A LEGACY TO THE FRIENDS OF FREE DISCUSSION

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Author: Benjamin Offen

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A LEGACY TO THE FRIENDS OF FREE DISCUSSION

By

Benjamin Offen

PRINCIPAL HISTORICAL FACTS AND PERSONAGES OF THE BOOKS KNOWN AS THE
OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT; WITH REMARKS ON THE MORALITY OF NATURE

1846

CONTENTS

PREFACE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

DETAILED CONTENTS

A LEGACY TO THE FRIENDS OF FREE DISCUSSION

GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE

THE OLD TESTAMENT

CHAPTER I. FROM THE CREATION TO THE DELUGE

CHAPTER II. A REVIEW OF THE DELUGE AND THE CONFUSION OF TONGUES AT THE TOWER OF BABEL

CHAPTER III. FROM THE CONFUSION OF TONGUES TO THE BIRTH OF MOSES

CHAPTER IV. FROM THE BIRTH OF MOSES TO THE DEATH OF JOSHUA

CHAPTER V. FROM THE DEATH OF JOSHUA TO THE REIGN OF SAUL

CHAPTER VI. THE REIGNS OF SAUL, DAVID, AND SOLOMON

CHAPTER VII. THE REIGN OF JEROBOAM, AND THE SEPARATION OF ISRAEL FROM JUDAH

CHAPTER VIII. ON DIVINE INSPIRATION

THE NEW TESTAMENT

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER on THE FACTS AND PERSONAGES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

CHAPTER I.

CHAPTER. II.

CHAPTER III.

CHAPTER IV.

CHAPTER V.

CHAPTER VI.

CHAPTER VII.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHAPTER IX.

REMARKS ON THE MORALITY OF NATURE

PREFACE

IN the following pages the author has freely discussed the claims of the books called the Old and New Testaments, to be considered Divine revelations. He had a *right* so to do; and in presenting the work to the public he gives the result of his exercise of such right.

The right of free discussion has been questioned. It would be well for humanity if this were all; but unhappily, the pages of history are replete with deeds of persecution and cruelty, committed by men, in the possession of power, on their less fortunate fellow-men, who have presumed to exercise the right of free investigation. Cupidity has drawn a line of demarcation; it has established boundaries for thought; and miserable has been the fate of the unhappy wretch who, rejoicing in the dignity of his nature, and anxious to discover the abode of Truth, has dared to pass the Rubicon.

What is Free Discussion? We answer, it is the exercise of the reasoning faculties. Without Free Discussion man cannot exist. His physical existence might indeed remain; but he could no longer be deemed a man; and would have to take a lower rank in the scale of creation.

Without investigation it is impossible to arrive at Truth; hence the utility of Free Discussion. This is never denied when science is the subject; and we have yet to learn why it should be restrained in any case; and also *how* and *when* any set of men became possessed of the right to restrain the exercise of the reasoning faculties of their fellow-men.

When men have not been impelled by cupidity to shackle the minds of their fellow beings, a spirit of uncharitableness has induced them to pursue the same line of conduct. Whoever has maintained an opinion contrary to theirs, has been considered as being actuated, not by mistaken, but, by dishonest motives; and has therefore been deemed a fit subject for punishment. As this work will probably be read by many professing Christians we will here give an extract from Dr. Blair's sermon on *Candor*, which will, probably, make a greater impression than any thing we could offer on that subject.

"It is one of the misfortunes of our present situation, that some of the good dispositions of human nature are apt to betray us into frailties and vices. Thus it often happens, that the laudable attachment which we contract to the country, or the church, to which we belong, or to some political denomination under which we class ourselves, both confines our affections within too narrow a sphere, and gives rise to violent prejudices against such as come under an opposite description. Not contented with being in the right ourselves, we must find all others in the wrong. We claim an exclusive possession of goodness and wisdom: and from approving warmly of those who join us, we proceed to condemn, with much acrimony, not only the principles, but the *characters*, of those from whom we differ. Hence, persons of well disposed minds are too often, through the strength of partial good affection, involved in the crime of uncharitable judgment They rashly extend to every individual the severe opinion which they have unwarrantably conceived of a whole body. This man is of a party whose principles we reckon slavish; and therefore his whole sentiments are corrupted. That man belongs to a religious sect which we are accustomed to deem bigoted; and therefore he is incapable of any generous or liberal thought Another is connected with a sect which we have been taught to account relaxed; and therefore he can have no sanctity.—Are these the judgments of candor and charity? Is true piety or virtue so very limited in its nature, as to be confined to such alone as see every thing with our eyes, and follow exactly the train of our ideas?"

The author disclaims any intention of wounding the feelings of those who hold opinions different to his own. For the religions hypocrite he has no bowels of compassion; but the sincere believer in Divine revelation, whose conduct is regulated by the universally acknowledged roles of morality, is to him an object of sincere respect and esteem.

Many things connected with what is called Divine revelation, have been very freely commented on by the author; and sometimes in a style which the Christian world will probably be disposed to condemn; but it should be remembered that what appears sacred to one, excites the ridicule of others. The Pagan venerates his manufactured god; the Christian views it with contempt and indignation.

The object of the author has been the promotion of Truth and Benevolence.

Should he fail to produce the effects he has contemplated, he will yet be able to console himself with the reflection, that he has been actuated by good intentions. The time has been when the assertion was frequently made that "hell was paved with good intentions" had the work appeared at that time, the author would, doubtless, have been destined, so far as human agency could effect it, to become one of the paving stones of that remarkable edifice: but a brighter day has dawned upon the world; Reason is asserting her right to empire; and the

cheering spirit of benevolence is animating the nations of the earth.

The shades of life's evening admonish the author that his sojourn in the world will very shortly be brought to a close. He is anxious, therefore, before his departure, to cast in his mite for the eradication of human suffering, and the promotion of human felicity; and then, in wrapping himself in the mantle of universal benevolence, to retire from the transitory scene, in charity with all men.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

THE main object of this book is to show that Jehovah, the God of the Jews, is not the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe, but a fictitious being, having no real existence whatever. If the above position be correct, it follows, that the Bible, including the Old and New Testaments, is not a Divine Revelation. But that the reader may see, more clearly, upon what uncertain ground divine revelation rests, the plan pursued in the following chapters will be a review of the *facts* and *personages* as recorded in the Old and New Testaments. But the limits of this work will only admit of a mere scantling of what might be written on the subject.

