even "To the Unknown God" (Acts 17: 23). The Gentiles believed already in virgin-born gods and in resurrections from the dead: the myths of Attis, Adonis, Isis, and Tammuz were accepted articles of their pagan faiths; fertile ground for a new faith with little or nothing new or strange about its beliefs and dogmas. So to the pagan gentiles the propagandists turned, and fortified their propaganda with marvellous tales of venerable "prophecies" wonderfully fulfilled: "and when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of Yahveh" (Acts 13: 48).

It was among these pagan gentiles that the propaganda of the new faith was chiefly conducted and was most successful; and for them the "Good News" and epistles were generation and more after the death and disappearance of the Divine Subject about whom it all was. Pagans whose articles of faith were the myths of the gods of Greece, Egypt, and Rome, and all the pantheon of the orient had little difficulty in being "converted" from these crude superstitions to the new God, whose "coming" had been prophesied in the ancient books of Israel and was wonderfully fulfilled -- they were told -- in the miraculous birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, Son of Yahveh, Elohe Israel.

The inspired formula of the new faith is Paul's own confession: "Believing all things which are written in the prophets" (Acts 24: 14); and "believing all things, hoping all thing" (2 Cor. 13: 7), their faith was to them "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb.

11: 1) -- and not knowable; "Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" (Rom. 8: 24).

We shall now respectfully view the Divine Comedy -- the supreme tragedy -- of the "promised Messiah," and the wonders of "prophecy fulfilled in Jesus Christ."

1. The Miraculous "virgin Birth" of Jesus

Matthew, whose gospel was written later, comes first in the order of gospels in our printed collections, for the reason that he gives a detailed "revelation" of the manner of miraculous conception and virgin birth of the Subject of his biography. He begins his book with the genealogy of Jesus, which we elsewhere take notice of. He then proceeds with inspired pen to record:

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of Yahveh appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." (Matt. 1: 18-21)

The foregoing is pure fiction; here follows the crowning instance wherein "the false pen of the scribes hath wrought falsely":

"Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord [Heb., Yahveh] by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

For this "prophecy" of the virgin birth of the Child Jesus, the marginal reference is to the Old Testament, Isaiah 7: 14, as the inspired "source" of the assertion made by Matthew. True, it says nothing of any miraculous pregnancy of any woman by the Holy Ghost, who was wholly unknown in the Old Testament; but this we do find, as rendered by the "false pen of the scribes" who translated Isaiah:

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." (Isa. 7: 14)

The King James, or Authorized, Version, or translation, puts into the margin opposite this verse the words "Or, thou, O virgin, shalt call." Nothing like this is in the Hebrew text.

We turn to the Hebrew text of this most wonderful of the "prophecies," and may well be amazed to find that it is falsely translated. The actual Hebrew words, read from right to left, and transliterated, so that the reader who knows no Hebrew may at least catch some words already become familiar, are:

"laken yittan adonai hu lakem oth hinneh ha-almah harah ve-yeldeth ben ve-karath shem-o immanuel."

Literally translated into English, in the exact order of the Hebrew words, the "prophecy" reads:

"Therefore shall-give my-lord he [himself] to you sign behold the-maid conceived [is pregnant] and-beareth son and- calleth name-his immanuel."

Here the word harah (conceived) is the Hebrew perfect tense, which, as in English, represents past and completed action; there is not the remotest hint of future tense or time. No doctor of divinity or scholar in Hebrew can or will deny this.

Moreover, this is confirmed by the more honest, yet deceptive, Revised Version. In its text of Isaiah 7: 14, it copies word for word the false translation of the King James Version; but it inserts figures in the text after the words "a virgin" and "shall conceive," and puts into the margin opposite, in small type, which not one in many thousands evedads or would understand the significance of, the true reading: "the virgin" and "is with child." It was thus not some indefinite "a virgin," who 750 years in the future " shall conceive" and "Shall bear a son," and "shall call" his name Immanuel; but it was some known and designated maiden to whom the "prophecy" referred, who had already conceived, or was already pregnant, and whose offspring should be the "sign" which "my lord" would give to Ahaz. The dishonesty of Matthew and of the translators in perverting this text of Isaiah into a "prophecy" of Jesus Christ is apparent.

"VIRGIN" OR "YOUNG WOMAN"

Another false, or at best misleading, translation is that of "virgin" in Isaiah. The Hebrew word used by Isaiah and translated "virgin" is almah, which does not at all signify "virgin" in the sense in which we understand it, of an unmarried woman who, in the often-repeated biblical phrase, "hath not known man by lying with him." The exegetes of the Biblical Encyclopedia thus correctly define it: "virgin, Heb., almah; i.e., a young woman of marriageable age" (Vol. 3: p. 117) -- not necessarily, or even presumptively, of intact virginity. The Hebrew word for a woman actually a virgin is bethulah; and throughout the Hebrew Bible the two words almah and bethulah are used with a fair degree of discrimination of sense, as shown by the instances which I think it pertinent to cite, for a clear understanding of this important point.

In the Hebrew texts the word almah is used seven times, always simply in the sense of a young female, and is rendered "damsel" once, "maid" twice, and "virgin" four times. The word bethulah occurs fifty times, rendered "maid" seven times, "maiden" eight times, and "virgin" thirty-five times. All fifty times it has the technical sense of virginity. For example, Rebekah was a "bethulah, neither had any man known her" (Gen. 24: 16). "He shall take a wife in her virginity [bethulah]. A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, or a harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a virgin [bethulah]" (Lev. 21: 13, 14). "If a damsel [naarah] that is a virgin [bethulah] be betrothed," etc. (Deut. 22:, 23). If a husband find his new wife "not a maid [bethulah]," then on his complaint her parents must "bring forth the tokens of the virginity [bethulah] of the maid [naarah]" (Deut. 22: 14, 15). Jephthah's daughter, doomed to be a living sacrifice to Yahveh, asked time to "bewail my virginity [bethulah]" (Judges 11: 37, 38). These instances suffice to make clear the correctness of the definitions:

"Bethulah conveys the idea of virginity, of a young unmarried woman; almah is used simply of a young woman

of marriageable age" (New Standard Bible Dictionary, p. 939); and they show the befuddled folly of all the labored fictions invented by Matthew, Luke, and the dogma-forgers to make out the wife of Joseph the carpenter a perpetual virgin-mother of Jesus and half a dozen other offspring. Isaiah's ha-almah need not have been, and the term did not signify that she was, strictly a virgin. Again "the false pen of the scribes hath wrought falsely." The gospels are all priestly forgeries over a century after their pretended dates.

THE "SIGN" OF A FALSE PROPHECY

What really was Isaiah "propheying" about and whereof was the "sign" which he persisted in thrusting upon Ahaz after the king had flatly refused to listen to it and had piously protested: "I will not ask [for a sign], neither will I tempt Yahveh"?

No lawyer or other intelligent person would for a moment jump at the meaning of a document from an isolated paragraph; he would stultify himself if he should pretend to form an opinion without a careful study of the whole document. The passage on which the opinion is sought must be taken with all its context. As this of the "prophecy" of the alleged "virgin birth of Jesus Christ" is the keystone of the whole scheme of Christianity, it is of the highest importance to clearly understand, from the context, what Isaiah is recorded as so oracularly delivering himself about. The whole of chapter 7, or at least the verses bearing upon the subject-matter of his "prophecy," must be presented to the reader.

In a word, Isaiah was speaking of a then pending war waged against Ahaz, King of Judah, by the kings of Israel and Syria, who were besieging Jerusalem; Isaiah volunteered his "sign of virgin birth" in proof of his "prophecy," -- shown false by the sequel -- that the siege and the war would fail by the defeat of the allied kings. Here is the inspired text:

"1. And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah, ... king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. ... Then said Yahveh unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz; ... And say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted. ... Thus saith Yahveh Elohim, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. ... "Moreover Yahveh spake again unto Ahaz [here Isaiah is not the medium], saying, Ask thee a sign of Yahveh thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt Yahveh. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; It is a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? [here apparently Isaiah or some unknown medium is again speaking]. "Therefore my Lord [Heb., adonai, my lord] himself shall give you a sign.; [honestly translated]: Behold, the maid is with child, and beareth a son, and called his name Immanuel. "Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, [that is, soon after its birth] the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings." (Isa. 7: 1-16)

This about eating butter and honey so that the child should know good from evil is none too lucid of meaning; and the assurance that before this should come about, "the land which thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings," is hardly more intelligible. But if meaning it has, it means --as elucidated in chapter 8 -- that very soon after the promised "sign," Samaria, the land of Israel and its king Pekah, under the suzerainty of Rezin King of Syria, should be overthrown; and that the two kings should not prevail in their war against Judah. "It will not succeed. Notice the positive tone of the prophet," says the Biblical Encyclopedia (Vol. 3: p. 116), commenting on verse 7.

Verses 17 to 25, completing chapter 7, which give the unique information that "Yahveh shall hiss for the fly that is in ... Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria" (7: 18), and that Yahveh shall "shave with a razor that is hired" (7: 20), are altogether too oracular and cabalistic for modern understanding; but they are recommended as a rare bit of inspiration.

Isaiah carries his peculiar line of "prophecy" over into chapter 8, and after several utterly unintelligible verses, strikes the trail of his war prophecy again, thus:

"Yahveh spake also unto me again, saying, Forasmuch as this people ... rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son [Pekah]; Now therefore, behold, Yahveh bringeth ... upon them ... the king of Assyria, and all his glory: ... And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over; ... and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel." (Isa. 8: 5-8)

No clearer proof could be that Isaiah, whatever he was trying to say, was not speaking of Jesus. In chapter 7, he spoke of the war of the kings Rezin and Pekah, son of Remaliah, and offered a "sign" that their expedition would fail, this sign being the virgin-born child Immanuel. Immediately afterwards he predicts a further war upon Judah by the King of Assyria, and addresses his allocation to this same infant Immanuel, and says that Assyria will overrun "thy land, O immanuel." Isaiah spoke simply, and falsely, of a "sign" to King Ahaz regarding the then pending war. Yet Matthew says that this Immanuel was a prophecy of Jesus; but how Jesus could be Immanuel and a "sign" of the result of a war 750 years previously, or the subject of the remarks of Isaiah about the Assyrian war of the same period, is not explained in any revelation I have yet come across. Such a post-mortem "sign" would be of no use to Ahaz anyhow. This pretence by Matthew is clearly unfounded and false.

Moreover, as this "sign" of the virgin-born child Immanuel was proclaimed by Isaiah as a proof of the truth of his prophecy as to the outcome of the pending war, I call special attention to the historical record of the result of this expedition of the Kings of Syria and Israel against Jerusalem and Ahaz. This is from the Second Book of the Chronicles of Israel and Judah:

"Ahaz ... reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not that which was right in the sight of Yahveh. ... Wherefore Yahveh his God delivered him into the land of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter. For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men; because they had forsaken Yahveh Elohim of their fathers. ... And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand, women, sons, and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria." (2 Chron. 28: 1, 5, 6, 8)

So the "prophecy" is seen to be false, though the history is contradictorily recorded in 2 Kings 6: 19.

2. Where the King was Born

The second statement in which Matthew appeals to the prophets, is that when the "Wise Men" came from the East to Jerusalem in search of the new-born "King of the Jews," Herod sent for the chief priests and scribes and "demanded of them where Christ should be born" (Matt. 2: 1-6). How Herod could call a baby a few days old, of whom he knew nothing, "Christ" is beside the present issue. "Christ" means "anointed," and Jesus was not "anointed" in any sense until thirty-odd years later, when the woman broke the box of ointment over him just before his death. But Matthew asserts:

"And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judea, art not the least among the princes of Judea; for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel." (Matt. 2: 5, 6)

The marginal source reference of this prophecy is to the book of Micah (5: 2), This, with its pertinent context, reads as follows:

"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. ... And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds and eight principal men. And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the and of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders." (Mic. 5: 2, 5, 6) Now, whatever this may have referred to, it referred to some leader who should arise to oppose the Assyrians.

Nineveh, "that great city," the capital of Assyria, was destroyed, and Assyrian power ceased to exist, 606 years before Christ. This makes it most evident that Micah had no reference to Jesus; and it may seem an oddity that the chief priests and scribes, who always opposed and denied Jesus during his life, and sent him to his death, should have wittingly furnished Matthew with so potent a prophecy concerning him, when Jesus was but a few days old. If the chief priests and scribes, who earnestly looked for the prophesied Messiah, knew that the infant Jesus was the Messiah, the fulfillment of Micah's prophecy, it may be wondered why they did not help him to become indeed "a ruler in Israel" and its great deliverer from the thralldom of Rome.

3. "Out of Egypt"

Matthew's third invocation of the prophets, although the matter referred to was a past fact and not a prophecy, is also found in chapter 2, when the angel is said to have appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to take Jesus to Egypt in order to escape Herod.

"When [Joseph] arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of Yahveh by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son." (Matt. 2: 14, 15)

The marginal reference for the source of this prophecy is to Hosea (11: 1). This chapter is entitled by the Bible editors, "The ingratitude of Israel unto God for his benefits," and refers entirely to the past record of the people of Israel.

"When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. ... He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return." (Hos. 11: 1, 5)

Now, there is a marginal reference at this passage to Exodus 4: 22, 23, as the source of Hosea's allusion to the people called "Israel" as the "son" of Yahveh, and refers to the fact of this "Son" being in Egypt, and being "called" out of Egypt by Moses. Never once does the text say: "I will call" -- but "called." The historical allusion, with its context, is as follows:

"And Yahveh said unto Moses, Thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, 'thus saith Yahveh, Israel is my son, even my first born: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me.'" (Ex. 4: 21-23)

From this it is clear that Hosea was looking into the far past and speaking of the exodus of the Children of Israel out of Egypt; not peering into the dim future and speaking of the flight of the Joseph family into Egypt. So Matthew makes another false appeal to "prophecy."

4. "Out-Heroding" Herod

The fourth venture of Matthew in citing the prophets is in the same chapter, after the account of the "Massacre of the Innocents" by Herod in his effort to murder the infant Jesus.

"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not." (Matt. 2: 17, 18)

The marginal reference opposite this citation is to the Book of Jeremiah (31: 15). The weeping prophet was speaking of the utter desolation of the people on account of the Babylonian captivity and threats of further destruction by Nebuchadnezzar, as any one reading the chapter may see.

"Thus saith Yahveh; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus saith Yahveh; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for ... they shall come again from the land of the enemy." (Jer. 31: 15, 16)

Jeremiah speaks of an event which had already happened, and quotes Yahveh as speaking in the past tense "a voice was heard," because of the great afflictions caused by the Babylonians, and promises the "return from captivity," over six hundred years the episode related of Herod. The reader may draw his own conclusions as to the honesty of Matthew's use of this "prophecy" and its fulfilment under Herod. Uninspired human history records not a word of such an impossible massacre by the Roman king.

5. The "NAZARENE"

The fifth reference to the prophets occurs in the same chapter.

"And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene." (Matt. 2: 23)

This is a bit of fancy falsehood. There is not a word in the Old Testament of this "prophecy" or anything like it, or of such a place as Nazareth, which did not exist in Old Testament times, or of Nazarenes. The marginal references to this verse are two: Judges 13: 5, and I Samuel 1: 11. These verses, and their context, refer to matters so far removed from Matthew's alleged "prophecy" that it is idle to quote them. But here they are. In the first instance, an angel of Yahveh appeared to the childless wife of Manoah and said:

"Lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite [Heb., Nazir] unto God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines." (Judges 13: 5)

The product of this angelic visitation was the giant-killer Samson, and he was to fight the Philistines; Jesus never did.

The second reference has to do with a like angelic aid to Hannah, who made a vow never to let a razor come upon the head of her prospective son Samuel. Those unkempt offsprings of angelic intercourse were called Nazarites. This is the closest that the Old Testament gets to Nazareth, and its inhabitants, Nazarenes. Matthew's invocation of the "Prophets" is far afield both in form and substance.

6. The Great Light

The sixth so-called "prophecy" relating to Jesus which Matthew invokes is in chapter 4: 12-16, a paragraph standing unrelated to anything else in the chapter.

"Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prisons he departed into Galilee; And leavingng Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw a great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up." (Matt. 4:12-16) We are given as marginal reference of authority for this Isaiah 9: 1, 2. As Matthew so mutilates and distorts his quotation, I shall have to direct attention to the several marked discrepancies and contortions which he makes of his texts, and explain, by their context, what Isaiah was really saying:

"Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtah, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." (Isa. 9:1, 2)

It will be noticed that Matthew entirely omits all the words which show that Isaiah was speaking of some accomplished historical fact, relating to the afflictions which the tribal sections mentioned had already suffered.

These explanatory and historical words, to repeat them for the reader's better catching their significance, are: "Nevertheless, the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted Zabulon and Naphtah, and afterward did more grievously afflict her." After depriving the verse of all sense, Matthew retains the simple geographical names: "the land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles." Both places are west of the Jordan. If "beyond" means "west of," Isaiah must have been written in Babylonian captivity, as no doubt it was. Matthew converts these meaningless words, taken out of their sense in an historical past context, into a prophecy, which he says was fulfilled because Jesus went to the town of Capernaum, in that part of the country.

But there is more to it. The verse opens with the words: "nevertheless the dimness." Necessarily this refers to something which has preceded in the text. This is found in chapter 8, of which chapter 9 is simply a continuation. But chapter 8 is so incoherent, speaking of "seeking unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter," that it is hardly possible to know what Isaiah is "raving" about. In the last verse, however, he denounces such seekers after wizards, and delivers himself of this: "And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness" (Isa. 8: 22). Then chapter 9 opens with the words quoted: "Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtah, and afterward did more grievously afflict her," etc. Isaiah then continues: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light," etc. All this, whatever unapparent sense there may be in it, refers to past events, and the reader may judge of Matthew's accuracy in calling it a "prophecy" fulfilled by Jesus going to Capernaum.

7. He Bore Our Infirmities

The seventh appeal of Matthew to "Prophecy" is in chapter 8, as follows:

"When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." (Matt. 8: 16, 17)

For this the marginal reference carries us to Isaiah 53: 4:

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."

All this is in the past tense, showing Isaiah lamenting over some departed friend, who was esteemed to have been "smitten of God," and is now dead. It can have no possible reference to Jesus Christ, Yahveh's "beloved son in whom I am well pleased," engaged in the divine work of casting out devils and healing the sick and smitten; never was Jesus at any time "smitten of God." So Matthew again uses a few words out of their context, misquotes them at that, and calls a lamenting statement over some past fact a "prophecy" fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

8. The "Bruised Reed"

The eighth instance of Matthew's adapting what he calls "prophecy" to his own uses, as proof that his account is the truth, occurs in chapter 12. The passage is long, but as it is necessary to compare it with the reputed "prophecy" in order to show Matthew's singular misquotation and misuse, I copy it entire:

"Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all; And charged them that they should not make him known: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust." (Matt. 12: 14-21)

The marginal reference for the source of this is Isaiah, 42: 1-4:

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall be not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law."

Who "my servant" upon whom "I have" put my spirit, here spoken of is, Isaiah does not tell us; but certainly the description does not in the least fit Jesus. Jesus was discouraged, and he enjoined secrecy on all his followers and fled to Gethsemane, where he collapsed in despair, as the whole unhappy scene in the Garden shows, and he never saw "victory"! And Isaiah never at all said what Matthew attributes to him in v. 21: "And in his name shall the Gentiles trust"; this is entirely new, made of the whole cloth, and the whole "prophecy" is misquoted and misapplied.

9. "The King Cometh"

The ninth resort by Matthew to this pettifogging method of proof that things done by Jesus were fulfillment of ancient prophecy, is as follows:

"And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." (Matt. 21: 1-5) This is a misquotation of alleged prophecy, as is shown by turning to the marginal reference, Zechariah 9: 9:

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

The book of Zechariah treats of the return of parts of the Jewish tribes from captivity in Babylon, by leave of King Darius. Zechariah is jubilant over it, and indulges in some flighty exaltations. In chapter 8, Zechariah declares:

"Thus saith Yahveh of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem." (Zech. 8: 7, 8)

And, in chapter 9, after the verses about the "entry of the King," and amid other exaltations, Zechariah exclaims:

"Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: ... And Yahveh their God shall save them in that day: ... For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids." (Zech. 9: 12, 16, 17)

Zechariah is here not very lucid, but in any event he was exulting over the return from the captivity, and not over Jesus entering Jerusalem, as Matthew would have us believe.

10. What is this One?

Matthew's tenth appeal to the prophets (Matt. 26: 51-56) is too general to permit of specific contradiction by comparing his authority. It is in connection with the story of Peter's cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant with a sword on the night of the arrest of Jesus. Jesus told him to put up his sword, and said that he could call down twelve legions of angels to his defence if he should pray for them. And he asks:

"But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matt. 26: 54)

Then Matthew says:

"But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." (Matt. 26: 56)

He does not say which scriptures nor which prophets; but the Bible editors come to his aid and give a marginal reference to the much abused Isaiah bewailing his anonymous "departed friend" who was "smitten of God" (53: 7), which we have above referred to and shown to be all in the past tense. Another editorial reference is to the Lamentations (4: 20), which may be offered for what it is worth:

"The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of Yahveh, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen."

Jeremiah is here bewailing the desolation of Jerusalem under the captivity of the "heathen" Babylonians, as appears from the entire book of woe, but particularly in these verses:

"Yahveh hath accomplished his fury; he hath poured out his fierce anger, and hath kindled a fire in Zion, and it hath devoured the foundations thereof. The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem." (Lam. 4: 11, 12)

It is plain that the writer was speaking of the ruin of Jerusalem. But it further appears of whom he was speaking by the terms "the breath of our nostrils, the anointed of Yahveh." All the Jewish kings were the "anointed of Yahveh" -- just as modern ones also are said to be. A marginal reference opposite these words of Lamentations is to Jeremiah 52: 9, which I shall quote together with the preceding and following verses, so as to get the full context:

"But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him. Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath; where he gave judgment upon him. And the king of Babylon slew the Sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he, slew also all the princes of Judah in Riblah."

Hinc illa, lacrimae! So Matthew is seen again twisting historical facts into pretended prophecies fulfilled by Jesus.

11. The "Potter's Field"

For the eleventh time Matthew invokes the prophets, the passage being from the story of Judas and the thirty pieces of silver (27: 3-10). Matthew says that Judas repented of his bargain of betrayal and took the money back to the chief priests, threw it at their feet, and went and hanged himself. The holy priests who had paid the thirty pieces for the "betrayal of innocent blood" were punctilious about putting the price of the blood into the treasury of Yahveh.

"And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, staying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter's field, as Yahveh appointed me."

If I were arguing this as a case in court, I should indict this in strong terms as pure charlatanism. But as I am simply offering appeals to "prophecy" with a little necessary comment, I merely let the reader compare it with Jeremiah's words (Jer. 32: 6-15). They have no more to do with the high priests' buying the potter's field with the thirty pieces of silver than with my buying my house in this city. They refer simply to Hanameel's coming to Jeremiah in prison, "according to the word of Yahveh," and saying to him:

"Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth; ... And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver." (Jer. 32: 8, 9)

This is all there is to "that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet," pretended to be fulfilled by buying the potter's field with the blood-money of Judas Iscariot.

But the Bible editors give another marginal reference, not to "Jeremy the prophet," but to Zechariah, for the reason, presumably, that a "Potter" and "thirty pieces of silver" are mentioned. So that no opportunity to let Matthew and his editors vindicate themselves may be denied them, I quote these incoherent verses, without comment -- except to say, what the reader can readily see, that they have no earthly connection with Iscariot's thirty pieces, or with anything else sanely imaginable:

"And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of Yahveh. And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And Yahveh said unto me, Cast it unto the potter; a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of Yahveh. Then I cut asunder my other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel." (Zech. 11: 10-14)

JUDAS HANGED HIMSELF?

Before passing from Matthew's story of Judas, who, he says, "departed, and went and hanged himself" (27: 5), I call attention to the fact that Matthew is flatly contradicted on this point by whoever wrote The Acts of the Apostles (supposed to be the evangelist Luke). This authority, also indulging in some dubious references, makes Peter tell a different story from Matthew's:

"And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, ... Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst and all his bowels gushed out." (Acts

1: 15-18)

According to this delicate gloating over the ill fate of an apostate brother apostle, it was Iscariot himself who bought a field -- and not a "potters field," but an estate -- with the thirty pieces which he had received as "the reward of iniquity"; he did not, therefore, "repent" and return the money to the priests. Nor did he go hang himself; he accidentally fell and ruptured himself fatally.

Peter's reference to David as speaking, a thousand years before, of Judas, is of a piece with some of the false pretenses of Peter's pretended "successors." The reference for David's reputed remarks about Judas is to Psalm 41: 9:

"Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me."

Now, David had troubles of his own, without bothering himself with Judas a thousand years ahead. The whole psalm shows that Peter ignorantly or wilfully falsified. David was pleading with Yahveh for himself alone, as appears by these verses:

"I said, Yahveh, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee. Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish? Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat

of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me. But thou, O Yahveh, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them." (Psalm 41: 4, 5, 9, 10)

No words are needed to show that David was speaking of his own troubles, and nothing else. He prays his Yahveh to be merciful and raise him up, so that he can take vengeance on his enemy.

But in this harangue of Peter there are more bungles of falsity and flat contradictions of other inspired passages. It is odd, in the first place, that Peter should make such a speech "in the midst of the disciples" (Acts 1: 15), telling them tales they must have known as well as he; and he proceeds to tell them also about the "field of blood," thereby contradicting Matthew. After speaking of Judas's taking the thirty pieces of silver and buying the field, and then bursting asunder bloodily, he conveys to them this bit of information: "And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood" (1: 19). This speech was made almost immediately after the ascension of Jesus, related in verses 1-14. Peter then, "in those days" (1: 15), made this speech in Jerusalem. As the betrayal of Judas had taken place only a few days before, it is strange that Judas's field should already have acquired this historic name, and be known to all the town. But it is more strange that Peter, speaking Aramaic to peasant disciples who also spoke Aramaic, in which Aceldama is a vernacular word, should translate it into Greek, "field of blood," which neither he nor his hearers understood. Somebody wrote this speech long afterwards in Greek, for Greek-speaking converts, and translated Aceldama into Greek for their benefit.

But Peter contradicts Matthew as to the origin of the term. Matthew says that the priests to whom the thirty pieces were returned by Judas "took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day" (Matt. 27: 7, 8); "unto this day" showing, too, that the tale was written long after.

Peter further falsely quotes David as speaking of Judas: "For it is written in the book of Psalms, ... and his bishoprick let another take" (Acts 1: 20). For this the supporting reference is to Psalm 109 a perfect gem of anathemas against "my adversaries" (109: 4), who "fought against me without a cause" (109: 3). Among other picturesque evils which Yahveh is invoked to bring upon the adversary, "Let Satan stand at his right hand; ... let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few; and let another take his office" (109: 6-8). So Peter joins the chorus of "lying prophets" and Jesus-propagandists. His appeals to "prophecy" regarding Judas are absolutely false and ridiculous.

12. Parting His Garments

The twelfth and last of Matthew's appeals to the prophets is indulged in at the time of all others when the occasion would seem to have led him to quote accurately and to tell the truth. Under the very shadow of the cross, he says:

"And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots." (Matt. 27: 35)

The reference is to Psalm 22: 18 and by it David is again made responsible for a pretended prophecy -- though David is not usually "numbered among the prophets." Matthew misquotes the words of David, spoken in the present tense, by putting them into the past tense and changing the pronoun "my" to "him," to make it apply to the acts of the Roman soldiers. The words of David are:

"They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." (Psalm 22: 18)

Again David is bewailing his own troubles, in the fanciful imagery of oriental poetry. He begins the psalm, which is a song inscribed "to the Chief Musician Aijeleth," with the words quoted by Jesus on the Cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and proceeds in what he himself calls "the words of my roaring."

Among the many "roaring" things he says about himself, I quote a very few:

"Many bulls have compassed me. ... They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. ... All my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. [David evidently wasn't up on anatomy, and didn't know of the diaphragm]. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. [It is a wonder that Matthew didn't use this apt phrase as a prophecy of what was done to Jesus!] I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." (Psalm 22: 12-14, 16-18)

How far these "words of roaring" applied to Jesus on the cross, as Matthew avers one verse did, and how correct Matthew is in his use of so-called prophecy, I leave now with the reader. I pass now to Mark.

MARK'S APPEALS TO PROPHECY

Mark is quite sparing of prophecy, but no less false and unsuccessful in its use.

1. To "Prepare the Way"

His book opens with a very fanciful vision of the Day of Judgment converted into a prophecy concerning John the Baptist as the herald of Jesus. Mark says:

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee." (Mark 1: 1, 2)

The marginal reference here is to the book of the last of the prophets, Malachi. The context shows what it was that Malachi was beholding:

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and Yahveh, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith Yahveh of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for, he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi: and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto Yahveh an offering in righteousness." (Mal. 3: 1-3)

Malachi carried his vision over into chapter 4 which is of only six verses, and is headed by the Bible editors "Elijah's coming and office." The pertinent verses are:

"For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith Yahveh of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. ... Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of Yahveh." (Mal. 4:1, 5)

It is thus clear that Malachi was "seeing things" concerning the "great and dreadful day of Yahveh," and said that Elijah would be sent ahead as sort of press-agent and committee of preparations. This vision certainly has nothing to do with John the Baptist or with Jesus, who each denied that he was Elijah (John 1: 20, 21; Matt. 16: 13), though Matthew makes Jesus say that John is Elijah (Matt. 11: 14).

In this connection, to show a contradiction of inspiration, it may be mentioned that Matthew makes a similar claim of prophecy about John the Baptist, but cites a different source. He says:

"And in those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea. ... For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of Yahveh, make his paths straight." (Matt. 3: 1, 3)

Matthew's reference is to Isaiah, 40: 3, which reads a little differently:

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of Yahveh, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

In verse 6 he adds: "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass," etc. John the Baptist is not reported as having made any such cry in the wilderness; it is simply poetic frenzy, the meaning of which, if it has any, being not yet revealed or unravelled.

2. "Numbered among Transgressors"

The second and last reference by Mark to "prophecy" is as follows:

"And with him they crucify two thieves; ... And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors." (Mark 15: 27, 28)

Here again we are referred to that inexhaustible source of pseudo-prophecy, Isaiah 53, which throughout is in the past tense, a lamentation and eulogy over some dead friend. Any righteous man who is put to death unjustly or upon false accusations may be said to be "numbered with the transgressors." There is no "prophecy" in this. The two other evangelists, Luke and John, mention very few "prophincies" as being fulfilled in Jesus. One or the other mentions such instances as riding on the ass and casting lots for the garments, which we have already introduced from Matthew, and shall not repeat. The few remaining instances will now be considered.

LUKE CITES PROPHECY

Luke does not himself invoke the so-called prophecies, but puts them into the mouth of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist. Luke says that when the child John was born "his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying" (Luke 1: 67). Now, what Zacharias said related exclusively to his own child John, but he cites exactly the same "prophecies" as are always evoked as applying to Jesus. The Bible editors recognized this, and straddled by heading the chapter, "The prophecy of Zacharias, both of Christ, and of John." But John was born six months before Jesus was born. It was on the eighth day after the birth of John, at his "christening," that Zacharias, having been stricken dumb as a "sign" of John's birth to the old and barren Elizabeth, wrote: "His name is John," and then recovered his voice, "was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied." Being "filled with the Holy Ghost," he was consequently fully "inspired," and must have spoken knowingly and truly. Being so filled, he "prophesied" -- of his own son John -- saying:

"Blessed be Yahveh God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David: ... And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of Yahveh to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel." (Luke 1: 68, 69, 76-80)

Zacharias clearly speaks all this only of his son John. But whether of John or Jesus, or both, the result is the same: it applies to neither, as is very plain to see. The marginal reference for Luke 1: 69 is to Psalm 132: 17: "There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed." This "anointed" is pretended to be John or Jesus. A few anterior verses will show who the "anointed" was -- King David himself. He begins the psalm:

"Yahveh, remember David, and all his afflictions. ... For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of thine anointed. Yahveh hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore. For Yahveh hath chosen Zion. ... This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell. ... There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed." (Psalm 132: 1, 10-14, 17)

All this is about a long line of kingly successors of the house of King David: nothing of Zacharias's son John, or of Jesus, neither of whom ever sat on the throne of David.

"GENEALOGIES" OF JESUS

In entire disproof of this reference to Jesus as being a "bud of the horn of David," or a "branch of David," I wish to offer a bit of collateral evidence proving that Jesus was nowise "of the house of David," as is so often asserted in the New Testament. Matthew and Luke both give detailed reputed "genealogies of Jesus Christ, the son of David" (Matt. 1: 1-17, Luke 3: 23-38). Matthew twenty-eight generations between David and Joseph; Luke records forty-three generations, every name but three between David at one end and Joseph at the other being totally different. Matthew derives Joseph from David through Solomon and Bathsheba, and through Roboam, son of Solomon, down to "Joseph the son of Jacob." Luke derives the ancestry from David through "Nathan, the son of David," down to "Joseph, the son of Heli." But in either event Jesus could not be the son of Joseph, and hence of David, if the angel spoke true, whom Matthew quotes as having said to Joseph in a dream: "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. ... And thou shalt call his name Jesus." (Matt. 1: 20, 21)

For as "Joseph, thou son of David" was not, according to this dream, the father of Jesus, either line of descent from David, whether Matthew's or Luke's, was broken, and the rather attenuated blood of David did not at all pass into Jesus. If the first husband of some woman had been the son of George Washington, but died without child, and the widow married a Mr. Smith, and they had a little George Washington Smith, certainly this offspring would not be a "son" of the Father of his Country, not even by the "bar sinister."

The first reference for Luke 1: 70 is to Jeremiah 23: 5, 6; verses 7 and 8, which I add, might honestly have been also referred to. The passage is as follows:

"Behold, the days come, saith Yahveh, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, YAHVEH OUGHTNESS." (Jer. 23: 5-8)

Therefore, behold, the days come, saith Yahveh, that they shall no more say, Yahveh liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, Yahveh liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land." (Jer. 23: 5-8)

This refers to a righteous king of the dynasty of David, who "shall reign and prosper." No language could be plainer than that this "Branch of David" was to be a secular king who should, as Zacharias himself says, save us "from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us" (Luke 1: 70). Neither John nor Jesus was this man, or was a king, or did any of these heroic things. And Jeremiah's "prophecy" failed, for no such deliverance ever came.

Another marginal reference is to Daniel 9: 24; but Infinite Wisdom alone could tell what this passage is about, so I pass it.

This disposes of and discredits Luke. We take up John.

JOHN APPEALS TO PROPHECY 1. A Prophecy Puzzle

The first reference to "prophecy" by John is in chapter 1, verse 45:

"Philip findeth Nathanel, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

This brings on such an intricacy of marginal reference and cross reference, that merely to try to disentangle such meaning as they may have would certainly affect one's mind, as Don Quixote's was affected by his books of knight-errantry. So I shall give only a few samples, and leave any reader who has nothing better to do to unravel the rest.

The first reference is to Genesis, 3: 15, the story of Eve and the serpent, and Yahveh's saying that there should be enmity between her seed and the serpent's seed. As nobody rationally believes that such a scene and colloquy ever occurred, what was not said does not signify; it means nothing anyhow, as demonstrated elsewhere. A bona fide God could speak more to the point than this jargon if he wanted to prophesy, especially of so fateful an event.

The next marginal reference is to Genesis 49: 10, from the account of dying Jacob's blessing on his sons:

"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes: His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk." (Gen. 49: 10-12)

Here we have, for verse 10, a false translation, or, if not, a notoriously false prophecy, besides an obviously post-Mosaic passage. Shiloh was the name of a town north of Bethel, where the Ark was deposited before it was removed to Jerusalem (Josh. 18: 1; Judges 18: 31; 1 Sam. 4: 3, 4). Consequently Jacob could have known nothing about Shiloh, and Moses could not have written the passage. But the Messiah-mangers have long regarded verse 10 as an alluring explicit prophecy of Jesus Christ, ridiculously torturing "Shiloh" into the name of a person. The Revised Version is loath to give up this false translation; but it does put into the margin the true rendition of the Hebrew: "Till he come to Shiloh, having the obedience of the peoples." This "he" is Judah, son of Jacob, to whom this "blessing" is addressed (Gen. 49: 1, 8-12); and the passage means, if anything, that supremacy should not depart from the descendants or tribe of Judah, after the tribe should possess that town in the promised land, so long as they retained the obedience of the people (see Encyc. Bib., Vol. 4: art. Shiloh). To change Shiloh into a person, and that person Jesus Christ, and to say that the "scepter shall not depart from Judah" until he came would involve poor Jacob in a false prophecy; for the scepter did "depart from Judah" forever when Nebuchadnezzar conquered the land, 586 years before Christ. Whatever this red-eyed drunkard referred to, it can hardly be believed to be a prophetic portrayal of Jesus, who was neither a wine-bibber nor held a scepter as king of Judah.

The next reference is to Deuteronomy 18: 18, which, since Jesus himself is made to refer to this later by John, I will pass over for the moment. This ends these references to Moses as having written of Jesus; the

otheferences are to the prophets, many of which we have already "weighed in the balance and found wanting." All the others will be found of exactly the same stripe, or even more meaningless and inapplicable to Jesus.

2. "For Moses Wrote of Me" (Jesus)

The second of John's appeals to prophecy occurs where John puts into the mouth of Jesus a false statement of pretended prophecy concerning himself. John makes Jesus say:

"For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5: 46, 47)

The latter verse (5: 47) is reserved for future consideration; we shall now run down the statement: "for [Moses] wrote of me." A similar statement is made in Acts 3: 22:

"For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall Yahveh your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you."

The references opposite these companion verses take us back to the citations we last reviewed, particularly to the so-called "Fifth Book of Moses," Deuteronomy 18: 17, 18. Jesus and the author of Acts call this a "prophecy" concerning Jesus:

"And Yahveh said unto me, ... I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him."

Who, then, was this prophet whom Yahveh was to raise up out of "thy brethren" like unto Moses, and to whom they were to hearken in all things which he commanded them? Moses, or whoever wrote the Five Books, tells us. For, in Numbers 27: 12, Yahveh told Moses to go up into Mount Abarim, "and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel":

"And when thou hast seen it, thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people. ... And Moses spake unto Yahveh, saying, Let Yahveh ... set a man over the congregation, Which may go out before them, and ... lead them. ... And Yahveh said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; And set him before ... all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put some of thine honor upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. ... And Moses did as Yahveh commanded him: and he took Joshua," etc. (Num. 27: 13-22)

It is plain from this and the other alleged "prophesies" referred to by Jesus and the evangelists that Moses did not write of Jesus, nor did the prophets speak of him; but of Joshua as the immediate successor of Moses as leader of the Chosen People.

3. Who Hath Believed? And Why Not?

The third attempt of John to fulfil "prophecy" is a two-horned imposition on Isaiah, as usual.

"These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them. But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake; Yahveh, who hath believed oueport? and to whom hath the arm of Yahveh been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." (John 12: 36-40)

The first reference, about believing oueport, is to that mine of "near-prophecy," Isaiah 53: 1. I can see no connection between "not believing oueport," which would be of things past and unknown to the persons to whom the report is made, and not believing in a person and things seen with one's own eyes, some seven centuries later, as was the case with those "before" whose eyes Jesus did "see many miracles." Furthermore, Isaiah is speaking about the "report" of himself and other prophets: "Who hath believed oueport?" It is idle to say more about this phase of it.

The other horn of this dilemma is utterly false, and implies an abhorrent proposition. John says that the Jews who saw the many signs of Jesus "believed not on him." But why not? John tells us why, saying positively: "For this cause they could not believe"; for as Isaiah (6: 9, 10) had said: "He [Yahveh] hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they should turn [repent], and I should heal them." It is discouraging to have to point out again that Isaiah was speaking of his own times and people and troubles. A few verses will make this evident even to a learned theologian:

"The vision of Isaiah which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. ... For Yahveh hath spoken, ... they have rebelled against me. ... Israel doth not

know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation. ... How is the faithful city become an harlot!" (Isa. 1: 1-4, 21) "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of Yahveh" (2: 5). "For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings are against Yahveh" (3: 8). "And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you. ... And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will break down the wall thereof. ... And I will lay it waste. ... Therefore is the anger of Yahveh kindled against his people" (5: 3, 5, 25). "And he [Yahveh] said [to Isaiah], Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. ... And make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed" (6: 9, 10).

John craftily omits even the opening words of Isaiah's verse 9, which of itself shows that Isaiah was told by Yahveh to "go and tell this people" those things, which John then claims that Isaiah gave as the reason why other Jews, 750 years later, would not believe Jesus! And the scraps of verses which I have picked from each of the preceding five chapters, to connect the whole, further prove what Isaiah was talking about, and to whom he was speaking.

The "abhorrent thing" which I mentioned is John's remarkable excuse for Jesus' not being believed by the Jews: "For this cause they could not believe" -- because Yahveh had "blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts," so that they could not believe and turn and be healed; that is, repent and be saved! Yet, if this same John and all his colleagues in inspiration are to be believed, Yahveh sent his own "beloved Son" into the world that the world through him might be saved; he called all to repentance, saying: Believe on me and ye shall be saved, and if ye believe not, ye shall be damned!

4. A Cooking Lesson as "Prophecy"

We pass now to the last reference by John to alleged "prophecy" of Jesus. This is also a double-barreled blunderbuss, and scatters shot all through the law and the prophets.

As Jesus hung on the cross between the two thieves, says John:

"Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But then they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side. ... For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced." (John 19: 31-34; 36, 37)

John appeals to these spurious "prophecies" with great solemnity, and, as he admits, for the express purpose of making himself believed: "And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For," he adds, "these things were done that the scripture should be fulfilled" (John 19: 35, 36). What scripture? The marginal references for verse 36 are to Exodus 12: 46; Numbers 9: 12; and Psalm 34: 20. I quote these in full, to show the straits of the evangelist and his editors to find something to fit; and their context to show what they really refer to: a passover cooking- lesson for the fugitive slave Jews!

1. Exodus 12 records the establishment of the passover feast, consisting of unleavened bread and a male lamb or kid (12: 5). This was to be prepared and eaten:

"And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and un-leavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. ... And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is Yahveh's passover. ... In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof"! (Ex. 12: 8, 9, 11, 46)

John misquotes this last sentence out of a whole chapter of minute directions for cooking and eating the passover lamb or kid; and changes the neuter "a bone thereof" -- that is, "of it," of the lamb or kid -- so as to make it apply to a man: "a bone of him shall not be broken." Then he calls it a "prophecy" of Jesus Christ fulfilled!

2. The second reference is in practically identical words; it is identical in subject; and its application to Jesus is identical in falsity:

"Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season. ... The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They shall leave none of it

unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all ordinances of the passover they shall keep it." (Num. 9: 2, 11, 12)

The third reference in trying to make this cookery recipe apply to Jesus on the cross is to Psalm

34. This does not even squint at the "prophecy" -- "A bone of him shall not be broken." David is in a good humor with himself and his Yahveh, and he sings:

"I will bless Yahveh at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. ... Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but Yahveh delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. -- (Psalm 34: 1, 19, 20)

This clearly irrelevant last appeal to wholly impertinent "prophecy" exhausts the series of remarkable attempts of the four evangelists to torture Old Testament "ravings" of the prophets into inspired fore-tellings of the Jesus Christ of the New. It is more than evident from this review that not a single word of the scores of so-called "prophecies" culled from the old Hebrew Scriptures in the remotest degree hints at the humble Man of Galilee. If a lawyer, pleading his cause before any court in any civilized country of the world, should resort to the device of citing records, precedents, and authorities in support of his contentions, and these should be discovered by his opponent or by the court to be of the sort appealed to by the gospel writers, he would be disgraced, branded as charlatan and "shyster," driven from the profession which he had thus dishonoured, and exposed to the contempt of honest mankind. But gospel writers are yet haloed as inspired saints, and preachers of the "Word of God" are yet sacred "divines," who go about redolent of the odor of sanctity, and listened to with rapt awe when they teach and preach these "prophecies" and their "fulfilment" to those who have been taught to believe them and have never thought for themselves or "searched the scriptures" for the wonders of their most holy faith. Like John on Patmos, we have "tried them which say they are apostles, and ... found them liars" (Rev. 2: 2).

IS IT GOD'S WORD?

CHAPTER 14: THE INSPIRED "HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS"

THE INSPIRED "HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS"

THE DATELESS NAZARENE

THE "BLESSED NAME" OF JESUS

GENEALOGIES OF JESUS

VIRGIN BIRTH OF JESUS

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM R

R THE SHEPHERD CHOIR

THE NOCTURNAL FLIGHT TO EGYPT

THE "MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS"

JOHN AND THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

THE TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS

THE APOSTLES CHOSEN

"THE TWELVE"

APOSTOLIC GREED AND STRIFE

OTHER APOSTOLIC TANGLES

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT -- OR THE PLAN

THIS LORD'S PRAYER

CHRIST ANOINTED

JESUS -- KING OF THE JEWS

POT-POURRI OF INSPIRED INHARMONIES

ECCE HOMO!

SECRECY ENJOINED

SUPERSTITIONS OF JESUS CHRIST

THE "SECOND COMING" OF CHRIST

THE INSPIRED "HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS"

THE life and times of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, the King of the Jews, the Saviour of the world, are preserved in four short monographs, called after their Greek title gospels, which means "good news." The earliest of these biographies, "The Gospel according to Mark," was written, at the earliest, about the year 70 of the new era, some forty years after the death of Jesus, when a whole new generation had come upon the scene of the events of his life and death therein reported.

In these biographies their subject is claimed by the writers to be the "Son of God" -- the Hebrew Yahveh; as "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," working wonders, crucified, rising from the dead, and ascending into heaven, where he sitteth on the right hand of his Father Yahveh, until he shall "come again to judge the quick and the dead" -- which he asserted would be very shortly, in the lifetime of his hearers.

In his brief career, between two or three Jewish Passovers only, he is recorded to have wrought "great signs and wonders" -- miracles; to have raised the dead; cured incurable diseases by a word or a touch or the simple faith of the patient or of his friends, or by his potent command "casting out devils" which caused the ailments; to have been tried and condemned by a Roman magistrate, and crucified by Roman law; on his death to have caused a great eclipse of the sun; to have rent in twain by earthquake the veil of the holy temple, causing innumerable graves to open, whose sheeted dead came forth and walked the streets of the Holy City, in full view of the populace; to have risen from the dead under the eyes of an armed Roman guard, specially stationed at his grave to prevent all tampering; and to have -- on the same or the next day, or forty days afterwards --

ascended to heaven at four different times and places, before the eyes of four different sets of spectators, and under four totally different sets of circumstances.

Not a word of any of these transcendent wonders is to be found in all the historic records or contemporary annals of that great city and age. The Roman philosopher Pliny, some forty years after the Crucifixion, about the time the first gospel is thought to have been written, lost his life seeking to investigate the very minor event of an eruption of Vesuvius which destroyed -- and preserved for future confirmation -- the unimportant Roman town of Pompeii. Of this event ample contemporary historical records abound. Flavius Josephus, a contemporary, the greatest historian of Jewry, records the minutest facts and even myths of Hebrew history from the earliest ages down to his own times. But there does not exist a word of any record, human or divine, concerning this God made man and his wondrous works outside of a notoriously forged and meagre reference, in a book written some sixty years after the death of Jesus, and stuck between incongruous paragraphs of one of the works of Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Bk. 18, chap. 3: 3), and outside the pages of these so-called gospels and epistles, and the Apocalypse revelation.