In most Christian countries (America excepted,) this work would be answered by either fine or imprisonment, or probably both. But fortunately for the cause of truth and free discussion, theological power here is so happily balanced, that persecution for religious opinions is impracticable. The period therefore has arrived, in this country in particular, when reason is free from the former obstacles that every where crossed its path. Now, then, is the time for us to examine the religion of our forefathers, and explore the regions of human credulity. A mixture of pain and pleasure will be the result:—*pain*, in considering what suffering has befallen the human family, when the laudable indulgence of imagining and reasoning was considered rebellion against God; and *pleasure*, to us who, having escaped those dreadful evils which in former ages spread terror throughout the world, can lessen the evils that surround us, and augment to an almost unlimited degree our happiness.

To those who may have the moral courage to read the following pages, I would say, I have neither a desire to shock their feelings, nor any wish to change their sentiments in order to gratify my vanity; for had Christianity been productive of "peace on earth and good will towards men," I should have been the last to have opposed it. But on the contrary, the page of religious history is blotted with human gore. The intolerant spirit that pervades the Old and New Testaments, has so inoculated its followers of every sect, that while they profess to love each other for Christ's sake, one sect (the strongest) has put to death a weaker sect

for God's sake. Nothing short of convincing men that the Bible is not a divine revelation, can or will guarantee posterity against a recurrence of those scenes of horror, at the very thought of which, the heart sickens.

From the pulpit, and in religious works, nothing is more common than to exclaim with horror at the unblushing Infidel. Unblushing Infidel! What cause have Infidels to blush? The blush, if any, ought to be on the face of the Christians of every sect. They have never failed to persecute when in power: they have been guilty of cruelties, at which the savage cannibal would weep, and this will ever be the case so long as the Bible is considered as coming from God; because, till all consequence is taken away from faith, and transferred to moral rectitude, persecution is the effect of believing that *faith* is the sure passport to glory, while *unbelief* is the broad road to perdition. Men cease to be Christians when they lose this spirit of intolerance, and become Infidels.

Sects are not alike intolerant; but all are in some degree. The Calvinists will not permit the Unitarians to preach in their churches. The Unitarians, or Universalists, will not permit an Infidel lecturer to speak in their churches,—no, not even on moral subjects. Christians, then, will always be more or less of a persecuting disposition, and nothing but giving up the Bible, as a Divine revelation, will destroy that spirit. To show how a profession of Christianity, unfits men to do justice to those who differ from them in religion, I will refer to the treatment of Thomas Paine, author of "Common Sense." His services in the glorious struggle that "tried men's souls" have been shamefully forgotten. Yes! the friend of the immortal Washington, who shared in the toils and dangers with the father of this great republic,—how have Americans generally treated his name and efforts to erect one of the most noble monuments of human wisdom—the *independent republic of North America?* For all his faithful devotedness to the independence of America, how is his name and memory spoken of at the present time? From the pulpit, every kind of falsehood and detraction is poured forth concerning him.

If he had been, a member of a church, the same fanatical priesthood would have lauded him to the skies. Such is the nature of religious bigotry, that the friendship of the ever to be venerated Washington—even that, cannot shield his name from pulpit calumny. "Bigotry, she has no head, and cannot think; she has no heart, and cannot feel."

But the name and services of Thomas Paine, are not, and never will be, forgotten. Thanks to the Liberals throughout the Union, his birthday is yearly celebrated in most of the cities and towns in the different States. A handsome and durable monument has been erected to his memory at New Rochelle, New York State. The thanks of-the Liberals are due to Mr. G. Vale, Editor of the *Beacon*, published in New York, for his untiring perseverance in urging on the completion of a monument will, in time, command the respect of posterity. Why are the name

and services of Thomas Paine be cautiously omitted by our orators and statesmen, when speaking of the patriotism of a Washington, Jefferson, Adams, Hancock, and others? It would offend the church and priesthood, as well as the whole of the Christian community; because—"*He that believeth not shall be damned.*" This is the brightest gem in the Christian's crown of glory. If he nurse this intolerant spirit against Infidels, the Christian considers his "*calling and election sure.*"

Sincere believers in Divine revelation are not aware what monsters the Bible makes of them; but for which they would be humane, compared to what they are under its influence. I am surprised that they are (the majority of them) so just, humane, and charitable, when I take into consideration the doctrines contained (or believed to be) in what is called the Word of God. In addition to their own evil habits and disregard for virtue in the common concerns of life, they have a Devil to tempt them by a thousand ways in which they are ignorant. Again, they have a Saviour who shed his blood to save them from the just punishment of their deserts; so that with their own evil deeds, and being urged on by the Devil, they become monsters in crime. They then go, as the phrase is, to Christ, be sorry, or profess to be, for what they have done, and are pardoned, and in the sight of Heaven are considered *superior* to the unconverted whom they have injured. Can you, my readers, wonder at the crimes of God's people? According to this doctrine, a man may steal a horse and cart, by the use of which, another man earned support for his family; the thief sells it, and spends the amount, in connexion with wretches like himself. He then goes to Jesus, repents, is forgiven; and, to follow the plan throughout—if the man who lost his horse and cart is an unbeliever, he goes to Hell, while the rogue sits singing and laughing in Glory!

This book is sent into society from the best of motives; hoping it will induce Christians to practise moderation, and somewhat abate that raging, fanatical fever, that has been so fatal to human happiness. If you take from us the Bible, says the Christian, what will you give in its stead? We answer, man requires nothing but what God, or Nature, has given him. All men in common, have reason to consult, by which man will learn the duty he owes to himself, and also to his fellow beings. The error lies in being taught, that reason, when in full exercise, will lead him into error. This has been his misfortune; and his punishment has followed as a consequence. The Bible contains many good moral precepts; but these are, by Christians, thought little of, compared with its doctrines. Faith is all important. By faith, barbarous Calvin caused Servetus to be burnt by a slow fire; and through faith, St. Austin, that drunken debauchee, obtained a good report.

The Bible is at war with man's reasoning powers; and, like a land pirate, has held up false lights, which instead of conducting man to the haven of happiness and safety, has caused him to make shipwreck on the rocks and shoals of religious

dogmas. Man is lost in no other sense than that, the loss of his reason. To recover *that*, and bring it into full exercise, is all the Saviour he needs. His moral path is as clear as light. God, or Nature, has made it a law of man's existence that he must love happiness, ease, and enjoyment; and also, that he must hate pain and trouble in every stage and form. This law is forced upon him independent of his choice. It is ever present to his senses, till he ceases to exist, or to be rational. This is man's stock of moral material furnished by God, or Nature. How clear, then, is his duty! He has but to follow out this law, by the aid of his reasoning, judging, and comparing powers. It will never lead him wrong. He requires no Bible, no Saviour; he is never lost; he has no incomprehensible doctrines to support or defend. Unlike the sectarian, he feels no disposition to persecute others who differ from him in matters of faith; he has no angry God to propel him on to fight for his glory; he can balance up every night his moral account of the day; and if he has followed out the law of his nature, by augmenting his own, and also the happiness of his fellow beings, and lightened the load of human ills around him, he in truth is the good man, be his faith little or much. That the following work may forward moral improvement, and encourage moderation and universal good will among the human family, is the sincere wish of

THE AUTHOR

DETAILED CONTENTS

OLD TESTAMENT

PREFACE.—Free Discussion; the right to use it in examining the Scriptures; its certainty in destroying error and establishing truth—Extract from Dr. Blair's sermon on Candor—Motives of the author in laying his work before the public.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION.—Object of the book—Intolerance and persecution of Christian sects—Their abuse of Infidels and calumnious treatment of Thomas Paine—His name and services appreciated by Liberals—Pernicious influence of the Bible upon morals—Knowledge of the laws of our existence the only sure guide to wisdom, happiness, and virtue.

GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE.—Character and situation of the Jews—Their treatment by Jehovah—Why were they chosen, and did they answer the end of their choice?—Probable reasoning of the Jewish God—Account of his visit to Abram and Sarah, and their reception and treatment of him—The consequences to the Jews of considering themselves the chosen people—The five books said to have been written by Moses—Treatment of Hagar and her child—Jehovah and the Jews.

CHAPTER I.—From the Creation to the Deluge.

CHAPTER II.—A Review of the Deluge and the confusion of Tongues at the Tower of Babel.

CHAPTER III.—From the Confusion of Tongues to the Birth of Moses.

CHAPTER IV.—From the Birth of Moses to the Death of Joshua.

CHAPTER V.—From the Death of Joshua to the Reign of Saul.

CHAPTER VI.—The Reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon.

CHAPTER VII.—The Reign of Jeroboam, and the separation of Israel from Judah.

CHAPTER VIII.—On Divine Inspiration.

NEW TESTAMENT

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.—Jehovah's dealings with the Jews—His failure to make them a pattern to the rest of the human family—The coming of Christ—The manner of his introduction—his associates; language; and conduct—

Miracles—The Jews had sufficient reason, for rejecting Jesus as the Messiah.

CHAPTER I.—Jesus the pretended Saviour of the world, not sent from God—Moses wrote the most minute things Connected with die system established by himself, but Jesus left no writings whatever-—Vagueness and want of authenticity of the writings of the Evangelists—General ignorance among Christians of what is the true Gospel—No proof of the heavenly origin of Jesus—His baptism by John—His temptation by the Devil—Its absurdity—Abusive language of Jesus to the Jews—His unfitness for his mission, and failure to prove himself sent from God.

CHAPTER II.—Casting out Devils—The case of Mary Magdalene—The doctrine of demoniacal possession, a heathen dogma—Miracles of Jesus no proof of his Divine origin—Evidence from the New Testament that no miracles ever took place—Inconsistent conduct and abusive language of Jesus—The miracle at his baptism—Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus from the clouds—Folly of miracles and their injurious consequence.

CHAPTER III.—Peter—Disingenuous mode adopted by Jesus to prove his Messiahship—The introduction of his mission to the Jews—His obscure doctrines, and disrespectful Language—Survey of his teaching, and mode of life—Inutility of his object—His betrayal—Judas Iscariot.

CHAPTER IV.—The Almighty Power that governs the universe not the author of the Christian Religion—Destructive saying of Jesus—The power given to Peter; its disastrous results—Institution of the Sacrament—Intolerance and persecution of Sectarianism—Folly of religious teaching.

CHAPTER V.—Orthodox views of Christianity—Remarks on the bad effects of believing in the existence of the Devil, and in witchcraft, doctrines taught in the Bible—Trial and execution of two women for witchcraft in England, in 1664—Account of the witchcraft that prevailed in England and Scotland, in the days of Elizabeth—Anecdote of Cromwell's bargain with the Devil.

CHAPTER VI.—Continuation of remarks upon the supposed influence of Satanic agency—Dreadful effects of human credulity—Sketch of the life and tragical fate of Joan of Arc, the Maid of Orleans—Temptation of Jesus.

CHAPTER VII.—God and the Devil—Probable origin of the belief in their existence—Mode of reasoning in ancient times by the ignorant—Theology—Christian Religion—Account of Witchcraft in Sweden, in 1670—Reflections.

CHAPTER VIII.—Comprehensive view of the mission of Christ to the Jewish nation—Plan of redemption—Willingness of the Jews to welcome the long expected Messiah—The violence and abuse they received from Jesus—Their condition not improved by his coming—Obscurity of his teaching—The Jews put him to death because they believed him an impostor—Judas, in betraying Jesus, was but the instrument to accomplish the plan of human redemption—Unfortunate condi-

tion of the Jews—Reflections upon their past and present treatment by Christians.