This Jesus was Incarnate God on earth, or lived as a man and teacher (if he ever lived) in one of the most brilliant ages and cultured societies in ancient history: in the reign of Caesar Augustus, an epoch illustrious as the golden age of Roman imperial, legal, literary, and cultured civilization.

Judaea was then a Roman province, Jerusalem a Roman capital. Its ruler, at the time of the traditional advent of the Nazarene, was Herod the Great, celebrated by the Jewish historian Josephus as one of the great if wicked men and rulers of the age. Learning and literature, of the elegant Roman and brilliant Greek types, flourished. But there is nowhere a scrap of papyrus whereon even the name of this God, or of this miracle-working man, is so much as mentioned, except in the passage referred to in an old manuscript of Josephus, held by most scholars to be spurious.

The tales of the Christ are marvellous and incredible, impossible, according to all human standards of reason, as shown in every circumstance of the confused and contradictory records of the four gospels. We have seen their subject stripped of every vestige of claim to be the fulfilment of prophecies appealed to by his four posthumous biographers in support of their accounts of the most salient features of his life and acts. No less unreal will be found the "harmony of the gospels" with respect to his birth, life, trial, crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension. Such events, so contradictorily chronicled and vouched for, could not be accepted as truth if testified on oath before a court of human justice. The rule of logic and of law: "Of two contradictories, one must be false" makes their "harmony" and truth incredible and impossible.

We shall take up these diversely recorded incidents one by one, and submit them to candid judgment.

THE DATELESS NAZARENE

Biographers of celebrated men are careful to state with exactness, or to approximate, the dates of the birth and death and of the principal events of the lives, of their subjects. The inspired biographers of the Son of God, for Christians the most momentous figure of history, ignore such dates or muddle them beyond even approximate probability. Only Matthew and Luke essay to tell of the birth of the God made man; there are at least thirteen years difference between the times of birth recorded by them. Like conflicts persist as to the duration of his ministry, and his age at various periods, as at the beginning of his ministry and at the time of his death.

According to Matthew, "Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea, in the days of Herod the king" (Matt. 2: 1). Herod died in the year 4 BC, but Jesus was born at least two years before the death of Herod, for Herod is recorded by Matthew as long waiting for the return of the "wise men" to report on the new-born King of the Jews, and as massacring all the children "from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men" (Matt. 2: 16). Jesus was thus born at least six years BC, if Herod died immediately after the massacre of the Innocents, which is not likely. Matthew thus lays the birth of Jesus in 6 BC at the earliest.

Luke makes out the birth to have been at earliest in the year 7 AD or thirteen years later. Luke tells of Joseph and Mary's going from Galilee to Bethlehem to be taxed, and says that Jesus was born while they were in Bethlehem on this fanciful mission. For, he says, "in those days. ... there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria)" (Luke 2: 1-7). It is well known that Galilee was annexed to Syria and Cyrenius (Quirinius) made

governor in AD 7. A classic authority may be taken, out of many, to fix this date. Josephus relates: "And now Herod altered his testament and granted the kingdom to Archelaus. ... When he had done these things he died. (Antiq., Bk. 17, chap. 7, sec. 1). "But in the tenth year of Archelaus's government" the Jews "accused him before Caesar" who banished him to Vienna in Gaul (Id., chap. 13, sec. 2). "So Archelaus's country was laid to the province of Syria; and Cyrenius, one that had been consul, was sent by Caesar to take account of people's effects in Syria, and to sell the house of Archelaus" (Id., chap. 13, sec. 5). "Moreover, Cyrenius came himself into Judea, which was now added to the province of Syria, to take an account of their substance" (Antiq., Bk. 18, chap. 1, sec. 1). "When Cyrenius had now disposed of Archelaus's money, and when the taxings were come to a conclusion, which were made in the thirty-seventh year of Caesar's victory over Anthony at Actium" (Id., chap. 2, sec. 1). Luke's taxation was then at a period thirty-seven years after the historic battle of Actium, which took place September 2, 31 BC; the thirty-seventh year after would therefore be between September 2, AD 6 and September 2, AD 7, in which year Luke says Jesus was born.

A word may be added about Luke's "decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed" (Luke 2: 1), and about the journey of Joseph and Mary from their home in Galilee to Bethlehem of Judea "to be taxed" (Luke 2: 4, 5). No such decree of Augustus is known to secular history; the provinces were taxed locally and at such different times as the local authorities decreed. If Jesus was born, as Matthew says, "in the days of Herod," Joseph, whether a resident of Galilee or of Judea, could not have been subject to such a Roman tax, for neither of these Jewish districts, belonging to Herod's kingdom was then a part of the Roman empire or of its province of Syria, being added thereto only in 7 AD Nor would residents of Galilee have gone to Judea to be taxed, either when both districts were separate governments, or after both were parts of Syria; citizens are taxed in the places of their actual residence, not in the town, in a different government, where they chanced to have been born. In all respects, "the account of Luke rests, therefore, on a series of mistakes" (Encyc. Bib., Vol. 1: col. 808).

The age of Jesus at the beginning of his ministry is left in like uncertainty. Luke says: "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. ... Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age" (Luke 3: 1, 23). The reign of Tiberius began in 14 AD; the fifteenth year of his reign would be 29 AD If Jesus was born, as Matthew says, "in the days of Herod the king" (Matt. 2: 1), and was thus born in or before 6 BC, as Matthew's account works out, Jesus would be thirty-five years of age in AD 29 and not "about thirty." But if Jesus was born, as Luke says, "when Cyrenius was governor of Syria" (Luke 2: 2), which was in AD 7, Jesus would be but twenty-one or twenty-two years of age in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, 29 AD, when his ministry began. The Jews took exceptions to the remark of Jesus: "Before Abraham was, I am." "Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" (John 7: 56-58). Thus Jesus, at least by appearance, must have been nearly fifty years of age during his ministry.

Jesus, according to Luke, began his ministry very shortly after John began his, which was in the time of Tiberius, as above shown, "Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests" (Luke 3: 1, 2, 23; 4: 1, 14, 15). This is another inspired impossibility: two high priests never held the office jointly. It is as if a history of the United States should read: "Washington and Monroe being Presidents," there being about the same space of time between the two presidents and the two high priests. Caiaphas was the high priest at the time indicated, and three others had held the office between Annas and Caiaphas (Josephus, Bk. 18: chap. 2, sec. 2). At the time when Caiaphas was high priest, John the Baptist, cousin of Jesus, began his tour of preaching, just when "Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age" (Luke 3: 1-3, 23), and immediately afterwards Jesus was baptized (Luke 3: 21), and began his own ministry (Luke 4: 1, 14, 15). But according to Matthew, Jesus was but about two years old at the death of Herod and his return from Egypt, when "in those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea" (Matt. 2: 19-23; 3: 1).

The ministry of Jesus lasted, according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, for only one year; according to John it covered at least three years. The former writers record but one visit of Jesus to Jerusalem; John brings him there at least four times (John 2: 13; 5: 1; 10: 22, 23; 12: 12). In this brief space of one or three years, so great was his activity, says John, that besides all the things which he relates in his gospel, "there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (John 21: 25) ! But in the very next book of the Bible, it is avowed by Luke that in his "former treatise" -- that is, the Gospel of Luke -- he had recorded "all that Jesus

began both to do and to teach, Until the day in which he was taken up" (Acts 1: 1, 2). These things which Jesus both did and taught will now be examined as they are recorded by inspired pens.

THE "BLESSED NAME" OF JESUS

It may be noted first, in passing, that the name of the "Christ," whether God or man, was not, to himself and his own family and people, Jesus at all. His given name in Hebrew, or Aramaic, the language in which he spoke, is Yehoshua (plain Joshua)-- exactly the same as that of the old heathen worthy for whom the sun and moon stood still upon Gibeon. The meaning of the name is "Yahveh is salvation"; Jesus is the later Greek form of the name Joshua.

The added title "Christ" is another Greek translation or substitute for the Hebrew Scripture word "Messiah," which means "anointed." John, if he wrote the gospel attributed to him, himself a Hebrew but writing in current Greek, correctly explains this when he tells of Andrew's coming to his brother Simon Peter and announcing: "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ" (John 1: 41). Both words, the Hebrew Mashiach and its Greek equivalent Christos, mean simply "the anointed."

The Galilean bearer of this name (Hebrew, Joshua; Greek, Jesus), by this token cannot be the virgin-born subject of the "prophecy" of Isaiah, as claimed by Matthew; for Isaiah declares that his virgin, bearing a son, "shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7: 14; quoted in Matt. 1: 23). This name, as Matthew explains in the same verse, "being interpreted is, God [El] with us" (Matt. 1: 23); whereas Joshua (Jesus) means, as we have seen, "Yahveh is salvation." So the virgin-born Joshua or Jesus of Matthew cannot be possibly -- all other proofs aside -- the same infant as the virgin-born Immanuel of Isaiah.

It has already been fully proved that Isaiah's unfulfilled "prophecy" regarding his "sign" of the outcome of the war of the two kings against Jerusalem does not at all refer to the child of Mary, 750 years later. We need not dwell again here on this prophecy of miraculous birth, but proceed to other as compelling proofs of the persistent errancy and inconsistency of Matthew and his fellow propagandists of this Jesus as the Christ.

The great national hero who should come to avenge the Chosen People of Yahveh against the Assyrians and other oppressors is not once intimated in the Hebrew Scriptures to be any other than a human being, "of the seed of David," who, as a king, should re-establish the throne of David on earth, as so often promised and proclaimed by Yahveh (e.g., Isa. 11: 1; Luke 1: 32; Acts 2: 30). Never once is it hinted that Yahveh himself, "Man of war" though he was, would come in person to accomplish the liberation and restoration of his Chosen People, after failing so signally to save them from destruction and captivity. Nor is there so much as an ambiguous or doubtful bit of revelation that Yahveh had a son by the name of Joshua, whom he would send at some time in the future to fill the role of the promised hero, and either establish the throne of David on earth, or set up a new religion promising a kingdom in heaven to the disappointed expectants of the renewed earthly Kingdom of Israel.

GENEALOGIES OF JESUS

The pedigree of Jesus causes the next notable conflict, between Matthew and one of his colleagues, Luke, who contradicts him, and between both of them and the Old Testament records. The chief of the essential qualifications of the expected Jewish Messiah was that he should be of the house and lineage of David the King, and should as king "re-establish the throne of David forever." This descent in unbroken line must be proved of Jesus the Son of Joseph or of Yahveh, or of any other who would successfully claim to fulfil the promise of the Messiah as an earthly king. Matthew therefore begins his biography with "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1: 1). Beginning with Abraham, he comes in a direct line of "begettings" to David, and from David, through Solomon and Roboam, to one Jacob: "And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ" (Matt. 1: 16); and he declares specifically, after naming all by name, that from David to Christ there are twenty-eight generations (1: 17). Matthew says that from Abraham, with whom his genealogy begins, to Jesus there were forty-two generations; but his own list (1: 2-16) shows only forty-one. He seems to have counted someone twice.

Matthew divides his genealogy into three periods, from Abraham to David, from David to the carrying away into captivity, from the captivity to Jesus; and he declares that in each of these periods "are fourteen

generations" (Matt. 1: 17) -- twice seven, the sacred number of the Jews. But in order to get this fanciful uniformity of numbers, Matthew deliberately falsifies the records of the Old Testament. The inspired, and supposedly official, Davidic genealogy "from David until the carrying away into Babylon," -- according to Matthew, "fourteen generations" -- is recorded in 1 Chronicles (3: 1, 5, 10-16), the first name being David and the last -- up to the "carrying away" -- Zedekiah. But when Matthew gets to Joram, he begins to falsify, and he says, "and Joram begat Ozias" (Matt. 1: 8), and then proceeds with his list. In doing this, Matthew purposely Omits four generations -- after Joram, "Ahaziah his son, Joash his son, Amaziah his son" (1 Chron. 3: 11, 12) - - three kings of David's direct line whose combined reigns were seventy years; then, after Josias, who, he says, "begat Jechonias" (Matt. 1: 11), he omits Jehoiakim (1 Chron. 3: 16), who reigned three months. Without going further into details, instead of there being, as Matthew says (Matt, 1: 17), exactly "fourteen generations" for each period, the true tally is: Abraham to David, 13; David until the "carrying away," 19; thence to Jesus, 13; a total of forty-five instead of the forty-two stated and forty-one recorded by Matthew, as any one who will delve into the tortuous records may verify. Matthew in his pre-Davidic list puts in the names of four women (an unprecedented thing for Jewish genealogies). Of more unsavory repute than these four ancestresses of the Son of God no females could be: Tamar, double daughter-in-law of Judah, who tricked him into incest with her; Rachab, harlot of Jericho, public prostitute; Ruth, young widow avid for another man, who stole in the dark into Boaz's bed in the barn and slept with him for incitation to marriage; Bath-sheba, adulteress with David, who connived at David's murder of her husband Uriah that she might have the "man after Yahveh's own heart" with impunity. To him she bore the bastard Solomon. As foachab, Matthew commits a gross inspired anachronism, and records her as the mother of Boaz and hence second mother-in-law of Ruth -- "Salmon begat Booz of Rachab" (Matt. 1: 5) -- and only three generations from David; whereas Rachab was the "harlot of Jericho" who entertained the "spies" of Joshua (Joshua 2: 1), nearly four centuries earlier. Luke, in chapter 3 of his equally inspired and credible biography, produces the genealogy of his subject, but in inverse order, from Jesus to David, instead of, as in Matthew, from David to Jesus. Luke carries the line of begettings directly back to David via one Mattatha, "which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David" (3: 32), instead of from David through Solomon and Roboam, like Matthew. Luke names and specifies forty-three generations from David to Jesus, instead of Matthew's twenty-eight; and only three names of the two contradictory lists are the same, except David at one end and Jesus at the other; the immediate ancestry at both ends is totally different. For comparison, here are the sacred genealogies as vouched for by the two inspired biographers:

MATTHEW 1:6-17 LUKE 3:23-38

*1. David

Solomon

Roboam

Abia

Asa

Josaphat

Joram

Ozias

Joatham

Achaz

Ezekias

Manasses

Amon

Josias

Jechonias *16. Salathiel *17. Zorobabel

18. Abiud *19. Eliakim

Azor

Sadoc

*1. David

Nathan

Mattatha

Menan

Melea *6. Eliakim

Jonan

Joseph

Juda

Simeon

Levi

Matthat

Jorim

Eliezer

Jose

Er

Elmodam

Cosam

Addi

Melchi

Neri

Achim

Eliud

Eleazar

Matthan

Jacob *27. Joseph *28. Jesus

*22. Salathiel *23. Zorobabel

Rhesa

Joanna

Juda

Joseph

Semei

Mattathias

Maath

Nagge

Esli

Naum

Amos

Mattathias

Joseph

Janna

Melchi

Levi

Matthat

Heli *42. Joseph

*43. Jesus

*Indicates names which occur in both lists.

This proves entire want of truth in one or the other of these fictitious and contradictory genealogies; and, curiously, both at the most critical point break the circuit of the direct descent of Jesus from David. For if Jesus was not the carnal son of Joseph, but was the incarnate Son of Yahveh by his Holy Ghost and the yet virgin Mary, he could not, by any possibility of human descent, be a blood descendant of David, whose line of generation ended with Joseph -- if Joseph was not the carnal father of Jesus. So in no sense could Jesus be a "Son of David," and so fill the first and essential requirement of the promised Messiah.

The "genealogies of Jesus," fictitious compilations of a century more or less after Jesus, ipso facto prove that at the time they were composed Jesus was regarded simply as a man "born of the seed of David after the flesh"; else why human genealogies? A God could have no ancestors. The truth is thus declared: "The genealogy could never have been drawn up after Joseph ceased to be regarded as the real father of Jesus" (Encyc. Biblica, Vol. 3: col. 2960).

Jesus himself denies positively that he is a "son of David"; for, "while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord? ... If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" (Matt. 22: 41-43, 45; Mark 12: 35-37; Luke 20: 41-44). This was a good deal of a conundrum, "for no man was able to answer him a word" (Matt. 22: 46). Nor can I. But John the Divine, about one hundred years later, quotes Jesus as saying in heaven: "I am the root and the offspring of David" (Rev. 22: 16); but this was in a dream.

Luke says that this controversy as to whether Jesus was a "son of David" was, not with Matthew's Pharisees, but between Jesus and "certain of the scribes" (Luke 20: 39-44); though Mark records no controversy at all, but says that Jesus, "while he taught in the temple," talking to "the common people," himself proposed the conundrum ("How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David?" Mark 12: 35-37) and answered it himself, and no one else said a word. Mark quotes Jesus as saying that David said all this about the Lord "by the Holy Ghost" (Mark 12: 36); but Matthew says Jesus said: "How then doth David in spirit call him Lord" (Matt. 22:, 43); Luke says simply that Jesus said that "David saith in the book of Psalms" (Luke 20: 42).

Matthew adds to his account that after the dispute about the "son of David" matter with the Pharisees, "neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions" (Matt. 22: 46); but Mark records that it was "one of the scribes" who argued with Jesus about the commandments, and "no man after that durst ask him any question" (Mark 12: 28-34); Luke declares that it was after a controversy with the Sadducees regarding the resurrection, and "after that they durst not ask him any question at all" (Luke 20: 27-40).

VIRGIN BIRTH OF JESUS

The reputed virgin birth of Jesus we have already fully disproved as having been prophesied by Isaiah, Matthew to the contrary notwithstanding. We shall briefly consider the miraculous pregnancy of the Ever-Virgin Mother (who had more than half a dozen children), and the circumstances of the birth of her first-born, Joshua or Jesus.

Matthew again is our inspired historian. He relates that, "When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 1: 18); that Joseph felt quite naturally disposed to "put her away privily"; but that he dreamed that an angel of Yahveh told him to fear not to accept his wife Mary, "for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" (1: 20). This dream seems to have quite satisfied Joseph, though he had never heard of a Holy Ghost, and no such person of the Christian Trinity is recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures. A curious grammatical consideration tends to disprove that Gabriel told Joseph (Matt.

1: 20), or Mary (Luke 1: 35), that the Holy Ghost would be the father of her child. In the Hebrew, or, Aramaic, spoken by these peasants, the word "spirit" or "ghost" (ruach) is of the feminine gender, and would never be thought of as indicating a potential father. But in Greek the word (pneuma) is masculine, so that the Church Father who forged the tale might with grammatical propriety, however fictitiously, say that the hagian pneuma (Holy Ghost) begot Jesus. So Joseph, "being raised from sleep, did as [he dreamed that] the angel of Yahveh had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son" (1: 24, 25; cf. Luke 2: 7).

Thus we learn, from Matthew, that the news of this pregnancy of his wife by the Holy Ghost was first broken to Joseph in a dream. When he dreamed this Inspiration does not directly tell; but it is readily deduced that it was not till at least three months after the secret visitation by the Holy Ghost took place, as will appear below. That it was several months after is also indicated by the fact that Joseph then took her unto himself, "and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son" -- evidently a considerable space of time, as the fact of Joseph's marital self-restraint is specially noted.

This (parenthetically) disproves too the dogma that Mary remained immaculate and ever-virgin: for, that Joseph knew her not "till" she had given birth to her first-born son, argues that he did "know her" carnally thereafter; and her "first-born" son argues others born thereafter. So a favorite fallacy of the celibate Fathers is exploded; to say nothing of the virginity-destroying effects of the births of half a dozen brothers and sisters of Jesus: "his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas, and his sisters," (Matt. 13: 55, 56; Mark 6: 2, 3); and Paul speaks of seeing his friend the apostle "James the Lord's brother" (Gal. 1: 19).

Luke as usual contradicts Matthew's story of Joseph's dream of the origin of his wife's pregnancy. Luke goes into much detail, relating that the angel Gabriel, in the sixth month after his like mission to Mary's cousin Elizabeth, was sent from Yahveh to Nazareth, "to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, ... and the virgin's name was Mary" (Luke 1: 26, 27). Gabriel announced to Mary that "the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee," and that she should "bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus." And Gabriel told her that the same kind of thing had already happened to her cousin Elizabeth six months before; and he departed. Mary, with true womanly instinct, arose and went with haste into the hill country, to the town of Elizabeth, to congratulate her and to break the news of her own like expectation; they both celebrated exultantly "with a loud voice" (1: 42).

Mary's hymn of praise at the "annunciation" is not a spontaneous and original jubilation; it is almost word for word copied from the song of Hannah over the similar annunciation of the birth of Samuel (cf. 1 Sam. 2: 1-5; Luke 1: 47-55).

Whether the annunciation was made by an angel to Mary or in a dream to Joseph, there is little difference; Luke's angels are of the same sort of stuff as Matthew's dreams, and everyone is coming now to know that angels's tales and Bible visions are but as "the baseless fabric of a dream."

That Mary had not told Joseph of the "visitation" of the Holy Ghost to her, and that he was ignorant of it for at least three months, is very evident from Matthew's inspired record. The promise was no doubt performed to Mary at the time of the "visitation" of the angel, related by Luke. It was three months later, when Mary returned to Joseph, or later still, that Joseph, by some means not revealed, "found" that Mary was "with child of the Holy Ghost." Really what Joseph found was simply that his wife "was with child," without his knowing by whom or what. For Joseph was thereupon, and naturally, "minded to put her away privily," so as not to "make her a public example" and create a scandal, as Matthew says. So Joseph could not have known, at the time of his discovery of the pregnancy, who was its author. It was only later, when he was sleeping on the matter, that he dreamed that he was told: "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 1: 20). That the suspicions of Joseph should have been so easily allayed by a dream may appear queer. Both Joseph and Mary, as Luke elsewhere relates, disclaim the whole story of the intervention of the Holy Ghost in the conception of Jesus, and themselves assert their own human and natural parenthood of the Child (Luke 2: 48-50).

We may here note for what it is worth in support of the orthodox faith that there was no novelty at all in virgin births from gods in the ancient religions. They were commonplace happenings which any superstitiously inclined pagan or Hebrew would readily accept in fullness of faith. Even the Hebrew Yahveh, who is not revealed to have had any heavenly spouse, is credited with numerous offspring -- the "beni ha-Elohim, sons of the-Gods," of Genesis and Job, who sported with the daughters of men, producing the demigod giants. To Yahveh also is credited the miraculous conceptions of Isaac (Gen. 18: 10, 11; 21: 1-3); of Samson (Judges 13: 2, 3, 24); of Samuel (1 Sam.

1: 9-11, 20); and of John the Baptist (Luke 1: 7-13). A similar miracle does not therefore prove Jesus divine; and Jesus evidently was not the "only begotten Son" of Yahveh God.

The great god of the Greeks, Zeus, was also prolific author of virgin births, of which we cite only the well-known and highly accredited instances of his copulation in the form of a swan with Leda, the miraculous product of which was the twins Castor and Pollux, and his intrigue with Io, which resulted in a son Epaphus.

The Roman war-god Mars likewise kept amorous tryst with the vestal virgin Rhea Silvia, from which the twins Romulus and Remus resulted. The great hero Achilles was also the product of the amours of, this time, a human father and the immortal sea-goddess Thetis. Divine hybrids in human form resulted. Alexander the Great was reputed son of his mother Olympias and Jupiter Ammon, as that god himself declared. The Egyptian Pharaohs and the Roman emperors were gods, the former by birth, the latter by apotheosis, just as are saints by canonization. The Son of Yahveh and Mary could not have been altogether "Very God," but was half human, and so only a demigod. Either virgin births by gods were very frequent actualities in the good old Hebrew-pagan times, or priestly assurance and popular credulity passed them as miraculous events worthy of faith. It is all the same, so far as they may serve as precedents for faith in the virgin birth of the reputed Son of Yahveh. The only authentication which we have of this much controverted event is sundry "proofs of Holy Writ," consisting of very contradictory scraps of inspiration in the New Testament.

Peter, at Pentecost, when all were filled with the Holy Ghost, preached his first sermon, in which by plenary inspiration he declared: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you," etc. "The patriarch David. ... Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him [Psalm 132: 11, 12], that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne" (Acts 2: 22, 29, 30). What could be more positive proof of humanity and disproof of divine paternity than this first avowal of Peter, perverted by his successors? And Paul, if he wrote the Second Epistle to Timothy, says: "Jesus Christ of the seed of David" (2 Tim. 2: 8). And John of Patmos: "I Jesus ... am the root and the offspring of David" (Rev. 22: 16). A god cannot be crazy; but Mark records (Mark 3: 21; cf. John 10: 20) that the family and friends of Jesus thought him so and went to arrest him as a madman: "And when his friends [margin: relatives] heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself" (Greek: existemi, to be out of one's wits, distracted, beside oneself). Thus his own family knew him for human and knew nothing of the fabled paternity of the Holy Ghost.

Paul, the most dogmatic theologian of them all, admits that Jesus Christ was altogether human in origin, for he "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Rom. 1: 3), and was simply "declared to be the Son of God [Yahveh] with power, according to the spirit of holiness" (1: 4). Paul admits the manhood of the Christ: "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2: 5). The Christ of Peter and Paul was not a god, but a mere man, "approved of God," and endowed with divine gifts, but yet a mere human being. Mark, the earliest of the gospel biographers, mentions no miraculous or virgin birth at all, either of Jesus or of John; Mark is therefore a potent witness 'ab silentio' against the controverted fact. Luke, after quoting Gabriel in chapter 1(28-36), seems to forget all about him in chapter 2: where he simply relates that Joseph went from Nazareth to Bethlehem "to be taxed, with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. ... And she brought forth her firstborn son" (Luke 2: 5, 7). Luke also relates the visit of Simeon to the temple to see the Child. Simeon indulged in ecstasies very like those of Gabriel. It is recorded: "And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him" (Luke 2: 33). Why should they marvel at what they already knew from Gabriel? It is evidence that Gabriel hadn't told them, and that they knew the child was their own son.

John says not a word of miraculous or virgin birth; he says: "I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God [Yahveh]" (John 1: 34). But what John meant by "Son of God" he has previously defined, and the expression is clearly shown by his own words to be used in a metaphorical, or Pickwickian, sense -- for all believers are sons of God: "But as many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name [even the devils believe and tremble]: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (1: 12, 13).

Thus two of the four gospel biographers wholly ignore -- and so tacitly deny -- any pretence of miraculous or virgin birth -- the most transcendent dogma of later Christian faith; and Paul and Peter, the greatest authors of dogma, expressly declare Jesus to have been of purely human procreation and birth -- "made of the seed of David according to the flesh" -- as he could not have been if of Yahvistic paternity. And if he was not, through Joseph, "of the seed of David," every inspired "prophecy of the Messiah" fails utterly.

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

The signs and portents attendant upon the miraculous birth of Joshua-Jesus give occasion for another clash between the inspirations of Matthew and of Luke, and lead into several tangles. Matthew alone of the four gospel historians relates that mysterious phenomenon of the heavens, the "star of Bethlehem"; and so relates it that we know it never was seen by eye of "wise men" or foolish, but was only a vision of inspired imagination. The East was celebrated for its zeal in the science of astronomy; but never an astronomer of Eastern antiquity saw recorded that extraordinary star. Nor did anyone else ever see it, outside the mind's eye, as is evident enough from the inspired account of it.

In his second chapter Matthew essays to tell how certain "wise men from the east" (but from where in the East he does not say) came to Jerusalem "when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea," and went about asking: "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" "for," they explained, "we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him" (2: 1, 2).

It is clear therefore, that this "star" was no bright and flaming sidereal luminary; it was not visible on the meridian of Jerusalem; no one but the "wise men" is recorded to have seen it at all; and they saw it only "in the east." Proof of this is that Herod "was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him" (2: 3) when they heard about the strange star. Herod "gathered all the chief priests and scribes," and inquired about the alleged new King of the Jews (2: 4); then he "privily called the wise men," and "enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared" (2: 7). Neither Herod nor any of "all Jerusalem" had seen this marvel or there would have been no need to "diligently enquire" as to the when and where of the phenomenon, which had now entirely disappeared from human view, else Herod could have seen it for himself.

It is clear too that this "star" was not the guiding pilot that it is popularly supposed to have been, leading the "Wise men" from the East to Jerusalem, or to the new-born King. It is not visible in Jerusalem; the "wise men" claimed only to "have seen his star in the east," somewhere far away. And they came to Jerusalem (not "to Bethlehem where the child was"), wholly ignorant of his whereabouts; so that they had to go about asking anybody they met on the streets, just as a stranger in town asks the corner policeman: "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" (2: 2). How these pagan down-easters were inspired to know or care anything about an unheard-of baby King of the Jews, or to know what the alleged "star in the east" signified with respect to him, and to journey across the burning deserts to "worship" him is curious to inquire, but is not revealed. Nor was the miraculous "star" itself very revealing. Though hung up in the Eastern skies for their own special benefit and guidance, it led them not to the Babe King in Bethlehem, nor even to Jerusalem; they had to go about and ask: "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" But no one in all Jerusalem had seen the star or knew of the new-born King.

The sequel proves that wicked Herod was now himself to be "numbered among the prophets"; for he "gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together," and "demanded of them [a very curious and 'inspired' sort of question] where Christ should be born?" (2: 4). Surely Herod never asked such a question. It was thirty-odd years afterwards that (to believe the story at all) Jesus was first "Christ"-ened, or "anointed," and thus first became "Christ," or "the Anointed." Unless Herod was inspired by prophetic vision, and could foresee thirty-odd years into the future, and behold in his mind's eye the very variously related incident of the woman breaking the alabaster box of ointment over the head -- or the feet -- of the Babe of Bethlehem, he could not ask such a question; and we may be sure that he did not. It is Luke who says that the Babe was born in a manger; Matthew declares that the "wise men" came "into the house" where the Child and mother were (Matt. 2: 11) and gave their presents. Luke says the Child was "laid ... in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2: 7). But there were no inns in Jewry at that time; the story betrays its fabrication by some Greek Father in a foreign country, who knew nothing of such details.

As the star had not led them right, the "wise men" had to pursue their quest for the object of their search. It required the whole assemblage of priestly wisecracks of Jerusalem to answer, by the aid of an errant prophecy, that the "Governor" was to be born in Bethlehem of Judea (2: 5, 6). And even now the "star" did not help or guide them to their goal. It was Herod himself, when he got the report of the priestly conclave, who "sent them to Bethlehem" (2: 8) to find the young Child, and return and report to him.

Then, "when they had heard the king, they departed" (2: 9) on their now well-directed way; and 'mirabile dictu,' "lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young

child was" (2: 9). Thus the wonderful star, till now wonderfully inefficient as a guide when the Wise Men needed guidance across the deserts, now when it was no longer needed as a guide, Herod himself having located the place, flared up before their eyes and flitted along before them on their journey to Bethlehem, a little suburban town just across the creek from Jerusalem.

This fabled "star of Bethlehem" was evidently merely a sort of flighty will-o'-the-wisp, not a regular star; for the nearest star in the heavens is some twenty trillions of miles away from earth, where it can be seen of all men, wise or otherwise, and neither goes before people, to guide them where they do not need a guide, nor comes and stands for their accommodation when they get there. However, it is curious to note that the "wise men," who are said to have seen the star "in the east" before coming to Jerusalem, now seem to have seen it for the first time as they left Jerusalem and as it "went before them" Bethlehem-ward; for, "when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy" (2: 10).

When the "wise men" had at last found the young Child, they duly worshipped it, and delivered their gifts; then, dreaming of some heavenly warning not to return to Herod, they "departed into their own country another way" (2: 12) -- so as to fool Herod, who was said to be awaiting their return to go himself and worship the baby King to be (2: 8). This is the faithful record of Matthew.

THE SHEPHERD CHOIR

But, according to the record of Luke, it did not happen this way at all. There was no star of Bethlehem; there were no "wise men" from the East; simply a group of lowly "shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night" (Luke 2: 8). To them an anonymous angel came, scaring them very badly, and told them that "a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (thus again anticipating the anointing), was born unto them that day. And of a sudden a whole angel choir, a "multitude of the heavenly host," winged down to earth from the heavens, over 1,000,000 light years away, and sang wondrously in the cold night air: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (2: 13, 14) -- an angelic prophecy never yet realized on this war-racked, hate-filled earth. It was the shepherds, according to Luke, who came with haste to Bethlehem to investigate the angelic report; and when they had found "the babe lying in a manger," they straightway broadcast the news throughout all those parts (2: 16, 17). The reader may choose whether to accept Matthew's star or Luke's angel choir. It is curious to note that in Matthew every communication regarding the Child Jesus is through dreams; in Luke through the agency of angels -- but both alike unreal.

THE NOCTURNAL FLIGHT TO EGYPT

Another highly important conflict of inspiration occurs here, in connection with the early life of the Child Jesus. Mark, who wrote first, omits all the childhood of his subject, beginning his biography with "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1: 1). But Matthew seeks to supply many items -- as is not infrequent with biographers. The cherry-tree episode of the youthful Father of his Country is an instance. But Matthew's "sources" were not ample, or his imagination lagged; so he sends the Holy Family and the Child to Egypt for some years, in fulfilment, he says, of another "prophecy," which we have elsewhere seen was not one at all. In any event, Luke says it was not true, as we shall presently see.

According to Matthew, immediately after the "(wise men" had departed for their own country, as a result of their dream of warning (Matt. 2: 12), another dream caused another hegira, thus related:

"When they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night [that same night], and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son." (Matt. 2: 13-15)

They stayed in Egypt until after the death of Herod, some unknown time later. Then they were told to return (Matt. 2: 20) in the same words in which Yahveh had commanded Moses to return to Egypt (Ex. 4: 19).

We have already examined the so-called "Out of Egypt" prophecy of Hosea (Hos. 11: 1), and have seen that it meant nothing whatever about Jesus. It is pleasing to know from Luke that we are right on this point. For Luke goes inspiredly into the young life of the Child, and relates it in no little detail. We see Luke's shepherds find the Babe in his manger (Luke 2: 16); then, still there, eight days afterwards the Child is circumcised and

named Jesus (2: 21); and then the Virgin Mother, dogmatized as immaculate and ever-pure, remained there for another thirty-three days, purging herself for her "purification according to the law of Moses" (2: 22; Lev. 12: 2-4). Then followed the several visits of Simeon (2: 25-35) and of Anna (2: 36-38), how long they lasted being unrevealed. Before either of the visits, however we have at least forty days in which the Child remained in his lowly Bethlehem manger, instead of flitting to Egypt the night of the visit of the Magi. All this time, too, the Immaculate Mother of God was "unclean" by the holy law, and could not so much as touch her own Holy Child (Lev. 12: 4) -- a truly godly prohibition to a mother with a new born babe. And then, Luke assures us: "When they had performed all things according to the law of Yahveh, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth" (2: 39).

So they did not flee into Egypt, as Matthew records. For upon returning directly to their home in Nazareth (Luke 2: 39), there they remained throughout the childhood and youth of their son Jesus, and there "the child grew, and waxed strong" (2: 40), never leaving home except once a year to go to Jerusalem with his parents, says Luke:

"Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast." (Luke 2: 41, 42)

And they took the young Jesus along with them, at least on this occasion, for "when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it" (2: 43), and did not discover that the child was missing until the next day: "But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey" (2: 44). Not finding him, "they turned back again to Jerusalem," and "after three days" of search, "they found him in the temple" arguing with the doctors (2: 45, 46). So for at least twelve years there was no midnight flight to Egypt to escape Herod; and they could not have remained there "until the death of Herod" (Matt. 2: 15), for Herod died in the year 4 AD, during the twelve years that the Holy Family remained at home in Nazareth, as Luke testifies. That Jesus was not born in the year 1 of his era, but some 6 to 10 years BC, is now generally known.

There in the temple, when the Child was found, Mary herself positively denies the divine paternity of her Child, and rightly calls Joseph its father; for when she found the Child, she said: "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father [Joseph] and I have sought thee sorrowing" (2: 48). Jesus here seems to deny the paternity of Joseph, saying: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (2: 49) or, as the Revised Version honestly translates: "I must be in my Father's house." But both Joseph and Mary "understood not the saying which he spake unto them" (2: 50) -- thus proving that they knew him for their own flesh-and-blood Child, and had no thought or knowledge of the dogma of divine paternity.

Even now they did not go to Egypt, for "he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them" (2: 51). And there he remained until he began to teach and preach when he "began to be about thirty years old," after his baptism by John. So the prophecy "Out of Egypt have I called my Son" is shown to be another instance of errant inspiration.

Here we may notice anotheadical contradiction. Luke makes Joseph and his family residents of Nazareth, and says they went from there to Bethlehem to be taxed, and then "they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth" (Luke 2: 4, 5, 39). But Matthew makes Joseph and his family resident in Bethlehem, whence they fled into Egypt. When Herod was dead, they returned and "came into the land of Israel" (Matt. 2: 21), but hearing that Archelaus was king in Judea, in which Bethlehem is situated, "he was afraid to go thither." After another dream-warning "he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth" (Matt. 2: 22, 23), that another specious prophecy might be fulfilled. This indicates that Galilee was outside of Herod's kingdom, and discredits the story of the family's going to Bethlehem "to be taxed," because Judea and Galilee were separate governments, and people are always taxed in their own country, not in a foreign land.

THE "MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS"

The amazing statement of Matthew that when Herod "saw that he was mocked of the wise men, [he] was exceeding wrath, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under" (Matt. 2: 16; may be dismissed with bare mention. That a Roman king, under the great Roman peace of the golden age of Augustus, could execute such a wholesale massacre of the subjects

of the empire proves itself impossible. No human history records such a massacre in Judea; not even Josephus, who relates in forty chapters of his Antiquities of the Jews the most trifling details of the life and reign of Herod and dilates upon his many crimes, has a word of this tremendous murderous event. But why argue such a statement of even an inspired author? The story, moreover, involves other serious contradictions. Matthew says that Herod commanded the massacre of all the children of the district "from two years old and under"; consequently Jesus was at least two years old at the time, and, curiously enough, Herod must have patiently waited quite two years after being "mocked of the wise men," before he got so "exceeding wrath" as to commit this amazing, and unrecorded, crime. Nor was there any need for this long wait and general massacre: Herod could easily have caught the child in Jerusalem, for just after the "purification" "they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to Yahveh" in the temple (Luke 2: 22, 27). But, what is more serious, the massacre never occurred at all; for Luke expressly asserts that immediately after the forty days "purification" of the Immaculate Virgin, and after the visits of Simeon and Anna, Joseph and Mary "returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth," and remained there continuously. This wholly discounts Matthew's visit of the Magi, the flight to Egypt, the "mocking" of Herod, and Herod's massacre of the Innocents. So this bloody blot is removed from wicked Herod's escutcheon.

JOHN AND THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

The first thing recorded by inspiration in regard to Jesus -- after his return from Egypt, or after he did not go to Egypt but "began to be about thirty years old" at home in the carpenter's shop of Nazareth is his reputed baptism by his cousin John the Baptist, in the Jordan. John himself is the subject of much uncertainty, into which we may for a moment inquire. His paternity is involved in curious obscurity, very like that of ancient Isaac. His parents were "both now well stricken in years," and his mother was "barren," like old Sarah. Angels, too, had to come and prophesy a child to them and some sort of divine agency is apparent in the fulfillment of the prophecy, for the child was "filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb" (Luke 1: 5-15). By special orders of Gabriel the child was named John; he wasn't really John, however, but, miraculously, the ancient prophet Elijah, alias Elias -- if his cousin Jesus is to be believed against the positive denial of the Baptist. For Jesus, inspired with all truth, says and repeats explicitly of John: "This is Elias, which was for to come" (Matt. 11: 14; 17: 11-13); and Matthew to prove it -- as if the word of Jesus needed proof -- invokes a prophecy of Malachi: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of Yahveh" (Mal. 4: 5). But John as categorically twice denies the imputation:

"And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No." (John 1: 20, 21) So with this positive "He is" of Jesus and the equally positive "I am not" of John, who ought to know, we must leave the identity of the Baptist in doubt, but the "great and dreadful day of Yahveh" did not come in John's time, nor did Jesus fulfil the role of him of whom Elijah was to be the precursor. We pass to the proofs of the baptism and some of its contrary incidents. Matthew tells us:

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea [and many came], And were baptized of him in Jordan. ... Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now. ... Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3: 1, 6, 13-17)

So John the Baptist knew and recognized Jesus, talked with him, and modestly protested against baptizing the Son of Yahveh, "whose shoes I am not worthy to bear" (3: 11); and John saw the dove from heaven, and heard the voice from heaven proclaiming the God-Man. Mark (1: 9-11), Luke (3: 21, 22), and John (1: 25-32), all relate the same inspired incident, and John the Evangelist, whose "record is true," as he himself admits, emphasizes the Baptist's knowledge of the divine identity of Jesus, and quotes the Baptist as proclaiming his knowledge that it was the Christ who came to him to be baptized -- but whom he evidently did not baptize, for he does not mention this, which would have been the most signal event of his life. Let us try to get this straight; the story is very tangled. The Evangelist John, first speaking of, then quoting John the Baptist, says: "John bare

witness of him, and cried, saying, This is he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me ... And of his fullness have we received, and grace for grace" (John 1: 15, 16). John could not have said this; it was before the alleged baptism of Jesus, and before Jesus began his "ministry of grace," and hence could not have been said at that time. The Baptist is further quoted by the Evangelist as declaring to sundry Pharisees who came to ask who he was and why he baptized: "John answered them, saying, ... There standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me" (John 1: 24-27). This a clear and unequivocal recognition by the Baptist of the Christ. The Evangelist then says: "These things were done in Beth- abara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing" (John 1: 28). The Greek Father who wrote this tale did not know Jewish geography; there is no such place in Jewry as Beth-abara; it was in Perea, far from the Jordan. So the Revised Version changes the name to Bethany; but this does not help, as Bethany is a suburb of Jerusalem and not "beyond Jordan," nor near the Jordan. The Evangelist proceeds: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me" (John 1: 29, 30) -- another explicit recognition. Then the Baptist twice says: "And I knew him not" (John 1: 31, 33), until he saw the promised "sign" of the dove descending from heaven upon Jesus (John 1: 32, 33). Upon seeing the sign, John says: "I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God" (John 1: 34). But he says not a word of a miraculous voice from heaven proclaiming: "This is my beloved Son," no records that he baptized Jesus; a rare omission on both points, for John is the only one of the disciples who was present at the scene. If John heard the voice from heaven, he evidently did not believe it, as his next recorded action proves.

Notwithstanding all the foregoing explicit testimonials, inspiration contradicts them all, makes it clear that John did not baptize or even know Jesus, and makes John have to send a special embassy from prison to Jesus to inquire about his identity:

"Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (Matt. 11: 2, 3; Luke 7: 18-20)

The clearest inference from this passage is that the Baptist did not baptize or even know Jesus, his own cousin, and did not "beacord" that "this is he who cometh after me" -- "this is the Son of God." So whether Jesus was eveeally baptized at all is very doubtful. John the Baptist certainly, on the gospel word of two of the four gospel biographers, did not baptize him; for he could not have done so and borne such witness, and then forget all about it, and send to inquire as about a total stranger.

Naturally the Baptist could not have "heard in the prison the works of Christ" (Matt. 11: 2) until the Christ had begun his ministry and had performed "works" or miracles -- so that, says Luke, "this rumor of him went forth throughout all Judea and throughout all the region round about. And the disciples of John shewed him of all these things" (Luke 7: 17, 18). And Matthew confirms the idea that the imprisonment of John was after Jesus had chosen and commissioned his disciples and had started his preaching tour (Matt. 11: 1), though he seems to contradict this in an earlier chapter, saying immediately after the account of the temptation in the wilderness: "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee" (Matt.4: 12), and "From that time Jesus began to preach" (Matt. 4: 17) -- thus beginning his ministry after John was in prison. But John the Evangelist contradicts this; according to him, Jesus had called his disciples and turned water into wine at Cana (John 2: 1, 2); had travelled around Galilee and Judea (John 2: 12, 13); had cleansed the temple (John 2: 14-16); had performed many miracles at the Passover in Jerusalem (John 2: 23); and had come with his disciples again to Judea, and baptized (John 3: 22). "And John also was baptizing in Enon ... For John was not yet cast into prison" (John 3: 23, 24)! Luke records that just after John had begun his preaching and baptizing, and had announced that "one mightier than I cometh" (Luke 2: 16), Herod the tetrarch, "being reproved" by John, "shut up John in prison" (Luke 3: 19, 20) -- thus before Jesus was baptized (by whom does not appear; Luke 3: 21, 22), and before the temptations in the wilderness (Luke 4: 1-13). But Mark says that the imprisonment of John was after the temptations and before he began to preach; for he records the temptations (Mark 1: 12, 13), and declares: "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching" (Mark 1: 13, 14).

THE TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS

Most bizarre of the recorded events of the life of the Christ, the "mighty One of Jacob," the "Prince of Peace," the "Son of God," are his unique adventures with the Devil in the wilderness of Judea and other places.

Immediately after the dubious baptism above noticed, the three synoptists say that Jesus was either "led" (Matt. 4: 1; Luke 4: 1) or "driven" (Mark 1: 12) by the spirit of God into the wilderness "to be tempted of the Devil"; but they no sooner get him there than all sense of "harmony" is lost, and with vivid picturesqueness of inspiration and quaint and varied embellishment of detail they diversely draw the picture of the "strong Son of God" in the toils of the Evil One.

Mark wrote the story first; he relates the baptism of Jesus, and says "immediately the spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; ... and the angels ministered unto him" (Mark 1: 12, 13). Thus the temptings were during the forty days; the "angels ministered unto him" food and drink, but not a word of the manner or eerie form of the temptations is hinted. But such a prosaic account does not suit the vivid inspiration of Matthew: "And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to him" (Matt. 4: 2, 3) -- thus Jesus wasn't ministered to by the angels; and the temptations were not during forty well-fed days, but after forty days and nights of fasting and hunger. Luke mixes both temptations and fasting; he says that Jesus was "forty days tempted of the devil" (Luke 4: 2); that is, he was being tempted daily during the forty days. "And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered. And the devil said to him" (Luke 4: 2, 3) -- thus the first temptation, after forty days of temptations.

Mark gives no details of the temptations, but Matthew revels in them, as is his wont, as also does Luke, differently. Both make the first temptation after the forty-day fast, and appropriately, being hungry and in the desert, it was: "Command that these stones be made bread" (Matt. 4: 3); but Luke says the Devil said: "If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread" (Luke 4: 3).

But now we have the most amazing spectacle on record: the great fiend of hell, like a monster sinister pterodactyl, seizes the poor bleating "Lamb of God," the mighty "Lion of Judah" --pardon the inspired mixed metaphors -- tucks him under his vast wing or dangles him from a mighty claw, springs from earth into the air, and with soaring, flight heads for the Holy City, circles with diabolic sweep of wing over the heads of the gaping populace, swoops down upon the holy temple, and perches the captive Son of God "on a pinnacle of the temple" (Matt. 4: 5; Luke 4: 9). This is Matthew's second, Luke's third temptation; the Devil, according to both, tempting his victim to cast himself down to the street below, so that the angels might break his fall. Then, says Luke, the temptations ended, and the Devil departed for a season (4: 13). Both Matthew and Luke say "upon a pinnacle of the temple"; but no Jew could have written that, even without inspiration, for the sacred pile had but one pinnacle. After 1800 years the Holy Ghost discovered its architectural mistake, and in the Revised Version substituted "the" for "a." The Catholic Version hasn't yet done so.