CHAPTER IX.—Object of Christ's coming into the world, uncertain and of doubtful utility—His obvious omission to convince the Jews that he was the Messiah, and his neglect to order his apostles to write a history of his life, show the Christian Religion deficient in the proof of its Divine origin—Jesus, according to the Gospels, was a moral reformer—Ignorance of his disciples of his Divine mission, as manifested by Peter, at the betrayal—The Resurrection of Jesus—Sudden departure afterward—Religious quarrels—Difficulty of defining Christianity-Reflections on the want of proof of Christ's Divine mission, and its insufficiency to reform the world—The Jesus of the New Testament an imaginary being.

CONCLUSION.—Remarks on the Morality of Nature—Pernicious effect of religious faith—Its failure to moralize the world—Its intolerance and persecution—Infidel morality founded in reason and the laws that govern human beings—Its superiority over faith in promoting good works, inducing correct conduct, and insuring human happiness and improvement.

A LEGACY TO THE FRIENDS OF FREE DISCUSSION

GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE

BEFORE reviewing the facts and personages, as recorded in the Old and New Testaments, it will be in order to notice the Jews, as Jehovah's *chosen race.* The subject will not admit of demonstration; it must be approached and examined in the same manner as the Alkoran of Mahomet.

In order to get at the truth, so as to arrive at something like certainty, and as Infinite Wisdom makes the choice, we must inquire—For what end were they chosen? and did they answer the end of such choice? If they were really chosen by the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe, they must, however strange they acted as a nation, have fulfilled the purpose of their choice; because, whatever they did, was known to Jehovah before the choice was made. How, then, can we reconcile expressions of regret and disappointment by Jehovah after he had selected them as his own peculiar people—such as, "*I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me?*" And again—"*He hated his own inheritance,*"—and also his stirring up and supporting heathen kings to subjugate them as slaves. Is this not the language of disappointment and regret? In fact, no learned divine can get over this striking truth that the Bible fully holds out in the plainest manner, that Jehovah was disappointed in his choice of the Jews as his favorite people. Were they, then, chosen to raise up and support the religion

given to them by God himself? No, impossible! they continually rebelled against Jehovah and worshipped strange Gods; and even Solomon himself built temples for idolatry, contrary to express command. Jehovah says of the Jewish nation—that he did not choose them because they were better than others, for they were always a stiff-necked people; but because he loved their fathers. Poor, miserable reasoning, indeed; to choose one of the most contemptible races of men, because their ancestors, some hundreds of years before, had superior qualities to their degenerate race.

Again, another reason given why Jehovah continued to protect them, is, that the promises before made to Abram, Isaac, and Jacob, bound him in honor so to do. Did not Infinite Wisdom foresee that the seed of Abram would not follow in the faithful footsteps of their great progenitor? If this was not foreseen, then we can discover clearly the reason why Jehovah complains of their rebellious conduct. It will be a vain attempt in ministers of the gospel, to reconcile those complaints, if Jehovah had foresight of what the seed of Abram would do. If "*God is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever,*" how did it happen that he appeared so regardless of the fate of mankind, as to allow some hundreds of years to pass away from the time of the confusion of tongues at the tower of Babel, till his visit to the tent of Abram, during which time, according to Bible history, Jehovah had no worshippers on earth? The whole of mankind were left to make the best of their deserted situation; to worship the Gods of their imagination; and they founded mighty empires, and became powerful on the earth.

Before the Lord called on Abram and Sarah in their tent, something like the following mode of reasoning probably took place in the mind of the Jewish God:—

"I have made a world and peopled it with inhabitants; Adam and Eve rebelled against me; their descendants followed in the footsteps of their progenitors; I have destroyed them all (eight only excepted,) from whom I expected better things. But, alas! they have also sinned against me; and to such a height of wickedness did they arrive, that they began to build a tower to reach my holy habitation. I have sent them off in confusion: and now I have no church, no worshippers,—not even a song of praise to my name. I possess universal empire, without even one single subject to obey me. What is to be done? A thought has struck me:—I will call on honest old Abram."

And here let me remind the reader, that the Bible clearly represents the Jewish God as being as changeable in his disposition and mode of acting as mortals. Like man, he is sometimes in a state of inaction, towards the fate of his offspring: at other times, he arouses from this torpor, and is the most sensitive and active. Sometimes he appears to repent of some failure in the calculations he has made concerning his creatures; attempts to rectify the error, and again

blunders. He at one time says: "*fury is not in me,*" then again he is all fury. No truth is more striking than this,—that the Jehovah of the Bible is not, cannot be, the universal governor of the universe, but merely a creature of the imagination, whose power is confined, having no existence without the covers of the Bible.

But to return to Abram:—Jehovah either goes to him, or sends to him delegates, to acquaint him of the choice he is about to make of "*Abram and his seed forever.*" This is but the beginning of a new experiment on the human race. And here does it not plainly appear, that Jehovah's mode of acting, in this case, is unworthy of the governor of the world? Does it not prove his total disregard for the welfare of the rest of mankind? Good heavens! the believers, one and all, of such absurdities, have ever been, and are still insane.

These heavenly visiters find Abram and Sarah living comfortably in their tent, watching flocks and herds. They (the angels) are treated with the hospitality common in pastoral life. They have their feet washed; they are invited to dine on the best; the calf is immediately killed; and Sarah, was not slow on her part, in the cooking department, from which, one might be induced to think, that over the door of the tent was written: "Dinners Dressed at the Shortest Notice."—Soon after being seated, the messengers make known their errand; Abram was much pleased; Sarah laughed outright. The promise was now ratified that had before been made to Abram, that *his seed should be as the sand of the sea in number,* for that Sarah should have *a son in her old age.* This, to say the least of it, was good pay for a good dinner.

Here, then, the reader will please to notice, was the final settlement as it regards the Jews being the chosen people of God. And here the following ceremony took place:—Three men, angels, or messengers, came from Heaven; they had their feet washed, agreeably to eastern custom; they sat down and did eat, and we may suppose did also drink with Abram and Sarah; one of the three was called the Lord.