The temptations must have happened in a certain order, which even inspiration couldn't alter --but Matthew's third is Luke's second. The Satanic cicerone with his divine burden wings his cloud-like flight to the top of an "exceeding high mountain" whence in vast panorama -- Luke says: "in a moment of time" (4: 5) -- could be seen "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them" (Matt. 4: 8); and all these kingdoms, some of them in the America of the Incas and Montezumas, the Devil showed the God, and offered to him, for, he said, "that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will, I give it." Comment on this bit of inspiration is supererogatory. But this amazing spectacle was never presented to eye of Christ or man, if we believe the inspired author of the Gospel of John, and Jesus was never in the wilderness with the Devil at all. Afteecording the descending of the dove upon Jesus (without the voice from heaven or the baptism), it is declared that "the next day after" occurred the episode of Andrew and Simon Peter (John 1: 35-42); and that "the day following" occurred the incident of Philip and Nathaniel (John 1: 43-51). "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; ... and both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage" (John 2: 1, 2), and were there present; and there Jesus did his first miracle, making water into wine. He could not have been in the wilderness, a hungered and thirsty, with the Devil, while he was with the demon rum at a party in town. Thus the historicity of the temptation in the wilderness is seriously discounted, and inspiration is badly out of joint.

THE APOSTLES CHOSEN

The "calling of the Apostles" should, it would seem, be one of the simplest narratives that truth-inspired gospel historians could relate if they knew what they were talking about, or were inspired. But it is as sadly mixed and muddled as any narrative in the books, when there is more than one inspired recorder of the same alleged fact -- for no two ever tell the same thing the same way.

Matthew is inspired to relate that immediately after the baptism by John, and the fantastic "temptation in the wilderness" by the Devil, Jesus, "leaving Nazareth. ... came and dwelt in Capernaum" (Matt. 4: 13) -- a town of which the identity and even the existence are dubious -- in order to fulfil another pretended prophecy. "From that time Jesus began to preach" (4: 17). And Jesus, "walking by the sea of Galilee" (evidently alone), saw two fishermen, brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, "casting a net into the sea"; and he saith unto them: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men"; and the two "straightway left their nets, and followed him" (Matt. 4: 18-20). Then, the three "going on from thence" -- or, as Mark says, "when he had gone a little farther thence" (Mark 1: 19), showing that it was not at the same point where he had met Peter and Andrew -- he saw two other fishermen who were brothers, James and John Zebedee, "in a ship mending their nets"; and "he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him" (4: 21, 22); and they "went about all Galilee teaching" (4: 23).

Thus we have two separate and distinct pairs of fishermen, found successively some distance apart, both pairs expressly "called" by Jesus, and straightway leaving their jobs and following a total stranger on a novel kind of man-fishing expedition.

But Matthew's persistent contradiction of Luke relates the incident quite differently, but by the same inspiration. In his chapter 5, Jesus, now evidently in a big crowd, "as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God," "stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets" (5: 1, 2) -- not here "casting their nets into the sea," as Matthew says. And Luke says that at the bidding of the stranger, Jesus, Simon the fisher let down his net, and "inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake" (5: 6); and the fish "filled both ships, so that they began to sink" (5: 7). But John says there were only 153 fishes, but big ones, "and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken" (John 21: 11). Aren't fishermen the liars! This happened at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry -- just after he had gone to Simon's house and healed Simon's mother-in-law (Luke 4: 38, 39), but before Jesus met and "called" Simon (Luke 5: 1-10). John, however, says that it was after the resurrection, on the occasion of his "third appearance" (John 21: 14). Aren't evangelists inspired!

But to return to the contradictory accounts of the "calling." Jesus "entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship" (5: 3). And James and John, the Zebedees, were there with Peter and Andrew -- "their partners, which were in the other ship" (5: 7); and it is repeated, for our greater credence: "James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon" (5: 10). And here it was that "Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from hence forth thou shalt catch men" (5: 10). Then (after a fish story extraordinary, which we shall soon tell), "when they had brought their ships to land, they [all four together] forsook all, and followed him" (5: 2) -- this time without being "called" or asked at all. So Matthew and Luke here again inspiredly contradict each other; but again John breaks into the narrative and flatly contradicts them both.

And this is the "true record" of the "calling" -- which was not a calling at all. John the Baptist was beside the Jordan, baptizing all comers; and as "John stood, and two of his disciples" (John 1: 35) -- there by Jordan, and not on the Sea of Galilee or Lake Gennesaret -- Jesus walked by, evidently all alone; and [John] "looking upon Jesus as he walked, [John] saith, Behold the Lamb of God!" (1: 36). And John's "two disciples heard him [John] speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi: ... where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see" (1: 37-39). And the two went home with Jesus "and abode with him that day."

Here comes the most surprising feature of this inspired record: "One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him [Jesus], was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother!" (1: 40) -- here following John by the Jordan, not fishing with Brother Simon on the Sea of Galilee. And Simon Peter was not there fishing either. For Andrew, says John, then went off somewhere and "findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah. ... And he brought him to Jesus" (1: 41, 42). No truly inspired records could possibly be more

diverse than these three; two of them must undeniably be wholly untrue. But it is a safe assertion that Andrew did not say to Peter, as he is quoted to have said: "I have found the Messiah." It was on the very next day (1: 35) after the uncertain baptism of Jesus by John, at the very beginning of the public activities of Jesus, that this scene is laid; Jesus was not Messiah, or Christ (1: 41), until he was "anointed" long afterward. Jesus beheld Simon and said to him: "Thou art Simon the son of Jona" (John 1: 42). Later he addresses him as "Simon, son of Jonas" (John 21: 15). The Revised Version in both passages reads "Simon, son of John"; but the two names are not the same, or even related. Jona (Jonah) and Jonas mean "a dove"; John means "grace of God." Inspiration is here sadly at loggerheads with itself, even on the highly important point of the "calling" of Simon Peter the fisherman to be the founder of the whole apostolic succession.

"THE TWELVE"

Before leaving the apostles to shift for themselves, we may briefly notice several other flaws of inspiration relating to them. Matthew, who was one of them, surely ought to know his own name, and how he came to be numbered among the chosen Twelve. We have seen already the conflicting accounts given by him and by Luke and John as to the "calling" -- or volunteering -- of Andrew, Peter, James and John. As for himself, Matthew says modestly: "And as Jesus passed forth from thence [where he had healed the man with the palsy], he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom; and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him" (Matt. 9: 9), But Mark tells us that "as [Jesus] passed by [after the healing], he saw Le6: the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom," and called him (2: 14). And Luke (5: 27) corroborates Mark, as usual contradicting Matthew, even as to his own name.

This little tangle does not end here: Matthew gives a list of the twelve apostles; among the others he lists "Matthew the publican"; two Simons, one surnamed Peter, the other the Canaanite (the whole race of Canaanites having been exterminated by Joshua); two Jameses, the son of Alphieus, and the son of Zebedee; and one "Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus" (10: 2-4). Luke omits Lebbaeus, and substitutes a second "Judas, the brother of James," besides Judas Iscariot (6: 16). So we do not really know who composed the Twelve.

As for James, his identity is very confused, as is also that of the second Judas. Matthew (13: 55) and Mark (6: 3) say that both James and Judas were sons of the Virgin Mary and brothers of Jesus; and Paul affirms that James was "the Lord's brother" (Gal. 1: 19). But later both Matthew (27: 56) and Mark (15: 40) contradict themselves and say that this James was the son of some other Mary. If James and Jesus were sons of the Virgin Mary, their father was of course Joseph the carpenter; but Matthew (10: 3) and Mark (3: 18) say that James and Judas were the sons of Alphaeus. If they were the sons of Alphaeus, they were brothers of Matthew, alias Le6: the publican; for Mark declares (2: 14) that Levi was the son of Alphaeus. Judas, according to Luke (6: 16), was "the brother of James"; the Revised Version says: "Judas, the son of James." James is not once mentioned in the gospel of his brother John.

Again, Matthew and John, as we have seen, represent the Twelve picked up, one, two, or four at a time, at various times and places; but Mark and Luke say that they were all chosen together at one and the same time, from a large number of disciples: Jesus "went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles" (Luke 6: 12, 13; Mark 3: 13, 14); and then follows the list of names we have just seen to differ from the other two lists. So the whole matter of the apostles is left a puzzle, except in one point, the personal character of these sainted gospel propagandists.

APOSTOLIC GREED AND STRIFE

Two of them, Peter and John, are expressly declared to be "unlearned and ignorant men" (Acts 4: 13); all twelve were of the same type and well matched. They were variously picked up from among the humblest and most superstitious of the Jews of the time, naked fishermen and peasants, "called" personally, we are told, by the Son of Yahveh, the King of the Jews, to be his counsellors and friends in the establishment of his earthly and heavenly kingdoms. They saw this carpenter's Son of Nazareth acclaimed by the desert dervish John as the Son of Yahveh, the long-promised and never- realized Messiah, the King of the Jews. This John was the own

cousin of Jesus, born within six months of Jesus' birth, and brought up in intimate association; yet John avers and repeats: "I knew him not," until the dove flew down and lighted on him (John 1: 29-34), and thus gave divine "sign" of the truth of his claim. But any signs are good to the ignorant and superstitious; and none at all are needed to gather followers for curiosity or hope of reward.

The hope of reward was the inspiredly recorded motive of these peasants who left their petty crafts for greater profit by following the lowly king-to-be. The greed and zeal for personal aggrandizement of the chosen Twelve is constantly revealed throughout. Hardly had the Twelve got organized and into action before the cunning and crafty Peter, acting as spokesman, boldly advanced the itching palm: "Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" (Matt. 19: 27). Here for once is complete "harmony of the gospels"; all three record the demand and the promise of reward, though still variantly (Mark 10: 28; Luke 18: 28). The Master responded splendidly with the promise: "Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19: 28) -- which seems to indicate that the ten tribes were not so lost as has been generally supposed. Still, this reward of reigning in future glory was naturally dampening to the spirits of those who had abandoned fishnets and the like to follow one proclaimed King of the Jews, whose earthly throne was to be established forever, there on earth. The other two inspired recorders assert that the promise was forward both on earth and in the hereafter: that they should "receive an hundredfold now in this time; ... and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10: 30; Luke 18: 30). But even these brilliant rewards could not satisfy the greed of the holy ones, and led, not to gratitude, but to greater greed and strife.

The mother of James and John, probably inspired by them, and zealous for their greater glory, came secretly, with her two sons, to Jesus, "worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him"; and when Jesus asked her what it was, "She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom" (Matt. 20: 20, 21). But Mark contradicts the assurance of Matthew that it was Mrs. Zebedee who made the request; and says that "James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire," and themselves stated their modest demand for preferment (Mark 10: 35-37) -- which, if granted, would have ousted Yahveh God from his proper seat (Mark 16: 19). But both agree that "when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren" (Matt. 20: 24; Mark 10: 41).

Nor during the whole year or two of association with their Master did these holy apostles abate their greed and strife. Several disputes are recorded among them as to "who should be greatest" among them (Matt. 18: 1; Mark 9: 33, 34; Luke 9: 46). Here again the gospels harmonize in asserting the constant disharmony of the apostles. Even at the Last Supper, when Jesus had announced that one of them would that night betray him to death, "there was also strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest" (Luke 22: 24,). And great was the disgust of the Master at his miserable apostles, and especially at the craven and crafty Peter. When first Jesus began to foretell that he must be put to death -- thus putting an end to their hopes of reward -- Peter, more knowing than his own Lord, "began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee"; and Jesus turned on him with blasting scorn, "and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me" (Matt. 16: 22, 23); and again the gospels are in harmony (Mark 8: 33). Such are the holy apostles of Jesus Christ, painted by some of themselves through inspiration. This "Satan" Peter, later self-appointed "Saint" Peter, deserves our mention again.

But we shall now point out some other of the more glaring contradictions and obviously impossible truths of the inspired gospels. All their fables and superstitions it is impossible on account of their number even to mention. We limit instances to reputed incidents of the life of Christ.

OTHER APOSTOLIC TANGLES

Immediately after the calling of Peter, Andrew, James, and John, according to Mark (1: 16-20), "they went into Capernaum ... and entered the synagogue, and taught" (1: 21); but Luke says that Jesus went to Capernaum and taught in the synagogue alone (4: 31) and before "calling" these four fishermen (5: 1-11). Jesus plaintively said that the foxes have holes and the birds have nests, but "the son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Luke 9: 58), as if he were a homeless wanderer and outcast. Mark, however, tells us that "as

Jesus sat at meat in his own house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples" (2: 15). This was his permanent dwelling house; for "leaving Nazareth he came and dwelt in Capernaum" (Matt. 4: 13). According to this, Jesus had a spacious home, and could entertain large companies, though Luke says the dinner was given by Levi in his own house (Luke 5: 29).

Before the "calling" of the Twelve Jesus performed no miracles, according to John, for "the third day" after his baptism Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding in Cana, and there Jesus turned the water into wine. "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana" (John 2: 1-11). But according to all the others, as we have seen, Jesus did not go to Cana and perform there his first miracle, but into the wilderness for forty days; and according to Matthew (4: 18-23) and Mark (14: 12-20, et seq.), immediately after the temptation Jesus "called" the first four disciples and then began his miracles in Capernaum. But Luke brings him to Capernaum, gives him a long list of miracles, and reports his casting out devils and healing Peter's mother-in-law and his preaching throughout Galilee (Luke 4: 31-44) before he "called" the big four (5: 1-11).

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT -- OR THE PLAN

The Sermon on the Mount is the most beautiful and lofty discourse in Christian history. Very little of it is original; as the marginal references show, a great part of it is the stringing together of odd scraps of moralizing taken bodily from the Old Testament. Matthew sets it out in extenso, and lays the scene just after the temptation in the wilderness, and the "calling" of Peter, Andrew, James, and John, but before the "calling" of Levi (Matt. 5-7; 9: 9). According to Luke (5: 27; 6: 17-20) it was after Levi was "called." He declares that "seeing the multitudes, [Jesus] went up into a mountain: and, when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying" (Matt. 5: 1, 2) -- here following in three chapters the justly celebrated sermon.

But Luke tells the whole affair quite differently. It was not on the mountain, where Jesus spoke seated; it was down in the plain, where Jesus stood and spoke. It was after all the Twelve had been chosen and commissioned, which, according to Luke, as we have seen, took place while Jesus was up on the mount in prayer all night (Luke 6: 12-16). Then, "He came down with [the Twelve], and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people" (6: 17). There, standing, "he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said" (6: 20) -- and here follows the selfsame sermon but abbreviated. Again inspiration clashes with inspiration, and we are left in doubt of truth.

THIS LORD'S PRAYER

A beautiful part of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount is the Lord's prayer. Jesus told the multitude of the vain public prayers of the heathen and of the hypocrites, and said: "Be not ye therefore like

unto them. ... After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven," etc. (Matt. 6: 8, 9) Luke again gives a different origin for this cherished story; laying the scene long after the Sermon on the Mount or the Plain, under totally different circumstances, and making it a prayer delivered as a model, on request, to only a few disciples. As if by plenary inspiration Luke says: "And it came to pass, that, as [Jesus] was praying in a certain place, when he ceased one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them. When ye pray, say, Our Father," etc. (Luke 11: 1-2).

Every circumstance of the two origins is in conflict. Even this masterpiece of devotion is in two totally different settings, and in two different versions -- and like the whole sermon, is a composite of ancient sayings of the Scriptures. It is said to be practically identical with the Kaddish of the Talmud.

CHRIST ANOINTED

Let us witness the much celebrated "Christening" or anointing of the Messiah-King of the Jews. Inspiration is strangely at variance as to when and where it happened, and how. If the great Yahveh of heaven had sent his only begotten Son on special mission to earth as the long-prophesied Messiah, to re-establish the throne of David forever and sit upon it as king, it was a very sorry ceremonial, at best, for the anointing of a king, earthly or heavenly.

Matthew states that two days before the Passover (at which he was to be betrayed) "Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper"; and "there came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat"; whereat "his disciples ... had indignation" for the waste (Matt. 26: 6-8). Mark's account is the same, in substance (Mark 14: 1-4), but he specifies that the box of ointment was "of spikenard, very precious" (14: 3), and that only "some" of the disciples were annoyed at the waste. Both lay the scene, as we have seen, two day's before the last Passover at which Jesus was ever present, just before his betrayal and death and after his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and in the house of Simon the leper.

But Luke (chapter 7) makes a very different story of it: the time was early in Jesus' ministry, just after John the Baptist had sent two of his disciples to Jesus, in the earliest days, to inquire: "Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?" (7: 19, 20). Then "one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house [in "a city called Nain" (7: 11)], and sat down to meat" (7: 36). Now and here it was that "behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner" came in with the alabaster box of ointment; and she washed "his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them [his feet] with the ointment" (7: 37, 38). Nobody said anything about the waste -- the disciples were not even invited to the dinner. The Pharisee is here called Simon, but could not have been the leper, for lepers were "unclean," and no one would have eaten with them. Moreover this dinner was two years before the last Passover; and the feet, not the head, were anointed.

But the greatest surprise comes from the inspired record of John (chapter 12). The event takes place "six days before the Passover," and before the entry into Jerusalem and in the house of Lazarus "which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair" (12: 8). It was "one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot" (12: 4), who alone complained about the waste, and said that the ointment should have been sold and the proceeds given to the poor (12: 5). In chapter 11: John tells of a sick man named Lazarus and of "Mary and her sister Martha" (11: 1); and makes the positive identification: "It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair" (11: 2) -- though the story of her doing it is deferred until the next chapter. We are pardonably surprised to learn that it was this friend of Jesus who was the "woman of the city, which was a sinner" (Luke 7: 37), for we had not previously suspected her virtue, and had thought it was Mary Magdalene, the "soiled dove" out of whom he had "cast seven devils" (Mark 16: 9; Luke 8: 2). Inspiration is here again seriously at odds.

JESUS -- KING OF THE JEWS

The saddest, sorriest mockery in the reputed life of the humble Nazarene was his tawdry entry into Jerusalem as the arrived Messiah -- the King of the Jews. Great must have been the obsession, the delusion, of the poor Wayfarer, who had no place even to lay his head, and had to catch a fish to find a penny to pay his pittance of a poll-tax -- and must needs borrow an ass's colt to make his mock-triumphal entry into his kingdom -- for one day. The discrepancies of the four inspired accounts of it are rather trifling, but they exist, and may be noted in passing the pitiful scene.

In Matthew 21: Jesus having arrived, with disciples and a rabble, at Bethphage, by the Mount of Olives, sent "two disciples, Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me" (21: 1, 2). The two disciples went and "brought the ass, and the colt [two animals], and put on them [both animals] their clothes, and they set him thereon" (21: 7) -- thus riding both ass and colt. The rabble followed behind, shouting Hosannas to their King (Mark 11: 10). Our poor Nazarene, the man who would be King, jogged with his shouting rabblement into Jerusalem, and all the city wondered, saying: "Who is this?" and for answer the rabble replied: "This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee" (Matt. 21: 10, 11). And with his inveterate habit of warping ancient sayings into "prophecies fulfilled by Jesus," Matthew says: "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying. ... "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass" (21: 4, 5). But after a big flourish of mock authority by driving the money-changers from the temple, the very same day, the uncrowned King "left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he

lodged there" (21: 17). Years later, another king made a like grand flourish, and "... with four thousand men, Rode up the hill, and then rode down again."

The God-sent King who was to establish his kingdom and reign forever over Israel did not fulfill the principal part of the prophecy.

Mark, who wrote the story first, says that Jesus said: "Go your way into the village over against you and ... ye shall find a colt tied; ... bring him. ... And they brought the colt to Jesus" (Mark 21: 2, 7); but as this would not fulfill the prophecy of "an ass and a colt," Matthew, in copying Mark, added the ass and the prophecy. Luke tells only of the colt (Luke 19: 29-40). John, who tells us that he always tells the truth, says that it was "on the next day" (John 21: 12) after the "six days before the Passover" (12: 1) when Mary anointed the feet of Jesus; "much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel." Thus the city rabble took the initiative in the farce-comedy. John assures us: "These things understood not his disciples at the first" (12: 16), whereas the other three make it the disciples who brought the ass, or ass and colt, or colt, and put their own clothes thereon, and themselves began the whole scene. Until another revelation, we shall never know the details exactly.

The "purging of the temple," says John, occurred only a few days after the wedding at Cana, and therefore at the beginning of Jesus, ministry (John 2: 1-22); but the other three (Matt, 21: 12-16; Mark 11: 15-18; Luke 19: 45-48) all place it at the close of his career, just before his last Passover. The next day after the purging, Jesus is recorded as cursing the fig tree (Matt. 21: 18, 19); but Mark says the cursing came first; then Jesus went into Jerusalem (but not on his triumphal entry, which had taken place the day before; Mark 11: 1-11) and cleaned out the money-changers (11: 12-19). According to Matthew, the fig tree was blasted by the curse immediately, before the eyes of the disciples (21: 19, 20); but Mark says that it was not till the next day after the cursing that the disciples, as they passed by, saw the fig tree dried up (11: 19, 20). Mark says that Jesus and his company, being hungry "and seeing a fig tree afar off," went to it to find figs, but found none, "for the time of figs was not yet" (11: 12, 13). Then Jesus cursed it (11: 14). As this happened at the time of Passover, in March or April, naturally there would be no figs, which are summer fruit; and one would think that the all-wise Son of Yahveh, who could read the innermost thoughts of man, would know this simple fact of nature, as well as whether there were figs on the tree without going to find out by inspection. The omniscient God searching for figs in March, and disappointed at not finding them -- creating a tree to bear fruit in the summer and cursing it for not bearing in the spring! Jesus cursed a living tree and it died; Mohammed blessed a dead tree and it lived.

POT-POURRI OF INSPIRED INHARMONIES

The Gospels simply cannot tell the truth. Scarcely a thing is stated by one inspired writer which is not denied or contradicted by one or more of the others. To cite them all would lead beyond reasonable limits of space; but to show further the incessant inharmony of inspired truths even in minor details, I shall pick at random a number of instances, with bare citation of subject, chapter, and verse.

Jesus cured Peter's mother-in-law after he cleansed the leper (Matt. 8: 2, 3, 14, 15); or before (Mark 1: 29-31; 40-42; Luke 4: 38, 39; 5: 12, 13). The leper was cleansed after the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5: 1; 8: 1-4); or before (Luke 5: 12-14; 6: 20-49). Peter's mother-in-law was healed before Peter was "called" (Luke 4: 38, 39; 5: 10); or after (Matt. 4: 18, 19; 8: 14, 15; Mark 1: 16, 17, 30, 31). James and John were with Jesus when he cured this woman (Mark 1: 29); they were not, as they had not yet been called (Luke 4: 38, 39; 5: 10, 11). The centurion's servant was healed between the cleansing of the leper and the curing of Peter's sick relative (Matt. 8: 2-14); it was not until after both these cures (Luke 4: 38, 39; 5: 12, 13; 7: 1-10). The centurion came to Jesus (Matt.

8: 5); he did not; he sent Jewish elders for Jesus (Luke 7: 2-4). This miracle was performed in Capernaum (Matt. 8: 5; Luke 7: 1); but it was in Cana (John 4: 46). Jesus stilled the tempest before Matthew was called -- he says so himself (Matt. 8: 23-27; 9: 9); but it was after (Mark 2: 14; 4: 35-41). Matthew also says that Jesus cast out the devils that entered into the herd of swine before he was called as a disciple (Matt. 8: 28, 33; 9: 9); but it was not until after (Mark 2: 14; 5: 113; Luke 5: 27; 8: 26-33). This legion of devils was cast out of one man (Mark 5: 2; Luke 8: 27); but it was "two possessed with devils" out of whom the legion was cast (Matt. 8:

28). The possessed said his, or the devils' name was Legion, a Latin military term. The Gospels were written in Greek; but the disciples and the devils spoke Aramaic, and the devils would hardly have had a Latin name, which the Galilean peasant apostles would not have understood. There were about two thousand swine (Mark 5: 13); the devils asked and the Christ graciously granted permission to the devils to enter into the swine. If each hog got only one devil in him there were about two thousand devils; the possessed must have been a very large man to house so many devils, or the devils must have been very small ones. If Jesus could grant this permission, he could have refused it. To grant it and so destroy a great herd of hogs would be a felony in any civilized country; it was gross malicious mischief even in Palestine. But hogs are an abhorrence' to Jews, forbidden by their law of Moses; it is odd that such extensive hog raising should have flourished in their country. The Jews did not really raise hogs at all. All these stories of devil-exorcism are told by the synoptists; not one is mentioned by John.

At Nain Jesus raised a dead man to life (Luke 7: 12-15), but this great miracle is mentioned only by Luke; all the others ignore the stupendous feat. The disciples of John asked Jesus about fasting (Matt. 9: 14); but it was the scribes and Pharisees who made the inquiry (Luke 5: 33). Jesus is credited with raising the daughter of Jairus from the dead. Matthew quotes Jairus as saying: "My daughter is even now dead" (Matt. 9: 18); but he said: "lieth at the point of death" (Mark 5: 23); or "lay a dying" (Luke 8: 42). Whether Jesus raised a dead girl to life or simply healed a sick one is uncertain. Peter, James, and John witnessed this miracle (Mark 5: 37-40; Luke 8: 51); John, who was the only gospel writer present, does not mention it at all. When Jesus first sent out the Twelve, he said: "He that receiveth you receiveth me," etc. (Matt. 10: 40; Luke 10: 16); but Jesus used these words at the Last Supper (John 13: 20). When sending the Twelve on their first crusade, Jesus told them to take "neither shoes, nor yet staves" (Matt. 10: 9, 10; Luke 9: 3); but he commanded them to take shoes and staves and nothing else (Mark 6: 8, 9). He also commanded them not to go among the Gentiles, "and into any city of the Samaritans, enter ye not" (Matt 10: 5); but straightway both Jesus and the disciples went to Samaria to Sychar, and they "abode there two days" (John 4: 3-5, 8, 40). Jesus told the multitude: "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence" (Matt. 11: 12). The words "from the days of John the Baptist until now" would indicate that a long period of time had elapsed since the days of John; yet on the very day on which Jesus uttered these words, Matthew himself records a visit to Jesus of the disciples of John, who was yet living (Matt. 11: 2, 3). The disciples said to Jesus: "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee" (John 11: 8); the disciples were themselves Jews; such language would never be used by Jews, but rather by the Greek Father who wrote the "Gospel according to John." When Herod heard of the wonderful works of Jesus, he said: "This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead" (Matt. 14: 2); here we have the Christian doctrine of bodily resurrection avowed by the pagan tetrarch. The account given by Matt. (14: 6-11) and Mark (6: 21-28) of the time and the reason for Herod's beheading of John is entirely at variance with that of the greatest Jewish historian, Josephus (Antiq., Bk. 18: chap. 5: sec. 2). John is said to have baptized "Jerusalem and all Judea" (Matt. 3: 5; Mark 1: 5); this is of course at least mildly exaggerated; if Jesus and his disciples "made and baptized more disciples than John" (John 4: 1, 2), where did these latter come from? Of his mightier successor, John said: "Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear" (Matt. 3: 11); what John said was: "The latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose" (Mark 1: 7), which is John's own report (John 1: 27). John also said of Jesus: "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost" (Mark 1: 8; John 1: 33); but he said that the baptism should be "with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (Matt. 3: 11; Luke 3: 16) --the latter an element not recorded as having been used, unless the reference is to hell fire, which Jesus invented.

The loaves and fishes to feed the multitude were provided by the disciples (Matt. 14: 15-17; Mark 6: 35-38; Luke 9: 12, 13); but they were furnished by "a lad" (John 6: 9). The miraculous feast was enjoyed by "about five thousand men" (Mark 6: 44); but this was "beside women and children" (Matt. 14: 21). This miracle occurred in "a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida" (Luke 9: 10); but when the repast was furnished, Jesus "constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and go to the other side before unto Bethsaida" (Mark 6: 45); if the miracle was performed in a desert of Bethsaida, the disciples were already there and did not cross the sea to reach the place. Then, after the feeding, Jesus "sent the multitudes away" (Matt. 14: 22; Mark 6: 45); he did not, but withdrew himself into a mountain (John 6: 15). Jesus went into this mountain to pray (Matt. 14: 23; Mark 6: 46); he went to the mountain to escape the multitude who wished to

"take him by force, to make him a king" (John 6: 15). Jesus had sent his disciples by ship across the sea; he went into the mountain to pray; "and when the evening was come, he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea" (Matt. 14: 22-24; Mark 6: 46, 47); on the other hand, "as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him" (Luke 9: 18). Jesus commanded his disciples, after the feeding, to sail "unto Bethsaida" (Mark 6: 45); they steered their course "toward Capernaum" (John 6: 17); and this erratic course brought them "into the land of Gennesaret" (Matt. 14: 34). Walking on the water, Jesus overtook the shipload of disciples "in the midst of the sea" (Matt. 14: 24-26; Mark 6: 47, 48); but it was as they were nearing the land (John 6: 19-21); thus, according to John, Jesus walked entirely across the sea, not merely half way, as in the otheecord. Peter tried to imitate his Master and walk on the stormy waters, according to Matthew (14: 29-31); none of the others report this interesting adventure.

After feeding five thousand with five loaves in the wilderness of Bethsaida, Jesus proposed to feed four thousand with seven loaves; at this the disciples expressed their surprise, and asked: "From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?" (Mark 8: 4, 5) After this second miraculous feeding, Jesus "came into the coasts of Magdala" (Matt. 15: 39); the Revised Version reads "borders of Magadan"; but he really came "into the parts of Dalmanutha" (Mark 8: 10).

The scribes and Pharisees complained to Jesus that his disciples violated the traditions by eating with unwashed hands (Matt. 15: 1, 2; Mark 7: 1, 2); but it was a certain Pharisee who made this complaint to Jesus because he himself ate without washing (Luke 11: 37, 38). A "woman of Canaan" besought Jesus to cast the devil out of her daughter (Matt. 15: 22); "the woman was a Greek" (Mark 7: 26).

On the way to Caesarea Philippi, Peter makes a great discovery. Asked by Jesus, "But whom say ye that I am?" Peteplied: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 16: 16, 17). And as a reward for his supernatural perception, Jesus conferred on him the keys of heaven and hell. Both Jesus and Matthew must have forgotten that just before, when Peter was about to sink as he tried to walk to Jesus on the water, and Jesus rescued him and brought him aboard the ship, "they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God" (Matt. 14: 29-33). So that Peter's information was not a divine revelation but the common gossip of the whole crew of fishermen. And at the very beginning of the ministry of Jesus, before Peter was "called," and when his brother Andrew went and found him to bring him to Jesus, Andrew said to Peter: "We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ" (John 1: 41). On the next day Nathaniel said to Jesus; "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel!" (John 1: 49). Peter's "revelation" thus loses credit for originality.

The Transfiguration occurred "after six days" from the announcement by Jesus of his immediate "second coming" (Matt. 16: 28; 17: 1; Mark 9: 1, 2); but "it came to pass about an eight days after" (Luke 9: 27, 28). Peter, James, and John were with Jesus there; "And his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light" (Matt. 17: 2); "The fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening" (Luke 9: 29). But it was only the clothing of Jesus which was affected: "And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow" (Mark

9: 3). A voice from the clouds declared: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matt. 17: 5); but the voice only said: "This is my beloved Son; hear ye him" (Mark 9: 7; Luke 9: 35). As at the baptism, when the same voice was heard to say the same thing, it probably only thundered, and any interpretation could be given to the noise by superstitious peasants. Moses and Elijah joined the transfiguration group, and Peter, ambitious always for a speaking part, proposed to build three tabernacles for the heavenly visitors; this proposal was made in the awful presence and hearing of Moses and Elijah (Matt. 17: 3, 4; Mark 9: 4-8); but Peter did not say this until "as they departed from him" (Luke 9: 33). Moses and Elijah talked with Jesus "and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9: 31); but I cannot understand how Luke knew what the conversation was about, as he was not present. Peter, James, and John "were heavy with sleep" (Luke 9: 32), and so could not have heard the conversation; and the proposal for the tabernacles came only afterwards "when they were awake" (Luke 9: 32). But the three disciples were not asleep at all; they were quite awake and saw and heard all that passed (Matt. 17: 2-7; Mark 9: 2-8). John was the only Gospel historian who was present at this tremendous scene; he mentions not a word of it. Of this and

of all similar situations said to have been witnessed by John, an authority has said: "All the events said to have been witnessed by John alone are omitted by John alone. This fact seems fatal either to the reality of the events in question or to the genuineness of the fourth gospel." [W.R. Greg, Creed of Christendom.] Immediately after the disappearance of Moses and Elijah the conversation turned upon the tradition that "Elias must first come"; and Jesus replied that "Elias is come already and they knew him not. ... Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist" (Matt. 17: 10-13). Jesus would seem to recognize thus the doctrine of transmigration of souls; but if Elijah had been before their eyes at the transfiguration, this conversation could not well have followed.

After the transfiguration Jesus cured a lunatic (Matt. 17: 15); he was an epileptic (Revised Version); but he had "a dumb spirit" (Mark 9: 17). The tax collector of Capernaum demanded a poll-tax of Jesus; he told Peter to go fishing "and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take, and give unto them for me and thee" (Matt. 17: 27). But Matthew leaves us genuinely curious as to what kind of "fisherman's luck" Peter had this time, whether he caught the fish and got the money or not: there are limits even to fishermen's tales. After leaving Galilee Jesus went "into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan" (Matt. 19: 1). The inspired writer again did not know geography; there were no "coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan"; Jordan was the eastern boundary of Judaea; the coasts were some fifty miles to the west. On his way to Jerusalem to attend his last Passover, Jesus "passed through the midst of Samaria" (Luke 17: 11); but he "cometh into the coasts of Judaea by the farther side of Jordan" (Mark 10: 1); these are two totally different routes. "And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho" (Luke 19: 1). This contradicts Luke's statement that Jesus "passed through the midst of Samaria" (Luke 17: 11), as Jericho was not on the route from Samaria, but was on the route described by Mark (Mark 10: 1). On whichever of these routes he was, Jesus in the way healed ten lepers (Luke 17: 12-14); this wholesale miracle is recorded by no other gospel; it is declared to be "absolutely unhistorical" (Bible for Learners, Vol. 3: p. 310). I see no reason why the learned divines who edited the Bible for Learners should have singled out this one miracle to criticize as "unhistorical"; they were all so. On the way also "blind Bartimaeus" sat begging, and he cried out: "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me" (Mark

10: 46, 47; Luke 18: 35-38); but it was not one but two blind men who cried: "Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David" (Matt. 20: 30). This dubious episode occurred "as he was come nigh unto Jericho" (Luke 18: 35); it occurred "as they departed from Jericho" (Matt. 20: 29; Mark 10: 46). Mark agrees with Luke and disagrees with Matthew as to the number of men, and agrees with Matthew and disagrees with Luke as to the time of the occurrence.

Speaking of divorce, Jesus said: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery" (Mark 10: 11, 12). A Jew could not have said or written this, for by the Jewish law a woman could not put away her husband at all. Matthew puts in a proviso which is a notable contradiction of Mark; he quotes Jesus as saying: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery" (Matt. 19: 9). According to Mark a man who divorces his wife for any cause whatever cannot lawfully marry another; according to Matthew if the divorce is for cause of the wife's fornication the man may lawfully marry again. In his conversation with the rich man, answering his question as to what he should do to inherit eternal life, Jesus told him that he must keep the commandments; the rich man asked which. In reply Jesus named five as essential and sufficient for the inheritance of heaven. What these commandments are no two of the synoptists agree; Matthew and Mark each give a commandment not given by either of the others (Matt. 19: 18, 19; Mark 10: 19; Luke 18: 20). The special significance of the reply of Jesus is that it asserts that keeping a few commandments is all that is required to go to heaven: thus repudiating the necessity of "articles of faith necessary to salvation"; and it invalidates his own repeated assertion, "He that believeth not is damned."

Jesus affirmed of the mustard seed that it "indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs" (Matt. 13: 32). Everyone knows that the mustard seed is not the "least of all seeds"; neither is the plant "the greatest among herbs." A celebrated saying of Jesus is "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to wonder place; and it shall remove" (Matt. 17: 20; Mark 11: 23), but Matthew makes a mountain out of a much less thing; for what Jesus said was: "Ye might say unto

this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you" (Luke 17: 6). The time and circumstances of the incident are also entirely different in each report.

In the parable of the great feast, the function was a wedding dinner given by a king for the marriage of his son (Matt. 22: 2-4); it was simply a "great supper" given by "a certain man" (Luke 14: 16). The king sent "his servants" and then "other servants" to invite the guests (Matt. 22: 3, 4); but the "certain man" only "sent his servant" (Luke 14: 17). The uncivil invited guests of the king seized the royal servants "and slew them" (Matt. 22: 6); Luke says that the one servant returned unharmed and reported (Luke 14: 21). Upon his invitation's being refused, the king "was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city" (Matt. 22: 7); a very drastic procedure, especially during a marriage feast, considering that the city of the murderous guests must have been also the city of the king. Evidently the guests invited to the wedding lived in the same town, for the dinner was already prepared, "and all things are ready" (Matt. 22: 4); though it would seem to be unusually late to invite guests to a royal wedding. The king sent "his servants" others than those slain -- into the highways to pick up wayfarers for emergency guests, and they were herded "both bad and good" to the banquet. His majesty came in to inspect them and "saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" The guest "was speechless," as he might well be at such an inquiry, for no one would expect a lot of transient wayfarers to go about dressed for a royal wedding. The king ordered his servants: "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness" (Matt. 22: 9-12). Every circumstance of this "twice told tale" is different in each of the two gospels.

In the parable of the wicked husbandmen, the owner of the vineyard sent "his servants" to collect the rent, and the evil farmers "took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another" (Matt. 21: 33-35); however, only one servant was sent and they only "beat him, and sent him away empty" (Mark 12: 3). In the parable of the talents, a man who was going on a journey had three servants; "And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one" (Matt.

25: 15); but the master, who was a nobleman, going off to take over a kingdom, really had ten servants, and to each of them he delivered one pound (Luke 19: 12, 13, 16). Two of the three servants each doubled his money (Matt. 25: 16, 17), thus returning ten and four talents respectively; of the ten servants one reported a gain of tenfold, the second of fivefold (Luke 19: 16, 18). The "unprofitable servant" of Matthew "dugged in the earth, and hid his lord's money" (Matt. 25: 18); the same servant in Luke returned his pound "which I have kept laid up in a napkin" (Luke 19: 20).

A lawyer had an interview with Jesus in regard to the two great commandments; the lawyer "asked him a question, tempting him, saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" and Jesus stated the two great commandments (Matt. 22: 35-40; Mark 12: 28-31); but when the lawyer asked the question, Jesus in turn asked: "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" and the lawyer himself in reply stated the two great commandments (Luke 10: 25-27). The lamentation of Jesus over Jerusalem (Matt. 23: 37) was delivered in the temple at Jerusalem" (Matt. 21: 10, et seq; 24: 1); it was delivered in a synagogue in Galilee before he went to Jerusalem (Luke 13: 34; 17: 11). While Jesus was at Jerusalem there came "a voice from heaven"; "the people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes" (John 12: 28-30); if the people who heard the "voice" could not distinguish it from thunder, of what benefit was it to them -- "for your sakes?"

The last prayer of Jesus was uttered in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26: 36, 39; Mark 14: 32, 35; Luke 22: 39, 41); but the last prayer is reported as made in Jerusalem before going to Gethsemane (John 17; 18: 1). During the last prayer in the garden Jesus was in agony, "and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22: 44). Luke was not one of the Twelve and was not present; Jesus was "withdrawn from them," praying alone. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping" (Luke 22: 41, 4: 5). How Luke knew of this unusual form of perspiration is not revealed. Baptism being declared by Jesus to be an essential to salvation (Mark 16: 16), naturally he and his disciples must have performed this ceremony from the beginning of the ministry, every time the "fishers of men" caught a peasant; and John says so. Just after the wedding at Cana and the meeting with Nicodemus, "came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized" (John 3: 22); though John later tells us, in parentheses, "Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples" (John 4: 2). At least, then,

the disciples baptized from the start. But it was not until after the resurrection of Jesus that he first commissioned them to baptize (Matt. 118: 18; 19; Mark 16: 15, 16). The formula of baptism is expressed, outside of one reference in the gospels, by Peter only; all were to be "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ," or "of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 2: 38; 8: 16; 10: 48; 19: 5). The formula "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28: 19), put by Matthew into the mouth of Jesus, is self-evidently a much later forgery, made after the Trinity had been invented.

In the beginning of his ministry and immediately after the wedding at Cana, Jesus foretold his death and resurrection (John 2: 18-22); but it was late in his ministry, just before the transfiguration, that "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must ... be killed, and be raised again the third day" (Matt. 16: 21; Mark 8: 31; Luke 9: 22). The parting command of Jesus to his disciples was: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. ... And they went forth, and preached everywhere" (Mark 16: 15, 20). This is totally irreconcilable with early church history; for, some ten years after the death of Jesus Christ, Peter is accused and condemned by the "apostles and brethren" because they had "heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God" (Acts 11: 1-19). And the "second coming" had not yet arrived, though Jesus -- limiting their mission to the "lost sheep of Israel" -- had told Peter and his confreres: "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come" (Matt.

10: 23). In contradiction of this positive assurance he had declared: "The gospel must first be published among all nations" (Mark 13: 10).

The prime endowment to the disciples was, or was to be, the gift of the Holy Ghost, which was conferred in a manner strangely reminiscent of the breathing of life into Adam; and this supreme gift was bestowed upon ten of the Twelve by Jesus himself at the time of his second appearance after the resurrection: "He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20: 22). Thomas Didymus (the Twin) never received any Holy Ghost, as he was not present (John 20: 24). But forty days later Jesus made one of his numerous post-mortem appearances, and "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father. ... Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. ... Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts 1: 3-5, 8). "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, ... they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2: 1, 4). This was quite seven weeks after the resurrection. There is much doubt as to how the Holy Ghost was sent upon the disciples and by whom. Before personally bestowing it on the resurrection day, Jesus had promised "the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send" (John 14: 26); but a little later Jesus said: "I will send him unto you" (John 16: 7); and later yet we have seen that Jesus in person bestowed "him" by blowing on the disciples (John 2, 22). It's quite a puzzle. The only effect of getting the Holy Ghost was that they "began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2: 4), and they acted so crazily that everybody thought they were drunk and drivelling, saying: "These men are full of new wine" (Acts 2: 13); but this imputation Peter denied as unreasonable, since it was too early to be drunk, "seeing it is but the third hour of the day" (Acts 2: 13), or only 9 a.m. But maybe the effect was that of "the morning after."

This must end, for "There are also [so] many other things which Jesus did" and said -- which are so contradictorily related by inspiration -- that while it cannot without some exaggeration be said that "the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" -- at least one ample volume such as this would not contain them.

ECCE HOMO!

Many superlatives of laudation and magnification are applied to Jesus the Christ: the mighty God, eternal, self-existent, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, infinite in wisdom, infinite in goodness, infinite in mercy, gentle and loving. His own words and deeds contradict each of these fanciful attributes.

Was Jesus self-existent? "The living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father" (John 6: 57); and of him Paul said: "He liveth by the power of God" (2 Cor. 13: 4). Was he omnipotent? "The Son can do nothing of himself ... I can of mine own self do nothing" (John 5: 19, 30). Was Jesus omniscient? Speaking of his own second coming, notwithstanding his many assertions that it should be very soon, he said: "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13: 32). This seems to indicate that Father and Son are two quite distinct persons. Also he did not know that there

were no figs on the tree which he cursed, for "he came, if haply he might find anything thereon" Mark 11: 13), and was disappointed when he found none. Also, if Jesus was omniscient, it is odd that he should have chosen Judas for the first church treasurer, who "was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein" (John 12: 6). Was Jesus omnipresent He travelled about the country like any other man; he said: "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there" (John 11: 15). "Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come" (John 7: 36). "And now I am no more in the world" (John 17: 11).

Infinite wisdom is absolute; but Jesus "increased in wisdom" (Luke 2: 52); therefore he had less wisdom at one time than at another, and his knowledge was limited, not infinite. Was Jesus infinite in goodness? He denies this. "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God" (Mark 10: 18) -- which again admits that Father and Son are separate and distinct. Far from infinity of mercy, he reiterates his mercilessness: "He that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16: 16); Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25: 41); "and these shall go away into everlasting punishment" (Matt. 25: 46). These words are those of the fiercest fanaticism, fearfully false and merciless; they are the words either of a deluded madman or of lying priests, used to frighten superstitious dupes into subjection of mind and soul; they are not of incarnate God, but of incarnate Devil.

The family or "kinsmen" of Jesus thought him insane and "went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself" (Mark 3: 21); and "many of [the people] said, He hath a devil, and is mad" (John 10: 20). Peculiarities of conduct began to show themselves early in his life, and were persistent. At the age of twelve he eluded his parents and stayed behind in Jerusalem, and had them frantically seeking him for three days. When he was found, in the temple, his mother gently chided him: "Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing"; he replied only: "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2: 42-49). The next thing we hear of him, at the beginning of his ministry, he is a guest at the wedding at Cana. His mother came and said to him: "They have no wine"; Jesus answered: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" (John 2: 4). Never again is he recorded as seeing or mentioning his mother, until one of his biographers records the curt remark from the cross, "Woman, behold thy son" (John 19: 26); the other three do not say that she was even present.

Apparently forsaking home and parents and family, Jesus spent his entire period of ministry travelling barefoot (Matt. 10: 10), over Palestine, followed by a troupe of twelve nondescripts; "'unlearned and ignorant men,' chosen from the humblest of the people," says Canon Farrar, -- "a dozen knaves, as ignorant as owls and as poor as church mice," says Voltaire. Most intimate of his friends were two females, Mary Lazarus, "a woman of the city, which was a sinner" (Luke 7: 37), and Mary Magdalene, "out of whom went seven devils" (Luke 8: 2). With this entourage "he went throughout every city and village, preaching. ... And certain women. ... Mary called Magdalene ... And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward [or cook], and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance" (Luke 8: 1-3). The son of God wandering about Jewry with such a retinue and supported by a rabble of women, including married women led away from their husbands, is not a spectacle to delight the contemplative mind. With a rabble such as this, augmented by a bosanna-shouting mob of the backwash of the city and of the countryside, astraddle of an ass and an ass's colt, Jesus King of the Jews invaded the Holy City. Pushing with his yelling suite through the astonished throng he entered the sacred temple; making a whip of cords he lashed the sellers of animals for the sacrifices and the changers of money, poured out their money, drove out the sacrificial animals and doves; and it may safely be surmised, raised a general riot (John 2: 13-16; Matt. 21: 12, 13; Mark 11: 15-18; Luke 19: 45, 46). Suppose a zealous young Zionist from the Bowery, astride a peddler's donkey or enthroned in a dilapidated "Lizzie;" surrounded with a screeching mob of Yiddish paddlers and East Side tatterdemalions, acclaiming their leader as King of Manhattan, invading the Stock Exchange in Wall Street, knocking over the tickers, destroying all available furniture and personal property, and thrashing the brokers; the Tombs or the psychiatric ward at Bellevue arise in the mind's eye as marking the close of the performance. Witnessing the scene as it was enacted, the disciples recalled the prophetic writing: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (John 2: 17).