I have here strictly adhered to the Bible history of this surprising account; and if it be not literally true, the choice of the Jews, and also the whole of the Jewish and Christian theology, falls prostrate. The account winds up with the departure of the angels to Sodom; where, after having dined with Abram, they took supper with Lot. The day following, Sodom was burnt by fire from Heaven; Lot's wife (by way of making the most of her) was turned into a *pillar of salt*, because she looked back on her old habitation. What became of the angels, Heaven only knows!

But to return to the Jews, as a nation. For what purpose were they chosen? It could not be to establish and support the only true religion on earth, whereby they became the constant and obedient servants of the Most High, because they continued to rebel against Jehovah; and in spite of all his commands to the con-

trary, to worship other gods, which conduct provoked the Lord to anger, and the most dreadful punishment followed for their disobedience. They were not chosen to convert other nations to the faith and worship of the God of Israel, because they were ordered to take the property and destroy the inhabitants of towns and cities, with whom they had not the most distant quarrel. Once more,—Were they chosen for the purpose that Jehovah should be their God, and that they should be his people? No, because they, time after time, rejected his authority as their God, and worshipped strange gods, unknown to their fathers; for which He sent "prophets and holy men" to remonstrate with them. But they killed the prophets; and, as a nation, never were for any length of time converted to, nor obeyed, the *God of Israel.*

It was promised to Abram, "*In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." When and how* have the nations ever been blessed? As for the poor Jews, no curse ever fell so heavy on mortals as fell on them, in consequence of their considering themselves God's chosen people, and other nations treating them as such. For eighteen hundred years, Christians have plundered and murdered them, because they have faithfully worshipped (since He cast them off) the God of their fathers, against whom (when under his protection) they continued to rebel.

The Jews are a strange people. Strange and hard has been their fate; and it can be easily accounted for, from their being originally cheated into the fact that they were *God's chosen people* to the exclusion of the rest of the human race. Christians ask how it could have been possible for Moses or any other person to induce them to believe that they were so chosen, when miracles and wonders were performed in their behalf, if no such things did in reality take place? The answer is easy:—Christians suppose that the books of the Old Testament were written at the time the generation lived, before whose eyes those wonders were performed. This is a fatal mistake. Those miracles and wonders, no doubt, were ante-dated, and brought forward to the Jews in after times, as proofs of what Jehovah had done for their forefathers; for it clearly appears from the internal evidence of Jewish history, that the five books said to have been written by Moses, were not known to the Jews, as a nation, till after the reigns of David, Solomon, and many others. At what time the five books were first made known to the descendants of Abram, is not ascertained; but, whenever it was, they contained the history of the Abrahamic family, including all the miracles and wonders performed by Jehovah in their behalf.

It is easy to perceive, how the Jews might be brought to believe all that was written concerning God's choice of them, as his peculiar people. An ambitious leader and legislator could, without much difficulty, soon establish them firmly in the conviction that they were Jehovah's chosen people. It would flatter their

vanity; and the credulity of the human mind is such, even now, that we need not wonder that the Jews, as a nation, gave credence to the tales of former times concerning their being the especial favorites of Jehovah. The Jews, then, no doubt were cheated into the firm conviction (by their early leaders) that *they*, of all people on earth, were the chosen of Heaven. This will account for their keeping themselves as a separate people—the heaviest curse that could befal them, and which remains on them till this day.

According to the Bible, the dealings of Jehovah towards mankind in general, and of the Jews in particular, will bear out the following remarks:—That, after the confusion of tongues at Babel, and the descendants of Noah were dispersed abroad on the earth, the Bible God forsook the earth for some hundred years. He had no worshippers on earth. He then descends and selects one family to be called after his name. From that moment, Jehovah appears to direct his whole attention to the family concerns of his new choice. Troubles come on in quick succession; Abram's domestic jars claim his attention and superintendence. Sarah and her maid servant quarrel; the maid is turned out of doors, about a child who claimed Sarah's husband as its father.

The Lord interfered and matters were made up. But soon another misunderstanding arose between Sarah and Hagar about the child who had ill-behaved himself towards Abram's wife. Sarah became enraged, and got the better of the Lord; and Abram and she drove Hagar and her son out of the house for good and all. The Lord again made the best of the matter by sending an angel who took charge of Hagar's son; and Abram and Sarah lived happy, and directed all their attention to little Isaac.

To return to the Jews, as a nation. Did they answer the end for which they were chosen? Most undoubtedly they did. For, as "known unto the Lord are all his works from the beginning" whatever his dealings were towards them, in punishing them for their rebellion and disobedience, and whatever suffering they endured in consequence of their departure from his commands, are included in his choice; and are the ends for which they were chosen. Here, then, we have arrived at the ends for which they were selected,—he knowing that they would continue to transgress, and also that such transgression would call forth his anger; and that punishment would follow from their disobedience. These are the only ends that we can discover by their being chosen, and these ends were fully answered.

And as Jehovah is represented as acting the same as men act under similar circumstances, the following remarks are in accordance with his dealings with the people of his choice, namely: that after Jehovah had driven the inhabitants of Babel abroad on the face of the earth, and not having any church or worshippers in the world, he became weary of this state of inaction, and, sighing for something to do, he chose the descendants of Abram for his future operations on the earth.

And from that moment, the Jews required all his attention; his anger was always raging: he had no repose whatever.

In the course of his watching over them, he occasionally stirred up the heathen against them, and suffered them to become bondmen and slaves. Then, again, they had arms put into their hands, and he marched out in aid of their victories; and then the "Lord of Hosts was his name." Then, as if he had forgotten the promises made to their forefathers, he repents of the neglect shown to them; again renews the combat and orders them to war against nations, and *to spare neither old age nor infancy.* So that, by turns, hating them and showing them no mercy; then again, repenting of his severe conduct towards them, proclaiming to the world that the Lord of Hosts or battle is his name,—the Bible account of Jehovah confirms us, in concluding, that, he chose the family of Abram for no other purpose than to disturb and brutalize the rest of the world.