The repute publicly won by Jesus was that of being "a man gluttonous, and, a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners" (Matt. 11: 19; Luke 7: 34). By ancient and laudable social custom "the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders" (Mark 7: 3). Great was the offence which Jesus and his peasant disciples gave to the well-mannered gentry by their constant violation of

this first precept of cleanliness and decency, because they "eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashed hands" (Mark 7: 2; Matt. 15: 2). Invited by a courteous Pharisee to dine at his home with a polite company including lawyers, Jesus "went in, and sat down to meat. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner. And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools ... Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! ... Woe unto you also, ye lawyers!" (Luke 11: 37-40, 44, 46). Pious people smirk and applaud as if this were a genteel act and speech; if any other guest at the table of a gentleman and in polite company should sit down unwashed and use like language to his host and guests, some plain but cultured people might think it the most uncouth insolence and unpardonable coarseness.

The meek and gentle Jesus made fluent use of a vocabulary which, if it were used by a Billingsgate fishwife, would be deemed vituperative abuse of a shocking kind. Here are some choice bits which he dealt out to people who did not entirely appreciate and agree with him: "Ye fools and blind" (Matt. 23: 17, 19); "Ye serpents, ye generation of wipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Matt. 23: 33) this chapter 23 is a rare study in fervid philippic); "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers" (John 10: 8).

How sweet the oft-quoted unctuous words of the Master: "Suffer little children to come unto me." If he said it he meant little Jewish children only; others he spurned with disdain. When the woman of Canaan came and worshipped him, begging that he would heal her daughter, "grievously vexed with a devil," the great Specialist in devil-exorcism retorted to the stricken mother: "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs" (Matt. 15: 26)! a truly Christlike rebuff. And that those deemed unworthy should receive no charity, he prescribes the general principle: "Neither cast ye your pearls before swine" (Matt. 7: 6).

Shiftlessness and poverty are inculcated as moral virtues for his indigent followers: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth. ... Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. ... Take therefor no thought for the morrow" (Matt. 6: 19, 25, 34); and this never yet realized promise is added for better persuasion: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6: 33). One instance, related by himself, belies his own assurance. Lazarus died a beggar, and, besides the crumbs from the rich man's table, inherited only the kingdom; he "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died; ... And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments" (Luke 16: 22, 23). Thus is vagrancy exalted and thrifty respectability decried. Poverty is further encouraged as an essential to salvation, though the Christ falls into a contradiction. The rich ruler asked: "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him ... Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor" (Luke 18: 18, 22). But another man volunteered: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. ... And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house" (Luke 19: 2, 8, 9). 'Such good works should be publicly displayed before men, that they may see your good works (Matt. 5: 16); though to do so is forbidden under penalty of God's reprobation: "Take heed that ye do not your alms [Revised Version, righteousness] before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 6: 1).

Jesus spread abroad the doctrines of class hatred and set the poor against the rich, the shiftless vagabond against the prudent provider for his family. In the second version of his Sermon on the Mount (this time on the plain) he preached: "Blessed be ye poor: for your's is the kingdom of God. ... But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation" (Luke 6: 20, 24); though the Wise Man declared: "The rich man's wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty" (Prov. 10: 15). Thus the Christ contrasts the present earthly condition of his paupers and of the evil well-to-do with their respective lots in the hereafter, and to the unlucky former class holds out the lure of future "consolation," while here they may find solace in pious gloating over the woeful prospects of the latter: "Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh" -- in another and better world after the poor victims with their broken hearts have starved to death. It may be preferable, with Omar the Seer, to "take the cash, and let the credit go."

The Kingdom of God is declared a happy realm of paupers and vagrants: "A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. ... It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matt. 19: 23, 24). To fit the earthly vagrant the better for the joys of his Lord,

"Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath" (Matt. 13: 12); though ex nihil nihil. The approved Christly and clerical way of accomplishing this feat and deepening poverty -- for the benefit of the soul and of the priest -- is taught in the narrative of the givers to the temple treasury, where the poor "widow's mite" --"even all her living" -- is commended above the much of the rich (Mark 12: 41-44; Luke 21: 1-4) -- an example illustrative of the credulous generosity of the priest-taught poor and of the heartless greed of the priesthood and church; a sacred text which through the ages has enabled a horde of indolent and faking priests to batten upon widows and orphans, to "filch the scanty earnings of the poor, and live like parasites upon the weak and sickly calves of humanity." Yea, Lord, how long?

Domestic strife and family division and hatreds are time and again inculcated by the Master in furtherance of the propaganda of his cult: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14: 26; Matt. 10: 37). Again: "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I: if it be already kindled? ... Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law" (Luke 12: 49, 51-53; cf. Matt. 10: 34, 35)! For once the Christ and his gospels spoke true: these accursed teachings of the Christ have borne the bitterest fruits of human woe, misery, and destruction throughout the ages wherever his falsified gospels have been preached and heeded. Read Lecky's History of European Morals for fearful instances -- recall your own observations or experiences. The rules of proselytism, as laid down by the Christ, are all-embracing and sophistically contradictory, as usual: "He that is not with me is against me" (Luke 11: 23); "He that is not against us is for us" (Luke 9: 50); it's "catch as catch can."

In the exalted zealotry of propaganda the Christ did not hesitate to enjoin the most frightful and fatal deeds of abject submission to his superstition; he taught that, marriage was evil, celibacy a sacred piety, and horrid self-mutilation a pious, acceptable sacrifice "for the kingdom of heaven's sake." For those "to whom it is given" to "receive this saying," the Christ agrees "it is not good to marry"; and he says: "There be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" (Matt. 19: 10-12). Paul is credited with having followed this infamous precept and himself put this "thorn in the flesh," as also the childless Father Origen, and hosts of other church fanatics. The great Pascal said: "Marriage is the lowest and most dangerous condition of Christians." Fanaticism in the name of Jesus, for the principles taught by Jesus, can go no further than these desperate and suicidal precepts: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you ... for my sake" (Matt. 5: 11); "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 10: 39); a fearful bid for self-destruction which has its climax in Paul's frantic Christ- incited exhortation: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12: 1). Countless thousands of fanatic morons have gone to torture and to death, their bodies living sacrifices, acceptable to the Juggernaut fetish of Jesus the Christ.

"My friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body" (Luke 12: 4), with mock heroism the Christ cajoles others; but as for himself, "After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him" (John 7: 1). When the scribes and Pharisees "took up stones to cast at him. ... Jesus hid himself" (John 8: 59); again, after an argument with the people, "Jesus ... departed, and did hide himself from them" (John 12: 36). When Jesus heard that John had been imprisoned, "he departed into Galilee" (Matt. 4: 12); when John was beheaded, he "departed thence by ship into a desert place apart" (Matt. 14: 13). When the Pharisees held a council how they might destroy him, "when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence"; and when people followed him, he "charged them that they should not make him known" (Matt. 12: 14-16). At Gethsemane, in an agony of fear at his coming betrayal and death, Jesus "fell on his face" and prayed that the cup might pass from him (Matt. 26: 39). After his crucifixion, his cowardly disciples who had fled and deserted him in his dire need, were found by him huddled in a room of which "the doors were shut ... for fear of the Jews" (John 20: 19). On Calvary the dying God frantically cried: "My God, My God, why hast thou sacrificed me?" -- a cry which "could never be wrung from the lips of a man who saw in his own death a

prearranged plan for the world's salvation, and his own return to divine glory temporarily renounced for transient misery on earth. The fictitious theology of a thousand years shrivels beneath the awful anguish of that cry." [W.R. Greg, Creed of Christendom.] "Even in those days there were those who could "point to others the steep and thorny path to heaven, but reck not their own rede."

In his divine egoism the Christ proclaimed: "I and my Father are one" (John 10: 20) here announcing at least the partial unity of the Godhead; though this he lateepudiates, and admits "My Father is greater than I" (John 14: 28), thus confessing again two distinct persons and again putting his identity with God in doubt. But without hesitation he avows of himself: "Behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (Matt. 12: 42), as he admits that he is also greater than Jonah (Matt. 12: 41).

Some of the precepts of Jesus might be regarded as very peculiar if they were emanations of the mind of an ordinary teacher. Is poverty of spirit a blessing? Then, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt. 5: 3). Resistance to wrong he taught was wrong: "Unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other" (Luke 6: 29). Reckless waste of substance is specially recommended: "Lend, hoping for nothing again; and youeward shall be great" (Luke 6: 35), and "Give to every man that asketh of thee" (Luke 6: 30). To this he adds the doctrine of submission to theft and robbery: "Of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again" (Luke 6: 30); and "him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also" (Luke 6: 29). The return of good for evil is indeed enjoined -- upon others; but for himself Jesus did not practice this preaching: "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father" (Matt.

10: 33); and, referring to his disciples: "I pray for them: I pray not for the world" (John 17: 9).

The principle is inculcated, that because the judge may not be free from some sin or error the accused must go free; the concrete case is the woman taken in adultery (John 8: 3-11). The general adoption of this principle would free every criminal and close the courts and jails, for judges are human and fallible. Though man cannot punish sin because not free from sin himself, yet God, the author of all sin, is regarded as quite just in punishing man eternally for his sins, even for the sin of doubt.

Jesus declared: "They that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matt. 26: 52); and as if presaging the general havoc which he had declared he had come to bring about, he straightway commanded his disciples. "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one" (Luke

22: 36). The sword was never out of the hand of his apostolic church till stricken from it by force. To those who would violate every sacred tie of life and bond of humanity the Christ speciously promised great earthly reward: "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children [but not wives], and lands" (Mark 10: 29, 30). This has never been known to have been made good. To Paul, at least, the Christ made this promise in a dream: "I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee", (Acts 18: 10); but this is Paul's own report: "I am ... in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned" (2 Cor. 11: 23-25). This shows how foolish it is to believe in dreams -- or in the promises of Jesus the Christ!

Christ Jesus was not always as free from what may be called dissimulation or deception as a Son of God should be -- but think what his Father Yahveh was! At the grave of Lazarus, "Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it" (John 11: 41, 42). Jesus told his brethren: "Go ye up unto this feast [of Tabernacles]: I go not up (yet) unto this feast. ... But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast" (John 7: 8, 10). The word "yet" is not in the text, as the American revisers pointed out; but while retaining it, the Revised Version puts into the margin: "Many ancient authorities omit yet." After his resurrection, when he intended to stop at Emmaus with Cleophas and his companion, "He made as though [i.e., pretended] he would have gone further," but his companions begged him, "and he went in to tarry with them" (Luke 24: 28, 29).

These are isolated instances of what Jesus himself avows was his constant and purposeful practice -- to mislead or deceive his hearers. Jesus spoke "unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them" (Matt. 13: 34); and when his disciples asked him: "Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" (Matt. 13: 10) Jesus said unto them: "All these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their

sins should be forgiven them" (Mark 4: 11, 12)! Can a more monstrous thing be imagined? The Son of God who pretended to have come "to take away the sins of the world" purposely deceiving the poor morons that he might have the pleasure of seeing them damned!
"This is Jesus the King of the Jews."

SECRECY ENJOINED

It is singular that the Messiah, so long prophesied and awaited, so often proclaimed by long-distance voices from his Father Yahveh in heaven: "This is my beloved Son ... hear ye him," and now making his triumphal entry into Jerusalem as the arrived Messiah and king, should so often have denied his divine identity and enjoined silence and secrecy about it. Time and again, as in the anguish of mortal fear, he charged his disciples "that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ" (Matt. 16: 20; 17: 9; Mark 8: 30; et passim); and he suffered not even his very active and efficient witnesses the devils to testify for him, "for they knew that he was Christ" (Luke 4: 41; Mark 1: 25, 34, et passim). Before Caiaphas and Pilate, who asked him "whether thou be the Christ" (Matt. 26: 63), and "Art thou the King of the Jews?" (Matt. 27: 11), he hesitated, and equivocated, and answered only: "Thou sayest" (Matt. 27: 11) or "If I tell you, ye will not believe" (Luke 22: 67). He allowed no one to witness his resurrection, in the dead of the night; and when he was risen from the dead, he showed himself, equivocally, but to one or a variously related number of private persons, never in public, as the Son of God triumphant over death.

SUPERSTITIONS OF JESUS CHRIST

A discrediting aspect of the personality of the proclaimed Son of Yahveh, who knew all things, even the hidden thoughts of men, is that he believed and declared so many things, which were current beliefs among the ignorant of his times, but are known by all school-children to-day to be fables and superstitions, and which the all-knowing mind of a God would always, even then, know to be impossible and untrue. Multiplied instances abound in the four inspired biographies.

The Christ warns against all others who should claim to be Christs, offering his own credentials: "If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matt. 24: 23, 24). We all know that miracles do not happen; that, as Hume justly said: "No testimony can prove miracles, for it is more probable that the testimony is false than that the miracles are true." But, even otherwise, how could "great signs and wonders" be worked, great and deceptive miracles be wrought, by impostors in whom the power of God is not? Signs and wonders, miracles, were the very sign-manual of the identity of Jesus with the Christ: "for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3: 2). "Believe me for the very works' sake" (John 14: 11), is the Christ's special challenge for faith to the doubting. Yet he concedes to impostors and to devils the very same power to work miracles which is his own special patent of divinity.

It is this same token of the authenticity of his divinity that he sends to the doubting Baptist, who sent to inquire: "Are thou he that should come? or look we for another?" The only answer which Jesus returned, the only proof he deemed necessary, was a report of his miracles: "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see" -- reciting a list of the miracles he had done (Matt. 11: 4, 5). And it is the same all-sufficient answer which he flung back at Herod: "Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils," etc. (Luke 13: 32); and throughout, the signs and wonders" which he worked are the test and authentication of the divinity of the Christ. "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe" (John 4: 48), Jesus himself declared.

Yet, a thousand times, the "false Christs" and the devils do the miracles of Yahveh, and are in this respect his successful rivals. The Devil leads the Christ into the wilderness, and up on a high mountain, and sets him on the pinnacle of the temple, and "tempts" him, claiming undisputed dominion over the kingdoms of the world (Matt. 4: 1-11). Jesus "cast out devils" by the legion from disordered persons, and held argument with the devils, recognizing their existence, intelligence, and power (Matt. 8: 28-32, passim); he enjoins his followers to "fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10: 28); he proclaimed that there is "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25: 41); and as the badge of their divine mission and authority, he gave to his disciples "power and authority over all devils" (Luke 9: 1) -- and so on ad

infinitum; though God and intelligent persons know there are no devils and no hell of fire -- and that devils and false Christs cannot work miracles.

With all the assurances of Jesus himself as to his manifold "Signs and wonders" and with the four gospels replete with records of his miracles, we are amazed to hear the positive words of the Master denying that he performed or would perform any miracles at all: "They said therefore unto him, What sign shawest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?" (John 6: 30). The answer is not here explicit, but is reported by the other biographers: "And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation" (Mark 8: 12). To this refusal Matthew adds the embellishment: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12: 39, 40; 16: 4). And Jonah is a poor sign for any truth.

Scores of other superstitious legends and fables, Jesus also constantly appeals to as living truths: Abel, Noah and the Flood, Lot, and his wife turned to a pillar of salt, Moses and the burning bush, Jonah swallowed by the fish -- a whole congeries of ancient fables the Son of Yahveh takes as gospel truth which God knows never were true. Even the Christ was infected with that "strong delusion to believe lies" sent by his Father upon men, "that they may all be damned."

THE "SECOND COMING" OF CHRIST

The crowning disproof of the divinity, even of the common sense, of the Christ, and a sad proof of the serious delusion which he suffered, is the stupendous assertion which he made of his immediate Second coming to earth in all the glory of his triumphant kingdom. He never said a more positive and explicit thing -- incapable of being misunderstood or of double meaning -- than this:

"Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." (Matt. 16: 28; Mark 9: 1)

"Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done." (Mark 13: 30)

"But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God." (Luke 9: 27)

So soon should the "second coming" be that when the Twelve were sent out on their first preaching tour in little Palestine, the Master assured them: "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come" (Matt. 10: 23). But the Christ himself contradicted this promise, and postponed indefinitely his coming again: "The gospel must first be published among all nations" (Mark 13: 10).

Caiaphas, the high priest before whom Jesus was led after his capture in the garden, solemnly appealed to him for truth:

"I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

"Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." (Matt. 26: 63, 64, Mark 14: 61, 62) And in these nineteen hundred years this supreme prophecy of the Son of Yahveh has gone unaccomplished. No more is needed to convict the inspired records of utter falsity and discredit, to prove that the lowly Nazarene was no God, was no promised Messiah -- was himself a "false Christ," who has deceived the very elect who have misplaced faith in his Holy Word.

IS IT GOD'S WORD?

CHAPTER 15: MORE: "HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS"

THE CLOSING SCENES OF THE DRAMA

MORE "HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS

" THE LAST SUPPER THE "LORD'S SUPPER" OR EUCHARIST

THE BETRAYAL AND ARREST

PETER'S DENIAL OF JESUS

THE TRIAL OF JESUS

THE CRUCIFIXION

BEARING THE CROSS

WHEN WAS IT?

THE INSCRIPTION

THE WITNESSES

THE INCIDENTS AT THE CRUCIFIXION

THE LAST WORDS

THE WONDERS AT DEATH

THE BURIAL SCENE

THE RESURRECTION

BREAKING THE RESURRECTION NEWS

POST-RESURRECTION APPEARANCES OF JESUS

THE FIRST APPEARANCE

THE SECOND APPEARANCE

THIRD APPEARANCE

FOURTH APPEARANCE

SUNDAY OTHER APPEARANCES

THE ASCENSION

NOBODY BELIEVED THE "IDLE TALES"

A PROPHET WITHOUT HONOR

MORE: "HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS"

WE have thus reviewed the salient features of the recorded events of the birth and career of the Man of Nazareth, and thus have been enabled to form an intelligent, if amazed, judgment as to their inspired and historical verity. Let us regard now the closing scenes of the sacred tragedy of the Son of Yahveh made man, in the distressing episodes of his betrayal, condemnation, and ignominious death, and in his glorious triumph over death, his resurrection from the dead, his various subsequent appearances to the living, and his transcendent ascension into heaven to sit with his Father Yahveh until his coming again in glory to establish his promised kingdom -- which he was to have established during his life on earth; no return, or "second coming," for this purpose is once prophesied.

THE LAST SUPPER

The holding and eating of a Jewish Passover supper by thirteen poor wandering Jews, in a borrowed dining room (Matt. 26: 18, 19; Mark 14: 14, 15; Luke 22: 9-13), would seem to be a simple affair, to be narrated by divinely inspired chroniclers with little effort and with fair chances for truth. But already one inspired contradiction stares us in the face. Was it the Passover supper or just an ordinary meal? Three of the gospel recorders declare expressly that the Last Supper was the Passover meal; John says that it was a supper eaten before the Passover.

According to the synoptists: "The disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover? ... And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve" (Matt.

26: 17, 19, 20; Mark 14: 12, 14, 16, 17; Luke 22: 7, 8, 11, 13, 14). Luke quotes Jesus expressly as saying, after they were all seated: "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22: 15). Thus it was the Passover supper. But John positively controverts this, saying: "Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father. ... And supper being ended" (John 13: 1, 2), then it was that the devil instigated Judas to betray Jesus. The Last Supper was thus before the Passover and was not the Passover supper.

That one of the Twelve should betray him Jesus announced during the Last Supper: "And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto You, that one of you shall betray me" (Matt. 26: 21; Mark 14: 18). But it was after the supper was finished and the cup passed that Jesus made the announcement: "Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table" (Luke 22: 20, 21; John 13: 2, 21). Judas thereupon asked: "Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said" (Matt. 26: 25); but according to John, instead of this direct question by Judas, betraying his guilty conscience, and the affirmative answer of Jesus, John, at the instance of Peter, asked the question: "Lord, who is it? Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop. ... And ... he gave it to Judas Iscariot" (John 13: 23-26). The identity of the betrayer was not, however, disclosed, according to Mark; each of the Twelve asked him "one by one, Is it I? ... And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish" (Mark 14: 19-20); Luke says only that the disciples "began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing," and Jesus made no disclosure other than the remark above quoted (Luke 22: 21, 23). Yet John represents the disciples as not knowing or understanding what Jesus meant: for after Judas had received the sop, "Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly. Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him" (John 13: 27, 28). And Judas, "having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night" (John 13: 30); though Judas had already been possessed of Satan, and had arranged the betrayal for the thirty pieces, some days before the last Passover (Matt. 26: 14-17; Mark 14: 10, 11; Luke 22: 3-7).

THE "LORD'S SUPPER" OR EUCHARIST

Immediately after the Last Supper a ceremony was performed by Jesus, which the synoptists declare to have been the Lord's Supper or Eucharist, but which John asserts was the simple act of washing the feet of the disciples. (John was the only gospel writer present.) John does not mention the former institution, and the others do not mention the foot washing; but both are said to have been the final act of Jesus before going out to Gethsemane and betrayal.

During the supper and before the ceremony of the Eucharist, Jesus passed a cup of wine to the disciples, and said: "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come (Luke 22: 18). But the remark, according to Matthew, was not made until after the ceremonial of the Lord's Supper, and in connection with it, and Jesus said that he would no more drink of the fruit of the vine "until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26: 26-29). The difference here is great: one statement is that he would drink again on earth when the kingdom of God was come, as it was scheduled to do immediately; the other is that he would drink it with the disciples some time in heaven. Mark also makes the statement come after the ceremony, and Jesus was to drink either on earth or in heaven, but quite alone; the disciples were not included in the invitation: "until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14: 25). According to two reports the cup was passed but once, and the remark of Jesus was made at that time (Matt. 26: 26-30; Mark 14: 22-26); the other says the cup was passed twice, first during supper, when the remark was made, and "likewise after supper," when the Eucharist was instituted (Luke 22: 17, 18, 20).

Just what this eucharistic ceremonial was and whether it was intended as a perpetual memorial or was for that occasion only is a question of first concern, and like all other gospel truth is sadly confused and contradictory. If John, who was the only evangelist who attended the Last Supper, is believed, there was no eucharistic ceremony at all; only foot washing (John 13: 4-12). But according to the synoptists, Jesus took bread and wine, blessed them, and passed them to the disciples, saying, as to the bread: "Take, eat; this is my body" (Matt. 26: 26; Mark 14: 22); or, "this is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22: 19).

Luke's report cannot be authentic if the other two are true. The chief tangle of inspiration is with respect to the wine. What was the mystic purpose for which the Christ's blood was to be shed?

Jesus said, according to Matthew:

"Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matt. 26: 27, 28)

Jesus said, according to Mark:

"This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many." (Mark 14: 24)

Jesus said, according to Luke:

"This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." (Luke 22: 20)

More notable discrepancies on a more important tenet of Christianity there could hardly be. The blood of Jesus, symbolized by the wine, was shed for the disciples only, "shed for you" alone, says Luke; it was "shed for many," but for whom is not specified, according to Mark; it was "shed for many for the remission of sins," according to Matthew, who is notoriously the purveyor of the amplest inspiration, and always embellishes the reports of the others. This revelation of the greatest of Christian doctrines, the atonement, is either falsely ascribed by Matthew to Jesus; or Mark and Luke have ignorantly or intentionally omitted it. The words attributed to Jesus by Luke are entirely different from those quoted by the others, even in the first part of the sentence. Not more than one of the three can possibly be accurate; the other two are necessarily false.

With respect to the bread only one of the three quotes words which are construed as establishing a permanent institution: "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22: 19). This is far from having the immense significance attributed to the simple words. One single instance suffices for a token of remembrance of a departing friend or companion; a farewell kiss is very often "something to remember me by," perhaps, by the very circumstances of the incident, never to be repeated. Matthew and Mark do not record even this ambiguous remark; and John omits the whole of the Lord's Supper.

John only of the Gospel recorders was an eye and ear witness to the proceedings of the -- not Passover, but simply last meal together. The "supper being ended" Jesus "riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water in a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. ... So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them" etc. (John 13: 2, 4, 5, 12).

John then, without a word of the Lord's Supper, records verbatim a long speech by Jesus (covering the remainder of chapter 13 and all of chapters 14-17). Then, "when Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples" (John 18: 1). Whether, then, the "mystery of the blessed Eucharist" or simple foot washing was there ordained is not yet unriddled.

THE BETRAYAL AND ARREST

Next comes the affecting incident of the betrayal and capture of Jesus, by night, in the Garden of Gethsemane. Of the posse comitatus which effected the capture, its source, its personnel, its material. Matthew thus writes: "And while he [Jesus] yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people." (Matt. 26: 47)

Mark records it thus:

"And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders." (Mark 14: 43)

Luke thus:

"And while he yet spake, behold a multitude and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them. ... Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him," etc. (Luke 22: 47, 52)

John says:

"Judas then, having received a band of men [Revised Version, "soldiers"] and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons." (John 18: 3)

The discrepancies in the foregoing four accounts of the posse are, in a narration of inspired truth, significant. Matthew says the posse was sent by "the chief priests and elders"; Mark, by the "chief priests, and the scribes and the elders"; Luke, that the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders" went in person with the posse; John says that it was sent by the "chief priests and Pharisees." Matthew and Mark say that Judas took along "a great multitude," Luke, simply "a multitude," all civilians.

John, much more precisely, says "a band of men and officers," all soldiers (R.V.). Since this whole proceeding was by night, it may naturally be somewhat in the dark, notwithstanding the "lanterns and torches" of John's soldiers.

Secondly, as to what happened when Judas and his posse arrived at the garden. Matthew says: "Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him." (Matt. 26: 48-50)

Mark says:

"And he that had betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely. And as soon as he was come, he went straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him. And they laid their hands on him, and took him." (Mark 14: 44-4-6)

Luke says:

"Judas ... went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke 22: 47,48)

John relates that as the band of soldiers approached at some distance,

"Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground. Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way. ... Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him." (John 18: 4-8, 12)

The conflicts of testimony are glaring here. Matthew and Mark are substantially agreed, declaring that Judas had prearranged to point out Jesus to his civilian posse by kissing him; and they both say that Judas went straightway to Jesus, hailed him "Master," and kissed him. But Luke does not testify that Judas kissed Jesus; he says only that he "drew near unto Jesus to kiss him"; and that Jesus, telepathically knowing his purpose, checked him, saying: "Judas, betrayest thou me with a kiss?" John contradicts the contradictory reports of all three of the others in his version. Judas, instead of going "before them," as Luke says, simply "stood with them"; and as soon as Jesus had said "I am he," the whole company of soldiers, with Judas, terrified, "went backward, and fell to the ground." John says the soldiers then "took Jesus and bound him" (18: 12); according to Matthew (27: 2) and Mark (15: 1) Jesus was not bound until he was sent to Pilate. No contradictions in human language could be plainer than these.

The little incident of Peter's cutting off the ear of one of the posse is related by Matthew thus:

"And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword." (Matt. 26: 51, 52)

Mark tells it thus:

"And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me?" (Mark 14: 47, 48)

Luke tells it thus:

"When they which were about him saw what would follow [the kissing], they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear, And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him." (Luke 22: 49-51)

John relates it thus:

"Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18: 10, 11)

Little as this incident is, these four inspired historians cannot tell just how it happened. Matthew relates that "one of them which were with Jesus" struck, and Jesus simply said: "Put up again thy sword." Mark speaks of the sword-play as by "a certain one of them that stood by"; and Jesus said nothing about putting up the sword, but said to the posse: "Are ye come out as against a thief?" Luke tells us that "they which were about" Jesus, seeing what was going to follow the undelivered kiss, asked permission as for a general affray, saying: "Lord, may we smite with the sword?" and one of them without waiting for a reply, cut off the servant's ear. Jesus, when it was too late, answered in the negative; then Luke, the physician, puts in a word for his profession, and tells us that Jesus performed a miracle by healing the ear. No one else relates this, the most remarkable incident of the whole evening. John goes into his usual detail and gives us the name of Peter as the aggressor, says nothing about the asking permission for a general assault, and gives the name of the wounded servant. And he reports that Jesus told Peter to put up his sword, for he himself must take his medicine out of the cup prepared for him. Each reader may take his choice as to how it happened or did not happen. It is related that "then all the disciples forsook him, and fled" (Matt. 26: 56).

PETER'S DENIAL OF JESUS

We shall now take up the trial of Jesus as recorded by his four inspired reporters. I omit, of course, all reference to Jewish ooman law and legal practice, as the Bible account must stand or fall on its own internal consistency. The italics, used to call attention to the contradictions, are mine.

First, we shall consider the incident of Peter's denial, the beginning of which precedes the trial. This takes us back a moment for our authority. Jesus is reported to have predicted this denial of Peter, in rebuking his vain boast of unfailing fidelity.

Matthew states the events thus:

"And when they had sung an hymn, they went out [from the Last Supper] into the mount of Olives. ... Jesus said unto him [Peter], Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." (Matt. 26: 30, 34)

Mark relates the events thus:

"And in the evening he [Jesus] cometh with the twelve. ... And Jesus saith unto him [Peter], Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. ... And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane." (Mark 14: 17, 30, 32)

Luke writes thus:

"And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me. ... And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives." (Luke 22: 14, 34., 39)

John relates the events thus:

"And supper being ended, ... Jesus answered him [Peter]. ... Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice." (John 13: 2, 38)

Here we have more conflicting truths. Matthew says that the accusation of Peter was made by Jesus after the Last Supper, in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. Mark, Luke, and John deny this, and assert that it occurred during the Last Supper, and that they then, afterwards, went to the mount. Matthew, Luke, and John report Jesus as saying that "before the cock crows" once, Peter would deny him thrice; Mark makes him say "before the cock crows twice," Peter would make the three denials. The reader may accept either of these cock-tales which he most relishes.

Now, how did these prophesied denials of Peter's come about, and what were their attendant circumstances?

Matthew relates the story thus:

"And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end. [The trial was proceeding -- verses 59-68.] Now Peter sat without in the palace, [i.e., in the courtyard]: and a damsel came unto him, saying," etc. "But he denied before them all, saying," etc. "And

when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said," etc. "And again he denied with an oath. ... And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter." etc. "Then began he to curse and to swear, saying I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." (Matt. 26: 57, 58, 69-75)

Mark reports the matter with important variations:

"And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire. [The trial then progressed -- verses 55- 65.] And as Peter was beneath in the palace [i.e., in the courtyard], there cometh one of the maids of the high priest, and said," etc. "But he denied. ... And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And a maid saw him again, and began to say," etc. And he denied it again. And a little while after they that stood by said again to Peter," etc. But he began to curse and to swear. ... And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice." (Mark 14: 53, 54, 66-72)

Luke relates the incident, with marked differences, as occurring on the next day before the trial:

"Then took they him [Jesus], and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, ... and said," etc. "And he denied him, saying," etc. "And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed," etc. "And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." (Luke 22: 54-61)

John gives a totally different report:

The soldiers "led him away to Annas first. ... And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple ... went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. [Later the maid that kept the door let Peter in.] Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter," etc., and he denied. The servants and officers and Peter were standing there warming themselves. The trial, apparently before Annas, was proceeding, (18: 19-24). "And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him," etc. "He denied it. ... One of the servants ... saith," etc. Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew." (John 18: 13, 15-18, 25-27)

The conflicts and contradictions in the relation of this trifling incident are astonishing. It is difficult to untangle the twisted narrative into its several warped strands. Matthew, Mark, and Luke lay this incident of denials and cock-crowing at the house of the high priest, Caiaphas; John lays it partly at the house of Caiaphas and partly at the house of Annas. Matthew and Mark say that it took place during the night trial of Jesus at the house of Caiaphas; Luke says that it occurred during the night, but during no trial, as Jesus was simply held a prisoner in the courtyard overnight, and his trial took place next day; John says -- well, Aristotle himself could hardly tell what John says; it is so mixed. I pass this puzzle till we come to the account of the trial.

To whom the denials were made, and where, is a matter of much conflict. As to the first denial, Matthew says that Peter was sitting without in the court, and a maid came unto him. Mark says that as Peter was "beneath in" the court, "one of the maids" came to him. Luke, says a certain maid saw him as he sat by the fire. John says it was the maid who kept the door of the court and who let Peter in.

As to the second denial, Matthew says that when Peter was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him. Mark says, when Peter was out in the porch, the same maid as at first saw him. Luke says Peter was still by the fire and that it was a man, Peter replying: "Man, I am not." John says it was "they" (officers and servants).

Of the third denial, Matthew says that after a little while "they that stood by" came. Mark says the same. Luke says that after the space of about one hour, "another man." John says "one of the servants."

Matthew, Luke, and John report the cock as crowing only once, and after the third denial; Mark says that the cock crowed twice, after the second and after the third denials. Matthew, Luke, and John record Peter as thereupon remembering that Jesus had said to him: "Before the cock crows [once], thou shalt deny me thrice"; Mark makes Peter remember that Jesus had said: "Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice." Luke

says that Jesus was present at the denial, and "turned, and looked upon Peter"; the others all represent Jesus as not present.

THE TRIAL OF JESUS

This brings us to the trial of Jesus Christ. Matthew thus relates the trial scene:

"And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. ... Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; ... Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee? ... When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate, the governor." (Matt. 26: 57,59-67; 27: 1, 2)

Mark's account of the trial scene (Mark 14: 15: 1) is substantially identical with Matthew's; therefore I do not repeat it.

Luke records the scene entirely differently. To get the connection I shall have to repeat a few verses offered in connection with the story of the "denial."

"But a certain maid beheld him [Peter] as he sat by the fire, and said," etc. "And he denied," etc. "And ... the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. ... And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee? And many other things blasphemously spake they against him. And as soon as it was day the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you ye will not believe. And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth. And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate." (Luke 22: 56-71; 23: 1)

John gives a still different account of the scene:

"Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year. The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I said unto them: behold, they know what I said. And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me? Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest." (John 18: 12, 13, 19-24)

The first two evangelists, Matthew and Mark, practically agree in their accounts of the trial: it was before Caiaphas; it was during the night when Jesus was captured; false witnesses testified; Jesus made statements which were considered blasphemous, and was judged worthy of death; and on the next morning he was carried before the Roman governor, Pilate. But Luke completely discredits the reports of Matthew and Mark. For Luke makes it plain that there was no trial during the night; Jesus passed the night in the courtyard with his guard and Peter; and the next morning, "as soon as it was day," the council assembled, "and they led him into their council." The proceedings are related with some minor differences, of which only one need be noticed. The high priest asked Jesus: "Art thou the Christ? ... And Jesus said, "I am" (Mark 14: 61, 62); but Luke says that Jesus replied: "If I tell you, ye will not believe" (Luke 22: 67). John says that Jesus was first taken to Annas, at

whose house some proceedings and one of Peter's denials seem to have taken place; then "Annas sent [Jesus] bound unto Caiaphas the high priest." Whether by night or day does not appear.

After the proceedings before Caiaphas, Jesus was taken to Pilate for final sentence. There are many variants in the fouecords of the proceedings before Pilate, but I shall pass all except the most glaring. Luke represents the proceedings before Pilate as held in the presence of the accusers of Jesus: "And led him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse him. ... And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. ... And Pilate ... said unto them ... behold, I:having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof you accuse him" (Luke 23: 1, 2, 10, 13, 14; cf. Matt. 27: 12-14; Mark 15: 1-4). But John declares that the hearing before Pilate was ex parte, without witnesses or accusers present: "Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled. ... Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? ... Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus" (John 18: 28, 29, 33). Pilate said to the Jews: "Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death" (John 18: 31). A little later, "the Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die" (John 19: 7). But in those days Jews were noted liars.

The result of the so-called trial was, by complete harmony of the gospels, that Pilate declared Jesus innocent -- and sentenced him to death! "Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him" (John 19: 6)! Somewhat odd, this, for the highest court of the land to adjudge a man not guilty and then pronounce the sentence of death! Such is inspired truth. Then the soldiers "stripped [Jesus], and put on him a scarlet robe" (Matt. 27: 28); but John calls it "a purple robe" (John 19: 2).

If this action of Pilate is denounced as infamous, Jesus says that his Father Yahveh was the greater criminal. He said to Pilate: "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee [Yahveh] hath the greater sin" (John 19: 11)! Good for Jesus!

THE CRUCIFIXION

The immediate scene of the Crucifixion offers several points of conflict. Let it be remembered that we now have to do with the most stupendous series of events in all time -- if any of them ever happened at all. The jewel of consistency should crown the inspired record of these wonders. Amid all the miracles appealed to, to accredit the story of the death and resurrection of a God, the seal of God's truth should blaze upon this supreme miracle for the faith of mankind. Let us look for the miracle of truth in these fouecords.

BEARING THE CROSS

Matthew (27: 32), Mark (15: 21), and Luke (23: 26) say that on the way to Golgotha with Jesus, one Simon a Cyrenian was "compelled to go with them, that he might bear his cross"; John, who says he was there, declares (19: 17) that Jesus himself, bearing the cross for himself, went forth to Golgotha.

WHEN WAS IT?

The time of the Crucifixion is much confused, both as to the day and the hour of the day. We have seen three of the gospel historians declare that the Last Supper was itself the Passover meal; John says it was before the Passover; and John, the most intimate friend of Jesus, who was with him at the foot of the cross, says that he was crucified before the Passover, and after noon: "And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour" (19: 14) when Jesus was delivered up to be crucified (19: 16); he was taken to Golgotha (19: 17); and Pilate came and wrote the inscription (19: 19); so that the Crucifixion took place some time after noon, and before the Passover, "because it was the preparation" (19: 31). Thus Jesus did not eat the Passover. According to the other three accounts, the Crucifixion took place the day after the Passover; a difference of two days.

Matthew says that the Crucifixion lasted from noon to three o'clock: "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour" (Matt. 27: 45). But Mark says: "It was the third hour [9 a.m.], and they crucified him" (Mark 15: 25); though he joins Matthew in making the dying cry come at the ninth hour, or 3 p.m. (15: 34), as does Luke (23: 44); so that Jesus, according to two recorders, hung for three hours on the cross; for six hours, according to Mark.

THE INSCRIPTION

Jesus was crucified with an inscription above his head. With respect to this Matthew says:

"And [the soldiers who crucified Jesus) set up over his head his accusation written, This is Jesus the King of the Jews." (Matt. 27: 37)

Mark records:

"And the superscription of his accusation was written over, The King of the Jews." (Mark 15: 26)

Luke says:

"And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, This is the King of the Jews." (Luke 23: 38)

John says:

"And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." (John 19: 19)

And John, who says he was there throughout, adds a totally new incident:

"Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written." (John 19: 21)

The inscription reads four different ways, with really vital differences of text. Luke, who did not see it, and John (19: 20) say that it was written in three languages, on the order of the Rosetta Stone. Mark and Luke say that the name of Jesus was not in the inscription, which simply read: "This is the King of the Jews"; Mark makes it even more laconic by omitting the first two words. Matthew declares that it named Jesus; John asserts that it gave him both name and title, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Matthew says that the soldiers who crucified Jesus set up the inscription; Mark and Luke say simply that it "was written," without indicating its writer; John flatly contradicts Matthew's statement that the soldiers did it, declaring that Pilate wrote it and put it on the cross. The colloquy about the text between Pilate and the chief priests, recorded by John (19: 21), is evidently apocryphal, as Pilate certainly was not present, and it may be doubted that the chief priests were there either.

THE WITNESSES

It would seem to be of great importance to know who were witnesses to that awful scene of a dying God; but the accounts are too variant and contradictory to satisfy a just interest. All the recorders speak of passers-by, soldiers, chief priests, scribes and elders of the Jews, and John makes Pilate present. That no Jews were or could be present is asserted by scholars versed in Jewish customs and tradition. This holy gentry would not so much as enter into the judgment hall of Pilate to press their accusations against Jesus "lest they should be defiled" (John 17: 28); much less would they defile their pure selves by witnessing the murder they had procured, even if permitted to do so.

Probably only the Roman soldiery was present, with chance passers-by and some of the pagan populace. The three synoptists speak of "the centurion" and his remarkable testimony. A centurion was an important officer, commander of one hundred men, a captain of a company of soldiers. There were but four soldiers (John 19: 23) present, and it is hardly likely that a company commander was sent in charge of a corporal's squad of four men to execute two thieves and one Christ.

The friends and followers of Jesus who witnessed the fatal scene deserve our attention more; but we can never know who they were. John, who claims to have been on the spot, says that only "there stood by the cross of Jesus" three Marys, "his mother, and his mother's sister [both oddly named Mary], and Mary Magdalene" (John 19: 25); and that Jesus, pointing to John, said: "Woman, behold thy son" (19: 26, 27). But John was not present, according to the silence of all the other gospel truth-bearers. Matthew, who was not there, bears record of "many women ... which followed Jesus from Galilee: ... Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses [he does not call her the mother, too, of Jesus] -- and the mother of Zebedee's children" (Matt. 27: 55, 56). Mark gives the list differently: "Among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome, and many other women" (Mark 15: 40, 41). Both Matthew and Mark declare that this whole troupe of women "were there beholding afar off," "looking on from afar" -- therefore not "standing by the cross" at all, as John says they were. And Luke too testifies that not only "the women that followed him from Galilee" but also "all his acquaintance" with them

"stood afar off, beholding these things" (Luke 23: 49). How the ladies could have seen these things from afar is not clear, for we are assured by the Holy Ghost, through three historians of the scene, that during the whole time that Jesus hung on the cross "from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour" (Matt. 27: 45; Mark 15: 33; Luke 23: 44); though John, who was present throughout, didn't see the darkness and eclipse, nor any of the other wonders to be noted.

John alone of the delectable Twelve was present at the final tragedy, according to him; all the disciples (himself included) at Gethsemane "forsook him and fled" (Matt. 26: 56; Mark 14: 50); all except Judas, who maybe, went and hanged himself. One traitor and eleven craven cowards were the holy apostles of the Son of Yahveh. A God might have foreknown their mean characters and have chosen honest and loyal men for his suite.

THE INCIDENTS AT THE CRUCIFIXION

What occurred at and during this transcendent scene of the Passion of a dying God, which should be recorded by inerrant inspiration, is peddled with the same sort of pettifogging tell-tale which characterizes all inspired narrative.

After arriving at the place of crucifixion, say Matthew and Mark, and before Jesus was put upon the cross, he was offered something to drink, but what is not certain. Matthew says: "They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall" (27: 34); Mark says: "They gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh" (15: 23); and both state that he would not accept it. But it was after the Crucifixion, says Luke, that the soldiers "mocked him. ... offering him vinegar" (23: 36), which was apparently refused. John, who claims to have been there, details the whole scene to the end, and then records: "After this, Jesus ... saith, I thirst. ... And they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth" (19: 28, 29), and Jesus "received the vinegar" (19: 30), bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Two "thieves," say Matthew (27: 38) and Mark (15: 27), were crucified with Jesus; Luke says they were simply "malefactors" (23: 32); John does not know what their offence was, and to him they were merely "two other" (19: 18). Both of Matthew's "thieves" joined with the chief priests, scribes, and elders in "mocking" Jesus, and "cast the same in his teeth" (27: 44), and neither of them repented, or was invited to paradise; and Mark agrees that both "they that were crucified with him reviled him" (15: 32), however unseemly it may be for those in the agony of death to engage in reproaching a fellow sufferer. But that there is honor even among dying thieves is admitted by Luke, who records that but "one of the malefactors ... railed on him," while "the other answering rebuked" the railer (23: 39, 40), and "this other" did not repent of "reviling Jesus," for he had not reviled him; but he did say: "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (23: 42) -- this dying thief being thus made to show a familiarity with the esoteric teachings of Jesus which even his own disciples did not at the time comprehend. But John, who was at the very foot of the cross, recorded no reviling or mocking, and the thieves, according to him, died like gentlemen, without a word.

As tangled a bit is next related regarding the casting of lots over the garments of the Crucified. The synoptists relate that all the clothing was raffled: "They parted his garments, casting lots" (Matt. 27: 35; Mark 15: 24; Luke 23: 34). But John, who was present, says that the lots were cast only for the seamless coat, the other things being divided by choice: "Then the soldiers ... took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam. ... They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lot's for it, whose it shall be" (19: 23, 24); and John puts into the mouth of the Roman soldiers ancient Davidic complaints as pretended Hebrew prophecy being fulfilled by themselves -- "... whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture did they cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did" (19: 24).

Matthew records that "about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" (27: 46), these Hebrew words being rendered as meaning: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Mark quotes the same expiring cry, but makes the first two words the Aramaic "Eloi, eloi" (15: 34); though neither Luke nor John records them in either form. But sabachthani means, not "forsaken me," but sacrificed me. The words are quoted from one of the Psalms (22: 1), and it seems strange that one dying in the agony of the cross should for his dying words quote ancient poetry. However, the quotation leads into other oddities of inspiration. Matthew says that "some of them that stood there," hearing the words, said, "This man calleth for Elias" (27: 47); one of them ran and got a vinegar-soaked sponge "and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be,

let us see whether Elias will come to save him" (27: 48, 49). But, according to Mark; it was the same man who gave the vinegar who made the remark: "And one ran and filled a sponge ... and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down" (15: 36). This despairing cry, "My God, why hast thou forsaken [sacrificed] me?" at the hour of death, when the oft-proclaimed Kingdom of David, or the Messianic program for the Kingdom of God, seemed utterly collapsed, proves of itself that the dying Christ was conscious that he was not God, but a poor, disillusioned dying man, forsaken, sacrificed, by Yahveh, God of Israel.

It is odd that anyone, Jew or gentile, should have mistaken the Hebrew word eli ("my God") for a call for Elijah, of which Elias is the Greek form. As pronounced by Jesus, the word sounded 'laylee'; the name of Elijah in Hebrew is pronounced "eh-lee-yah- hoo" (meaning "Yahveh is God"). The two words could not have been mistaken by the Jews, and to the pagan gentiles they would have been meaningless; they knew nothing about Elijah. Jews hearing it would hardly have mistaken the words of the Psalm 22 for a cry to the precursor of the Messianic kingdom -- a mistake upon which theiaillery is made to depend.

One of the extraordinary episodes, related by John only, is that after Jesus "was dead already" (19: 33), "one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water" (19: 34). It is strange that none of the other wonder- mongers relates this physiological curiosity. The deed was done after the soldiers, by leave of Pilate (whom John records as taking an incredible holiday to attend the Crucifixion), had found that Jesus was already dead (19: 31-34), and of course Pilate, being there, knew that Jesus was dead after but three (or six) hours on the cross. But Mark denies that Pilate was at the crucifixion or knew that Jesus was dead; for "now when the even was come," Joseph of Arimathaea "went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph" (Mark 15: 42-45). So Pilate was at home, in the palace in Jerusalem, and knew nothing about Jesus' being so soon dead (crucifixion being a lingering death lasting usually several days). This suffices for this batch of old wives' tales", peddled as gospel truth.

THE LAST WORDS

Matthew and Mark relate not a word said by Jesus on the cross except the expiring cry at the ninth hour, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani" (a quotation from David; Ps. 22: 1), meaning "My God, my God, why hast thou sacrificed me?" Luke (23: 43) tells of a single remark to one of the thieves, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (but Jesus, after his death, went, not to paradise, but to hell; Acts 2: 31; 1 Pet. 3: 19; cf. the Apostles' Creed); and then, at the ninth hour, the expiring cry, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (23: 46). John relates only one remark by Jesus to his mother, concerning John, "Woman, behold thy son!" and one to the disciple, "Behold thy mother!" and "I thirst" (19: 26-28). At the end Jesus merely said: "It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost" (19: 30), without either of the expiring cries. Surely this is unsatisfactory for such a scene.