The Jews, and their God, seem to be objects of pity and contempt. Pity for the poor Jews, for their unfortunate fate; and as for Jehovah, if the Bible be true, from the moment he adopted them as his favorites, he became subject to rage, furious anger, grief, repenting of the choice he had made; and finally casting them off. These, then, are some of the glorious ends for which they were chosen. To conclude—Of all the impositions that ever have been palmed on the inhabitants of the earth, destructive of "peace on earth and good will towards men" that of the Jews being God's chosen people, is one of the greatest; the Jehovah of the Bible, being nothing but an imaginary God, to cheat the World into the faith of his being the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

CHAPTER I. FROM THE CREATION TO THE DELUGE

FROM what has before been written, the reader is no doubt convinced, that the writer of this work does not believe the Bible to have any claim to divine authority; but is entirely, from beginning to end, a collection of absurd tales, of historic facts, and of personages that have no foundation in truth, which unfortunately, by being considered of divine origin, has generated a train of calamities destructive to the peace and welfare of the human race. And to account for its hav-ing gained credit, and got such strong foothold in the world, we have only to consider that *fable* is the elder sister of history; that nations have run a long career of incidents, mostly fabulous, before any appearance of authentic history made its way in the world. What took place in those days may be considered like things taking place in the dark.

From such fabulous materials, then, national history always commences. Not that the writers or authors intend to deceive and impose on posterity; they write what they believe; what they have been told, and what is generally credited in those days. Here, then, we discover the Bible to be of use to us, in showing to what lamentable extent poor mortals have sincerely erred in following the legendary tales of former times. And now, that the bandage is removed from our eyes, let us all use our best exertions to spread knowledge among those, who,

with us, are seeking after truth, but who have till now sought it where it is not to be found.

The authors of the Bible, no doubt, followed in the same track as those who are called profane writers. They wrote what had been told them by their forefathers. Hence the miracles and wonders, credited by them, of the most extravagant nature, that never did and never could take place; and unfortunately, for the peace and happiness of mortals, by giving credit to such things, they, for ages, shut up every avenue that would otherwise have led them to the temple of truth.

To believe the account of Adam's transgression, in connection with all the circumstances attending it, to be a matter of fact, appears hardly possible for any man of sane mind. Yet millions there are, who never have had a doubt of its being literally true. Whoever first wrote it, did so from tradition or hearsay, as this is the origin of all national history. It is not impossible but that every nation of antiquity had a similar commencement; because, as history did not appear till hundreds of years after the facts related are said to have taken place, it follows that hearsay evidence is the *best* and *only* evidence that can be obtained. If this is a correct view of the strange tales related in the Bible; then, the more strange and impossible the greater glory is given to God, by swallowing all down, and asking no questions.

The Bible commences, as to persons, with—first, Jehovah, Adam, and Eve, and, according to the orthodox Christians, the Devil was near at hand. Here, then, we have before us, according to Bible history, Jehovah, God of all, about to form or make a world, and put on it both man and beast. This was done without consulting in any way whatever, with Adam and Eve, who were to be placed at the head of all creation. Every circumstance that would take place to Adam and Eve, and their posterity, throughout all ages, was planned, approved of, and finally settled, in the mind of Jehovah, before they had life or being.

Here we have a God knowing all that will take place; and arranging circumstances favorable to its fulfilment. On the other hand, Adam and Eve were ignorant of the past, the present, and also of the future. Only notice the infinite difference between the two contracting parties. I wish the reader to keep this in view, as it respects what is termed the fall of our first parents. In all ages of the Christian superstition, the fall of Adam has been urged as a justification of God's quarrel with the human race.

Let us examine this subject calmly. It is but justice that this should be done; since from one hundred thousand pulpits in the different nations of the earth, the priests never fail to praise and thank the Lord for his goodness to the descendants of Adam. I, on the other hand, will honestly, though feebly, advocate the cause of poor, *libelled, condemned, priest-ridden Man.* If, before our first parents had

been called into life, they had been informed on what conditions *they* and their *posterity* were to receive it, together with the final destiny of ninety out of every hundred of their unfortunate race, they would no doubt have exclaimed, "For humanity's sake, let us forever sleep in the womb of chaos!" It is the common practice from the pulpit, as also from the writings of the orthodox Christians, to libel the human race, by saying, that man has rebelled against God, and turned from him; when the truth is, that in all ages and nations, man, has been seeking after the best God he could find, and God; has always remained the great *Unknown*, while man, in whatever state we find him, "savage, saint, or sage," has been endeavoring to find out God.

This has always been his misfortune. By trying to find out the absent and unknown God, he has, in his imagination, invented and followed a thousand foolish whims, till, losing all correct ideas of moral rectitude, he has died of old age without arriving at the knowledge of *whom or what* to worship. Whereas, if he had not troubled himself at all about his maker, and, by the aid of his reasoning powers, had come to the just conclusion, that as he knew not how, nor where to find God, it would follow that it was the business of his maker, and not *his* to instruct in the right way to worship the true God. This mode of reasoning will be reprobated by Christians as horrid and wicked; but in reply, it may be asked, to what amount of knowledge have they arrived by all their seeking after him?

We now return to the Bible account of Adam and Eve's creation. The position that justice, strict justice, is due on the part of God towards his new creation, must never be lost sight of in our investigations. If any thing like trickery or injustice on his part is recorded, we, without hesitation, denounce it as a libel on his character, and totally unworthy of the least credit. In reviewing the Old and New Testament, as being considered a Divine Revelation, this criterion will be always referred to; for, if any writings purporting to be of Divine authority, represent their author to be any thing otherwise than a God impartial and just, such writings will, by the author of this work, be considered entirely unworthy of the broad seal of Heaven, and as fully deserving of being held up to human beings as false, and a flagrant imposition on the credulity of mankind.

And here the reader is reminded, that we have now before us, in the creation of man, a scene of the most surprising nature. A God, infinite in wisdom, unbounded in power, about to bring into existence a race of beings; he, on his part, possessing all knowledge of the past, the present, and also of the future; and they, on their part, entirely passive, not being consulted as to their organization, their wishes, or the consequences that would result to their progeny. From such a position, what ought we to expect, in order that the being about to be made, might have a fair point from which to start in his untried career? Would we not suppose that every advantage should have been given to the party who had no

voice concerning his future destiny, nor that of his race? The smallest omission in providing for or securing his first movements, would be fatal to his happiness, and also that of his race.