THE WONDERS AT DEATH

Wonderful miracles attended the death of a God on a cross, as related by one or another of the reporters. Matthew (27: 45), Mark (15: 33), and Luke (23: 44) say that "from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour," when, with or without the expiring cry, Jesus, "gave up the ghost." But John, who was there, and saw, and "saith true, that ye might believe," did not see the darkness, nor other wonderful phenomena. Matthew gives a whole catalogue of wonders, which is found in no other history of that period: "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." (Matt. 27: 51-53) How there could have been "saints" already dead and buried ages before the Holy Church set up its saint-mill is not clear; and what they did between the "ninth hour," when they "arose," and three (or one and a half) days later, when they "came out of their graves after his resurrection," is not revealed. Maybe, as Ingersoll suggests, "they were polite enough to sit in their open graves and wait for Christ to rise first." But Mark does not credit these ghosts, nor the earthquake, any more than I do, for he simply says (15: 38) the "veil of the temple was

rent in twain," which is also all that Luke says (23: 45); and John, who alone was there to see, discredits every word of the three others, for he says nothing of all these wonders.

These inspired writers are also in hopeless conflict as to what the Roman centurion said when Jesus "gave up the ghost." Matthew and Mark say that, when those present "saw the earthquake," the centurion said: "Truly this was the Son of God" -- thus familiar with the Jewish Messianic doctrine and confessing the Christian claim that Jesus was the Messiah! But Luke is not so ambitious for a confession of Christian faith from the pagan Roman, and declares that he simply said: "Certainly this was a righteous man." John, at the foot of the cross, did not hear any remark from the centurion, or did not record it.

THE BURIAL SCENE

We may bow with such reverence as the palpable sham of the whole affair permits while we look for a moment upon the burial of a crucified and dead God.

Matthew records that when even was come, a rich disciple of Jesus, one Joseph of Arimathea, "went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus" (27: 58). Mark tells how Joseph went about the request; he "went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus (15: 43); but not so boldly, says John -- "but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate" (19: 38). When Joseph had got the body of Jesus by Pilate's order, says Matthew, "he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock" (27: 59, 60). Mark relates that Joseph first went and "bought fine linen" (15: 46), which, however, can hardly be true; for Joseph was a Jew and a member of the Cyanhydrin, and "the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath" (15: 42); therefore it was the sabbath, which began at "even"; and dry goods could neither be bought nor sold, nor would "an honorable counsellor" (15: 43), as Joseph was, have violated the holy law by such an act, the penalty for which was stoning to death. Howbeit, having somehow the fine linen, Joseph took Jesus down from the cross, wrapped the body in the linen, "and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock" (15: 46). But this evidently was not Joseph's "own new tomb" of Matthew; Mark who wrote first, does not mention this important circumstance; and John makes it positive that it was just a vacant tomb that happened to be handy for temporary use. John makes Nicodemus, too, a party to the burial: "And there came also Nicodemus. ... Then took they the body of Jesus. ... Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand" (19: 39-42). So it was just an empty burial place near by, and Jesus was temporarily laid in it "therefore because" of the holiday, "for the sepulchre was nigh at hand." All this excludes totally the notion that this was Joseph's "own new tomb."

Joseph then, all alone, says Matthew, "rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed" (27: 60), leaving two Marys "sitting over against the sepulchre" (27: 61; Mark 15: 46, 47). But according to Luke, Joseph, though alone, rolled no stone against the door, but simply laid the body in (23: 53) and went away, and he left no women there watching. For, after Joseph was gone away, "the women ... followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid" (23: 55), showing there was no stone closing the sepulchre, which is further proved by the statement that the women "returned and prepared spices and ointments" (23: 56) to anoint or embalm the body. There was no embalment, according to Matthew and Mark, as we have seen; and Luke's women saw none, for they viewed the body and went away to prepare to embalm it. But John avers that the body of Jesus was embalmed before burial, by Joseph and Nicodemus, and in very exuberant superfluity. For Nicodemus brought along "a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight" (19: 39) -- enough to embalm an elephant. "Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices as the manner of the Jews is to bury" (19: 40). Then they buried it, but are not recorded to have rolled any stone before the sepulchre, though all four evangelists speak of the stone's being rolled away on the morning of the resurrection.

The women who, Luke says, came up after Joseph had left, "saw how his body was laid" in the open sepulchre; they then returned home "and prepared spices and ointments" to embalm the body, and then they "rested the sabbath day" (Luke 23: 56); thus they had obtained and prepared the materials before the sabbath. But Mark has it otherwise, that "when the sabbath was past," the women "had bought" (the Revised Version honestly

reads "bought") the materials "that they might come and anoint him" (Mark 16: 1); thus not buying the materials until after the sabbath.

Matthew, the most incorrigible wonder-monger of them all, is the only one to record an episode which must be noticed, as it is one of his most palpable fabrications. According to Matthew, Jesus was crucified and buried on the "day of preparation" for the sabbath, that is, on Friday afternoon. Then he begins to entangle himself: "Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation [that is, on the sabbath day], the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate [the most punctilious of the Jews going on their holy day to their pagan enemy, Pilate, to attend to business in utter defiance of their holy law], Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again" (Matt. 27: 62, 63) -- showing the priests to be more familiar with the resurrection doctrine of Jesus than his own disciples, "For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead" (John, 2, 9). And the sanhedrim visitors proceeded: "Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first" (Matt. 27: 64) -- an admission that they had erred in their accusations and in procuring the death of "this deceiver." In reply, "Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch" (27: 65, 66); these rigorous sticklers for the law forbidding work on the sabbath here violating it by undertaking a big job of masonry.

This story is evidently written in with a purpose, that expressed by the Jews, of anticipating the claim of false resurrection, and for the further purpose of lending greater credibility to the ensuing story of the resurrection. Immediately following, Matthew begins the scene for which he has thus set the stage. "In the end of the sabbath [that is, Saturday at sundown, or as the verse erroneously continues] as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week [therefore Sunday morning], came [the two Marys] to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. ... And the angel answered and said unto the women ... He is not here: for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (28: 1, 2, 5, 6).

Here was the grave sealed, and an armed Roman guard standing sentinel before it; the angel descended from heaven before the eyes of soldiers and women, and in their presence, breaking the seal, rolled away the stone; and, lo! "He is not here: for he has risen."

When and how did the risen Lord rise and with his physical body get out of the grave? It was sealed and guarded by Roman soldiers, and when opened before witnesses, it was empty. Matthew is caught in his own trap; his attempt to create the air of credibility results in a dilemma of total incredibility. Either the body of Jesus Christ was never put into that grave -- or it was "stolen away" before the grave was sealed and the sentinels posted. Which? Jesus was put into the grave Friday about sunset; the sepulchre was not sealed and the armed watch set until some time "the next day that followed" (Matt. 27: 62, 66). Was Jesus simply in a swoon from those three hours on the cross? Or was he really dead, and put into the tomb by his friend and disciple Joseph, Friday evening? and did "his disciples come by night [that Friday night] and steal him away" before the watch was set on the sabbath, and then "say unto the people, He is risen from the dead," just as the chief priests and Pharisees suspected?

Matthew pursues his phantom. He relates that when the women and angel left the sepulchre, "Some of the watch came into the city" and related the affair to the chief priests; the latter summoned the council (sanhedrim) and talked the problem over; then "they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught" (Matt. 28: 11-15). What could be more preposterous? Soldiers posted for three days leaving their posts before their time was up -- a capital offence; then taking a bribe to admit that they slept on post -- for which summary death was the unescapable penalty; then learning that the seal was broken and the great stone rolled away right under their noses (whether asleep or not, the commotion would have waked them); then, most improbable of all, lyingly confessing and trusting to these Jewish murderers of the Christ to "persuade" Pilate, who hated them, to "be easy" on the recreant soldiers of the guard who failed in the single purpose of their posting. Inspiration surely is childish at times.

THE RESURRECTION

Jesus was buried Friday evening; the Jewish sabbath, our Saturday, passed, and the next morning, lo, "He is risen from the dead"! Jesus was thus in the grave, if at all, two nights and one day at most, discrediting his own prophecy in which he appealed to the similitude of poor old Jonah: "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly [so it was a whale after all, not simply a "great fish"]; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12: 40). Jonah was a poor prototype for a God, and the prophecy of three days and three nights was not fulfilled.

The resurrection of Jesus took place in the dead of night; no human being was eyewitness to it. Only an empty borrowed grave -- and some immense contradictions -- vouch for it. Matthew records the time and persons thus:

"In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre." (Matt. 28: 1)

Mark states thus:

"And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun." (Mark 16: 1, 2)

Luke thus:

"Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they [i.e., the women which came with him from Galilee; 23: 55] came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them." (Luke 24: 1)

John's record is this:

"The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre." (John 2: 1)

The conflicts here are very apparent, upon seemingly trifling points; but nothing is trifling concerning inspired truths of the event surpassing everything else in history, human or divine. The time varies: Matthew, "as it began to dawn toward the day"; Mark, "very early in the morning at the rising of the sun"; Luke, "very early in the morning"; John, "when it was yet dark." Now, it could not be sunrise and dark at the same time.

The writer of the Gospel According to Matthew was evidently not a Jew. He says that the women went to the sepulchre "in the end of the sabbath" and "as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week" (28: 1), and they found that Jesus had already risen. If this be true, then the resurrection took place, not on "the first day of the week," as Mark asserts (16: 9), but on the last day of the week, the sabbath. The Jewish day ended, and another began, at sunset, a method of computation of which no Jew has ever been ignorant "even unto this day." No sabbath with the Jews ever ended "as it began to dawn toward" the first day of the week; the sabbath ended at the previous sunset. The writers both of Matthew and of Mark evidently supposed that the Jewish day began at dawn or sunrise; but the "first day of the week" and every other began in the evening, at sunset of the preceding day. The night preceding the morning visit to the tomb belonged, not to the seventh day, but to the first.

The conflict continues as to the persons who came, at sunrise or by dark: Matthew, two persons, "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary"; Mark, three persons, "Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, and Salome"; Luke, a number of persons, "the women ... which came with him from Galilee, ... and certain others with them"; John, one person, "Mary Magdalene," alone; John says nothing about spices and anointing; and it may be wondered how they could expect to anoint a body already buried three days, sealed in a grave with a great stone before the door, and with an armed Roman guard specially posted to prevent tampering.

Now we shall see if we can disentangle what happened when one, two, three, or a number of persons came to the sepulchre at sunrise, or by dark:

Matthew asserts that this is what happened:

"And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, ... go quickly, and tell his disciples." (Matt. 28: 2-7)

Mark asserts that this happened:

"And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted." (Mark 16: 4, 5)

Luke asserts that this happened:

"And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments." (Luke 24: 2-4)

John bears true record that these totally different and quite impossible things happened:

"The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene ... unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple [John], whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre. ... Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre [John arriving first]. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie. ... Then went in also that other disciple, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home. But Mary [Magdalene] stood without ... weeping; and ... stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, And seeth two angels in white, sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." (John 2: 1-12) The contradictions here are very glaring, and are of the highest importance. Matthew avers that, after the two Marys arrived at the sepulchre, a lightning-faced angel descended before their eyes, accompanied by an earthquake, and rolled away the stone and sat on it outside the sepulchre. This second "great earthquake," which none of the others saw or felt or mention, leaves the armed Roman guard stretched out like dead men; the angel speaks to the scared women; neither of Matthew's two women enters the sepulchre; but the angel announces the resurrection and sends them away to tell the news. Mark's three women see that the stone is already rolled away, and they enter into the sepulchre and find one young man sitting on the right side. Luke's whole trompe of women find the stone removed, and they all enter into the sepulchre, and find two men standing by. John, who was there himself after Mary Magdalene called him, states that Mary Magdalene went alone to the sepulchre, and found the stone taken away; but no angel of Yahveh, nor one young man sitting, nor two men standing by are mentioned. Mary Magdalene calls Peter and John, and they find the sepulchre empty except for the grave-clothes. When Peter and John had found nothing and gone home, then the Magdalene looked in and saw two angels, one at each end of the place where the body had been. But none of these saw a guard of keepers scared by a great earthquake. Mark (16: 5) and Luke (24: 5) say that it was the women who were affrighted; Mark says that "they went out quickly, and fled" (16: 8); according to Luke, they "bowed down their faces to the earth" (24: 5).

One of the most remarkable misstatements is that of John (2: 9): "For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead." This denies the most insistent teaching of Jesus throughout his career of preaching, and contradicts numerous explicit declarations of his coming resurrection made to these same disciples. "And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again" (Matt. 2: 17-19; cf. Mark 8: 31; 9: 31; 10: 34; Luke 18: 31-33; 24: 46). Moreover, John's statement is a gross anachronism; there could not have been any scripture about the resurrection; there was only the oral teaching of Jesus within the few months of his nomadic association with his disciples. The reference to "scripture" betrays the fact that the Gospel According to John was written many years later by some forger who probably had Mark's book of Christ- tales before him.

BREAKING THE RESURRECTION NEWS

The happenings immediately after the arrival at the sepulchre of the one, two, or three women, or the troupe of women, and their finding an angel sitting outside on the stone, or one young man sittings or two men standing by, or none of these at all, are thus related by the four inspired recorders:

Matthew tells this story, abbreviated but exact: "The angel ... said unto the women, Fear not ye: ... for he is risen, as he said. ... Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before

you into Galilee; there shall ye see him. ... And they departed quickly, and did run to bring his disciples word." (Matt. 28: 5-8)

Mark abbreviated but exact, tells this story: the young men sitting on the right side said:

"Be not affrighted. ... He is risen. ... But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him. ... And they went out quickly, and fled; ... neither said any thing to any man; for they were afraid." (Mark 16: 6-8)

Luke abbreviated but exact, tells a different story thus: the two men standing by said to the several women, who were "Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them" (24: 10):

"Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you. ... And they remembered, ... And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. ... Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass." (Luke 24: 5-12)

John, abbreviated but exact, tells a very different story: Peter and John, as above related, ran together to the sepulchre after Mary Magdalene had told them, and found the linen clothes, and both went home. Then Mary went into the sepulchre, and the two angels asked her: "Woman, why weepest thou?" (John 2: 13) The first words of greeting are differently recorded. Matthew's angel announces the resurrection as he sits outside on the stone, and sends the two women to tell the disciples, adding that Jesus had gone ahead into Galilee, where he would see them; and the women ran to bring the disciples word. Mark has his young man, sitting inside, make the announcement, and direct the three women to go tell the disciples; but being afraid they told no man. Luke says his two men, standing by, told the troupe of women that Jesus was risen, and they went, without being instructed and told all the disciples; and Peter alone went and looked in, did not enter the sepulchre, and went away wondering. John says that Mary Magdalene alone went to the sepulchre, found it empty and saw no one, and then went and told him and Peter, and both went running, looked in, entered, and found only the linen clothes and saw no one, and went home. Then it was that Mary Magdalene a second time looked in, and saw two angels, who spoke to her, asking what she sought. But they did not announce the resurrection, for the reason which will next appear.

POST-RESURRECTION APPEARANCES OF JESUS

This brings us to the appearances of the Lord after his resurrection to his disciples and other acquaintances.

THE FIRST APPEARANCE

Matthew, after stating that "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary" left the sepulchre at the behest of the angel to go to tell the disciples that Jesus had gone to Galilee, relates the first appearance thus:

"And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." (Matt. 28: 9, 10)

Mark, after telling how "Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome" had "fled from the sepulchre," and told no one, "for they were afraid," gives this account:

"Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene. ... And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they ... believed not." (Mark 16: 9-11)

Luke, after relating how "Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them" had returned from the sepulchre and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest, and how Peter had then run to the sepulchre alone and seen only the grave-clothes laid by, relates the first appearance very differently, thus:

"And, behold, two of them [disciples] went that same day to a village called Emmaus. ... And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ... Then he said unto them, O fools," etc. "And he went in to tarry with them. ... And he hid from their sight." (Luke 24: 13-15, 25, 29, 31)

John, after telling of Mary Magdalene's going alone to the sepulchre, and finding the body gone but seeing no one, and of her telling Peter and John, who went and found nothing but the grave-clothes, and saw no one and returned home, and of Mary's seeing two angels sitting where the body had lain, and their asking her, "Woman, why weepest thou?" then declares:

"And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. ... Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not. ... Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord." (John 2: 14, 17, 18)

Thus we have the four conflicting accounts. Matthew says that Jesus first appeared to the two women as they went to tell the disciples, and they at once recognized him; Mark says that he first appeared to one woman, Mary Magdalene, early the first day; Luke says that Jesus first appeared to the two disciples as they went to Emmaus; John says that Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene by the sepulchre, as she turned from speaking with the two angels, and that she did not recognize him. And she said that Jesus forbade her to touch him, "for I am not yet ascended"; Matthew says that his two Marys "came and held him by the feet."

THE SECOND APPEARANCE

The second appearance is as diversely narrated. Matthew, after saying that Jesus had told the two Marys to tell his disciples to meet him in Galilee, relates the second appearance was thus:

"Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. ... And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, ... And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (Matt. 28: 16, 18, 20)

Mark, after telling how Jesus "appeared first to Mary Magdalene," on the first day, tells of the second appearance thus:

"After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country." (Mark 16: 12)

Luke, after relating how Jesus first appeared to the two on their way to Emmaus, and how he went with them, and took supper with them, says:

"And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them. ... And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted and supposed that they had seen a spirit. ... He shewed them his hands and his feet," and asked for meat, and he ate broiled fish and honeycomb before them, and spoke with them at length. (Luke 24: 33, 36, 37, 40, et seq.)

John, after relating how Jesus had first appeared early on the resurrection day to Mary Magdalene alone at the sepulchre, says of the second appearance:

"Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in their midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. ... Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." (John 2: 19, 20)

The contradictions as to the second appearance are obvious. Matthew says that it was to the Eleven on a mountain in Galilee, "where Jesus had appointed them." But neither Jesus nor the Eleven went into Galilee; for Luke says that at Jerusalem on the same resurrection day Jesus suddenly appeared out of empty space "and stood in the midst of them," and said: "Peace be unto you," but that "they were terrified and affrighted." He had supper with them; then "he led them out as far as Bethany" and said unto the Eleven: "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem;" and as he spoke, "he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven" (Luke 24: 33-51). Mark says that the second appearance was "in another form" (what form he does not say) "to two of them," as they walked in the country. Luke says that it was in Jerusalem, unto the Eleven "and them that were with them," and greatly terrified them all. John says that it was on the evening of the resurrection day, in a closed room; and instead of being terrified, the disciples "were glad when they saw the Lord."

THIRD APPEARANCE

There were other appearances, not recorded by all the gospel historians, the accounts of which are equally conflicting. Matthew relates only the two appearances already credited to him. Mark, after telling of the second appearance, to the two walking in the country, tells of a third:

"Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief." (Mark 16: 14)

Luke is satisfied with his two, which differ entirely from Matthew's two, as we have seen. John, after his account of the second appearance, to the disciples in the closed room, on which occasion he says that Thomas Didymus was not present, and after stating that Thomas, when he heard about it, would not believe, then tells of a third appearance, at which Thomas was convinced:

"And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you." (John 2: 26)

Thus we see that Matthew and Luke relate only two appearances, and, if we believe Luke, there were no more; Mark and John relate three. All the accounts differ about time, place, persons, and other circumstances; each account renders impossible the others.

FOURTH APPEARANCE

John relates a fourth appearance, which he calls the third, to the disciples:

"After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself. ... This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead." (John 21: 1, 14)

On this occasion the disciples were fishing, and had caught nothing. Jesus told them to throw their net on the other side of the boat, and they landed 153 "great fishes"; "and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken" (21: 11). When they landed, they saw a fire of coals, with fish already broiling thereon, with bread, and they all had breakfast alfresco.

SUNDAY OTHER APPEARANCES

This would seem to complete the very contradictory relations of the appearances of the Crucified after the resurrection. But the end is not yet; other witnesses say there were at least forty, and perhaps more, appearances. We call the anonymous author of the Acts of the Apostles, reputed to be Luke, who has already, and quite differently, testified in his gospel. In Acts 1: 1, 2, this witness now testifies that Jesus, before "the day in which he was taken up," gave commandments to the apostles,

"To whom also he shewed himself alive, being seen of them forty days." (Acts 1: 3)

There would be, then, at least forty several appearances to the apostles, on forty several days after the resurrection.

But the chronicler of the Acts quotes Peter 'not only as throwing doubt on the means of Jesus' death, asserting that he was "hanged on a tree" (Acts 10: 39), but further saying:

"Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead." (Acts 10: 40, 41)

This would seem to indicate only one appearance, to the Eleven only; and it discounts the repeated appearances to the one, two, or many women. It limits the appearance to the little apostolic band, by declaring that Jesus showed himself "not to all the people." One would think that the sole proof of so tremendous an issue as the resurrection of a God from the death of a man would not be left to a crew of deserting cowards and proved liars, but that the risen God would at once have shown himself to Pilate, to the sanhedrim, "to all the people," as openly at least as the dead saints who "came out of their graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Matt. 27: 53); though, it is true, we have only Matthew's word for this.

The inspired historian of Acts a little later quotes Paul on the subject, and in quite different tenor:

"But God raised him up from the dead: And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people." (Acts 13: 30, 31)

Thus for many days, and to a whole rabble of Galilean peasants the Conqueror of Death paraded himself in private; but no single intelligent person, chief priest of the Jews, Roman ruler of Jerusalem, or official historian

of the province, was advised of it, or given an opportunity to make a credible record of the greatest wonder of the world. What negligence! Instead of fishermen's tales of this transcendent event we should have accredited official history.

But with the lapse of time wonders grow, and Paul writing to the Corinthians, lately pagans, adds prodigiously to the throng of witnesses for the verity of his risen Lord. After telling of the death and burial of the Christ, he adds:

"He rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once. ... After that he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." (1 Cor. 15: 4-8)

This is a most extraordinary rigmarole of falsities and impossibilities -- if there is a word of truth in the four gospels; for it contradicts even all the gospel contradictions on the subject. Paul begins with a blunder: Jesus rose on the third day "according to the scriptures." There were no scriptures of the New Testament at that time; the gospels were not written until some fifty or one hundred and fifty years later, and were not in existence when the Epistles of Paul and the others were written. The Old Testament never once predicts or mentions the resurrection.

Paul next says that the first appearance of Jesus after his resurrection was to Peter (Cephas). This contradicts flatly every gospel recorder, every one of whom declares, though diversely, that the first appearance was to Mary Magdalene, alone or with other women. Next Paul says that Jesus was "seen ... of the Twelve." But there were no Twelve at the time; Judas had deserted and was dead, and his successor was not chosen until some time after the "ascension," when one Matthias was elected (Acts 1: 23-26). Paul evidently knew nothing about Judas and his betrayal of the Christ. After that, declares Paul, Jesus was seen by over five hundred witnesses at once. This general appearance is not only entirely unknown to the evangelists, but contradicts them all, particularly Peter's declaration that Jesus appeared only "unto us who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts 10: 41); therefore to the Eleven only. In the days of Jesus there could have been no "five hundred brethren"; shortly after the ascension, when all the "brethren" were gathered to hear Peter, it is recorded that "the number of the names together were about one hundred and twenty" (Acts 1: 15); and this number is considered exaggerated.

James, own brother of Jesus, nowhere makes claim to have seen him after the resurrection; and only Paul vouches for his own peculiar vision, "as of one born out of due time." Both the last- cited witnesses contradict the contradictory histories of the four gospel writers, quoted above, and leave the whole matter of post- mortem and pre-ascension appearances much more confused and doubtful than even the gospels leave it. Not only are all these alleged appearances contradictory and mutually destructive, and thus evident fabricated; they also destroy the possibility of the truth of the contradictorily related, fabled ascension.

THE ASCENSION

Matthew, the most prolific wonder-teller, knew nothing of an "ascension", and there was none if we stop with him, for he does not mention it. On the contrary, in the last verse of his gospel Jesus

assures his hearers that he was going to stay with them -- "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt. 28: 20).

Mark, after relating the third appearance, to the Eleven as they sat at meat, evidently in a room in a house, declares:

"So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached." (Mark 16: 19, 20)

Luke, after relating the second and last appearance, to the Eleven in Jerusalem, when Jesus ate the broiled fish and honey- comb, says:

"And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." (Luke 24: 50, 51)

John, like Matthew, knows nothing, or says nothing, of an ascension.

We have recourse now to our new and fifth witness, the author of the Acts of the Apostles. After asserting that Jesus remained on earth with the apostles and was "seen of them forty days," "being assembled together with them" on the Mount of Olives, speaking with them, the writer says:

"And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. ... Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet." (Acts 1: 9, 12)

The evidence for the ascension is quite as conflicting, both as to time and place, as all the rest which we have examined. Matthew and John record no ascension at all. The resurrection is laid by all on the first day of the week. As to the time of the ascension, Mark is indefinite; he makes the first appearance of Jesus on the same first day; and says and "after that" he made the second appearance, and "afterward" the third. This third appearance was indoors, at a meal-time, with the Eleven, and probably in Jerusalem, their headquarters; and then and there "the Lord was received up," right through the roof of the house.

Luke, in his gospel, lays the time of the resurrection day, immediately after the second and last appearance, at a meal with the eleven in Jerusalem, and asserts that, when the meal was ended, Jesus led them out as far as Bethany, and there "was separated from them and carried up into heaven," from the open country side. But in the Acts Luke tells a different story: he explicitly says that the time was after forty days and at least forty appearances, and that the place was "the mount called Olivet." As stated, John does not record any ascension; but he relates the second appearance of Jesus, to the eleven on the evening of the resurrection day, and says that "after eight days" Jesus again appeared to them when Thomas Didymus was also present; so that, according to John, the ascension, if there was one, must have been at least eight days after the resurrection; and longer, for John records that "after these things Jesus shewed himself again to his disciples at the sea of Tiberias," on the occasion of the miraculous fishing. And the ascension could not have occurred far forty days after the resurrection, if Peter is believed; for he says that Jesus was "seen of them forty days" (Acts 1: 3). This destroys every gospel tale of the ascension.

NOBODY BELIEVED THE "IDLE TALES"

In concluding our review, we may pause for a moment and satisfy a natural curiosity, as well as adduce important evidence, by inquiring what effect all these "miracles and wonders and signs" had upon the loyal disciples and close associates of Jesus. They were with him throughout his career, and Jesus said to them: "Ye are witnesses of these things." Jesus also gave them the fair and gentle admonition, "He that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16: 16). This inquiry affords pertinent evidence for one who, twenty centuries after -- when "seeing is believing" -- not having seen these things himself, and having them only on the credit of the four inspired biographies and the Acts, may be so bold as not to believe them.

Matthew guards a discreet silence, although he says (28: 17) that when Jesus met his disciples in Galilee, "some doubted."

Mark, after saying that Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene, who told the others, says:

"And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, And they went and told it unto the residue; neither believed they them." (Mark 16: 11-13)

Luke, after relating that his group of women returned from the sepulchre and told the apostles of the resurrection, says:

"And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not." (Luke, 24: 11)

John quotes Jesus as saying: "Ye also have seen me, and believe not"; and John tells the story of "doubting Thomas," who said: "Show me, or I will not believe."

A PROPHET WITHOUT HONOR

A halo of pathos surrounds, for credulous devotees of the Christ, his plaintive words, which have become proverbial: "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house" (Matt. 13: 57; Mark 6: 4; Luke 4: 24; John 4: 44).

Even the little episode of the utterance of this just reproach cannot be related by the truth-inspired gospel biographers without contradictions which entirely destroy its force and discredit its authenticity. The three

synoptists say that Jesus uttered the rebuke to the Galileans because of the rejection of him in his home country; John says that it was directed at the Judeans because they rejected him, and that the Galileans accepted him. Jesus and the Twelve began the first preaching tour in Judea (Matt. 11: 1); later Jesus, with them, "departed thence ... and was come into his own country," Galilee (Matt. 13: 53, 54). His neighbors scoffed at "the carpenter's son," saying: "Whence then hath this man these things?" (Matt. 13: 55, 56) and "they were offended in him" (13: 57). Upon this provocation Jesus spoke his condemnation of the Galileans.

John reverses the situation. According to him, Jesus "left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee" (John 4: 3); he passed through Samaria, and held converse with the much-married "woman of Samaria" at the well of Sychar; then "after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee. For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honor in his own country. Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galilaeans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem" (John 4: 43-45).

The synoptists thus say that Jesus was without honor in Galilee; John says that he was without honor in Judea, and for that reason left there and went into Galilee. According to the synoptists the Galileans rejected him; John says "the Galileans received him"; according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Galilee was "his own country"; according to John, Judea was "his own country."

Thus Christendom's Jewish prophet is stripped of honor, not only in "his own country," which honored him not, but in the credulous Christian world, which has dishonored itself by believing --and by murdering and martyring millions who would not believe -- these childish, contradictory tales of the Christ.

This summary review of the reputed life and acts of Jesus of Nazareth, as set forth in the only human documents in which they are with any pretense of inspiration recorded, has more than abundantly shown, to even the most reverently credulous, the degree of inspired truth in the gospel stories. The common asseveration of veracity, "true as the gospel," has lost force as a convincing assurance. "On my word of honor" is to be recommended as a more persuasive formula for men of truth and honor.

It is sad perhaps to discover that the long-cherished gospels are totally wanting in that "harmony" which has long been regarded as their most potent assurance of truth. But the simple process of attentively comparing the records and pointing out their contradictions has stripped them of all pretense of being inspired truth. These gospels prove themselves -- as historical records -- to be clumsy fabrications of impossibilities, palmed off upon an ignorant and credulous populace -- a whole generation and more after the pretended events, by perhaps well-meaning persons, pretending, as Paul admits of himself, by their lies to make the glory of God the more to abound (Rom. 3: 7).

IS IT GOD'S WORD?

CHAPTER 16: THE SACRED DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY

THE SACRED DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY

THE FORMULA OF FAITH

LYING AND FRAUD ADMITTED

REDEMPTION FROM THE CURSE

FREE FOR ALL OR LIMITED

"SALVATION IS OF THE JEWS"

BELIEVE AND BE SAVED -- OR STAY DAMNED

REPENTANCE AS A CONDITION ELECTED OR ECLECTIC?

FAITH OR WORKS?

LAW OR NOT LAW?

CIRCUMCISION OR UNCIRCUMCISION?

BAPTISM AND BACKSLIDING

FORGIVENESS OF SIN

RESURRECTION

THE FINAL JUDGMENT

THE "SECOND COMING"

DEVILOLOGY

FIGHTING THE DEVILS

THE PENALTIES OF UNBELIEF

INTOLERANCE AND DESTRUCTION

INSPIRED PRIESTLY PRESUMPTION

AN INFAMOUS ACCUSATION

THE APOSTLES' VIEWS OF EACH OTHER

KNOWLEDGE SCORNED -- IGNORANCE EXALTED

CHILDISH FAITH FOR SALVATION

DAMNATION FOR UNBELIEF FATUOUS FANATICISM THE "PRINCE OF PEACE"

THE SACRED DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY

THE creeds, says a poet, are in number some seventy-three. Of Christian sects or denominations, each founded upon chosen texts, there are in fact a much greater number, some hundreds, each quite out of harmony with all the others. Each by its sectarian votaries is fondly held to be the sole inheritor of saving truth, and can point with pride to the inerrant texts where the legacy of truth is made to it alone. But every other sect disputes this reading, and with equal assurance and no less pride can point to yet other texts of the true Testament which nullify the pretensions of all the others and leave itself the sole and universal heir to saving truth.

For are not the Christian sects, seventy-three though be their conflicting creeds, one and all of them founded upon the "impregnable rock of the Holy Scripture," as Mr. Gladstone termed it, and the belief that this book is divinely inspired in its every word; that it is the "living Word of God," the faithful revelation of his divine will to man? Outside the sacred tome itself, no higher authority can be invoked for the inerrant truth of Holy Writ and the utter unity of that truth than the recent (AD 1870) spirit-illuminated declaration of the sacred Vatican Council:

"These books are sacred and canonical because they contain revelation without error, and because, written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they have God for their author."

Yet we have in the foregoing pages seen great parts of this God-written book sadly lacking in inspiration and truth; and to explain or attenuate this, one might suspect that such parts of it may be excepted from the general

rule of inspiration and inerrancy. But in this they err, to believe the Holy Ghost speaking lately through Pope Leo 13: in his encyclical Provid. Deus, where this error is roundly refuted:

"It will never be lawful to restrict inspiration merely to certain parts of the Holy Scripture, or to grant that the sacred writers could have made a mistake. ... They render in exact language, with infallible truth, all that God commanded and nothing else; without that, God would not be the Author of the Scripture in its entirety."

This settles it; "Roma locuta est, causa finita est." And to this dogma of infallibly inspired truth in toto, all the otherwise dissentient members of the Body of Christ chorus unanimously amen.

The trouble with the dogma of inspired infallible truth is in the utter diversity of truth in the sacred book, each truth inferentially and necessarily discounting or discrediting all the others. For is it not true that of two or more contradictory dogmas or doctrines, while none may be true, not more than one can possibly be? "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3: 16). The truth of this inspired dogma, and of the papal complements to it, above quoted, is so easily tested and proved --or disproved -- by the simplest and most infallible of tests, that an honest mind can but candidly apply the test. The simple expedient of pairing off Bible texts one against another, or, as it were, "matching inspirations," is an infallible way of testing the truth and harmony of inerrant inspiration -- and its revelations will be found astounding. No single dogmatic doctrine or inspired truth will be found in all the New Testament which is not contradicted, denied, refuted, repudiated, and made ridiculous by some equally inspired truth uttered by the same, or by some other equally inspired, dogmatist.

The fault lies not in the reader and searcher, but in the book. We shall simply turn the pages of the inspired and inerrant Word and note the principal dogmas and doctrines of the Christian creeds --and leave the result to speak for itself.

THE FORMULA OF FAITH

The inspired formula of the faith is Paul's own confession of faith: "This I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets" (Acts 24: 14). Faith cares not for facts or proofs, but boasts that it "believeth all things, hopeth all things" (1 Cor. 13: 7). Faith is all-sufficient, in lieu of fact -- "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11: 1), not known, and altogether unknowable.

In this confessed absence of certain knowledge, we shall see what the inspired dogmatists and doctrinaires solemnly posit for our belief. First let us have well in mind the confessed mendacities and frauds which were so potent a factor in carrying on the good work of Salvation from mythical perdition.

LYING AND FRAUD ADMITTED

Paul, in his zealot exaltation, admits and justifies, on Jesuitical principles, the preaching of falsehood, and feels really aggrieved that honest men should take exceptions to such mendacious propaganda:

"For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?" (Rom. 3: 7)

In a spirit of good-humored naivete he winks at the flock of Corinthians whom he has hooked into the fold, and admits that he had tricked them:

"Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved. But be it so: ... nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile." (2 Cor. 12: 15, 16)

As a "man that striveth for the mastery" (1 Cor. 9: 25), he expounds to the church leaders the modus operandi of the successful propagandist: "I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, that I might gain them that are without law. ... I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake" (1 Cor. 9: 19-23). And he admits to the church of Corinth: "I robbed other churches ... to do you service" (2 Cor. 11: 8).

REDEMPTION FROM THE CURSE

The dogma of death and damnation through the "sin of Adam" is variously stated and elaborated by its protagonist Paul; first as follows:

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men; ... therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." (Rom. 5: 12, 18)

Thus Paul propounds the doctrine of death and damnation to all by the sin of one, Adam, and of salvation by the "free gift unto all men" by the atonement of another One. More simply and positively he repeats this:

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor. 15, 22)

And with the utmost assurance he avers:

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse." (Gal. 3: 13)

These texts carry the positive assurance, perfectly logical and just if true, that as the fearful "original sin" of Adam entailed the "curse" of inevitable involuntary sin and damnation upon all mankind ever since, the great sacrifice and propitiation of Jesus Christ has the effect of wiping out that old score utterly, and redeeming all mankind without more ado. Indeed, the nearest and dearest to Jesus of his four biographers several times in his first epistle justifies this interpretation and confirms this reasonable expectation:

"God ... sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1John 4: 10; 3: 5)

He repeats and amplifies this assurance of free redemption:

"And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2: 2) The same is likewise asserted by Peter:

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3: 18)

And he asserts the complete efficacy of the vicarious atonement once and for all:

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." (1 Peter 2: 24)

These plain texts surely seem to mean what they with such reiteration say -- that, as all were damned nolens volens through the Old Adam, willy-nilly all should have free and unconditional redemption through the expiation of the New Adam "for the sins of the whole world." But our well justified confidence is by a variety of limitations disappointed: redemption and salvation are found to be quite partial, precarious, and then impossible.

FREE FOR ALL OR LIMITED

The universality of free redemption is assured in gracious terms by the Master's own words:

"For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost." (Matt. 18: 11)

And again, in appealing, soothing words assuring free grace and salvation to all, believer or not:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11: 28)

Even broader and freer is the offer of the Apocalypse:

"And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Rev. 22: 17)

Surely these repeated passages prove free "redemption from the curse" and salvation from sin for all mankind, without condition and without price the "free gift of grace." All were cursed and damned; all are redeemed and saved.

But the Beloved Disciple strikes a chord whose fatal dissonance alarms the hopeful soul even under the beautiful words in which it is clothed -- it is the Believer only for whom the supreme propitiation is made, who only is thus "redeemed from the curse":

"For God [i.e., Yahveh] so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3: 16)

The Christ himself proclaimed the universal efficacy of his sacrifice:

"And I: if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 12: 32)

though this he denies in his cryptic assertion:

"For many be called, but few chosen." (Matt. 20: 16)

"SALVATION IS OF THE JEWS"

Even this limitation of salvation to "whosoever believeth" has yet another limitation: Christ did not come to redeem all mankind damned in the curse that is to be redeemed, but the Jew only -- if the Jew believed. The Christ himself positively asserts so:

"But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matt. 15, 24,)

This was the divine commission given by the Master to the Twelve upon their very first mission.

"These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matt. 10: 5, 6)

The Christ told the woman of Samaria, -- "Salvation is of the Jews." (John 4: 22)

Thus, by his own iterated assertion, the Christ gainsays all the assurances of free and universal redemption "for the sins of the whole world" and the assurance that God sent his Son that "whosoever believeth" should be saved. The believer must be a "lost sheep" of Israel; all others still remained under the universal curse. But Jewry was safe and that too without condition of belief:

"And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." (Rom. 11: 26, 27)

This prophecy, however, is known to have not yet been wholly verified, and besides is expressly repudiated by the chief apostle after the total failure of the Christ to realize his special mission to the "lost sheep" of Israel. The Jews had been so often deceived by "false Christs," self-proclaimed Messiahs -- by the fatuous cry, "Lo, here is Christ, or there" (Matt. 24: 23) -- that they were not in a receptive mood towards this One. So Paul, who had taken up the propaganda of the faith that failed at the cross, hopeless of the sophisticated "lost sheep of Israel," denounced them as "unworthy of everlasting life" (Acts 13: 46); and he proclaimed: "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (13: 46) -- who were not so schooled in Hebrew traditions, and might thus more readily be taken into the fold. Paul thus assures them:

"For so hath the Lord [Yahveh] commanded us, saying, I have set thee, to be a light of the Gentiles. ... And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of Yahveh." (Acts 13: 47, 48)

But it is the Hebrew God Yahveh who is quoted (Isa. 49: 6) as saying this: it was no part of the mission or purpose of the Christ to redeem or save any but the Jews -- "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Consequently the mission of the Christ had been a confessed failure; and the gentiles, to whom the "free gift" was now promised, and who were glad, were yet to learn the conditions and limitations of the gift.

BELIEVE AND BE SAVED -- OR STAY DAMNED

God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but should be redeemed from the curse, and have everlasting life; but "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John 3: 36)

The sine qua non of belief as the alternative to continued eternal damnation is reiterated throughout the gospels and the epistles of the God of Love, who came "that the world through him might be saved." In his last recorded words after the resurrection, the crucified Christ thus challenges the unredeemed:

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16: 16)

All repudiations of the doctrine of unconditioned free grace and salvation culminate, however, in this statement of Paul:

"He that doubteth is damned." (Rom. 14: 23)

REPENTANCE AS A CONDITION

To the requirement of belief the Master has just added that of "and is baptized"; otherwise the soul is damned and the wrath of Yahveh God abideth on him as since Adam's time. Following this fearful intimation come Peter's words of exhortation, adding yet another condition to the "free" gift: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts 3: 19)

Paul, however, flatly denies the need of repentance:

"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." (Rom. 11: 29)

Paul's statement is also a flat contradiction of the explicit words of his Master:

"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13: 3)

The need of repentance, or of any other act on the part of the individual damned through Adam seems to be entirely obviated by the explicit avowal of divine responsibility for unbelief -- which seems hard to believe of a good God:

"For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." (Rom. 11: 32)

But the assurance of gratuitous mercy to all, even unbelievers, is contradicted by the same inspired dogmatist in the selfsame epistle; he imputes to God the wilful turning of human souls to damnation, destroying their power of escape:

"Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." (ROM. 9: 18)

ELECTED OR ECLECTIC?

The text last quoted contains the hint of what may be termed election to involuntary damnation, which is the effect of God's "hardening" of a predamned soul which may desire to believe and be saved. But the fatal doctrine, which is the total repudiation of "propitiation for the sins of the whole world," finds many more explicit assertions -- as well as bald denials -- in the inspired texts. When Paul "turned to the Gentiles," and the Gentiles were glad, and glorified, and apparently were all zealous to accept the new faith, it is recorded:

"And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." (Acts 13: 48)

This fatal phrase "ordained to eternal life," limiting the possibility of belief, and hence of salvation, to an unknowable select number of the gentiles, seems like the explosion of a sapper's mine under hope in the promise of "whosoever will." But hope is raised by the apostolic assurance:

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord [Yahveh] shall be saved." (Rom. 10: 13)

This hope, however, is dashed by the counter-assurance of the same inspired author: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, ... having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." (Eph. 1: 4, 5) And the doctrine of free-will to choose to be saved -- if not saved without choice, as damned

without choice -- is denied by the stone on which the Church is founded:

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit." (1 Peter 1: 2)

These words of renewed hope greet us: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." (Rom. 5: 6)

But the hope is sadly jarred by these others of the same dogmatist:

"Because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (2 Thess. 2: 13)

The colloquy between the jailer of Philippi and his prisoners Paul and Silas raises again the hope of salvation to all who will believe:

"Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (Acts 16: 30, 31)

The jailer, however, would seem to have been "elect" and the reasonable hopes of other willing believers seem rudely curtailed by the discouraging ipse dixit of the Master:

"Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to

enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." (Luke 13: 23, 24)

This seems strangely at variance with the inspired assurance, often repeated:

"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord [Yahveh] shall be saved." (Romans 10: 13; Acts 2: 21)

All hope of free choice of salvation is quite upset, and only those foreordained by Divine Providence are given any chance to escape the wrath of God, by these other words of his Son: "All that the Father [Yahveh] giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6: 37)

The dismal doctrine of "election" to redemption from the curse and of salvation for those only whom the Father Yahveh giveth to be saved (of the lost sheep of Israel only) is reaffirmed in the very words of the Father of Life, as quoted by Paul:

"For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth. ... For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. ... Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." (Rom. 9: 11, 15, 16, 18)

The doom of election to salvation and damnation by Yahveh himself, regardless of human striving, receives solemn confirmation in the record of the early operations of the plan:

"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2: 47)

Those who have never taken the pains to compare doctrinal texts must naturally prick up their ears in curiosity at the discordant notes of the sacred texts of salvation. One doctrine is flatly denied by the other; therefore, both alike are discredited, or at least inextricably confused. So that no man can guess whether "salvation" was for the Jew Only; or to the Jew first and then, upon his rejection of it, to the gentile, to keep the legacy of the "free gift" from failing entirely; or whether Jew or gentile might be saved by believing and willingly seeking salvation; or whether only those "elected" by Yahveh in heaven before the foundation of the world might ever attain to heaven. And if only the "elect" are to be saved, and these willy-nilly, what is the use for anyone, who cannot possibly know whether he is of the "elect" or not, to make any effort or worry at all about salvation? His efforts are either quite unnecessary or wholly unavailing.

FAITH OR WORKS?

However we may solve or leave the foregoing problem, we are at once met with another series of conflicting passages on the interesting subject of salvation by grace through faith or by works --both doctrines contrary to the theory of salvation through election. Paul asserts:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; ... not of works." (Eph. 2: 8, 9)

And again;

"As it is written; The just shall live by faith." (Rom. 1: 17) But James, the brother of Jesus, flatly contradicts Paul:

"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? ... Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." (James 2: 14, 17)

And he offers an array of ancient instances -- with a contemptuous slur at his antagonist Paul:

"But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" (James 2: 20, 21)

The status of Father Abraham himself, however, is not quite so free from uncertainty in view of the laboured retort of Paul:

"What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him foighteousness." (Rom. 4: 1-3)

The bone of apostolic contention over the good old patriarch is not yet gnawed bare, as appears by the next bit of inspiration:

"Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him foighteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." (Gal. 3: 6, 7)

James plays off faith against works and makes a combination of both essential to the free grace of salvation, or a prerequisite to election, as the case may be:

"Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him foighteousness: and he was called

the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. ... For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (James 2: 22-24, 26)

The contradictory doctrine of justification by faith alone is argued laboriously by Paul:

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Gal. 2: 16) "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. ... Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." (Rom. 3: 28, 31) The same high authority contradicts himself, however, and harks back to the "deeds of the law": "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." (Rom. 2: 13) which would seem to negate the hope of reward to the believer: "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter 1: 9)

The whole muddled disputation seems left in a bewilderment of nonsensical puzzle, both for the inspired dogmatist and for the perplexed seeker after truth, by the confused ratiocinations of Paul:

"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." (Rom. 11: 6)

All this produces in the mind a certain querulous state which finds apt expression in the query of the chief apostle:

"And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Peter 4: 18)

LAW OR NOT LAW?

The effect of this jumble of ideas may be heightened by considering this:

"And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13: 39)

The unequivocal words of the Master would seem to be in express denial of the text last quoted, as well as of several of those cited just previously, for he said:

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (Matt. 5: 17, 18)

This positive assurance the Master, however, repudiates by his assertion that the law has been fulfilled:

"The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached." (Luke 16: 16)

One of these divine utterances of policy and purpose is quite negated, the other confirmed, by the assertion of the apostle of grace:

"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Rom.