That no such precaution, on the part of the God of the Bible, was pursued towards his new made creatures, will be fully proved by the examination of the events recorded as having taken place in the Garden of Eden! Whatever were the passions or the inclinations included in the physical organization of our first parents, they had not any control over them whatever, because of the impossibility of their being consulted in a state of non-existence. Whatever they were then, and, also, what was to be their future destiny, was known to Jehovah only; to Adam and Eve, it was all unknown. This, then, was the state of the pretended Creator and the creatures.

We will pass over the account of the six days' creation, together with the serpent's deceiving Eve by the aid of what the Christians believe to be the Devil. It deserves no comment, except, that from the account given in the Bible, we may infer, that happy would it have been for Adam if he had remained an old bachelor; for, in that case, Satan perhaps would neither have scraped acquaintance with the serpent, nor ever thought of lurking about the garden. But the source of all human misfortune, according to the Old and New Testaments, is included in Eve's eating the forbidden fruit. We may ask, why was one tree forbidden among so many? Certainly as a trap, set to catch the inexperienced, virtuous, and harmless Eve. What humbug! to make such a fuss about Adam's being alone, without a help-mate; and: at the very time the rib operation was going on, Jehovah, stood by, and knew whatever he might say, that the woman, on leaving her ribship, would damn all that he had declared to be good. Can we, dare we, charge the Governor of the Universe with such trickery? It must never be lost sight of, that the very prohibition of one tree, would be certain, in their state of ignorance, to produce the consequence that followed: viz., to induce Eve, from curiosity, to partake of it. Is it any thing short of insanity to suppose that such dreadful consequences would follow so trifling an offence?

This forbidden tree had something in it, that, to us, seems very strange. It was to impart knowledge; and as the fruit was inviting to the eye, and a desire existing to obtain knowledge, Eve fell a victim to her unfortunate curiosity. Nor was this all. Until Eve ate thereof, it appears that the happy couple did not perceive their want of clothing. Instantly they set to work to repair this first mishap, by sewing leaves together to make aprons. But in this stage of the business, the Lord seems to have some compassion left, for he, "*the Lord, made coats of skins and clothed them*"—poor Adam and Eve being ignorant of the strength and durability of leaf aprons. We may suppose the Lord as thinking or saying to Adam,—"Why, this will never do; you must have something more lasting, or else, by every wind

that blows, you will be no more than a bundle of tattered rags." Soon, therefore, by the Lord's assistance, poor Adam and Eve jumped into a new suit of clothes! And, to make sure of man's destruction, by taking that which was forbidden, the serpent was permitted to point out the advantages that would follow; so that the appearance of the fruit, and the desire to get knowledge, urged on by the serpent, together with Eve's ignorance that any thing like lying existed in the Garden of Eden, the disobedience of our first parents was, by ninety-nine chances out of a hundred, secured, and the damnation of their posterity made sure.

Now, to ascribe such conduct to God, such barefaced design to quarrel with his new creation, is horrid in the extreme, and would disgrace (bad as it is said he is) the very Devil himself. And if the account is not true, if the facts, as recorded, did not take place, but are altogether to be considered as an allegory, then it follows, that human redemption is an allegory, also; and the whole fabric of the Jewish and Christian religion falls to the ground.

In dismissing this father of humbugs, (the fall of our first parents,) which ended in Adam and Eve's expulsion from Paradise, by way of consolation, we may in justice say, "Farewell, Adam and Eve; you have had but a rough beginning. God and the Devil have both conspired to make you unhappy, But never mind, do your best; comfort and console each other; the whole world is before you. This garden trade has proved a failure altogether. If you can but procure a spade, a hoe, and shovel, you will in time get on; and, as your present misfortune originated from that unforeseen quarrel in the garden, live in peace, and share equally in your troubles, and also in your prosperity. Things are not so bad, after all; and if Adam's wound in the side is not yet entirely healed, it is your duty, Eve, as a good wife, to pay particular attention to it. It is for your interest, also; for if Jehovah should, be again offended with you, as in the garden, and take from Adam the opposite rib from which you sprang, and of it make a second Eve, the serpent would pay another visit to mar your happiness, and your troubles would have no end."

What kind of religion there was, if any, in those days, we know not; but Cain and Abel, Adam's sons, appear to have been worshippers of Jehovah, notwithstanding the expulsion of their parents from Paradise. We have it recorded that, in the course of their worship, Cain's offering was of the "fruits of the earth," and Abel's was "a lamb with the fat thereof." Cain's offering had no respect paid to it; but, on the other hand, Abel's offering was respected. The reason why the one was rejected and the other accepted, we have no means of knowing; at any rate, Jehovah knew that murder would follow as a consequence. Here, then, we have an account of the *first religious quarrel*, and the murderous spirit that was connected with it. And history confirms this truth, that the same murderous spirit has always, more or less, shown itself in all religious disputes;

but more dreadful and furious in the Jewish and Christian religions than in any others. From Cain, the first religious murderer, to the present day, intolerance and blood appear to have stained the pages of Jewish and Christian history. And now, that those days of persecution have passed away, let us do all in our power to prevent their recurrence.