6: 14; cf. Gal. 3: 24, 25) Paul, however, in one of his next breaths contradicts himself most egregiously:

"The law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth." (Rom. 7: 1) though almost immediately he asserts the contrary: "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held." (Rom. 7: 6)

He reaffirms the permanency of the law and the obligation to do its full works:

"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Gal. 3: 10) and again contradicts his own words:

"For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression." (Rom. 4: 14, 15)

But Paul seems to make a curious refutation of the declaration that in the absence of law there can be no violation or transgression of law, by making out the law to be dependent upon and a consequence of previous transgression:

"Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions." (Gal. 3: 19)

John takes issue with Paul, and states the rule more reasonably:

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3: 4)

Paul lauds the law in his Epistle to the Romans:

"Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. ... For we know that the law is spiritual." (Rom. 7: 12, 14) and asserts that Yahveh God of Israel gave the law for the express purpose of working the ruin of all those subject to that law:

"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." (Rom. 3: 19)

And yet he assures the Galatians that the law has them all bound in sin, from which they may be relieved by faith, which has done away with the law, heedless that this is a flagrant denial of the words of the Master, previously quoted, as well as of his own to the Romans:

"But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed." (Gal. 3: 22, 23)

The effect of these bits of inspired text can be but to increase the wonder of the "hearers of the Word," a feeling much akin to that produced by the snake in Hudibras, which "Wriggled in and wriggled out, Leaving the people much in doubt, Wether the snake that made the track Was going east or coming back."

CIRCUMCISION OR UNCIRCUMCISION?

The confusion is heightened by the hotly debated question raised, but adroitly dodged, in Acts 15:

"Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." (1 Cor. 7: 18, 19)

Paul himself denied this assertion:

"For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law." (Rom. 2: 25) and also flatly contradicted both the preceding statements: "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." (Gal. 5: 2)

And the selfsame Paul flings a denial into the very teeth of his immediately preceding inspired assertion:

"What profit is there of circumcision? Much every way." (Rom. 3: 1, 2) though this too he gainsays: "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision." (Gal. 5: 6)

And in spite of Paul's assuming to preach on every side of the question, which did or did not matter, according to whom he was addressing, whether Jew or Gentile, he claims a special revelation of Yahveh to himself and to his partner Peter to split the question and take opposite sides of it:

"The gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter." (Gal. 2: 7)

BAPTISM AND BACKSLIDING

That baptism is essential to salvation is a positive assertion of the Christ, who enjoined the ceremonial on his disciples, to be imposed on all their converts: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16: 16)

Unless the ceremony was submitted to, it was declared impossible to go to heaven:

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3: 5)

The parting command given by the risen Lord to his disciples -- but which we have seen he never gave -- was this:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them." (Matt. 28: 19)

The repentant thief on the cross was not baptized, and his belief must have been very embryonic, yet he entered forthright into the kingdom. Baptism then would seem not to be so essential to salvation as is sometimes thought; and Paul takes credit to himself for omitting the watery initiation, and asserts that Christ did not enjoin the performance of the rite on him:

"I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius. ... For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." (1 Cor. 1: 14, 17)

The ceremony once performed, is its efficacy permanent? The act of faith is of lasting effect unto eternal life, says the Christ:

"My sheep hear my voice, ... and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." (John 10: 27, 28)

Here the genial doctrine of "backsliding" is confirmed; the backslider may enjoy the earthy fruits of his lapse and yet enter into the joys of his Lord. But in this he will find himself greatly mistaken, notwithstanding the assurance of the Comforter; his latter end will be worse than the first, asserts the keeper of the keys:

"If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning." (2 Peter 2: 20)

The creed, however, harks back to the Christ and affirms the right of backsliding ad libitum:

"There is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptized" (Confession of Faith, Art. 9).

FORGIVENESS OF SIN

The Master said:

"If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass

against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." (Luke 17: 3, 4)

This is supplemented by a n even more liberal version of the same divine injunction, never known

to have been acted upon since:

"Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven." (Matt. 18: 22)

But this beautiful precept of conduct between man and man finds no place in the stricter dealings of Yahveh with man, if we are to believe Paul:

"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." (Heb. 10: 26)

This harsh denial of the comfortable principle of backsliding is reaffirmed by the same dogmatist:

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, ...

If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance." (Heb. 6: 4, 6)

The proper depository of the divine power of forgiveness of sin is left in serious doubt. First Christ claimed the power in himself:

"The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." (Mark 2: 10)

Then he is said to have delegated plenary power to Peter:

Thou art Peter. ... And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: ... and whatsoever

thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 16: 18, 19; 18: 18)

Though the Christ thus promised "I will give the keys," the record of the actual investiture is

missing; this has not hindered the successors of the fisherman, however, from displaying models of the celestial keys and claiming constant use of them.

But later it is asserted that the power is the prerogative of the heavenly King:

"He [Yahveh] is faithful and just to forgive sins" (1 John 1: 9).

RESURRECTION

We now cite a series of conflicting texts touching upon the subject of the resurrection of the body, a doctrine much in dispute in the early days, which appears to be stated by Paul rather as a pious hope than as a dogma:

"And [I] have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." (Acts 24: 15)

But at another place the apostle seems to put the matter even more in doubt, as possibly an unattainable aspiration:

"If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from the dead." (Phil. 3: 11)

Jesus told the Sadducees:

"For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." (Matt. 22: 30)

A sentiment worthy of the woman-hating Paul, who says in a typical vein:

"But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." (1 Cor. 15: 35, 36)

Besides exposing himself to the "danger of hell fire," with which the Master himself threatened whoever calls his brother a fool (Matt. 5: 22), and making a rather unbecoming exhibition of apostolic spleen, the apostle seems, to any one who has done gardening or otherwise acquired the rudiments of agricultural biology, to show himself entitled to the appellation, for a tyro in farming knows that the inspired argument is fallacious: the seed which dies is not "quickened," but rots and is lost; only the seeds which live in the ground and germinate are "quickened" and grow up to reproduce their kind. If the inspired author was so ignorant of natural things, he might be in error with respect to things supernatural. The next verse is from the same ill-inspired source:

"It is sown by a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." (1 Cor. 15: 44)

The argument is labouriously resumed:

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Cor. 15: 50-52)

These last verses seem to assert that the resurrection is not of the body as it is laid in the grave, but of something quite different which is manufactured "in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump," out of nothing, for in many instances the material body would be quite destroyed. And certainly, as would occur to any one versed in theological lore, this theory is wholly opposed to the proposition of the "Apostles' Creed" (of origin several centuries after the apostles) concerning the material "resurrection of the body." This creed, however, finds some support in the gospel of the Beloved Disciple:

"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." (John 5: 28, 29)

THE FINAL JUDGMENT

These texts may appear to any thoughtful person to raise the curious question of what becomes of the human soul between the time of death the body and the magical blasts of the resurrection trumpet, countless ages in the future, at the Day of Judgment. In popular concept, as in scriptural representation, the soul goes to its final reward or punishment immediately after it leaves the body at death. Lazarus died, and quite shortly Dies, and both souls sped at once to the respective eternal billets; for we are told that upon the death of Lazarus, he "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom"; and "in hell [Dies], lift up his eyes, being in torment," and engaged in an instructive dialogue with Lazarus across the immeasurably great gulf fixed between their habitats. The repentant thief on the cross was on the same day transported to paradise, and there are other instances of the same sort.

If this be true, what then, one may curiously ask, is the use or need of a general final judgment, which could not alter the status of the souls already for unnumbered ages basking in heaven or broiling in hell? On the other hand, if this be not true, it appears very incongruous that souls, after leaving the body, should flit around in a sort of limbo of empty space for untold time awaiting the playing of the last trump. Yet this is the situation described by one who was snatched up into the third heaven, and verily "saw the vision of the future and the wonders that would be"; for he says, in rapt clairvoyance:

"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works." (Rev. 2: 13)

But why -- in hell -- judge one who already has been for ages in hell? A reversal of his sentence would be like reversing that of a man already hanged.

Another gospel text seems to represent both soul and body as lying moldering in the grave, not until a trumpet-call, but the voice of the Master, should awaken such only as were "elected" to awake to a new life:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." (John 5: 25)

But what seems a plain contradiction of this theory and an assertion that the dead are raised to life at once without waiting for any general resurrection day comes in the Master's own words (misquoting his source):

"Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord [Yahveh] the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him." (Luke 20: 37, 38)

As this argument is, however, based on the "burning bush" incident, which no one believes ever happened, and is also a mis-statement of the alleged fact, since it was Yahveh himself, not Moses, who made use of the words quoted (Ex. 3: 6), it may not be very persuasive. But the Master himself contradicts this theory and postpones to his "second coming" the adjudication of rewards and punishment, during the interval preceding which both body and soul are apparently quiescent in the common grave:

"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." (Matt. 16: 27)

The next verse is in a tone of dubious argumentation, suggesting a possible negation of the major premises of its final sentence, as well as begging the whole resurrection question:

"Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen." (1 Cor. 15: 12, 13)

Yet a deeper note of potential despair echoes in another text of the great dogmatist:

"And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." (1 Cor. 15: 17, 18)

So the questions of the resurrection of the body and the final judgment of the soul, and the why and wherefore of both, are left in a nebulous state. The Lord only knows just exactly how it will all happen, as it has not been very clearly revealed yet.

THE "SECOND COMING"

The most unequivocal and positive of the teachings of Jesus and of his several apostles alike is the immediate visible "second coming" of Christ, the end of the world, the final judgement, and the prompt establishment of the Messianic Kingdom of Yahveh and David on the new earth -- all this being the most potent propaganda of the new religion. The Master commanded:

"And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 10: 7)

The immediacy of the coming is proclaimed by him in the most positive and unmistakable terms repeatedly:

"Verily, I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." (Matt. 26: 28)

He adds reassurance to make assurance of the coming and the kingdom doubly sure:

"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." (Matt. 24: 34; Mark 13: 80)

The same doctrine, in almost identical words, is repeated in Mark 9: 1 and Luke 9: 27, and is implied in the remark of Jesus after the jealous altercation between Peter and John:

"Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me." (John 21: 22)

The end should come so quickly that the disciples should not have covered even the little territory of Palestine:

"Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come." (Matt. 10: 23)

But why, then, one wonders, should they be again commanded:

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16: 15)

The assurance of the speedy fulfilment of the prophesied end of all things is reaffirmed, somewhat tardily, in the Revelation -- written some 100 years after Christ:

"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which

must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: ... for the time is at hand." (Rev. 1: 1, 3)

And again:

"Behold, I come quickly." (Rev. 3: 11)

The notion is repeated by Paul:

"For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." (Heb. 10: 37)

And reiterated by John:

"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." (1 John 2: 18)

Paul declares that the great day is so close at hand that he enjoins total carnal abstinence as a sort of preparatory purification: "But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none," etc. (1 Cor. 7: 29) And he tells the same Corinthians, who were evidently getting impatient, that the coming was to be during the very lives of themselves; that they would not die, but should hear the fateful trump sound in their living ears; that those already dead should be promptly resurrected, and the yet living would be "changed":

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we [the yet living] shall be changed." (1 Cor. 15, 51, 52)

The Master again preaches preparedness for his early advent:

"Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." (Luke 12: 40)

Peter joins in the refrain of watchful waiting:

"But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." (1 Peter 4: 7)

He paints a lurid picture of how it is to happen:

"But the day of Yahveh will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away

with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2 Peter 3: 10) Paul, with his chronic cocksureness about everything which he is totally ignorant of, also tells us explicitly and fully just how it is going to happen:

"For the Lord [Yahveh] shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thess. 4: 16, 18)

But as the brethren, despite all these assurances of quick dividends of glory, were apparently getting restless for the grand catastrophe and spectacle which was so tardy, James, own brother of Jesus, cajoles them:

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and lattein. Be ye also patient, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." (James 5: 7, 8)

Paul also finds himself under the necessity of preaching patience in order to save his own reputation as an inspired prophet:

"And the Lord direct your hearts ... into the patient waiting for Christ." (2 Thess. 3: 5)

And yet again, he coaxes those of the Hebrews who had fallen into the faith and were chafing at its unfulfilled promises:

"For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." (Heb. 10: 36, 37)

But the clamour for fulfilment of these promises of the "second coming" became louder and more insistent, threatening the total discredit of the inspired promisers; the disappointment of the saints over the non-fulfilment of the reiterated assurances, promises, and prophecies, and the nature of their taunts, being voiced with very pertinent directness by those whom the crafty Peter dubs "scoffers":

"And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2 Peter 3: 4)

This same crafty Peter, first pope of the new faith, himself makes a shifty pretended answer to these "scoffers," whereby he tries to squirm out of the situation created by the palpable failure of all the inspired predictions by himself and his confreres of the immediate end of all things: "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (2 Peter 3: 8)

This, however, does not seem at all disingenuous and honest, and hardly meets the positive repeated assurances that "some standing here shall not taste of death" before the "second coming" -- that "this generation shall not pass away till all these things be accomplished," when "we that are alive" shall be "caught up" into glory. There seems to be a sad want of inspired truth, and even of common honesty, in solemnly declaring such awful events, which scared thousands into belief, and then deceived their terrified expectation. And it may be wondered how any of them ever persisted in their new faith after such patent deception. If inspiration is so out of joint with truth in this most positive of the declarations of Christ and his propagandists, the whole of their preachings and predictions may well be subject to some discount, if not entire discredit.

DEVILOLOGY

A flood of inspired texts illustrates one of the most persistent superstitions of the whole Scriptures: the belief in devils and demoniac possession, in hell and its malign ruler Satan, almost if not quite equal in power, and in some respects even superior, to Yahveh Almighty, (the English rendering of the Hebrew El Shaddai, "God of Demons.") The Devil appears early and holds fast:

"And Jesus ... was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil. ... And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine." (Luke 4: 1-7)

These verses clearly recognize the Devil as a divine being, with full power of possession and dominion over this world, having miraculous powers quite equal to those of Yahveh's. Indeed, Paul gives him this exalted title: "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believed not." (2 Cor. 4: 4) a designation of rank and power confirmed by the Master himself:

"For the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." (John 14: 30)

And repeated, among many others, by Paul:

"According to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." (Eph. 2: 2)

The Master himself admits the divine origin of the princely Devil:

"And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." (Luke 10: 18)

In the nightmare visions of the Apocalypse a fearful and wonderful pen picture is drawn of this

great potentate of heaven, rebel against Yahveh his King, conquered by the great Michael

Archangel, and ousted from the realms of light:

"And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." (Rev. 12: 9)

So great was the awe in which the Satanic power was held by even the highest in the hierarchy of

heaven that it is declared:

"Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, Yahveh rebuke thee." (Jude 9)

The miraculous power of Satan and his minor devils is attested by the apostle in chief:

"The working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." (2 Thes. 2: 9) and also in the Apocalypse:

"For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles." (Rev. 16: 14)

And their powers are quite equal to Yahveh's and defiant of his Almightyness:

"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great

thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness." (2 Cor. 11: 14, 15)

The Master himself accredits the doctrines of Zoroaster touching the two great powers who disputed the government of the universe, one the creator and purveyor of good, the other of evil:

"Ye are of your father the devil. ... He was a murderer from the beginning. ... He is a liar, and the

father of it." (John 8: 44)

The following verse recognizes the same principle, but impresses one with a feeling of

disappointment that the purpose expressed in its second sentence has seemingly as yet failed of complete success:

"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose

the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." (1 John 3: 8)

Again this divinely purposed triumph over the evil one is expressly declared, with an admission at the same time of the extraordinary powers possessed by His Satanic Majesty:

"That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." (Heb. 2: 14)

And the success of the project is assured by the Christ in person:

"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." (John 12: 31)

But Paul trims down the promise of destruction of the Devil and his works, substituting a milder form of discipline, which, though its prompt accomplishment is promised, does not appear to have been yet brought about:

"And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." (Rom. 16: 20)

Considerable puzzlement is caused after all the foregoing texts descriptive of the activities of the prince of devils and his legions, and the divine assurances of his early capture and destruction, or at least bruising, by the official keeper of the keys of hell, by the surprising revealed assurance that His Satanic Majesty and his devil hosts were already in chains in hell, and had indeed always been so since they were first cast out of Heaven:

"God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." (2 Peter 2: 4)

though such captivity is again revealed as being simply an apocalyptic vision, and for a term which with Yahveh is, as we are elsewhere told, but as one day:

"And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years." (Rev. 20: 2)

And even this millennial period, so confidently assured, not only has not come about in these two thousand years, but is expressly admitted to be but a temporary makeshift of restraint, after which the Devil was to be freed to resume his operations:

"And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season." (Rev. 20: 3) This causes the thought that it was odd for the almighty Yahveh of heaven to permit the release of the arch-fiend to prey upon his creatures, after once he had him safely chained down and sealed up in the bottomless pit; Yahveh even seems by this act to make himself accomplice in the malignant works of the Devil. And one wonders upon what compulsion "he must be loosed" from hell, which seems to imply a serious limitation upon the almightiness of Yahveh. In any event, the confused and conflicting texts about the Devil and his status, past, present, and prospective, leads to the thought that the inspired writers did not really know what they were talking about; that the Devil was a myth, or at least that the revelations made concerning him were altogether mythical.

Paul himself admits the besetting activities of the Devil, and acknowledges himself, despite all his boasted power over devils, to be a victim of the powers of their chief:

"We would have come unto you; but Satan hindered us." (1 Thess. 2: 18)

Peter, evidently despairing of the promised victory over the Devil and of effective restraint of him, from which he was broken loose, issues a warning to the faithful against his continued activities:

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5: 8)

FIGHTING THE DEVILS

That a very active campaign was, however, waged against the hosts of devils, who were evidently as plentiful as blackberries in those days, and very mischievous, is made apparent by scores of texts of devilology, which make up so large a part of gospel truth that only a few can be here presented. The fight against devils was apparently the principal occupation of the Master, and the highest patent of his divine personality and mission:

"And he preached ... throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils." (Mark 1: 39)

He cites this gift as the first and most potent proof of his divine mission:

"And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils." (Luke 13: 32)

Likewise it was the badge of commission of the Twelve:

"Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases." (Luke 9: 1)

as also of the Seventy: "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name." (Luke 10: 17)

This devil-exorcism was also the badge and working tool of all true believer:

"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils." (Mark 16: 17)

Paul reaches the apex of the superstition in the startling assertion not only that devils galore exist, but (in accordance with the Vulgate Version of Psalm 96: 5, that "all the gods of the heathen are devils") asserts their divinity with his usual omniscient assurance:

"But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God [Yahveh]: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils." (1 Cor. 10: 20)

The inspired historian of the Acts makes Paul the hero of an episode which attributes to these devils the divine faculties of foreknowledge and prediction, the same as to the acknowledged prophets of Yahveh:

"And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: ... and this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out in the same hour." (Acts 16: 16, 18)

The Great Physician graciously busied himself in healing all kinds of diseases, but made a specialty of casting out devils, which in those days, before medicine was well developed, were regarded, even by the Son of Yahveh, as being the active agents of all the ills to which human flesh was heir:

"Jesus of Nazareth ... went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil." (Acts 10: 38)

Some texts seem to distinguish between ordinary diseases, and those caused by the possession of devils, and lunacy:

"And they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them." (Matt. 4: 24)

But the devils were evidently the efficient cause of even sore cases of mental alienation, according to the Master Physician's own diagnosis: "Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is a lunatic, and sore vexed. ... And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him." (Matt 17: 15, 18)

As likewise of sundry female troubles:

"And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." (Matt. 15: 22)

And again:

"And ought not this woman, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this

bond on the Sabbath day?" (Luke 13: 16)

And especially in the celebrated case of Mary Magdalene:

"Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils" (Luke 8: 2).

Also of dumbness:

"As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil, and when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake." (Matt. 9: 32)

These devils had a way, in Bible days, of entering into people and causing them a devil of a time, to their great suffering and distress; and the devils were intelligent in their way: "And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him." (Mark 1: 34)

The perversity of the devils is indicated by the fact that they did not at all heed the command of the Master not to speak: "And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ." (Luke, 4: 41)

The devils were even saucy and talked back:

"Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to

destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God." (Luke 4: 34)

This, if the devils eveeally said it, proves that they themselves are children of Yahveh and joint

heirs of salvation with the best of believers -- for:

"Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God." (John 4: 2)

and by every principle of the gospel promises, are entitled to share in the joys of the Lord Yahveh:

"That through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10: 43)

That the devils had a firm Christian faith, evidenced by their unanimous confessions, is avowed in express terms:

"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." (James 2: 19)

But they are seemingly doomed to a disappointment of their just hopes as true believers:

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. 25: 41)

All the devils were apparently not of Satan; some seem to have been celestial, a point to be tested by some means not explained:

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God." (1 John 4: 1)

These and a hundred or more other verses dealing with various phases of devilology establish the high record for inspired Bible texts on a single subject, it being apparent that no other name or subject in all the Bible, hardly excepting the Divine Father Yahveh and his Son, is more often mentioned, or held in higher faith or fear than that of the Devil and the teeming hosts of devils. Belief in devils and in demoniac possession was an

article of the profoundest credulity of all the inspired writers as of the uninspired ignorant masses, and in none stronger than in the Son of Yahveh. We can but wonder how belief in such an ignorant myth and superstition was possible to one who claimed to be the very Son of Yahveh, God of truth, and to those claiming to be divinely inspired by Yahveh to be the apostles of truth on earth.

THE PENALTIES OF UNBELIEF

Let those who may be tempted to question the eternal verity of it all take warning from the fearful threat against unbelief which the chief apostle hurls at the incredulous:

"That they all might be damned who believed not the truth." (2 Thess. 2: 12)

The same dire fate is pronounced against him who even hesitates in his faith:

"And he that doubteth is damned" (Rom. 14: 28)

This is that to which they are damned:

"Are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." (Jude 7) to which is added

the Master's fearful admonition:

"Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matt. 10: 28) and the fulmination of the ex-persecutor of the faithful, persecutor now of the faithless:

"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy: ... Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye,

shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?" (Heb. 10: 28, 29)

followed by the warning of the horrible example of the past:

"The Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not." (Jude 6) and the very pertinent warning for the future:

"For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience." (Col. 3: 6) and the yet more terrifying threat in the gentle Jesus' own words:

"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Matt. 23: 33)

Paul again says:

"For the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." (1 Thess. 2: 16) and John: "For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Rev. 6: 17)

This is augmented by the apostolic prophesy of yet more wrath to come:

"But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." (Heb. 10: 27)

The argument of terror and its efficiency is again urged by Paul, who admits he uses it for the

moral suasion of converts:

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." (2 Cor. 5: 10, 11) and who brings it to this climax of terrorism:

"Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints." (2 Thess. 1: 6-10)

All this tends to induce the mind to yield a very ready assent to the total truth of the same apostle's warning: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. 10: 31)

Many may well wonder how a kind and loving heavenly Father of us all should make such terrible threats or inflict such fearful penalties upon his human children for simply not believing things so contrary to the most godlike faculty he had endowed them with, divine reason -- threats and penalties more consonant with the practices of Apache Indians than with the principles of a just and merciful God.

INTOLERANCE AND DESTRUCTION

Evidently, from what follows, there was not sufficient sanction for the new religion in the awful things that the wrathful Yahveh was said to have in store for the hapless unbeliever after death. His apostolic vicars and vicegerents here on earth hold divine commission to anticipate upon the body here and now the fearful tortures which their Yahveh should inflict upon the soul hereafter and eternally. The principle of priestly intolerance and the torch which lit the hellish fires of the Holy Inquisition have both their certain warrant and divine command in inspired texts.

Everyone who did not accept the Nazarene as the Christ he declared to be his enemy: "He that is not with me is against me" (Matt. 12: 80); and upon all such he calls down destruction and death:

"Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." (Luke 19: 27)

The Christ himself, to say nothing of numerous impostors who had preceded him, declared that others after him should claim to be Messiah, and should have miraculous powers like himself, so that even the chosen could hardly tell the difference between the genuine and the spurious Christs:

"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." (Matt. 24: 24)

Paul pictures "Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness" enticing those who "received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved"; though it was

impossible that they should believe the truth:

"For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth." (2 Thess. 2: 9-12)

Peter, the rock upon which the Church persecutrix was founded, true to his traditions of violence, breathed deadly vengeance against all who presumed to differ from his dogmas. Peter cites Moses as predicting Jesus Christ as the prophet to be raised up "like unto me," and quotes Yahveh as threatening with death all who would not heed his word:

"Every soul which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." (Acts 3: 23)

And he devotes to swift destruction all who do not think as he thinks -- a murderous program followed by his apostolic successors for as long as they dared and could:

"There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." (2 Peter 2: 1)

Even the Beloved Disciple preaches denunciation and intolerance:

"Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist." (1John 2: 22)

But then we recall the admission that this is the bluster of ignoramuses:

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled." (Acts 4: 18)

On those who were indisposed to receive the ministrations of the zealous crusaders of the new

religion, summary destruction is invoked of Heaven:

"And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we commend fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" (Luke 9: 54)

The earliest and a very characteristic glimpse of him who became the chief of the apostles is this:

"And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest." (Acts 9: 1)

Paul thus vents his apostolic intolerance of free speech and liberty of discussion -- the cardinal

polity ever since followed by the Holy Church which he founded:

"For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, whose mouths must be stopped." (Titus 1: 10, 11)
Ostracism and the boycott are proclaimed as the first steps in the ascending scale of suppression of those who disagree with the new doctrines:

"Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." (Rom. 16: 17)

He then boldly preaches the gospel of priestly anathema against man or angel who should presume to contradict the apostolic dogmas:

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Gal. 1: 8, 9) and caps the climax of consecrated bigotry with a pious exhortation to the annihilation of all who dare disbelieve his inspired pretensions of truth:

"He that troubleth you shall hear his judgment, whosoever he be. ... I would they were even cut off which trouble you." (Gal. 5: 10, 12)

To the credulous he even adopts a tone of terroristic authority to hold them in their credulity: For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us, ... I should not be ashamed: That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters." (2 Cor. 10: 8, 9) and modestly claims for his self-assumed authority no limitations of law, human or divine, except sacerdotal notions of expediency: "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient." (1 Cor. 10: 23)

INSPIRED PRIESTLY PRESUMPTION

The bigot Paul hedges himself about with autocratic near- divinity and warns away presumptuous mortals from all profane contact or interference with his awful personality, while he vain- glories in the mutilation of person which changes him into a celibate zealot:

"From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." (Gal. 6: 17)

Heedless of the infinite contradictions of his dogmas, he asserts in their behalf and for himself the infallible verity of direct inspiration, not, however, from Father Yahveh, but from his Son Jesus:

"I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. 1: 11, 12)

This inspired veracity he lays claim to in the fullest measure:

"As the truth of Christ is in me." (2 Cor. 11: 10)

He vaunts his self-assumed title and claims all the credit for the results of his pious propaganda:

"Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? (1 Cor. 9: 1) though he admits that he is not a free agent in this propaganda, but claims to be under some sort of mysterious "control," or maybe under the spell of his own terroristic doctrines:

"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe

is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Cor. 16)

He claims precedence over all other propagandists of the new faith, making (parenthetically) an interesting personal though braggart admission:

"Are they, ministers of Christ? (I speak as a Fool) I am more." (2 Cor. 11: 28)

This gospel truth he reaffirms, claiming to be proud of the fact:

"I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me." (2 Cor. 12: 11)

He displays it so patently and publicly that Festus declares:

"Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." (Acts 26: 24)

But Paul justifies himself by the special plea that it is for the good of the cause:

"For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause." (2

Cor. 5: 13)

With pretended plenary inspiration he assures us of his perfect knowledge of all the divine mysteries, which, however, he does not very plenaryly reveal to the rest of us:

"Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." (Eph. 3: 4)

He reaches the superlative of obsessed egoism by boldly claiming Jesus Christ's gospel as his own:

"Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel." (2 Tim. 2: 8) even setting up his own notions as the ratio decided in the end of the Last Judgment:

"In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." (Rom. 2: 16)

He would even supplant his old friend and partner Peter as the purveyor general of pardons, in a childish tangle of tautology:

"To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ." (2 Cor. 2: 10) and boastingly claims commission as the true adjutant of the Almighty Yahveh to give human utterance to his holy will, and makes acceptance of this pretence the one test of the true prophet and of the genuine gift of spirit --whatever that is:

"If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." (1 Cor. 14: 37) claiming again that the Deity speaks directly through him:

"I command, yet not I: but the Lord." (1 Cor. 7: 10)

He pretends to rely upon moral suasion rather than to impose belief by Yahveh's divine authority:

"Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand." (2 Cor. 1: 24) although he certainly had the divine right and authority to command boldly and to impose his own will as that of the Lord Yahveh: "Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient." (Philem. 8)

And again he returns to a warning against any who may not even yet be quite persuaded by all his strained arguments and terrifying threats:

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." (Heb. 3: 12)

AN INFAMOUS ACCUSATION

But aside from the difficulty, or stark impossibility, of knowing what to believe of all the contradictions and conflicts of dogma, or of believing any of it under such conditions, our inspired dogmatist, with very odd logic, tells us that it is impossible to believe at all, as his God Yahveh has himself closed the human heart to belief, so that he could save men whether they believed or not:

"For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." (Rom. 11: 32) Yet he contradicts himself in this by his dogmatic assertion that the promise of salvation is only to those who do believe:

"But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." (Gal. 3: 22)

Again the same apostle denies both of his former bald assertions, and asserts that we are to be saved actually through others not believing at all:

"For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief." (Rom. 11: 30)

Straightway he contradicts this medley of contradictions, and with amazing assurance imputes to the God of truth and mercy the total depravity of making men believe lies in order that they might be damned for their God-imposed unbelief:

"And for this cause God shall send them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.(2 Thess. 2: 11, 12)

And then, as if conscious of being adjudged into this class himself, before any one has time to accuse him of it, he hastens to deny it and to proclaim his own inspired veracity -- though with respect to which of his manifold contradictions he does not explain, leaving us in the darkness of doubt as to them all:

"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not." (Rom. 9: 1; Gal. 1: 20; 2 Cor. 11: 31.) though he has just a little before confessed to the Romans, with a show of pious pride in his adroitness of mendacity, that he was accused and "judged as a sinner" because of his abounding lies "to the glory of God" (Rom. 3: 7).

THE APOSTLES' VIEWS OF EACH OTHER

A new and final commandment the Christ gave to his holy apostles: "That ye love one another" (John 13: 34). We have already seen their constant quarrelling as to which should be the greatest among them, even at the Last Supper in the shadow of the martyrdom of their Master. When, after his death, they were free from constraint and rebuke, vent was given to their rivalries and animosities, which they indulged in true clerical style; they called each other liars and knaves, and denied and impeached each other's teachings. Many instances of this we have noted in matching their contradictory doctrines and dogmas.

Paul denied the teachings of James as to faith (Gal. 2: 16-21); James condemned the teachings of Paul (James 2: 20). Paul proclaimed himself the divinely appointed sole apostle to the gentiles:

"The gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter." (Gal. 2: 7)

Peter flatly denied this and claimed that the commission was assigned to him:

"And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel." (Acts 15: 7)

A quarrel had prevailed among the holy ones of Christ, Paul and Barnabas on the one side; and Peter, James, and John, who, says Paul, only "seemed to be pillars," on the other; but they patched it up apparently and gave each other in token "the right hands of fellowship."

"But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. ... And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. (Gal. 2: 9, 11, 18)

John of Patmos, from the third heaven, illumined by the great white light of Yahveh's throne, caught a good bird's-eye view of the whole apostolic crew, and at the command of the enthroned Christ declared:

"Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and hast found them liars." (Rev. 2: 2)

KNOWLEDGE SCORNED -- IGNORANCE EXALTED

The first "thou shalt not," the first ban imposed on humanity, was the edict of Yahveh God in Eden decreeing perpetual ignorance for his creature man. In the midst of the garden Yahveh Elohim planted the tree of knowledge, and thus he decreed:

"Thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen. 2: 17)

Thus the priests banned human knowledge under penalty of death, a penalty often enforced by them; and the ignorance thus decreed they have perpetuated; they have forbidden and derided knowledge, boasted of their own ignorance, and imposed it on mankind ever since. Even the Master exulted that his preachments were not for intelligent persons but were kept for the childish- minded only. Looking up to his Father Yahveh, he fervently exclaimed:

"I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." (Matt. 11: 26; Luke 10: 21)

The propagandist-in-chief of these beliefs of babes reiterates his enthusiasm for ignorance and his scorn and fear of knowledge:

"Knowledge puffeth up." (1Cor..8: 1)

"The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." (1 Cor.3: 19)

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy." (Col. 2: 8)

And he expressly enjoins the perpetuation of ignorance and forbids all effort for enlightenment:

"If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant" (1 Cor.14: 88).

The fruits of the Christian ban on learning and of its exaltation of unthinking ignorance are seen in the quality of the flock fed on such refuse:

"Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. ... Base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen yea, and the things which are not." (1Cor. 1: 26-28)

Hear his own description of his converts and of the membership of his churches:

"We are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." (1 Cor. 4: 13).

And the apostolic feeders of the flock are admitted to be no better:

"We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake." (1 Cor. 4: 9, 10)

One has only to contemplate the vast hordes of "true believers" throughout Christendom, and to look upon the faces of thousands of little padres and preachers of the word, to visualize the ancient apostles and their followers. Those countries of Christendom to-day where the faith most flourishes are shown by readily available statistics to have the greatest percentages of illiteracy among the credulous population, and there ignorance and superstition most abound.

Victor Hugo knew the class whom he describes as "neither men nor women -- priests"; and he says: "There is in every village a lighted torch, the schoolmaster; and a mouth to blow it out, the parson."

CHILDISH FAITH FOR SALVATION

When a person of any God-given intelligence has read and pondered these correlated contradictions, so solemnly uttered for our faith, he can better appreciate the subtle significance of the oft-repeated prime qualification for Christian faith and salvation. The Master himself declares:

"Except ye ... become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18: 3) "For of such is the kingdom of heaven"! (Matt. 11: 14)

Little children have such childish simplicity and credulity, -- believing in Santa Claus, fairies, elves, and ghosts in full faith. When they have grown into adult child-mindedness, the Holy Ghost, Yahveh, and Jesus Christ are added to their holy faith.

DAMNATION FOR UNBELIEF

Along with such childlike belief go the most fearful threats of eternal death and damnation if one is not so childish as to believe it all:

"He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God; ... but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John 3: 18, 36) And afteeading all the divine assurances, even "He that doubteth is damned"! (Romans 14: 23)

FATUOUS FANATICISM

When, under the influence of the inspired and contrary preachments above dinned, coaxed, and threatened into one, one forswears his reason and becomes so like a little child as to believe, these are among the pious duties

and obligations to which he is devoted, by the Master's own avowal, and for his own sweet sake and that of the holy Christian religion:

"The brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death." (Matt. 10: 21)

A Christian ideal realized untold times during the long dark ages of faith, which to-day still flourishes, dividing the Christian world into hostile camps of bigoted and intolerant factions. And the promise of reward for so great inhumanity is very incentive to those who believe it:

"Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." (Matt. 19: 29)

In countless homes and hearts, blighting the tenderest love, the curse of the inspired ban has been felt:

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for ... what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (2 Cor. 6: 14, 15)

THE "PRINCE OF PEACE"

Of all the inspired words which we have quoted and commented on, the only provable ones which have proved true are those of the last few paragraphs, and the sinister, cruel, and fearful sentences of the Man of Nazareth, fondly called the "Prince of Peace" -- words which have borne the bitterest harvest of blood, and blight, and hell-on-earth through all the ages since they were uttered:

"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." (Matt. 10: 34-37; Luke 12: 51-53)

The Christian creeds and dogmas, laid down with such inspired assurance and so self-contradictorily -- in the Holy Bible, may here be left, conveniently assembled and matched for the easieadical revision of opinion regarding them.

IS IT GOD'S WORD?

CHAPTER 17: THE CHRISTIAN "PLAN OF SALVATION"

THE CHRISTIAN "PLAN OF SALVATION"

THE REVELATION OF THE FALL

THE "CURSE" IN EDEN

THE SNAKE CURSE

THE CURSE ON WOMAN THE CURSE ON MAN

THE "CURSE" INNOCUOUS

THE "CURSE" LIFTED

THE RIDDLE OF THE SERPENT SEED

A BIG CHANCE MISSED

DAMNATION A CHRISTIAN DOGMA PAUL THE APOSTLE

THE "PLAN OF SALVATION"

"REDEMPTION FROM THE CURSE"

THE CURSE NOT 100% REDEEMED

THE CHRISTIAN "PLAN OF SALVATION"

"Redemption from the Curse"

THE whole philosophy of what is fondly known as the "Sacred science of Christianity" revolves around two extremes of inspired Bible history: the "curse on man" through Adam, and the "redemption from the curse" through Jesus Christ. The second Council of Orange (A.D. 529) thus declares and defines the deadly dogma: "One man [Adam] has transmitted to the whole human race not only the death of the body, which is the punishment of sin, but even sin itself, which is the death of the soul" (Cath. Encyc., Vol.11:p. 314.) St. Augustine, profoundest apologist of the Church and its dogmas, states the Christian scheme thus: "The whole Christian religion may be summed up in the intervention of two men, the one to ruin us, the other to save us" (De Pecc. Orig., 24; Cath. Encyc., Vol 11: p. 314). This is but a paraphrase of the proposition as formulated by the directly inspired originator of the dogma, St. Paul, who states it very explicitly:

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor.15: 22)

Thus, by the express utterance of inspiration, the Christian religion rests totally upon, is inextricably and fatally involved with, the historicity of the Garden of Eden, of Adam and Eve, of the talking snake, and of the "curse" and the "Fall" -- for upon the verity of these events depends utterly the validity of the divine mission of Jesus Christ, Son of Yahveh God, sent by Yahveh to "redeem the world from the sin of Adam." It was the "original sin" of Adam which brought on the fearful curse of Yahveh which clings to every since-born human soul, until and unless "redeemed" by Jesus the Christ.

This frightful sin was thus defined by inspiration of the Holy Ghost in the sacred council of Trent (the italics are mine): "Original sin is described not only as the death of the soul, but as the privation of justice that each child contracts at its conception" (Coun. Trent, Sess. 6:chap. 3; Cath. Encyc., Vol. 11:p. 314). If this, in the mercies of a just God, is not true, it is the most fearful and blasting untruth which priest has ever inflicted on mankind. Let us examine the dogma with the fearful attention which it challenges.

Inevitably, if Genesis is not true, Jesus Christ, as God and "Savior," is not, cannot be, true; both stand or fall together; if one, then the other must be relegated to the same limbo of exploded myth. Adam, says Paul, "is the figure of him that was to come" (Rom. 5: 15); Jesus Christ, again he says, is the "last Adam" (I Cor.15: 45). If the "first Adam" goes into the discard, the "last Adam" must needs follow.

In a previous chapter we have examined a score or more of pretended "prophecies" of the Hebrew Scriptures, alleged to have been "fulfilled" in Jesus Christ and sundry of the events of his life and death. Every one of these we have found to be apocryphal. In addition to these ineptly invoked "prophecies" there are many other -- some one hundred and forty-nine -- jumbles of words scattered through the Hebrew Scriptures which the pious Bible

editors, or the inspired Church, proclaim to be other "prophecies of Jesus Christ" -- of like quality with the former.

The very first of these is that of the "curse" and the "Fall," with its pretended "promise of the Redeemer." How priest ever proclaimed, and human intelligence ever believed, that a good and loving Father God (as Yahveh is naively described), who said that not a sparrow could fall without his anxious concern, would damn throughout eternity the errant masterpieces of his creation, on the very first day of their existence, for a simple disobedience, and involve all creation and all future humanity in a deadly curse on the soul of man until his Son should come, perhaps, four thousand years later, to "redeem" this humanity from the damnation of "original sin," and then leave damned oedamn all those who would not believe the "Word of God" about it, or who never heard of it and so never had a chance to disbelieve it -- this I leave to more knowing or more credulous minds to try to explain. I simply read the texts of the "Word of God" where this is all said by the priests to be revealed, to discover whether an unprejudiced lay mind can see it as they do.

THE REVELATION OF THE FALL

Chapter 3 of Genesis begins with the talking snake, who is praised as being more subtle than any beast of the field which Yahveh had made. The serpent meets, for the first time, Mother Eve under the shade of the wondrous tree of knowledge which flourished in the midst of the Garden of Eden, with respect to which Yahveh, in the first lie on record, had benignly threatened: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." The serpent tells Eve that this is really not a true statement, for the fruit of the tree was good to eat, and if eaten, "your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as the gods, knowing good from evil." Here again the verity of a plurality of gods is asserted.

This was Eve's first day on earth; she was totally inexperienced with the ways of the world or of serpents; so she was "beguiled" by the serpent and did eat of the fruit, and gave some to Adam. While the trio were yet together, but too late to do any good by prevention, Yahveh appears upon the scene, learns of the incident, flies into the most damning of all the rages recorded of him in all his Book of Curses, and immediately damns every person and thing in being and yet to come.

THE "CURSE" IN EDEN

This "curse" is a triple-plated damnation -- against the serpent, against the woman, and against the man. It is well worth the while to pause a moment to dissect it, curse by curse, as set out in Genesis 3:

THE SNAKE CURSE

"Yahveh Elohim said unto the serpent; Because thou hast done this,

"[1] thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field;

"[2] upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: "[3] And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed;

"[4] it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Gen. 3: 14, 15)

While this is quite a blustering curse, it seems of slight practical consequence -- though the Bible editors and the inspired Church assure us that this really and truly is a pellucid and positive divine promise of Jesus Christ. As the serpent naturally went on his belly anyhow, one may wonder where is the point in cursing him to continue to "wriggle in and wriggle out" as usual; and as to eating dust for a steady diet, this must be a mistake, if the "curse" applied to snakes generally, as the "Funny-mentalists" insist, for snakes are not known to eat dirt, but they suck eggs, and eat birds and rabbits and rats and other snakes; not even Barnum's circus at its heyday ever had a snake addicted to such unusual and economical diet as dirt.

This dust diet is really prescribed only to this particular serpent; and there seems no just reason to read into the plain language of Yahveh the curse of a perpetual dirt diet for all snakes for all time, which is not in effect anyhow; and it would hardly be just in Yahveh to condemn all snakes in the world for the wrong of one snake. "Shall not the judge of all the earth be just?" And should the "just suffer for the unjust?" We shall consider the words "enmity between thee and the woman" and "thy seed" when we have noticed the other curses in their order.

THE CURSE ON WOMAN

"Unto the woman he said,

"[1] I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception;

"[2] in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children;

"[3] and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." (Gen. 3: 16)

Here the choleric Yahveh simply inflicts poor Eve in her own single person with increased pangs in child-birth and a multiplication of sorrows, which would do no credit to any kind and loving God. As for the rest, a desire or love only to her own husband, instead of heuning off after affinities and soul- mates, would seem to be a blessing rather than a curse; and the subjection to her husband as the head of the household, is no accursed thing within reasonable limits of equality of personal privilege.

This curse on woman was also evidently limited to Eve alone; and there is no justice reason in claiming, as some expositors insist, that Yahveh cursed all women for the simple act of one woman, any more than he did all serpents. The whole curse against Eve was really pain and sorrow in giving life, not eternal damnation after death.

THE CURSE ON MAN

"Unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it:

"[1] cursed is the ground for thy sake;

"[2] in sorrow shalt thou eat (of) it all the days of thy life;

"[3] Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee;

"[4) and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

"[5) In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; "for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." (Gen. 3: 17-19).

This was Adam's share in the tremendous curse; and just what was it? Let me state its terms again:

The ground is accursed;

in sorrow shalt thou (Adam) eat it all the days of thy life (though he was to die on the very day he ate it);

thorns and thistles shall grow from the ground;

thou shalt eat the herbs of the field;

thou shalt eat bread in the sweat of thy face until thou return unto the ground; that is, until thy death.

This is every single solitary item of the fearful "curse on man." it is no curse upon adam (man) at all, except the one item of having to work for an honest living; all the rest of the "curse" is upon the harmless and helpless earth, which Yahveh had just created with such a deal of pains that he had to rest a whole day -- which with him is as a thousand years (2 Peter 3: 8). But there is not a single word oemotest hint of sin, or death of soul, or eternal damnation. If Yahveh ever said: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (2: 17) he either "repented" as usual, or it was all a brutal Jahvic bluff; for Adam continued to live, after that fatal day, for just nine hundred and thirty years, if the vital statistics of Genesis are to be credited. But I repeat that there is not one word in the whole record of sin or death or damnation as a penalty against Adam himself, much less against his posterity and all humanity.

THE "CURSE" INNOCUOUS

The "curse," as we have seen, is principally against the ground itself, not upon the man: "accursed is the ground for thy sake." The man is humorously condemned to eat ground, as was the snake; there is no "of" in the original Hebrew. The ground also should grow thorns and thistles; yet, according to Genesis 1: every kind of herb and plant and tree, including, of course, thorns and thistles, had already been created and "the earth brought forth" the same, on the third day (1: 12). The man was further condemned, as part of the "curse," to eat "the herb of the field"; but already, and as a divine providence for man, these same herbs of the field had been graciously bestowed upon him for food; for it is recorded: "And Elohim said, Behold, I have given you every herb, and every tree, in the which is the fruit; ... to you it shall be for meat" (1: 29). As for eating bread in the sweat of his face, or working to make the ground bring forth its produce of food, why, that was the

express purpose for which man was created in the first place (in the second version of his creation) and put into the Garden of Eden -- a blessing of healthful work instead of idle existence. For, after the earth was created, and before man was put upon it, it is recorded: "And there was not a man to till the ground" (2: 5). So Yahveh proceeded to form man out of the dust of the ground, and then laid out and planted the Garden of Eden. Then Yahveh Elohim took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden "to dress it and to keep it" (2: 15) -- thus providing for him useful and healthful work, so that "by the sweat of his face" he should eat of all the varied products of nature which Yahveh had given the man for food, until his return to the dust from which he was taken.

So we see that every single clause of the "curse" on man, was no "curse"(?) at all; every item of it, except that of "eating dirt" all his life like the snake, and which he never acquired the habit of doing, was already provided by the bounteous Creator Yahveh as particular blessings for his masterpiece of creation. The statement about his death and return to dust was no part of the "curse" at all, for man was never designed to live on earth forever, but was mercifully to be released, in due time, from that intolerable fate. The pretence of some pious persons and of the Council of Orange that gut for this awful "original sin," man would have lived always without tasting death, besides being utterly absurd, is distinctly denied by the inspired record; for, in a very curious passage, Yahveh Elohim is represented in a colloquy with some of the other gods, anonymous in the record, and, says Yahveh: "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore Yahveh Elohim sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken" (3: 22, 23). Thus the man was driven away from the tree of life, which had the magic property of making earthly life everlasting, expressly to prevent him from acquiring immunity from death.

And he was driven forth from the garden expressly "to till the ground from whence he was taken" (3: 23) -- which was exactly the purpose for which he was originally put into the garden, "to dress it and to keep it" (2: 15). So the "curse" is seen to be quite innocuous; and I pledge my word of honor that there is not another word nor the remotest allusion in all the Hebrew Bible to the whole incident of the garden and the snake. The Old Testament is as silent as Sheol (the grave) about any pretended "original sin" and "curse" and "Fall," and of eternal damnation on account of that or of anything else.

THE "CURSE" LIFTED

And just here one very singular circumstance may be mentioned, which is another falsehood imputable to Yahveh. Just after the Flood, when pious reckless old Noah destroyed one-half of all his breeding stock for a burnt sacrifice to Yahveh, we are told that "Yahveh smelled a sweet savor; and Yahveh said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake" (Gen. 8: 21). This would certainly seem to indicate that Yahveh was appeased and the "curse" lifted, and that the new race of mankind would now have a fair new start in life. But this is evidently a mistake; for the "curse" of Eden yet rests upon the ground. Indeed, "all things continue as from the beginning of the world"; the ground still brings forth thorns and thistles, and in toil man still eats of it in the sweat of his face (for, as the poet sings: "How salt with sweat is the laborer's bread!"); snakes still wriggle through life on their belly; and in pain do women yet bring forth children. So Jahvistic injustice is still universal and his Holy Word is broken, believe either phase of it one may prefer.

This is the whole of the fearful "curse" and "fall of man," whereby, we are told, all humanity was placed under the "curse of God," and Jesus Christ had to be sent into the world by his Father Yahveh, after four thousand years of weary "watchful waiting," to suffer and die ignominiously in order "to redeem mankind from the sin and curse of Adam." But one may wonder where is any eternal death and damnation in all this, or any scheme of redemption -- where is the joke. I shall reveal it.

THE RIDDLE OF THE SERPENT SEED

Utterly all of the "plan of salvation" is revealed, or concealed, in one fatal verse of Genesis 3. The whole trick is in the riddle of Yahveh and his talking snake: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (3: 15). Yahveh Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, in his infinite wisdom, said those few cabalistic words about snake- and woman-

seed, and about bruising heads and heels, to his talking snake; and out of this inspired sentence the inspired oracles of the new dispensation, over four thousand years afterwards, conjured this fearful and wonderful combination of curse and prophecy, clear as mud: Mankind is damned through the sin of Adam to the last generation; but the merciful and loving Yahveh will send his son Jesus Christ, the Lord knows when, to "redeem and save" all those who believe this childish Jewish fable, and to re-damn in hell fire, not then invented, all those who do not and will not believe a word of it.

Of course, Yahveh did not say this in words that anybody but a talking snake or a priest could understand. The mystic remark was made to the serpent; it does not appear that Adam and Eve heard it or understood it to mean anything, and certainly not the tremendous curse of death, damnation, and salvation, four thousand years afterwards evolved out of it.

Nor did a single patriarch, priest, prophet, or seer of Israel, with all their frenzied visions and fiery cursings, ever imagine or mention anything of the sort. Of all persons on earth, these Old Testament worthies surely would not have overlooked so momentous and terrific a curse, in the very beginning of their own Book of Curses, if either by inspiration or ingenuity they could have unriddled such a sense out of these seemingly senseless words. Those holy ones of Israel surpassed all human skill of those ages in devising curses to terrify the Chosen People into abject submission to the priests and to Yahveh; but, fearfully effective as it was afterwards made, not a word of the awful "curse of Adam," with eternal hell fire and damnation, do they utter, or even hint, or suspect.

A BIG CHANCE MISSED

Moses is Yahveh's arch-terrorist; he piles Pelion on Ossa of threats and curses throughout all of his reputed Five Books, and sums them all up in his schedule of curses in the closing chapters of Deuteronomy. He elaborates the most frightful and blood-curdling catalogue of curses ever framed or imagined prior to the gentle and loving Jesus and his apostles and to medieval churchly anathemas. All which he threatens "shall come to pass if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of Yahveh thy God, to observe to do all his commandments; ... all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee." Cursed shalt thou be in this and cursed shalt thou be in that:

"Yahveh shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, ... until thou be destroyed. ... Yahveh shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee from off the land. ... Yahveh shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew. ... And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters" -- and countless other blood-curdling and diabolic horrors. And when old Moses has exhausted his powers of invention of terrors and his vocabulary of horrors, and is choked off by an apoplectic fit of rage, he sputters and spits forth a residuary clause of curses: "Also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, them will Yahveh bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed" (Deut. 28: 15-61).

These gentle admonitions to belief and obedience, be it remembered, are by Moses himself -- the same inspired author of the riddle of the serpent seed, supposed by Christian propagandists to signify eternal damnation in hell fire. Read in the light of hell fire, this "curse of Adam" would have been the most potent of all the terrors of the priests of Yahveh, just as it always has been, until lately, of those of the later triplex Deity. Moses imposed the yoke of the priest upon the people by the threat of death: "The man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto [obey] the priest. ... even that man shall die" (Deut. 17: 12); and he exhausts the vocabulary of terrorism to instill the abject fear of the hierarchy into the minds and souls of the deluded Chosen: but never once does he hurl at them: "Doubt and be damned" -- "Fear him who hath power to destroy both soul and body in hell!" What a chance be missed!

But Moses, in all his fluency of frightfulness and fury of invention of terror, never once includes the "curse of Adam" in the catalogue of "all the curses that are written in this book"; he evidently did not read his own riddle that way; and no other priest or prophet from Moses to Malachi even hints at Adam's curse, or Fall, or eternal damnation in hell fire. Hell and its fire are totally nonexistent in the entire Hebrew scheme of penalties and punishments.

Again, let it be noted in the reader's mind, and written indelibly upon his memory, that from the first "curse" in Genesis 3 until the final "Lest he come and smite the earth with a curse" in the last verse of Malachi" amid all the fearful cursings and ravings of the prophets of Yahveh calling down death and destruction upon his Chosen People, there is not one single mention oemotest reference again in all the Hebrew Bible to the snake story, or to the curse of Adam, or to the "fall of man," or to the necessity or propriety of redemption from "original sin" and from the fires of hell. All the furies of the dread Yahveh, invoked by all his holy prophets, are temporal terrors; all his pains and penalties are ended with the death of his miserable victims. In the grave (sheol) they are at rest; they are never pursued into any hell fire on account of Adam's sin or of their own. We must give even their Yahveh his due.

DAMNATION A CHRISTIAN DOGMA

Whence then, comes this fearful doctrine of "original sin," of the "fall of man," of eternal death and damnation -- of this curious and accursed "plan of salvation?" It is all a fiendish invention of the apostles and priests of the new dispensation, as will now be very easily seen. Hell fire and damnation are simply the genial sanction of the religion of the gentle and loving Jesus. But Jesus Christ never once even mentioned Adam or the pretended curse and the Fall; he never once intimated that his mission was due to the pretended talking snake scene in the Garden of Eden. More than that, not one of the four writers of the so-called gospels utters a word about Adam, or the curse, or the Fall, or of "redemption" by Jesus Christ for any sin of Adam, which is never even remotely referred to throughout their gospels. The single reference by the gospel writers to any Mosaic antecedent for any of the events of the life of Jesus Christ (except some pretended "prophecies" elsewhere examined) is by John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," his dearest and closest friend; and he only says: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3: 14). But this is not because of the serpent in Eden, or of the "curse" on Adam and mankind, but simply, as John says, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Thus neither Jesus nor any of his inspired biographers makes the remotest allusion to the very cornerstone of the "plan of salvation."

PAUL THE APOSTLE

The awful dogma was inflicted upon suffering superstitious humanity by one who never knew Jesus; who was the most malignant of the early persecutors of the believers in Jesus; one Saul of Tarsus, a Jew, a Pharisee, a doctrinaire, a garrulous, tergiversating zealot, who admits that he "profited in the Jews' religion above many" (Gal. 1: 14); then changed his name to Paul, and with the zeal of a new convert became perfectly frenzied as a propagandist of the new religion --admittedly "lying to the glory of God" -- to such an extent that he came to be called "the second founder of Christianity," the creator of its dogma, and deviser of its dogmatic system, self-contradictory in most or all of its muddled propositions.

This Paul in a fit of frenzy gives vent to this: "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth [but certainly out of the mind]; such an one caught up to the third heaven; ... and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor.12: 2). Notwithstanding this pretended trip to the very fount of inspiration, Paul is so uninspired by truth that he takes the prophets of old seriously, and assures us that "God ... at sundry times and in divers manners [i.e., by dreams, dice, and phallic ephods] spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets" (Heb. 1: 1) --heedless that this same God himself had said: "The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not" (Jer.14: 14).

The grossness of his superstition and the proof that nothing he utters is to be believed as very "oracles of God" lie not only in his incessant contradictions of himself, but also in his own boasting confession before Felix: "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers [Yahveh], believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets" (Acts 24: 14). We have just seen the portraiture of this Yahveh, "God of my fathers," and heard the maudlin "ravings" and monstrous lies of the meshuggah prophets, of whom Paul's old side-partner and rival Peter fatuously says: "Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1: 21). But these "holy men of Yahveh" have abundantly admitted the sources of their "inspiration," and are totally discredited.

Now it is that this Paul inflicts his cruel and accursed "original sin" on humanity. If he had been inspired of truth by God, he would have known that Adam, Eve, the Garden of Eden, the talking snake, the "curse," Moses, and his Genesis, all were myths and fables. But he had been whisked into the third heaven, wherever that is, and this may have been one of the things he heard "which it is not lawful for a man to utter" -- at least, for an honest and truthful man; the chief advance agent of "revelation" deemed it unlawful to reveal things which he saw in heaven with his own eyes, and instead peddled ancient and false "prophecies" of the old meshuggahs of Israel. When he comes back to earth (but not to his senses), he maunders through some pages of myth and wrath of God and blood, and delivers himself of the solemn, oracular, and gratuitous utterances on his novel propositions of "original sin" and the "plan of salvation."

THE "PLAN OF SALVATION"

The whole of theology, founded on these fables of dogma, is aptly summed up in those memorable opening words of Milton's immortal epic: "Of man's first disobedience and the fruit Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste Brought death into the world and all our woe, With loss of Eden, till one greater Man Restore us and regain that blissful seat,

Sing, heav'nly Muse." But truly inspired of poesy as was Milton, let us turn to yet higher inspiration for the more authoritative theory of original sin and for the inspired originals of the plan of salvation. The great dogmatist of the faith, Paul, thus states and restates his doctrine, of which he is the originator:

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor.15: 22)

This theorem he elaborates at great length and with much iteration in others of his letters, of which this is a fair example: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, ... even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. ... Through the offence of one many be dead. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (Romans 5: 12-15, 19)

And to cap his direful dogma, he emits this positive assurance:

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law." (Gal. 3: 13)

Human language is inadequate for comment on the fearful fatality of these fatuous sentences. The

fairest part of the earth has been under their blight for nearly twenty centuries; at this time and

place it suffices to demonstrate their awful enormity of falsehood. A childish fable of a talking snake and a muddled "curse," about as pregnant of the sense of "original sin" and eternal damnation as "chops and tomato sauce" are of breach of promise of marriage, are warped and twisted and tortured by the adroit Sergeant Buzfuz of Christianity into the priestly doctrine of eternal damnation in hell fire for all humanity! As there never was any

Adam, it cannot be true that "in Adam all die"; therefore its corollary that "even so in Christ shall all be made alive" cannot follow. As it consequently is not true that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin," the superstition of "original sin" is false, as it is likewise false that "so death passed upon all men," in the sense of the soul's "death by sin" of Adam inflicted upon all succeeding generations by a "curse."

From this fatuous torturing of an idle fable, purely personal and temporal in its every fanciful term, comes the monstrous cardinal tenet of the Christian Church, that a great and glorious God damned all the countless millions of yet unborn humanity to eternal hell fire because one man in a fable ate a fabled apple at the instigation of a fabled talking snake, and for punishment was told that he must work for his living thereafter, and that "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shall surely die" -- which he leisurely enough is said to have done just 930 years after the fatal incident.

Based on this inspired story and on the amazing deductions from it by the inspired Doctor of Dogma, Paul, is the inspired doctrine thus formulated by the original one true Church of Yahveh, and fondly adopted by every sect in Christendom, however otherwise dissentient, as the very cornerstone of the ecclesiastical plan of salvation:

"The souls of those who depart in mortal sin, or only in original sin, go down immediately to hell" (Second Council of Lyons; and Decree Unionis, Council of Florence; Cath. Encyc., Vol. 7:p. 208).

The climax of this deadly doctrine is found in the awesome aphorism of sundry of the Christian creeds that "Hell is full of infants a span long," roasting in the torments of everlasting hell fire because of the "original sin" of Father Adam, who never lived, in a Garden of Eden that never was.

"REDEMPTION FROM THE CURSE"

The culminating doctrine of the whole series, perfectly typical of untruth of it all, is Paul's astonishing assertion: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse" (Gal. 3: 13). Let us apply a moment's thought to this dogma of Paul and the priests.

According to the infamy imputed to Yahveh, he damned all future humanity into hell for the sin of the fabled first man. Awful, if true; all babes, however innocent; all men and women, however nobly good and virtuous in life -- all damned in hell irretrievably because of One; for "in Adam all men die" (1 Cor. 15: 22), "and so death passed upon all men" (Rom. 5: 12).

But after four thousand years Yahveh, who had done this, relenting, sent his "only begotten Son" to die and so save the world from this curse. Christ died that all might live; he redeemed us from the curse. This is just and righteous, however tardy, if true. As all were damned, whether they knew it or not, whether they believed it or not, whether they had sinned or not, surely, in righting the wrong, all should be saved quite as universally and effectively.

But no; the Christian plan of salvation does not work that way. Its terms and conditions are: "Believe, and ye shall be saved; believe not, and ye are damned already" (Mark 16: 16; John 3: 18). Damned nolens volens: undamned only volens and credulous. Be born and be damned; believe unbelievable things and be saved, remain damned: such is the "sacred science of Christianity."

Of course, if the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ is given full credit, its efficacy is, must be, universal. He was proclaimed from heaven: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1: 29); and Inspiration explicitly states: "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (I John 2: 2). Therefore, by every token of truth and reason, if the sacrifice of the cross really "redeemed us from the curse" as universally as Adam's reputed sin damned, then all are saved by that atoning act alone. But there would be then no use for priest and church and theology; and threats of hell fire would be as innocuous as water on the proverbial goose's back. So the zealous soul-savers, inventors and propagandists of hell fire, have "made the sacrifice of Christ of no avail," by limiting its effective redemption strictly to the microscopic minority of true believers alone, leaving the countless majority of mankind yet damned forever. Indeed, millions who cherish the heretic hope of salvation are doomed to infernal disappointment and eternal damnation for their unorthodox way of belief; for the venerable Athanasian Creed of the One True Church assures us: "Whoever will be saved, it is necessary above all things that he hold to the Catholic faith. Unless each one keep this whole and unbroken, he shall without doubt perish into eternal death. ... This is the Catholic faith: unless each believe it rightly and firmly, he cannot be saved" (Cath. Encyc., Vol. 2:p. 34).

THE CURSE NOT 100% REDEEMED

There are yet other curiosities of the plan of salvation -- of this "redemption" from the "curse" --even for the true believers. If by the sacrifice of the cross the "curse" is taken away, even if only for those who believe, then why not all the curse? Why is the wondrous work of redemption so incomplete? The snake still goes prone upon his belly, under the curse; the believing woman still brings forth her still damned child in birth pains, under the curse; the yet accursed ground yet brings forth thorns and thistles, under the curse, and yields its fruits, even to the true believer, only by dint of "the sweat of his face," under the curse; even the true believer yet eats his bread in the sweat of his face -- all exactly as pronounced in the "curse" from which his Christ "redeemed" him two thousand years ago. Surely "the wisdom of Yahveh is foolishness to men." And all this wisdom is the legitimate fruit of the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden. Such is the Sacred Science of Christianity.

The whole fabric of the Christian "faith" -- and not its admirable moral precepts, which are not new or peculiar to it at all, but its laboriously built up dogmatic theology, forged by Paul and his associate propagandists into a priestly system of beliefs and practices enforced by terrific threats of eternal damnation hereafter through

eternity -- and so long as was possible by torture and death here on earth -- is seen to be totally dependent, as it was falsely founded, upon the idle fables of Yahveh of the primitive, superstitious, heathen Hebrews, and falls into vacuous nothingness with the disproof of the fabled Eden and the Fall.

Thus we see that the whole of the Christian faith, the entire Christian plan of salvation, -- the sole and only apology for Christian theology -- hangs like a Dead Sea apple from the fabled serpent-entwined tree of knowledge in the mythical Garden of Eden. And, like the Dead Sea apple, the "sacred science of Christianity," with its labored "plan of salvation," turns to vain ashes at the touch of truth and is blown away with a breath of reason.

Paul admits: "Beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it" (Gal. 1: 13), and he admits that he found his profit in the bloody business (1: 14). When he saw the "great light" on Damascus way, and took up the new faith, he became a much more bigoted persecutor of all unbelievers in his labored, ludicrous dogmas. He screams: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha" (1 Cor.16: 22) -- a frightful churchly curse; "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that we have preached, let him be accursed"; and he pledges eternal hell fire to the skeptically inclined: "He that doubteth is damned" (Rom.14: 23) --"suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7). This is the nearest that ecclesiastical terrorism could get to inflicting torture and death upon disbelievers while the mighty Roman Empire stood guarding of human rights; the rack and the stake for unbelief came later, when the debased and christianized state had entered into a priest-imposed league of hell and covenant of death with the Holy Church, which Paul and his arch-adjutant Peter had created and established "Ad majorem Dei gloriam" and for their mutual profit and aggrandizement and that of the whole apostolic succession and even of dissenting Protestants ever since. Jesus Christ founded the Church with a play on words, a pun: "Thou art Peter [Greek, Petros, a stone], and upon this rock I will build my church" -- and the assurance is fondly added: "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt.16: 18). Hell and the church are thus cut from the same piece by the Grand Master of both superstitions. The hell myth has long since been exploded, and the church was badly shaken by the explosion. When the keystone of the arch, ecclesiastic theology, is knocked out, the whole structure of superstition will crash down to ruin, "and great will be the fall thereof", to the universal advantage of true spiritual uplook and the brotherhood of man on earth.

IS IT GOD'S WORD?

CHAPTER 18: REVELATIONS OF THE HEREAFTER

REVELATIONS OF THE HEREAFTER

WHAT HEAVEN IS AND WHERE

SO THIS IS HELL

CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE

A DAMNED PLACE IS HELL

PURGATORY -- AND PAY

REVELATIONS OF THE HEREAFTER

IN the twentieth century after the traditional advent of the Son of Yahveh on earth, the religion which is built around that event persists in a congeries of primitive cosmological notions, which modern knowledge has made totally obsolete. The Hebrew, and ancient primitive, notions of the architectural scheme of their very limited universe were intimately related to, and an integral part of, their scheme of theology and of eschatology, or after-life affairs as they conceived them. Their notions of God, of heaven, of hell, and of after-life, were adapted, and were adaptable only, to the narrow limits of the universe as imagined by the ancient theologians. And present-day Christian theology adopts wholly and wholly rests upon the ancient Hebrew revelation of earth and heaven and hell -- with fire later kindled in the last.

According to this ancient Hebrew revelation, the earth is flat and four-cornered; the sun moves around it as a center, and on occasion can be made to stand still in its course. No great distance above the flat surface of the earth is a solid arched "firmament," in which the sun, moon, and stars are somehow set and on which they move. Just within this firmament, which is a solid something which "divides the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament" (Gen. 1: 7), is heaven, where Yahveh and angels, seraphim, the "sons of the gods," and others of the "heavenly hosts" have their abode.

This heaven is so close to the earth that men could propose and attempt to build a tower which should reach into it and enable them to scale up to the gods; so close that a laddeesting on the earth actually reached into the heaven, and angels passed to and fro on it. Yahveh and his messengers can easily and quickly pass back and forth between earth and heaven; the "sons of the gods" can come to earth among the daughters of men. The voice of Yahveh can easily be heard when he cries from heaven, and from heaven he can hurl stones and thunder-bolts when he fights, like Jove, in the battles of his chosen warriors. The Spirit of Yahveh can flit dove-like from heaven to earth to accredit the Son of Yahveh to men. The living bodies of Enoch and Elijah can be "translated" into heaven, the latter in a chariot and horses of fire, before human eyes; the flesh-clothed shades of Elijah and Moses can swoop down upon the Mount of Transfiguration and back again like flashes of lightning, The human eye in ecstasy can see into heaven and behold Yahveh seated on his throne. Dives in hell can look up into heaven and see Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham and hold converse with him. Satan, King of Hell, was wont to pass readily to heaven to hold Yahveh in challenging argument and defiance and to plot evil to Job. Under the "new dispensation," the souls of the newly dead found instant lodgment in heaven or hell, according to the deeds done in the flesh.

WHAT HEAVEN IS AND WHERE

"In the beginning Elohim [gods] created the heaven and the earth," reads the ancient Hebrew revelation, and "made the firmament, and called the firmament Heaven" (Gen. 1: 7, 8).

About the same time, perhaps, Marduk, Babylonian sky-god and creator of heaven and earth, forged the immense dome of heaven out of the hardest metal, resting it upon a wall surrounding the earth. For the Egyptians, the heavens were an arched iron ceiling from which the stars were suspended by cables. To the ancient Greeks and Romans, the sky-father (Zeus-pater, Jupiter) had set up a great vault of crystal, to which the

fixed stars were attached, the sun and planets being suspended movably by brazen chains. Olympus's high head pierced the visible sky, and on its lofty summit awful Zeus held his court. The Romans called the vaulted ceiling or covering of the earth *coelum*.

How do the heathen rage and the peoples imagine vain things! Fatuous notions these, of childish heathen cosmogony, of pagan superstition. Only the Hebrews in their hoary Holy Writ had the true revelation of creation by their true God (s); they only, inspired by their Yahveh, truly knew what or where heaven is, for their Yahveh himself wrought it, as is revealed: "I am Yahveh that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself" (Isa. 44: 24). Heaven, Job says, "is strong, and as of molten brass" (Job 37: 18).

This was the heaven of the Hebrew: in his consonantal language SHM, "to be high"; in Anglo-Saxon *heofon*, "heaved, lifted up." "And Elohim called the firmament Heaven"; a solid something which was fixed "in the midst of the waters, to divide the waters from the waters" (Gen. 1: 6) --thus a sort of great vaulted bulkhead containing-wall for the vast celestial reservoir above, through which the upper waters poured in Noah's deluge when "the windows of heaven were opened" (Gen. 7: 11). The firmament (RQY) of Hebrew revelation is something "beaten or hammered out," something "made firm or solid -- hence firmamentum" in the Vulgate. How strangely alike the pagan fables and inspired revelation! The revealed Hebrew-Christian heaven so closely girded the four-cornered flat Bible earth that, as Amos says, living people might "climb up to heaven" (Amos 9: 2). And it is common knowledge that the departed soul "in the twinkling of an eye" flashes from earth to its home in heaven, so near is heaven to us, according to Paul.

But profane human knowledge points otherwise. By processes wonderful as they are precise, the primitive heaven of Hebrew revelation has been pushed back beyond the tiptop of Jacob's dreamed ladder and the storied snow-capped peaks of Olympus, and has been translated so far into fathomless sidereal space that the journeyman departed soul needs much more time to reach it.

Delicate instruments devised by the genius of man, and the divine powers of trigonometry, while not yet attaining the exact triangulation of heaven, have amazingly shown where heaven is not. The unwritten revelations of the real Creator God through astronomy have made manifest for our wonder and reverence the far-flung extent of his universe; the Sun at 93,000,000 miles from its tiny planet earth; Neptune, most distant of his planets, 2,793,000,000 miles farther into space; the nearest of the fixed stars, which "God set in the firmament," 20,000,000,000,000 miles from the base of Jacob's ladder on earth.

Not to pause at other stars which have yielded the secret of their distance to the eye of science, we plunge in thought upward and onward to "star clusters," so thick-studded and so far away that their separate bodies are mingled to the sight of the most powerful sidereal telescope so as to be in appearance almost as identical and inseparable as are in dogma the ineffable Persons in the mystery of the Three-in-One Godhead, Yahveh, Logos, and Paraclete Bel, On, and Hea; Osiris, Isis, and Horus; or Brahma, Siva, and Vishnu -- one has a liberal choice of trinities. And there is revealed, on the very frontiers of the fathomed universe a truly divine revelation -- the star cluster, known only by its number, N.G.C. 6822, which lies in profound depths of space so far distant that the blaze of light from it reaches this mundane sphere only after a flight through space of 1,000,000 years! (Int. Encyc. Year Book, 1924, p. 66). Those true prophets of the God Creator, astronomers, measure sidereal distances not by miles or leagues but by "light years," or units of the distance in miles that light travels through space in a year of time; and 1,000,000 such light years measure the stupendous distance from earth to somewhere this side of heaven where star group N.G.C. 6822 answered the divine fiat: "Let there be light," and burst into glorious being.

But we have not yet defined this stretch of space heavenward; we will at least resolve it into its arithmetical elements. Light flashes through space at the dizzy speed of about 186,280 miles in one second of time. In one year there are 31,557,600 seconds. Thus one light year is equal to 5,879,180,880,000, or approximately six trillions, of miles of travel per year. This number of miles multiplied by the 1,000,000 years the light of this star group requires to reach our eyes gives us a number that no man can apprehend and only the mind of God can comprehend --5,879,180,880,000,000,000 miles! And heaven -- since we can see with uninterrupted, though telescopic, sight up to that star cluster -- is somewhere beyond, with its myriads of mansions, its jasper walls, its golden streets and pearly gates, its wondrous River of Life which flows by the throne of Yahveh; otherwise it would intercept and shut off the blaze of light from the star group

N.G.C. 6822.

Nowhere by inspiration is the speed of a soul in flight revealed to man, or the time it takes to flit "from earth to heaven's immortal day." A near-revelation is near-made in one well-known scripture passage, when about the sixth hour of a memorable day One Crucified is reported as saying to one of his companions in passion: "Verily, this day shalt thou be with me in paradise." It was not until the ninth hour that that immortal Spirit gave up the ghost, leaving only three hours of the day remaining for the journey to paradise; so that this remark may be interpreted as a suggestion of very rapid ascent to the kingdom of heaven. But the data are too meagre to allow of exact computations, such as we are able to make in the calculations just submitted.

Inspiration and science have here yet another point of friendly contact, in their processes. "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God" (John 4: 1) is the thumb-rule of revelation. Science, applying this same principle to test its own revelations, tries out every possible hypothesis before it puts the seal of infallibility upon its really heavenly dogmas. So until it is revealed or otherwise satisfactorily shown that a departed soul has, as it were, a muzzle velocity on leaving the body and a constantly maintained flight through space far excelling the speed of light and quite equal to that of thought, our conclusions from irrefragable figures that three hours are too narrow a margin of time for a soul to span the gap from earth to heaven stand on at least as firm a foundation of truth as that of the revelation of the efficacy of priestly prayers -- at so much per -- for the relief and ultimate release of the souls in purgatory.

Scientific methods of research for truth, as well as certain precepts of inspired dogma, compel us to examine the hypotheses of purgatory and hell, against the possibility that perchance, after all, the soul of the repentant thief did not, in sad reality, bend its flight heavenward, but, in virtue of sin, original or acquired or both, was barred from that kingdom of glory, and must seek its temporary or eternal habitat in one or another of the spirit realms conveniently provided for unshriven souls by inspired revelation or equally inspired tradition. Such an inquiry is demanded by scientific candor; as the problem of the destiny of the soul, when disembodied, is both quite germane to our theme and not without a curious interest of its own, the subject justifies a brief excursus on the hypotheses of these two other Christian provinces, or providence, or properties.

SO THIS IS HELL

Hell, as it comes first in time of discovery, revelation, or invention, claims first our fearful attention. In the genial doctrine of the gospel of love, hell is the goal of the soul which dares even to doubt, which is the unpardonable sin. Here we are not vexed with scientific or mathematical speculations of time of transit. Dogma, which so admirably complements the shortcomings of revelation, has set its fatal sanction on the assured fact of instantaneous translation, and sundry other congenial incidents.

Thanks to the inspired infallible decree "Unionis" (Council of Florence; Cath. Encyc., Vol. 7: p. 208), we now know just when and where we arrive and what to expect upon arrival: "The souls of those who depart in mortal sin, or only in original sin, go down immediately into hell." And patching out this precious piece of the sacred deposit with a scrap from the creed, we learn that it is "into everlasting fire" that we go; and once landed safely in it, "the torments of the damned shall last forever and ever," as Holy Writ of the dispensation of God's love and mercy so often reassures us for our warning.

The "sacred science of Christianity," like profane knowledge, is a progressive science, and hell has evolved with the process of the suns and of revelations. In the Babylonian "Lay of Ishtah" -- from which Hebrew revelation would seem to have cribbed this and other matters of revelation -- the underworld to which the shade of the departed, sinner and saint alike, sank after death, is described in appropriately gloomy colors. It is variously and poetically called "the pit," the "house of darkness," the "land of no return" -- metaphors strangely reminiscent of "Pluto's gloomy realm" of Homer, of the "go down to the pit," of the Psalmist, of Isaiah, and of Job; of the "bottomless pit" of the Apocalypse; of the "outer darkness" and "pits of darkness" of the evangelists; of the "land of forgetfulness" of the sweet singer of Israel (Psalm 88: 12); of "death, and the house appointed for all living" of the man of boils and patience (Job 30: 23) -- of the "borne from whence no traveller returns" of another of high inspiration.

Wherever in the old Hebrew revelation the place of dim life after death is named, its name is Sheol (the cave, dug-out); it is equivalent to and often rendered as "the grave" in English versions: "O that thou wouldst hide

me in the grave [Sheol]," cries Job (14: 13), "until thy wrath be past"; Korah and his band "went down alive into the pit [Sheol], and the earth closed upon them" (Num. 16: 33); "Thou hast brought up my soul from Sheol," sings the Psalmist (Psalm 30: 3). It is identical in every sense with the "Hades" of pagan and Christian Greek: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol," sings again in Hebrew the Psalmist (Psalm 16: 10) -- quoted: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades" (Acts 2: 27). Good and bad alike found there theiest after life's fitful fever; it was truly "the house appointed for all living" (Job 30: 23). The soul of the Psalmist we have just seen there, though his hope is that it will not remain always. "Out of the belly of Sheol cried I," wails the godly Jonah (2: 2). In grief for Joseph reported dead, the patriarch Jacob rent his garments and cried: "I will go down into Sheol unto my son mourning" (Gen. 37: 35). There in the same Sheol was the shade of the holy Samuel, conjured up to earth at King Saul's behest by the uncanny witch of Endor (1 Sam. 28).

Moreover, the place and locality of the Hebrew Sheol is fixed with a precision unusual to revelation: "I shall ... set thee in the low parts of the earth, in places desolate of old, with them that go down to the pit [Sheol] (Ezek. 26: 20). Nor is it so far down that reasonable efforts of excavation may not lay it bare: "Though they dig into Sheol" (Amos 9: 2); indeed there are things and places which are "deeper than Sheol" (Job 11: 8). And in all this not one fleck of hell fire; not one whiff of brimstone; not even the sound of "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Luke 13: 28)! In the Old Testament, therefore, Sheol is simply "the place desolate of old," bereft morely of the "glory set in the land of the living" (Ezek. 26: 20). The books of the law and the prophets, major and minor, are silent as the grave on the whole Christly-apostolic-churchly doctrine of the future reward of good and punishment of evil. Their hell is on earth, in life; the nearest approximation in Hebrew revelation to the notion of heavenly reward is death and the ensuing "sinking down into Sheol," away from the awful wrath of their jealous Yahveh.

Had the repentant thief then, by luck or in providence, lived and passed from life under the postmortem regime of the old dispensation, his spirit would have found its lasting abode in a cheerless, maybe, but not fiery habitat, where it would have enjoyed the companionship of the shades of Adam and Eve and Noah, of the patriarchs (but not of the prophets, as we shall see, except Samuel), of Kings David and Solomon, of the Queen of Sheba, and Jezebel, and the harlot of Jericho, and other worthies, good, bad, and indifferent, of Israel; of Homer, Ulysses, Socrates, Xantippe, Sappho, of unnumbered other great and good spirits of olden times. That the worthies of Israel were there their own inspired revelation indicates; a new revelation, not indeed of the Scriptures but of equal inspiration, vouchsafes to us the real reason for their seclusion in that house of darkness, or limbo; "in which the souls of the just who died before Christ awaited their admission to heaven; for in the meantime heaven was closed against them in punishment for the sin of Adam" (Cath. Encyc., Vol. 7: p. 207). This proves that there was no fire in hell prior to the new dispensation, and that purgatory was not yet discovered; for it would not have been fair to broil the just along with the unjust for four thousand years, while they waited for transfer to heaven. It also proves that Mohammed spoke the truth when he said: "God is just," as the event also proves.

If the ghost of ouepentant thief had been immured in Sheol- Hades, it would undoubtedly have been an interested spectator, if not a beneficiary, of the remarkable act of justice, however tardy, rendered to these poor imprisoned spirits by the unparalleled deliverance from hell which inspiration, at first rather hazily, afterwards with the most soul-satisfying assurance, relates. To St. Paul we are indebted for the first glimmer of inspired light on this affair, in the lucid passage where he is said to say, in substance and effect, that in the three days -- or one and a half --between the Crucifixion and the resurrection, the redeemer of mankind occupied his time in a trip to hell (Eph. 4: 10). This valuable information is illumined further by St. Peter, who relates that while there, the Master "preached unto the spirits in prison" (I Peter 3: 19). Between the two, supplemented and made intelligible by more positive revelation out of the inexhaustible sacred deposit, we have the assurance that as the result of this infernal excursion "Christ conducted to heaven the patriarchs who had been in limbo."

CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE

The inspired history of all this is deserving our profound ponderation; the logic which demonstrates it is as unique as it is faith-compelling. The great logician of the faith, St. Paul, speaking to the Ephesians, springs upon them without warning this inspired syllogism:

"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended.)" (Eph. 4: 7-10)

This is almost as convincing of his conclusion as the ditty-axiom:

"Whatever goes up is bound to come down, On somebody's head or on the ground."

And this sententious surpluse mixed in with the statement about "leading captivity captive," by every postulate of reason, as of faith, means that the spirits of the patriarchs and worthies which were in the captivity" of Sheol four thousand years were now led "Captive" into heaven! The wonders of inspired logic, as of grace, are beyond comprehension.

To the Ephesians, who were only new-hatched pagan-Christians, unread in the Hebrew Scriptures, the foregoing probably sounded familiarly like an Orphic oracle, and therefore worthy of all acceptance. But in the memory of one betteead in the Hebrew Scriptures "captivity captive" jingles like a half-forgotten quotation, like an ill-remembered "old odd end stolen out of Holy Writ." Pricked by curiosity, let us then "search the Scriptures" for this alluring alliteration. Oueward is as great as our surprise; there is naught of "ascending on high" nor of saying anything on the ascent; but we capture the captivity, in the jubilation song of Deborah and Barak over Sisera, him against whom the "stars fought in their courses":

"Awake, awake, Deborah: Awake, awake, utter a song: Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive!" (Judges 5: 12)

The incident of the sermon to the spirits is revealed by equally cogent and inspired St. Peter (1 Peter 3: 17-20): "It is better ... that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. For Christ also hath once suffered. ... being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."

After this preachment, addressed clearly only to the disobedient pre-Noachians, the whole of "captivity captive" was led, like the rats by the Pied Piper, out of hell into heaven; for this truth, if not entirely deducible from the two inspired passages quoted, is vouched for by the inspired source above cited: "Christ conducted to heaven the patriarchs who had been in limbo." But how this trip to Hades during the day and a half between crucifixion and resurrection was possible does not appear, in view of the assurance of the Crucified One to the repentant thief: "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise," which shows that they "ascended" together, and did not "descend" into hell at all.

Just here we seem to strike a snag in inspiration. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob certainly were patriarchs of the patriarchs; but unfortunately they were not in Sheol to share in this patriarchal deliverance, which happened just after the Crucifixion. For some time before this event Christ himself speaks positively of "Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 8: 11). Beggar Lazarus "died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16: 23). Dives in hell, "lift up his eyes, ... and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom"; and Dives cried to Father Abraham to please send Lazarus with a drop of water, "for I am tormented in this flame" (Luke 16: 24) -- which proves that the fire had been kindled in Hades, which was now the Christian hell. Abraham called back that there was a great gulf fixed between heaven and hell, "so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence" (16: 26); though evidently it was no trick for people in either place to see well into the other and talk, as if by wireless telephony, across the gulf of space. There was no thoroughfare however nor corporeal passing back and forth; which causes wonder how Christ managed to "conduct to heaven the patriarchs [except Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob] who were in limbo" -- though Satan fell from heaven into hell, and often used to go back to heaven to talk with Yahveh regarding Job.

Nor were these the only absentees from the roster of patriarchs in limbo. The godly Enoch was not there, for he had been "translated" from the original Hebrew into heaven alive; nor was Elijah in hell, for he had been whirled alive in the fiery chariot right into heaven; nor was Moses, for he and Elijah appeared there to Peter and his companions on the Mount of Transfiguration. They must have come down from heaven together, not one down from heaven and the other up from hell. Moreover, "all the prophets" were on the absence-list of hell, for they were "with Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob. ... in the kingdom of god" (Luke 13: 28).

A DAMNED PLACE IS HELL

All these wonders and this good and godly company of repentant thief must have missed. His departure from life was under the new dispensation of love and mercy, after the fires of brimstone had been kindled by Christ himself in Sheol, and, in providence, it had become the Christian hell. If, according to the hypothesis which we are examining, having missed heaven, the repentant thief's soul was doomed to the Christian hell, what a hell of a doom awaited it! We know so much about it already from the hell-reeking pages of the gospels of love, and from the blood-curdling Inferno of the "man who has been in hell" on a personally conducted tour with a good old pagan guide, there resident, and also by the glimpse of Dives "in anguish in this flame" -- that we turn away with a shudder of soul from the spectacle, and will not look for even a thief in such a damned place or "place of the damned," if that sounds less profane, as it is more scriptural and theological. And surely the gentle reader would not endure the apocalyptic vision revealing the genial repentant soul among poor sinners (either of original or of mortal sin), who are there "tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb," who all look on complacent while "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night" from the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God (Rev. 14: 10, 11). This is the inspired revelation of the God of all love.

What a horrid caricature of the Christian Yahveh's mercy is that of the abominable Koran of the infidel, with its crude brutal bullying fate of the unbeliever: "Verily, those who disbelieve our signs, we will surely cast to be broiled in hell fire; so often as their skins shall be well burned, we will give them other skins in exchange, that they may taste the sharper torment; for Allah is mighty and wise" (Sutra iv)! Oh, the holy mercies of the Christian faith, wherein no such fiendish skin-grafting is practiced for our greater torment! Turning away in holy horror and godly fear from such a hell, we would fervently utter in spirit the prayer: "God have mercy on the souls in hell"; but are checked by the remembrance that this our prayer would not do them any good, for it is revealed that "the wrath of God abideth on the damned" -- and "the torments of the damned shall last for ever and ever." without even any such graft of new skin as the brutish Mohammedan god provides. Besides, equally inspired revelation warns us that the souls of the Christian damned in the Christian hell, "are never released, notwithstanding the mass for dead souls" (probably meaning souls of the dead) -- no, "the soul that sinneth it shall surely die." Why then torment dead souls? This brings us up with a sudden jerk in purgatory, whither we have been steering our course for some pages back. Let us look around for our crucified thief here.

PURGATORY -- AND PAY

Purgatory is surely the strangest Place this side of hell. Curiously in the Bible there is no jot nor tittle of remotest hint of it from "In the beginning" of Genesis to the final "Amen" of the Apocalypse, search for it who will; and positive proof of its non-existence is in the two passages from Peter and Paul that we have just reviewed and in the revelation quoted, that "the souls of the just who died before Christ awaited in hell their admission to heaven," there being evidently no purgatory open for occupation at that time. This omission of purgatory from the earlier Christian "properties" is the more curious because we have admirable and elaborately defined purgatories in a number of contemporary heathen systems of the hereafter; as, for example, in the twelve cycles of purgation of Zoroaster, the seven of the very near-Christian Mithraism, and the refined "empyrosis" of the Stoics; from which ancient but diabolic religions, and from several others, the Hebrew-Christian sacred science had apparently borrowed so many revelations that the holy Fathers, to explain away the identities of the pagan and Christian rituals, said that "the Devil had blasphemously imitated the Christian rites and doctrines." This would be very persuasive, if not conclusive, but for the fact that all of these plagiarized pagan systems antedated Christianity by many centuries.

It is curious, too, that not for several centuries after the close of the canon was this serious omission ever officially noticed by the inspired guardians of the sacred deposit. When it was, they held a hasty council session at Lyons in the year 1274 -- confirmed (on the well-known principle that by frequently repeating a thing one often comes himself to believe it) at Florence in 1439, and in the famous Council of Trent, in the 1540's -- and resolved:

"Whereas the Catholic Church, instructed by the Holy Ghost, has from the Sacred Scriptures [chapter and verse not cited] and the ancient tradition of the Fathers taught in councils [unspecified] and very recently in this

ecumenical synod, that there is a purgatory, and that the souls therein detained are helped by the suffrages [i.e., paid prayers] of the faithful, but principally by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar; the holy synod enjoins on the bishops that they diligently endeavor to have the sound doctrine of the Fathers in councils regarding purgatory everywhere taught and preached, held and believed by the faithful" -- (Cath Encyc., Vol. 12:p. 575). This proves that the faithful did not very much believe it, so that Tetzl & Co.'s famous bargain sales of indulgences from purgatorial pains were not so remunerative as in greater faith they really should have been. In honor of truth, however, it must be admitted that much earlier efforts to "graft" purgatory on the true faith had often been made, though not with such plenary instruction of the Holy Ghost as could be invoked by the holy councils referred to. For instance, the Holy Father Pope Gregory the Great, about A.D. 604, was the first to formulate the hitherto vacuous doctrine into good Latin and to "call a spade a spade," as it were, by naming the place purgatory, though its latitude and longitude in ecclesiastical cosmogony have never been satisfactorily defined.

Here we may pause in honor of the memory and spiritual illumination of this great man, Pope Gregory, to note an amusing incident for which he vouches with the same infallible inspiration as that which attests his discovery and definition of purgatory. When elected pope in A.D. 590, Rome was threatened by a dreadful pestilence sent by the Hebrew God Yahveh, who had supplanted Jupiter in the Roman theogony. The pious new Pontifex Maximus (another heathen institution appropriated by the Christians) at once determined to propitiate (a euphemism for "bribe") the angry God, who was flinging fiery darts into the devoted city. Yahveh's inspired vicar-general Gregory headed a monkish parade through the unclean streets (maybe an indirect adjunct of the pestilence). Suddenly he saw (he tells it himself, just as he told about the nun swallowing the devil on a lettuce leaf) the Arch-angel Michael hovering over the great pagan mausoleum of Hadrian, just in the act of sheathing his flaming sword, while three angels with him chanted the Regina Caeli, a monkish hymn to the "Queen of heaven." The great pope made the sign of the cross and broke into hallelujahs (Heb., "Praise Yahveh"), whereupon the plague promptly ceased. In commemoration of this notable event, the pope built a Christian chapel dedicated to St. Michael on the top of the pagan monument, and over it erected the colossal statue of the destroying archangel in the act of sheathing his bloody sword; thus the pagan mausoleum became the Christian Castle Saint' Angelo, which stands to this day in proof of the infallibility of papal narratives, and thus corroborative of Pope Gregory's dogma of purgatory.

The holy Council of Trent, for the better ensuring that its doctrine of purgatory, and the superior efficacy of paid prayers, should be believed by the faithful, who might be curious to know just where their money went in this direction, and what good it did, solemnly warned and commanded the bishops "to exclude from their preaching difficult and subtle questions which tend not to edification, and from the discussion of which there is no increase either of piety or devotion" --though there might thereby be a decrease of churchly revenues. Some of these unedifying questions might, to some of the inquisitive faithful, be, for instance -- but why should there be any "difficult and subtle questions" about so interesting and important a revelation of faith, especially when the Holy Ghost was present in person in at least three councils, and could be called into any other at a moment's notice, to "instruct" them on these very points? Besides, it is idle to ask questions as to what good paid prayers do for the souls of the dead when the answer to such questions is always the silencing retort of "the angelic doctor" St. Thomas: "Unless they [i.e., the souls of the dead] know that they are to be delivered, they would not ask for the prayers" (Cath. Encyc., Vol. 12:p. 578) -- which clinches it; though the source or means of the dead souls' knowledge is not revealed, nor are their messages of request, in spirit handwriting, ever exhibited for confirmation of faith in them, to the interested or curious public, in proof of their pious petitions.

But the real question for a faith up a tree, as it were, is how there can be any purgatory, in which slightly soiled and faded souls may be burnt free from earthly dross and renovated for heaven --even if the Holy Ghost did very tardily instruct the holy councils that there is such a place -- when the same Holy Ghost had in effect assured councils, including these same councils of Lyons and Florence, that there was no such place, for "the souls of those who depart in mortal sin, or only in original sin [which defiles even the souls of just-born babes and of ecclesiastical persons], go down immediately into hell, to be visited, however, with unequal punishments" (Cath. Encyc., Vol. 7: p. 207)? From the latter place, as Abraham told Dives, there was no return. Such a clash of inspirations -- oather slip in promulgating the last before repealing, or concealing, the former --illustrates the convenience of keeping a well regulated card-index system as an adjunct to the

depository of faith, to assist in keeping a ready check on revelations, and thus avoiding possible future embarrassments of faith, due to their conflicts.

Here we must confess an error in our quest, induced by friendly zeal for the comfort of our ex-thief's soul, in suggesting the possibility of finding it in this purgatory of the orthodox (i.e., "rightbelieving") faith. For in life he was either a Jew or a pagan, hence a heretic, who could have no part in the orthodox Christian pangs of purgatory; and he would no doubt have added to his heresy by sharing with Luther, the great faith-splitter, the doctrine of the twenty-seventh of his ninety-five theses nailed up on the Wittenberg church door: "They preach man who say that the soul flies out of purgatory as soon as the money thrown into the chest rattles"; or, in poetic version:

"As soon as the gold in the casket rings, the rescued soul to heaven springs"!

The phrase "as soon as" is unorthodox; for the orthodox rule of payment is that the suffering soul "is not released until the last farthing be paid" -- which suggests an instalment plan of payments. This is just and as it should be. For if the well-to-do heirs of a just-dead Christian sinner were to make an immediate lump-sum payment for prompt prayers, the soul might escape from purgatory into heaven before the penitential flames had done their work of preparatory purification, the great idea being, according to Father Origen, that "the purgatorial fire burns away the lighter materials of faults, and prepares the soul for the kingdom of God, where nothing defiled may enter"; and all the celibate Fathers agree.

The instalment plan of payments is distinctly recognized and enjoined by the Father Tertullian, who advises a widow "to pray for the soul of her husband, begging repose for him, and participation in the first resurrection"; he commands her also to make oblations (a euphemism for priestly "tips") for him on the anniversary of his demise, and charges her with infidelity (whether spiritual or corporal is not explicit) if she neglect to succor his soul (Cath. Encyc., Vol. 12:p. 577). Evidently this good Father, and the great Father St. Augustine, pinned no faith on the efficacy of such paid prayers to hurry the escape of the soul from the fires of purgatory; for the former suggests such escape only at the "first resurrection," and the latter postpones it till the last (whenever either of these should be) -- declaring that "the punishment of purgatory is temporary and will cease at least at the last judgment" (De Cir. Dei, lib. 21: cap. 13: 16). That is a long time to wait, writhing in terrible torment; for we are assured by the holy Pope Gregory the Great, taking the cue from St. Augustine if not from the Holy Ghost, that "the pain of those who after this life expiate their faults by purgatorial flames will be more intolerable than any one can suffer in this life." It must certainly be considerable, judging by the excruciating tortures which Holy Church, by rack and wheel, by flaying alive, by slow burning at the stake, and other like pious practices, inflicted upon the sensitive bodies of thousands who dared to disbelieve her inspired dogmas, and despise the source, and defy her prostituted powers.

Here we may digress a moment to do tribute to that ancient and cherished precept of Mosaic law, generously observed through the ages, and become the chief stone of the corner of the Church universal: "They shall not appear before Yahveh empty" (Deut. 16: 16) -- "when they give an offering unto Yahveh, to make an atonement for your souls" (Ex. 30: 15) -- but shall pay, rich and poor alike, to "buy atonement"; and this pious work is to the churchman, like faith to Father Abraham, accounted foighteousness. Curiously, while the new dispensation quite overthrew and repealed the whole code of laws and ceremonies of the old, this one thrifty exception escaped, and the Holy Church of the dispensation of free grace, with a wisdom of this world worldly, preserved it and diligently taught that in the article of tithes the Mosaic law is still "of divine obligation and cannot be abrogated" (Cath. Encyc., Vol. 16:pp. 741, 742). Further yet it went, inciting the faithful to outdo even the quota of the tenth commandeered by the ancient law, by yet more liberal donatives exhorted by the Master, who commanded to "give all that ye have" (Mark 10: 21) in order to be his true disciples.

This inspired retention by divine command of the "pay" precept of the law is expounded with his usual naive and cogent logic by the dogmatic second founder of the faith: "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." (i Cor. 9: 13, 14)

Among the devotional gems of the sacred litany of Holy Church a foremost place is held by the doggerel Latin chant celebrating this mystic union of the law and the gospel:

"Cum summa cura est fratribus,

(Ut sermo testatur loquax)
Offere, fundis venditis
Sestertiorum millia.
Addicta avorum praedia
Foedis sub auctionibus,
Successor exheres gemit,
Sanctis egens parentibus.
Haec occultantur abditis
Ecelesiarum in angulis,
Et summa pietas creditur
Nudare dulces liberos!"

(Prudentius, Hymn II) This is the poetry of the scriptural injunction to "sell and give all," with the added prosaic truth that the denuded children and disinherited heirs of the giver groan as naked beggars so that their prodigal parents may have the odor of pious saints. O temporal O mores! Thus a goodly portion of their heirs' expectations our churchmen often obediently spend in this pious form of mundane vanity, leaving their families fewer worldly goods, but buying their soul's atonement in truly churchly fashion, and earning incidentally the plaudits of the clergy, who hold up before their flocks for emulation this godly example -- of giving.

How striking and faith-compelling is the system of types and symbols of the oriental scriptures, wherein everything typifies or symbolizes something else -- which the inspired scrivener nine times in ten never really thought or heard of in his life, but which all perplexed delvers into the "hidden things of scripture" assure us is implied in the plain and ordinary Hebrew or Greek words. But for once in scripture, type and typified are here readily identified, even to unimaginative occidental minds. In the new dispensation the groups of true believers are figured forth as "flocks"; the older, dyed-in-the-wool bell-wethers of the flocks are dubbed "sheep"; the tender ones wholly innocent of sense are affectionately termed "lambs"; and all are herded and driven by venerable "pastors" (postors, or in some late readings im-postors) called "shepherds," always allegorically pictured as going about armed with "crooks," to hook the stragglers into the "fold," and to keep them there when once hooked in. The imagery of the oriental mind is singularly appealing at times and persuasive of a sure- enough inspiration of ironic truth under its symbols!

Even in a prosaic standard lexicon of the twentieth century we may discover the persistence of this bit of oriental imagery in the accepted definition of "sheep," in the figurative sense: "The flock of the Good Shepherd; simple-minded and silly persons"; while to be "sheepish" is to "resemble a sheep in silliness or dullness!" The sheep is to this day the symbol of the vacuous herd, all blindly following some equally stupid old bellwether which heads the flock this way or that as his inner lights lead, or the crook of the shepherd pulls. The diminution of patrimonial expectations occasioned by such contributions to the "Lord's treasury was once, we blush to say, measurably retrieved by the excellent income which the good and generous givers derived from the rental of some of their best corner buildings down town for saloons, and in some exceptional instances of houses owned by them in the "restricted districts" for uses which are as well understood as need be without being specified. True, the fine sense of churchmanly propriety and of Christian rightmindedness often does not allow our good churchmen to make these leases directly to the degraded occupants. They piously salve their consciences by giving their agents carte blanche and asking them no inconvenient questions. We all know that "Yahveh loveth a cheerful giver"; and Yahveh commands his people: "Thou shalt remember Yahveh thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deut. 8: 18), which we must acknowledge is a potent appeal. This scrupulous delicacy on the part of some good churchmen, which does them honor, and which is a refinement upon the scriptural injunction not to let the right hand know what is left-handedly done (a sanctimonious injunction much invoked by the godly of these cultured times), is one of the most eloquent testimonies to the cultural influence of our professed religion in refining the grosser practices of earlier forms of worship. Everyone who is not blinded by prejudice against the Christian faith and is not a chronic scoffer at its cherished practices must recognize the (relative) purity of thus replenishing by discreet indirectness the Lord's treasury from the toll of sin, as compared with the unblushing system of temple harlotry of ancient pagan-Hebrew worship, and with the quasi-gross but lucrative scheme of relatively recent times when brothels

of pious prostitution were recognized adjuncts of holy nunneries, and the virgins of Christ hallowed as pious alms the wages of sin earned for them by their sisters, whose virginity was a welcome sacrifice on the altar, not of Cupid, but of churchly cupidity. So all praise to those worthy churchmen who, in returning a pittance of their gifts from Yahveh, reject such unrefined practices, and find ready means to obey the divine command to "Give to the Lord," without openly offending the more refined feelings of modern churchianity, though the productive source is the same.

To return from this sympathetic digression on the theme of pious paying enjoined by Holy Writ to the post-mortem purgatorial payment plan of Holy Church. A revelation which would make possible some commutation of penitential torment and final escape therefrom some time this side of the first resurrection or final judgment, even at considerable cost to the harrowed and terrified survivors,

would be regarded as a good thing for the tormented soul, its family, and friends, and incidentally net a handsome revenue. However it may have been, the Holy Ghost is said to have instructed the holy Council of Trent as to the instalment-pay-plan, revealing that "indulgences [at so much per] are most salutary for Christian people, and may be applied to the souls in purgatory" (Cath. Encyc., Vol. 12:p. 578).

It betrays a darkened understanding, or a malevolent wit, of course, to imagine that this pay-asyou-enter plan of priestly prayers for the souls in purgatory smacks even remotely of buying Yahveh's grace or of bribing Holy Church. The distinction, if not difference, is acutely indicated by an approved theological apologist, thus: "The celebration of the mass for money would be sinful; but it is perfectly legitimate to accept a stipend offered on such occasion for the support of the celebrant. The amount of the stipend varying for different times and countries, is usually fixed [in advance, you see] by ecclesiastical authority" (Cath. Encyc., Vol. 14:p. 1). It is thus the stipend which must be paid, and not the prayers; though the corollary -- "No stipend, no prayers" -- deprives the soul of the prayers and of any benefit they might do it. But the scheme testifies to the refining influence of the Holy Ghost working upon greedy humanity. Simon the Magician, the earliest Christian exponent of the offence stigmatized with his name, simony, grossly offered money outright for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and was justly rebuked by St. Peter, "because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money" (Acts 8: 20). The successors of St. Peter, being more practical, piously shun such gross venality and take the money, but do not sell the gift. With the utmost delicacy of discriminating propriety, they simply withhold the free gift until the stipulated stipend is paid. This, when paid, on the analogy of the coin in the slot, loosens the mechanism of the mass, and the prayers begin to ascend for the writhing tenants of purgatory. Only in this roundabout, de-Simonized, and legitimized left-handed sense should the reasonable mind understand the otherwise ribald gibe of Father Luther that only "when the money thrown into the chest rattles," does the tortured soul begin to shake loose its singed wings for flight from the flames, being thereunto "aided by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar," prepaid according to the schedule of stipends prescribed by Holy Church. *Honi soit qui mal y pense* after so adroit an explanation.

This near-hell-fiery habitat of the near-blessed being exclusively a resort of the orthodox Christian, we are precluded -- not by doubt (which is damnable), but by dogma (which is infallible) -- from the possibility of encountering ouepentant thief's soul there. And our compassion is already seen in revolt against the doctrine of hell fire, common alike to orthodoxy and to heterodoxy (signifying my "doxy," or "right-think," and your "doxy," or "wrong-think," according as one is the speaker or the spoken to or of). Being evidently in neither of these places, and not yet arrived at heaven, the soul of our crucified thief, we have thus an added reason in concluding, is still wending its way heavenward through the fathomless reaches of sidereal space, and may yet confidently be expected to present itself and its credentials to the celestial concierge, St. Peter.

If someone should be disposed to question this, on the faith- founded theory above indicated that no soul clogged with the material dross of earthy fault may be suffered to enter in at the golden gates, but that the fault must first be purged away by the purgatorial fires, we oppose a very reasonable, and equally effective, counter-theory, suggested by more modern science: that the upper interstellaegions are infested with inconceivably intense cold, a degree of cold even greater maybe than the fires of purgatory are hot; that heat and cold, in intense degree, have often a similar effect, particularly in point of drying up substances, rendering them brittle; therefore, that the earthly dross of venial faults yet clinging to the departed soul, being subjected for the 1,000,000 light years of its trajectory heavenward to such extreme cold, may thus be either frozen quite off, or at least rendered so crumbly that the simple violent swish of the air caused by the rapidity of flight would flip it

off en route, or at any rate enable it to be very easily scraped off just outside the pearly gates of heaven upon arrival, and the soul thus present itself as freed from such dross as if it had done its penance amid the flames of purgatory.

Thus the same result is attained, and by a process quite as uncomfortable -- which is a very great desideratum in theology; and an enormous amount of time would be saved, as the soul could begin its purging flight heavenward immediately on its corporeal release, instead of first doing infinite time until the "first resurrection" or the "last judgment" in purgatory before beginning its million- light-year flight heavenward. Moreover, sidereal spatial cold is a scientific fact, while purgatorial fire is only a theological "speculation," though a highly successful one as the source of a fine church revenue. As it doesn't cost anybody anything to accept our new "cold storage" revelation, and as we vouch for its being as good as any on the market, we trust that it may have ready credence, and in time even supplant some of the ancient and more costly nostrums of credulity.

In the long meanwhile, let us bid good-speed to the fleeting soul on its heavenward flight, with the classic ex voto: "Let it R.I.P.!"

IS IT GOD'S WORD?

CHAPTER 19: CESSET SUPERSTITION AND THEN? SEGMENT:

CESSET SUPERSTITIO! AND THEN?

CESSET SUPERSTITION AND THEN? SEGMENT:

"But if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matt. 5: 13). -- "It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Luke 14: 35).

PAUL'S naive confession that he told lies that the truth of God might the more abound (Rom. 3: 7) we have found to be about the only true thing he is recorded as saying. A like paucity of truth is found in all his confreres, as our examination has shown. We have found, no doubt with amazement, that lies are "the mostest things there isn't nothing else but" in all Bible and Theology, to the pretended glory of God -- and to the great profit of priestcraft. Paul also spoke true when he admitted that he "profited in the Jew's religion above many" (Gal. 3: 14) -- showing that it was for many a profitable occupation; he lost no pelf when he apostatized to become the propagandist in chief of the new faith. But "strong delusion that men should believe lies" of religious superstition propagated by him and his confreres was not, as he avers, sent by God; it is just another of Paul's own admitted mendacities, the conscious -- and unconscionable -- work of professional priestcraft. That otherwise intelligent thinking people should be yet under this strong delusion to believe priestly lies is because they do not know their Bible and derived theology; they take their fore-shortened beliefs about it "on faith" from the parsons and from such choice fervent texts as they hear expounded or casually read. That the vast majority of Christians are rank know-nothings of Bible and theology is evidenced by the gasps of surprise and shock which no doubt many readers of this book have made at the disclosures of what really "God's Word" is. Brought up from youth on the "strong delusion" that it is all verily "God's Word," and that "he that doubteth is damned -- suffering the vengeance of eternal fire," they do not reason or dare to doubt; they hear believingly, if they do not heed, the preached word.

Some good and scholarly "divines" too, educated to theology and its sophistries, no doubt believe even yet, in simplicity of faith, quite innocently. The distinguished Bishop Colenso, Church of England "divine," may be instanced. Being appointed, in the good mid-Victorian era, bishop of Natal, so great was his zeal to spread the saving truth in "Darkest Africa" that he learned the Zulu language, wrote a grammar and dictionary of the idiom, and then taught English to a number of bright native converts to the Christian faith. With their aid he then began the work of translating the Bible into Zulu, for the conversion of the heathen natives. Before long the good bishop's troubles began, and he began to "see a great light." His intelligent Zulu collaborators, who had been converted to Christianity by hearsay and not upon knowledge, would come to him in great amazement and point out to him things encountered in the Bible, as they worked in translating, which to their untutored minds seemed shocking contradictions of text; absurdities and untruths in what they had been taught was the inerrant inspired Word of God. The Bishop's attention being thus for the first time challenged, he thoroughly studied the whole matter of inspiration and revelation in this new light. The result was his monumental seven-volume work *The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined* (1862-1879), in which the inspiration and truth of the Old Testament were denied and disproved. The bishop's "conversion" caused great sensation and scandal in England; he was excommunicated and deposed by his indignant church, and his salary stopped; but the courts held this action invalid and decreed full payment of salary with all arrears. Similar cases of conversion to reason have been known.

But many instances no doubt abound, in these more recent times, like that of the good parson in St. Louis who urged the writer to become a member of his church and congregation. In answer to the frank objection that, for

the reasons now exposed in this book, he could not without hypocrisy go back into the church which he had abandoned, the good pastor as frankly replied that all that was no sound objection; "If your ideas about the Bible and mine were put into a bag and shaken up and poured out, you could not tell which were yours and which mine"! How many good parsons reading this book would not -- at least to their own inner selves -- make a like "confession of faith"!

The Christ, in the text on salt of lost savor, quoted above, was inveighing against the superstitious old Hebrew law, in himself now fulfilled, said to have been handed down by word of mouth from his own putative Father, Yahveh God of Israel. In all the Bible there is no Christian God but Yahveh, and the Christ is his Son. The description and condemnation thus voiced by the Christ are found to fit perfectly the ancient fables and superstitions both of the old and the new "revelations." The theories, long and fondly held, of the divine revelation, inspiration, and inerrant truth of these old Jewish books as the unimpeachable "Word of God" have lost their savor, and must be cast out.

The most and worst that follows from the discovery that the Bible is not the "Word of God" --merely Jewish fables of Yahveh and his Son -- is that God has not seen fit to deliver any written "word" or "law," either to the ancient Hebrews. or to the Christians, or to anybody else. Possibly the Supreme Architect of the universe, who framed all this wonder of the world and established its immutable laws, could, and would if he so pleased and saw fit, find some way and means to make written revelation of himself and of his will for the behoof of the human race. But he who ordered the harmony of the worlds and ordained their divine laws, would in such event, we may do him credit to believe, so reveal and state his will and laws to man that man would know veritably two things: that the God made the revelation, and what he said and meant. It would be certain and unmistakable, so that it could be known for sure to all men. It would be as simple, too, as two and two are four; so simple and sure that the wayfaring man, though a fool, could not err therein. There would be no danger of losing one's soul through the impossibility of understanding the revelation; no occasion for "heresies," and schisms, and sects, with different and discordant interpretations of it, as with the present revelations of Yahveh and Son by the mouth of priests and clergy. In such a true God-given revelation there would be no occasion for the apologetic casuistry of Peter -- himself an "ignorant and unlearned" person -- for the Jewish revelation, "in which are some things hard to understand, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest unto their own destruction" (2 Pet. 3: 16); and Paul would not be so put to it to make believe that "the foolishness of God [Yahveh] is wiser than men" (1 Cor. 1: 25).

The supreme destiny of the human soul would not be left, by a true and intelligent God, to such clouded, mystic, mythic, jangling jargon of professional priests and prophets and apostles and theologians as we have found their "revelation" and theology to be. A God who could not or would not reveal his awful will for the eternal destiny of man better and more truly than in these "inspired revelations" of Bible and theology is not fit to be a God or to be entrusted with the fate of a human soul. A man's last will and testament, so dubiously authenticated, would never be admitted to probate; and with such darkened and contradictory dispositions, would by any competent court be held "void for uncertainty," and the testator declared intestate, if not insane. Since, evidently, the true, all-wise Creator God has not revealed thus autobiographically his Word, his creature man is evidently in need of no such revelation and is none the worse off without it.

The mythic Yahveh of Israel, exactly like all ancient and some more modern mythic deities, was by his professional prophets and priests pretended to have spoken and commanded through them. But in truth, as admitted, "the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests beaule by their means, and the people love to have it so" -- then, and all through human history. Professional priests undeniably devised all "revealed" gods and religions; professional clergy are yet the propagandists of these ancient myths as "religion" of God, as "articles of faith necessary to salvation" -- with damnation as the alternative.

Priests ruled the ancient world and kings superstitiously did their crafty bidding. For centuries priests dominated the modern world and made kings superstitiously grovel before them and don and doff their crowns at their command. Priestcraft to-day proclaims itself vicar of Yahveh God on earth, and strives yet mightily to impose itself on the minds and consciences of men, through their superstitious fears, invented and imposed by priest and clergy, and through the awful but anachronistic authority of the "keys of heaven and hell." It is all the same old priestly game, very little modernized.

The Hebrew Scriptures are seen to be an inextricable complex of ancient cosmological legends, of primitive folklore, of rude tribal chronicles, of some actual historical events, of superstitious religious fables, of pagan Hebrew concepts of their mythological tribal Yahveh, God of Israel. Later the fabled Yahveh of Israel was slowly and dubiously evolved into a -- no less mythological -- One God Yahveh of all the earth. A mythological god cannot evolve into a real living true God -- *ex nihilo nihil fit*. A myth cannot be imagined into a reality. The "revelation" is all one, from Moses to Ezra and his priests -- they hang and fall together. False premisses cannot produce true conclusions.

Seizing upon the patent myth of Yahveh as God of all the earth for its basic point of departure, and retaining fully and without reserve all the primitive fables and mythology of ancient Jewry, the Christian "revelation" builds up a fabulous fatuous scheme of theological mystery and casuistry fondly called the sacred science of Christianity -- founded upon the Yahveh myth, Yahveh's curse on mankind for the "original sin" of the fabled "first Adam," atoned for by the sacrifice of the "last Adam," virgin-born Son of the mythic Yahveh, sent to redeem the world from Adamic sin, and culminating in the dogma of three gods in One. Such is the holy Christian faith -- "which except a man believe faithfully and firmly, he can not be saved" (Athanasian Creed, *Cath. Encyc.*, Vol. 2: p. 34).

The theology of this is rather mystifying. Each of these triune persons is all Yahveh but only a part of Yahveh. According to the creed above cited, "The Father [Yahveh] is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God," "these Three Persons being truly distinct one from another"; and yet there are not three Gods but one God" (Yahveh). And the sacred deposit lays it down: "In this Trinity of Persons the Son is begotten of the Father by an eternal generation, and the Holy Spirit proceeds by an eternal procession from the Father and the Son. Yet notwithstanding this difference as to origin [Gods are supposed to be without origin, "from eternity"], the Persons are co-eternal and coequal: all alike are uncreated and omnipotent" (*Cath. Encyc.*, Vol 15:p. 47). If three persons are co-eternal, all existing from eternity, it is difficult to perceive how one should be begotten by another, which implies the previous existence of the begetter, or how another could "proceed" from the other two, which implies the previous coexistence of the other two. This is too subtle for any but professional theologians. But they seem to be contradicted by the positive Yahvistic declaration of the relatively modern begetting of the Son, only about 1000 B.C.; for David quotes some one, apparently (but quite impossibly) the Son himself, on his supposed first day of existence: "Yahveh hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee" (Ps.

2: 7). For positive assurance of identity it is thrice asserted by Paul: "God [Yahveh] ... hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" (Acts 13: 33; Heb. 1: 5; 5: 5). So Yahveh the Father and his Son can hardly, on this revealed record, or naturally, be "co-eternal"; and if the Holy Ghost "proceeds" from Yahveh and Son, the "procession" must have begun since the date the Son was begotten by Yahveh.

Yahveh was wholly a mythological deity, existent only in a very primitive pagan imagination; a mythological deity could by no possibility, except imaginative, have had an actual begotten and incarnate son, and it is a very attenuated Ghost that could "proceed" from such mythic sources. This simple consideration, with its unescapable logic, leaves nothing of the Triune-Yahveh but myth and a pious perplexity at the dogma of the theologians, once accepted by faith.

It may be mentioned, in passing, that the "Three Persons" of the Yahvistic godhead -- or at least two of them, these being the only ones recorded as ever saying anything -- are, on all Bible authority, to be taken as "being truly distinct one from another," and therefore difficult to regard as "not three Gods but one God." Yahveh assured his Son: "This day have I begotten thee"; a thousand years later the Son comes to earth while the Father Yahveh remains in heaven; the Father Yahveh calls from heaven: "This is my beloved Son," and the Son prays to the Father -- all which is odd if both are the same Person. The Son is specially said to be "an advocate with the Father" (1 John 2: 1), who "is even at the right hand of God [Yahveh], who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8: 34), as also "the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8: 26). We are often told that the Son sitteth or standeth "on the right hand of the Father" (Yahveh). The Bible speaks of "God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost," but never once does it say that these three distinctly named and designated Gods are all One God or a Triune God. The word "Trinity" is totally unknown in Holy Writ. All this clearly corroborates the fact of three Gods "truly distinct one from another";

but their distinctive functions and activities leave more questionable the theory of "not three Gods but One God" (Yahveh alone). As fact this seems inexplicable; as fable it needs no explanation: it is theology. As the Bible is altogether superstitious falsities and its Yahveh-God wholly mythological, no less so must be the elaborate and intricate theology founded on them; the stream can rise no higher than its source. This simple truth quite destroys the whole congeries of conflicting creeds and wrecks their exhaustless fount, the "sacred deposit of faith." The disclosed undeniable want of inspiration and truth in the Bible makes grimly humorous the dogmatic assurances of the inspired truth of the deposit, for which it is claimed: "All revealed truth is not consigned to Holy Scripture, but Christ gave to his apostles to be transmitted to his Church -- or they received from inspiration revelation -- divine instructions which they transmitted to the Church and which were not committed to the inspired writings. Thus Christ instituted his Church as the official and authentic organ to transmit and explain in virtue of divine authority the revelation made to men. Holy Scripture is therefore not the only theological source of the revelation made by God [i.e., Yahveh] to his Church. Side by side with scripture there is tradition, side by side with the written revelation is the oral revelation. This granted, it is impossible to be satisfied with the Bible alone for the solution of all dogmatic questions" (Cath. Encyc., Vol. 15:pp. 6, 7, art. Tradition). The premisses of the above ratiocination not being now so readily granted, there may be appreciably less satisfaction with either Bible or tradition in respect to the verity of theological dogmas. The Bible, though thus all true, is not all the truth -- so says the sacred deposit. Let us now again --in the light of our study of Bible and deposit -- read a couple of precious excerpts from the deposit vouching for the Bible, both put forth as *ex cathedra* utterances of the Holy Ghost of Yahveh God (the italics being mine): "These books are sacred and canonical because they contain revelation without error, and because written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they have God [Yahveh] for their Author" (Vatican Council, Sess. 3: ch. 2: 1870; Cath. Encyc., Vol. 2: p. 543). And: "It will never be lawful to restrict inspiration merely to certain portions of the Holy Scriptures, or to grant that the sacred writers could have made a mistake ... They render in exact language, with infallible truth, all that God [Yahveh] commanded, and nothing else"! "Wherever the sacred writer makes a statement as his own, that statement is the word of God and infallibly true, whatever be the subject-matter of the statement"! (Pope Leo 13:Encyclical Prov. Deus, 1893; Cath. Encyc., Vol. 2: p. 543). To be impartial, take this example of the stark presumption of uninspired bunkum from the thirteenth of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion: "Good works done before the grace of Christ are not pleasant to God; but they have the nature of sin"! Sancta simplicitas!

The old Roman augurs, when they performed the sacred mysteries of the auspices upon the livers and entrails of the sacrifices and delivered to the superstitious their solemn oracular mummeries of the awful will of the god so revealed, were wont to stick their tongues in their cheeks and wink at one another, in mirthful appreciation of their own ingenuity in "getting away with it," thanks to the crass ignorance of their pious dupes. The pagan augurs must have felt as self-conscious of base imposture as are, of Yahveh's own power of miracle, the Christian priests who with mystic signs and mutterings "make God with four Latin words," and metamorphose ordinary bread and wine into the veritable bod and blood of a God who never was -- and who, being a "spirit" (John 4: 24), could not have body and blood or other "corporeal elements" to be thus anthropophagously consumed, thousands of millions of times a year through twenty centuries. When the theologians and "divines," in full twentieth century, read in their Bibles the self-same things we have just wonderingly reviewed, and then give utterance to the above quoted and other like outpourings of the Holy Ghost, and stand forth to proclaim all this to intelligent modern men as God's own truth -- to disbelieve which is eternal death and damnation -- probably they restrain themselves from outward visible indications of their inneeactions; or maybe, knowing no better, they have none. The charitable imputation of ignorance is all that saves them from the guilt of conscious imposition, though ethically it is all one to assert as true what one does not know to be true and to assert as true what one knows to be untrue. Whether ignorant or conscious, theology and dogma savor none the less inevitably of imposture and superstition.

Superstition is thus defined by a high lexicographic authority:

"A belief founded in irrational feelings, especially of fear, and characterized by credulity; also any practice originating in such belief; excessive and unreasonable scruples due to ignorant dread of the supernatural. Specifically, a belief in a religious system regarded by others than the believer as unreasonable and without support; a false religion, or any of its rites" (New Standard Dictionary of the English Language).

With this accurate definition of superstition, and with the preceding revelations of Holy Writ fresh in mind, are not the Hebrao-Christian creeds, dogmas, and theologies, of Bible as of "deposit," superstitions all? The question is submitted in all candor to every candid mind.

The supernatural myths and superstitions of Bible and theology are no part of real religion; they have no portion in the inheritance of righteousness which exalts a man and a nation. Rather are they a degrading concept of God and his intelligence, and betray a strange contempt for the dignity of mind and common sense of men in imposing such nonsense for their belief.

Full faith in Adam, the talking snake, and Yahveh's curse is not in these modern days necessary to an abiding faith in the Creator God and in the creature man, though the Catholic Encyclopedia says that "the first three chapters of Genesis contain facts touching the foundations of the Christian religion" (Vol. 7: p. 313). That the "law" was not given by word of mouth of Yahveh, tribal God of Israel, to Moses on Sinai, does not hinder one from heeding the better principles of the ten commandments, valid in every moral code. To discredit the virgin-birth by mortal woman of a Son of Yahveh does not nullify the good in anything the reputed Son may have said of truth and righteousness, nor destroy a manly reverence for woman and motherhood. To throw hell into the discard does not impair man's ability or will to "do good, for good is good to do," spurning "bribe of heaven and threat of hell." To relegate angels, devils, witches, and miracles to the limbo of childish fancy along with Santa Claus yet leaves place -- freer, better place -- in the hearts and lives of men for truth, honor, and justice, by freeing their minds from "complete paralysis of the intelligence, resulting from irrational surrender to the blight of theological dogma."

As the distinguished doctor of divinity quoted in the last line earnestly says (the italics are mine) "The work of the Church in bringing Christ to men [notable -- not men to Christ, in the old pulpit cant] is enormously handicapped by associating it with the imposed belief in the veracity and historicity of what are patently early myths and naive, childish, primitive folklore. "It is of supreme importance to remember that a proper understanding of these Jewish stories, while necessarily working havoc with the ideas of Paul and the elaborate theology that is based on them, in no wise affects in the slightest manner the Christianity of Christ, the religion of Jesus, the eternal principles by which he lived and for which he died" (Fagnani, *The Beginnings of History According to the Jews*, pp. 23-24).

Again this erudite doctor of divinity and professor of Hebrew Scripture asserts Yahveh, God of Israel, to have been "an imagined, aboriginal, primitive deity, ... not the God of the New Testament" (Ibid., p. 18). But the God is Yahveh in Old and New Testaments alike.

While this saving clause yet savors a bit of the original sin of theological dogma, however well diluted, these two frank, pregnant utterances destroy alike in toto the Bible fables of Yahveh as true God and the false theology of Paul and the Church regarding everything based on these Bible fables. They leave untouched, except to mention and to magnify them, and instinct with all then pristine worth, the "eternal principles," all that is good and true and pure and worthy of all acceptance in the recorded words and life of him who is called the Christ, and who gave to all "power to become the sons of God" (John 1: 12) -- in the same sense as was the Christ himself.

In 1797-8, a score of years after the American Revolution for political and religious liberty, a celebrated state trial was held in England against a bookseller for the crime of blasphemy -- for selling a copy of the *Age of Reason*, by the immortal American patriot, Thomas Paine. The distinguished attorney general of the kingdom conducted the prosecution and made a very remarkable argument to the trial jury. He expressed in fervent words "the regret and indignation I feel, that any man in this country should dare to disseminate such pernicious doctrines"; and he declaimed:

"What have we to expect if those long-established feelings and principles be expelled from the minds and hearts of men? What reliance have I to receive from you, gentlemen of the jury, an honest verdict on the evidence which has been laid before you? On what were you sworn that you would act conscientiously? To what were you referred when you swore that you would return a true verdict, 'so help me God'? You swore on that Holy Book. ... "What reason have you to believe that the witnesses will speak the truth, except from the operation of those religious principles which I have described to you? Are they not sworn on that sacred volume? ... "What hold have we on the mind of His Honor that he will administer the law with strict justice, uprightness, and impartiality? What security has the defendant himself that pure justice will be rendered to him

on his trial, except the oath of His Honor? ... "When any individual assumes a station of trust or power in the government, the constitution prescribes an oath; ... that oath is on the holy gospels of God. ... "I have only, therefore, to remind you, gentlemen, that this information was not preferred from any idea that the Christian religion could be affected in its character or irresistible progress by this disgusting and contemptible book; but to prevent its circulation amongst the industrious poor, too much engaged in the support of their families by their labor, and too uninformed to be secure against artful wickedness. Of all human beings they stand most in need of the consolations of religion, and the country has the deepest stake in their enjoying it, not only from the protection which it owes them, but because no man can be expected to be against the government of God! Gentlemen, I leave it to you as twelve Christian men to decide whether this is not a most blasphemous and impious libel." (William's Case, 26 Howard's State Trials, 1798-9; pp. 654-719)

On this specious, fantastic plea of His Majesty's attorney general that justice could not be administered nor government maintained among men but for the sanction of a superstitious oath on a book of fables, the "pure justice" of a verdict of "guilty" of blasphemy -- against the mythologic Yahveh -- was returned in a "Christian court of justice" against the disseminator of the truth. Let our English friends remember this eminent English precedent when disposed to sneer too critically at the "monkey case" in the hill-country of Tennessee! That sixty per cent or more of the people of these United States are not galled by the yoke of dogmatic theological religion of any brand of itself belies the pretentious casuistry that justice cannot or would not be done between state and citizen, between man and man, but for the sanction of a religious oath with the fear of hell fire behind it -- as often violated by perjury as observed from an honest regard for truth; and belies especially, the unveiled assertion that it is the poor particularly who stand in need of the restraints, and assumed consolations, of this priest-forged rod of authority, without which they would be quite ungovernable. Every intelligent person versed in history knows that it is not true that justice cannot be done, or order in government be maintained, without the Christian threat of hell and damnation to restrain the false witness or the insubordinate subject or to constrain the righteous judgment of the judge.

Times have changed. Not a state of this Union but still retains the oath "So help me God"; and in New York the greasy old tome of Holy Writ must usually be dragged out and tagged by the witness as he swears upon it. But such oath is not always required; the witness may simply "affirm" that he or she will speak the truth; or may break a saucer, or jump over a broomstick, or swear by "the beard of the prophet" or whatever other freak he may regard as of most sacred compulsion for him to tell the truth. It's a piddling performance at best; no oath prevents perjury. A thousand hands are held to heaven or laid on the musty book each day, to speak the truth, "So help me God"; and a large part of all the solemnly vouched testimony given is lies. it would be better to abolish the whole superstitious farce; let a man affirm that he speaks the truth, and if he lies, jail him for perjury, and perjury will cease to be so much in vogue as a means to "justice."

Justice can be done without swearing by fables. The noblest, most admirable system of law, the sternest, fairest scheme of human justice, which the world has ever known -- under which the whole civilized world lives to-day -- is pagan Roman law. It is to-day the basis of every legal system of Europe, as of Japan's; it largely supplements the crudities of the common law of England; the whole system of English and American equity is derived from and instinct with the spirit of the stern, impartial justice of pagan Rome. Many American judges are Jews; many others no doubt quite disbelieve the Christian faith; American juries are composed in large part of Jews and disbelievers; still justice is rendered between men; still government, the best on earth, is maintained, protecting men in life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness. It will yet persist, and human happiness be no doubt more nearly perfect when strife and dissensions engendered by religious differences have been relegated to oblivion.

The glory that was Greece, the grandeur that was Rome, they know, have filled the world with beauty and with law, ages before the Christian superstition existed or the torch of its crude theology had been applied to the brimstone of hell and its holy fires kindled for the unbelieving soul. Those learned in the law will recall the maxims of the jurisprudence of ancient Rome, mistress and lawgiver of the world; maxims gathered by Justinian into the Digest, culled from the olden precepts of the noblest of the old Roman juriconsults and legal philosophers, which still rule the civilized world to-day. It was Ulpian, pagan that he was, who described the Roman lawyers as "priests of justice, engaged in the pursuit of a philosophy that is truly such and no counterfeit"; and pagan Ulpian it was who gave the living definition: "Jurisprudence is the knowledge of things

human and divine, the science of the just and unjust" -- almost a translation of the much more ancient pagan Greek Stoic concept of "sophia." The very first sentence of the Digest is this: "The precepts of the law are these: to live honorably, to injure no one, to render to every one his due." The pagan Cicero declared: "Law is nothing else than right reason, enlightened by the gods, commanding what is honest and forbidding what is dishonest."

There are to-day some 243,000 churches, temples, synagogues, and whatever they may be called scattered throughout these United States, to minister to some 47,000,000 members of them all. No doubt they are a force for good in the land. A far greater force they will be for far greater good when once they turn from propagating worn-out superstitions and strive to further personal and civic righteousness for its own high sake. Recently a very well-known "liberal" minister in the metropolis declared through the public press that his own sons refused to attend church because, they said, they "did not want to have to listen to a lot of bunk." Nor do hundreds of thousands of other men gifted with fair, reasonable minds. I find the question, so often heard, again seriously put "whether the pulpit is any longer useful in modern life"; and on this the Dean of St. Paul's, London, thus comments:

"The crumbling of certain parts of the dogmatic structure has undoubtedly increased the difficulty of preaching. There is much uncertainty as to what may be, and should be, said from the pulpit. The people themselves are impatient with dogma. Accordingly, many preachers try to interest their congregations by topical discussions of newspaper controversies, new books, or, worst of all, burning economic problems, in which their ill-informed tirades generate much more heat than light. There seems to be a kind of fatality that the Church always begins to champion a political party at the moment when it is preparing to abuse its power. The Church never goes into politics without coming out badly smirched, and few sermons are more unprofitable than rambling comments or declamations on secular affairs" (Literary Digest, November 21, 1925, pp. 31-32).

Churches are to-day largely social gathering places, where the social gradations are as marked and as rigidly observed as at the king's court, the rich in the best pews, the poor in the rear and side ones, and little recognition or fraternity between them. On Sundays the sacred edifices are solemnly open, and maybe on an evening during the week; the rest of the time they are mostly closed and dark, and as cold as is their spirit when open.

Every "house of God," of whatever god (and there are many), throughout the land should be kept open and habitable and every day and evening, and should be active centers of spiritual and social and civic interests, where, most of all, the homeless should find a shelter if not a home. Churches are in a large and important sense supported by the State, by the public, being free from all taxation, to the extent all told of thousands of millions of dollars yearly; they should be brought to some real return of service to the public, beyond preaching fables and singing psalms a couple of times a week. Church houses should be community centers, open to every responsible and respectable society and organization, religious, social, civic, political, freely or at only the actual expense of service for the occasion.

Make the churches public forums, where the public may forgather for every kind of social and civic occasion and innocent diversion, from the instructive scenes on the "silver screen" to the healthful, joyful dance; public lectures, political gatherings, social and literary societies -- all are quite as socially and spiritually useful and uplifting, and as innocuous and little "desecrating" to the sacred edifices as church "rummage sales" and parish "grab-bag" parties and "rates." The talk about "sacredness" and "consecration" of churches, which must not be "desecrated" or "profaned" by honest uses for worthy purposes, is sanctimonious silliness. All human service is sacred, all human effort that makes foight and foighteousness is holy, consecrated.

Let the churches then, if they would attract and hold intelligent modern men and women, leave off preaching and teaching the fables of the Bible as the truthful Word of God, about Adam's talking snake, and Balaam's talking ass, and Jonah's marvelous whale, and men raised from the dead, and men living in heaven or hell after they are dead -- of devils, and angels. Let the ministers quit "skypiloting" for the very dubious hereafter and devote themselves to spreading the knowledge of God's real truths of life and nature here on earth; ethical and educational truths, God in his wonders of nature, the bands of Orion, or the bandaging of wounds in first aid to the injured; the cruel hatefulness of war and its ostracism from earth; the beauty and duty of charity to all men, of whateveace or tongue or creed, and the loathsomeness of prejudices of race or color or creed --and speed the abolition of creed. Thousands of truths of knowledge and use and beauty, to the true glory of God and benefit

of man, may be taught and spread abroad from the pulpit with never a hint of superstition or a whiff of fire and brimstone.

Then may people, in growing numbers, come to hear and remain to be instructed in things worth while; the vast numbers driven from the Church to-day by the vacuous myth-mongering of its preachings may return with joy to its teaching of wholesome truths, of knowledge in all its scope, of science in popular form. Then will the influence of the churches be real and potent for good to all the people; not restricted as now to miracle-mongering for a credulous few, and to social display for worldly wise but very indifferently believing and behaving Christians.

If the churches will not with good grace make this return of public utility and service for valuable public support by tax exemption on their billions of dollars' worth of deadhead property, then tax them like rich men's clubs or poor men's cottages, and let them share the common burden of support of the government which protects all alike under the law, and Christians from each other.

Broaden and enforce the laws against "superstitious uses," and make illegal and void the rich legacies, and the painfully earned pittances of the poor, for the already over-swollen "treasury of the Lord," obtained by the false pretence of "lending to the Lord," or for praying the souls of the superstitious out of non-existent purgatory -- than both which there is no nearer grand larceny in the annals of priestly avarice. Make it by the penal code grand larceny de jure as grand larceny it surely is de facto. Consider for a moment the countless millions filched through the centuries from the credulous through this pious confidence game! Justice to a man and to his surviving family comes before superstitious generosity to the Devil to buy surcease of pains for a dead man's soul gone wrong, or tainted only with Adam's original sin. Purgatory not only does not exist, for the souls "go down immediately into hell" (Decree Unionis) -- but if it did exist, paid prayers are utterly worthless to get the souls out, for it is "revealed" that they writhe there until "the first resurrection" or until "the last judgment," which is exactly when they would get out anyhow, to pass to heaven or hell -- if such places existed.

For two thousand years mankind in Christendom has been the victim of these priest-invented superstitions imposed on it as the holy will of Almighty God; has from infancy been priest-taught to believe fishermen's tales as inspired truth; has been duped into reverencing, obeying, and supporting for life a horde of parasitic, hypocritical, indolent, insolent soul-savers who have dealt damnation to all who eluded their thralldom. Numberless millions of the most intelligent and independent human beings have been tortured by fiendish devices, murdered, and sent to everlasting torment in the fires of hell for daring to doubt, to question, to deride, and to despise the priests and their deadly superstitions. The human intellect has been atrophied and debauched, the mind paralyzed and debased, God-given reason crumbed or confined into puerile and worthless channels, by enforced bondage to priestcraft. Freedom of thought had been martyred; learning, discovery, science have been cramped and thwarted; the progress of civilization itself has been hindered and delayed by priestly oppression.

Gulliver is beginning to break the multiplied threads which so long have bound him prostrate before padre and parson; let the Lilliputians beware. Divinely endowed men, turned swine-minded by the hateful enchantments of the scarlet Circle could, when freed, trample their seducers under foot, and turn again and rend them. A better and holier than they heard the fearful cry "Crucify him! crucify him!" Like Samson rendered impotent by the shearing, they may be caught and crushed in the crash of the temple when its tottering supports are knocked from under. *Verbum sat sapienti.*

Once free the mind and soul from the debasing thrall of "imposed belief in the veracity and historicity" of these Bible fables, and from the "blight of theological dogma," as God's Word necessary to salvation, and what a flood of spiritual light and truth may illumine man's mind and conscience from the book of God's work in nature! True, an unknown God not revealed in writing, but still the true Creator God, revealed through his wondrous works. Nor need the Bible be altogether disregarded as ennobling truth. Full as is the Bible, Old and New Testaments, of crude, cruel, immoral, revolting fables and concepts of the mythic Yahveh as God, it abounds, too, in truly inspired outbursts of the highest fervor of spirit, of the purest morality, of eternal principles of right and wrong, of that righteousness that exalts men and nations, and of denunciations of those sins which are a reproach to any people. Amid the chaff and trash and filth in Holy Writ there are infinite gems of purest ray serene to illumine mind and soul with true godliness whereby to light the way to death. All such

gems of ancient devotion are to be cherished as part of the great spiritual treasures of life, to be found in the Bible as in many another work of highest worth in many literatures and religions, valid and true wholly apart from the fables and myths. With all the crude, gross Bible fables eliminated, there yet remains much of truth and beauty; verses which are the gems, and contain the germs, of true religion of the human spirit. This is the religion of clean hands and pure hearts; of fact, not of faith; of good deeds, not of credulity. Revolting is the doctrine of theology that not by the doing of good and by right living, but only by credulous faith, is there profit to man or God. As we have read: "Except which a man believe faithfully and firmly he cannot be saved"! "Good works done before the grace of Christ are not pleasant to God; but they have the nature of sin"! Better far to so sin and die in such sin than live in debasing belief in such theological "confidence" stuff!

Micah, prophet of old Israel, denouncing the credulous beliefs and superstitious practices of his people, struck for once in the Hebrew Scriptures the high key-note of true religion:

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord [Yahveh] require of thee, but to do justly, and to mlove mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6: 8)

This is not Christian; it was written ages before Christ. It is not sectarian; it is catholic, universal. It is not superstitious, but sensible. It is the key-note of the universal religion of the sincere mind and heart, striving after spiritual godlikeness. It is identical with the universal, highly religious concept of the very first of the Praecepta of the pagan Institutes of the law of nature and of world law of Rome:

Juris praecepta sunt haec: Honeste vivere, alterum non laedere, suum cuique tribuere. The precepts of the law are these: To live honorably, to injure no man, to render to everyone his due." (Institutes, 1: 1, 3)

Under the new dispensation of superstition, there sounds out, too, one pure note in harmonious unison with the same true religion; uttered by the own brother after the flesh of the Master of the new faith of miracles and credulity:

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1: 27)

These three golden precepts of religion pure and undefiled by crass superstitions are the utterances of three lofty-minded, high- visioned men: an Old Hebrew prophet crying against the grossly superstitious creeds and practices of the Chosen People of Yahveh; a noble pagan prophet and priest of justice and law, human and divine; a Hebrew of the new dispensation, brother of its Founder, who believed but a modicum of its superstitions, but stressed to its utmost its substance of love and charity and truth, as his beautiful Epistle shows. To these may be added the noble exhortation of fiery Paul:

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; think on these things." (Phil. 4: 8)

The sum total and golden substance of truth of them all is synthesized by a creedless modern seer in the tocsin couplet of the Kasidah:

"Do good, for good is good to do: Spurn bribe of heaven and threat of hell."

These all are words which utter the doom of superstition, the apotheosis of godly reason. They are the golden rule of highest human righteousness. They spell the noblest terms of religion, of true pure spirituality. They exclude not God; they embrace the innate sense of God, of walking humbly with thy God, in Micah's golden phrase. God we know not except through his wondrous works of universal creation, save in the unstillable strivings of the human soul foighteousness, for godlikeness. Whoever, whatever God be, we feel him instinct within us; with the pagan poet quoted by Paul on Mars' Hill, we feel that "in him we live, and move, and have our being"; in a very high, real sense "we are also his offspring" (Acts 17: 28). In our souls we feel the impelling stirring of the truth of Festus: "Nothing but God can satisfy the soul that he made great" -- the greatest gift of God to his masterpiece man.

But this God is not the crude tribal Yahveh, the superstitious, psychopathic Jesus, and the inane Holy Ghost -- the cerberus Trinity -- "revealed" in the oriental fancy of the Hebrao- Christian Bible. God is not to be worshipped, as I conceive it, by superstitious creeds, but in golden deeds wrought in the heart for the good of the soul and of man.

The Bible is not the inspired infallible "Word of God"; it is the very human record of the human fallible striving of man's soul after an Unknown but very conscious God-in-man, urging its realization in men's lives, unconcerned with the unknowable hereafter.

That the Bible has been shown to be, IS, wholly human, fearfully immoral, false, and cruel for the most part, detracts naught from its immense value to mankind as a veritable treasury, not of "God's outpourings through Moses," but of man's outpourings, of man's upliftings of spirit towards righteousness, towards godliness. That it is over-full of primitive, puerile superstitions; that priests and hierarchies of priests have forged out of its crude myths a cruel, blighting system of "theology" for dominating men's minds and souls by priestly schemes of graft and aggrandizement, of rule and ruin, is, unhappily for mankind, all too true, as several thousand years of history and the imperfect, inadequate sketches of this book prove. But when this demonstration is brought home to the minds and realization of men, the damage is ended forever. Knowing the truth, men will be free from the dominion of error; the priestly era and occupation will be gone -- gone as the ghosts of yesteryear. But the Bible, in its better parts will endure, to the real benefit of humanity, once it is rated at its true worth. Inestimable evils, far more than from Pandora's box, have come from this Bible: because misguided, mistaught, priest-taught men have mistaken it for an inerrant book of facts of God, instead of, as it is, a book of wondrous, fallible fables of man, carrying tremendous morals of mighty spiritual truth. Once realize its fables as fables frankly, its inspiration as the genius of man's fervent spirit groping up towards the truths of spiritual life, with its gross chaff winnowed away by the discernment of the spirit, then its "apples of gold in pictures of silver" will become more beautiful to the mind's eye, more palatable to the spirit's taste, more vitally nourishing to the soul's salvation from error and superstition.

The Bible has always been a wonderful work of literature. Held as a purely human, spiritual literary work; as such cherished, reverently regarded, spiritually and reasonably lived; with its superstitions, prolific cause of religious hatreds and intolerance, of wars and woes unnumbered, banished from men's minds and souls; with its lofty ideal truths of spirit impressed on men's hearts, not its fatal mystic texts "engraven on theieeking swords" for murderous strifes over its vain fables; and with its fine assurance that "of one flesh hath God made all men under the sun" and that all men are brothers under the universal fatherhood of God -- then, then only, then indeed, will the humanized, revitalized Bible be potent, omnipotent perhaps, to perfect the true civilization of mankind; then triumphantly may be realized the burden of the angels' storied song over the birth of the new era of the storied Christ:

"On earth peace to men of good will." Or better yet: "Peace to all mankind."

11/26/25