Following the history of the antediluvians, in Genesis, chap. vi., we are not a little surprised to find a new race of, beings on earth. We find, that after "*men began to multiply an the face of the earthy and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose, and they bare children unto them; the same became mighty men, which were of old men of renown.*" Here we may ask, is it possible to believe in the truth of this account? But for its being recorded in the Bible, no person, having one grain of common sense, would for a moment give it the least credit. But its truth rests on the same authority as the fall of our first parents, and no doubt is equally true. We are told, by Christ, that in heaven, they "*neither marry nor are given in marriage*"; but here it seems that the sons of God were tired of their restraint, and broke loose, and came a wooing the pretty young girls of those days: and, from the account, the courtship was short; for they took to them, wives of all that they chose. Good heavens! how the young men of those days must have stared to see the young ladies So pliable! If, in those days, "bustles" were not worn by the girls, the sons of God soon put them, one and all, in a bustle. Wonder how those gentlemen were dressed, that the women became so soon captivated! If, in the course of their negociations, some girl, more thoughtful than the rest, had asked her strange lover what employment he intended to follow, he would have been stuck fast to have given an answer. After all, if this account is to be considered true, heaven is not in so happy a state as is represented; for the sons of God became uneasy in their confinement, and preferred a love frolic to Gabriel's evening song. As heaven is considered to have the most enchanting music, perhaps the new visiters brought with them their instruments, and began their courtship by a heavenly jig. It does not appear that Jehovah exhibited any displeasure on account of the sons of God leaving the blessed abodes and marrying the daughters of men. For aught we know, it was an experiment to improve the antediluvian race.

But leaving this point for ministers of the gospel to settle, it seems as if their progeny were a jolly set of fellows, and became "*men of renown.*" Taking, then, a review of the world from its creation until it was destroyed by the deluge, we discover, that if the facts recorded are true, and did really take place, it was one continued chapter of blunders. First, Adam is made and set to work. It is next discovered that he requires a partner; but, behold! no materials are left with which to make one. Adam is then laid up in dock; taken to pieces like an old

steamboat; one of his timbers removed, and a woman appears. Things go on well, but only for a short time. Eve soon longs for fruit; she takes it; then, lo, and wonder! she and her husband discover, and for the first time feel, a sense of decency. They set to work to make aprons; this is but lost labor. The Lord, it appears by the account, was not in the garden, but on returning, found his servants partly clothed. He informs them of their error; sets to work and protects them from wind and weather. To be sure, they were not turned out naked; the very ground was cursed for their bad conduct, and thorns and thistles would spring up to annoy them. Whether the Garden of Eden was given up altogether, or another gardener employed to keep it, we have no account.

This, at any rate, was paying dear for an apple, or peach. We find, however, that our first parents did not despair; for they soon raised a family. If this expulsion did actually take place, to talk of family troubles is nothing, compared to this unfortunate couple. For one single fault, to be driven as outcasts from their only known home, to wander they did not know where, without experience or capital to begin with! Of all the houseless wanderers, their lot seems to be the most piteous to behold.

Again, whether "the sons of God" Were permitted to descend and marry the daughters of men by way of improving the race, we know not. If improvement was Jehovah's object in this strange union, another failure, equal to former ones, was the result. The antediluvians, one and all, were so wicked, that "the Lord repented that he had made man on the earth; and it grieved him at his heart." One exception only, in the family of Noah; to whom Jehovah immediately communicated his determination to *destroy man and beast by a flood*—Noah's family only excepted.

To conclude this chapter, a few remarks will suffice.—If the foregoing account of the creation is maintained to be truly the work of Infinite Wisdom and Power, what a picture presents itself to the mind of a sensible and reasonable man! Can it be possible for such an one to believe it? His mind must reject it as the most barefaced falsehood that ever could be proposed to human credence; as impossible to be true, and equally impossible to be credited by any person having the least claim on common sense. And yet, in this crazy world, to give credit to it, is to be respectable; but to deny its truth, is to be infamous, and an object of Christian horror, unworthy to live in this world, and sure of damnation in the next. No man living can get over this certain conclusion, that if the Governor of the Universe did act towards Adam and Eve, together with the rest of the antediluvians, as is recorded in the Bible, he made them for no other apparent end than to quarrel with them, so as to have a pretence to punish and torment creatures who had no power to resist. And can such a Being be the object of love and adoration? The Devil himself is not painted in colors half so black.

But enough has been said on this subject. We turn from it in disgust, and boldly say to all the world, that no such God ever did, nor does now exist; nor did the facts recorded in the Bible, of Adam's fall, *ever take place.*

CHAPTER II. A REVIEW OF THE DELUGE AND THE CONFUSION OF TONGUES AT THE TOWER OF BABEL

TO destroy all mankind by drowning, because of their wickedness, seems to us a strange reason; for, when we attentively consider it, we are compelled to conclude that the Jewish God had banished from his moral government the very appearance of justice. What! no compassion for the young men and women who had been brought up under circumstances so unfavorable to virtue, from the bad example of their fathers? What! no mercy for the thousands of infants? What! no feeling towards the youth, from manhood through all the gradations down to helpless infancy? None. We know that it is common for men and women to go crazy. From so strange a perversion of justice on the part of Jehovah, it would seem that he, at times, has his crazy fits, also. Destroy the innocent with the guilty—allowing the innocent no chance of escape! If this were performed by an earthly monarch, *insanity* would be the most charitable allowance to be made for so atrocious an act. But when ascribed to the all-wise and powerful God, and insisted on as an article of faith, such doctrines are only fit for madmen to preach and idiots to hear. Christians little think to what extent they blaspheme the God whom they profess to adore.

Let us bring this horrid scene nearer to our eyes:—thousands and tens of thousands of children from six years old and up to the age of maturity, of both sexes, imploring for mercy, cut off in the midst of enjoyment, for crimes over which they had no control, and which their tender age precluded them from committing: yet to them the door of mercy was forever closed. A raging Almighty God commanding Noah to proceed, that his vengeance might be satisfied! Only look at such a picture, so faintly drawn; for if the deluge did really take place, this portrait bears but a small resemblance to a scene too dreadful for the con-

templation of man, and, Oh! heavens! too unjust and cruel to ascribe to a God. To drown the whole of the human race by a flood, is one of the most dreadful visitations of vengeance that cruelty could execute. In it, we discover nothing to defend. The mind shrinks back with horror at the bare recital. It is one among hundreds of such acts recorded as being performed by the Lord.

Turn to what part of the history you will, where the Jewish God is about to do something, or to interfere in any way in human affairs, the conduct ascribed to him, either in punishment or granting favor, you will find to be always contrary to justice and reason. If justice be the theme, it will end in cruelty. If to show favor, it will be sure to be ill directed and allied to favoritism. Among men, justice is the foundation of correct moral principles. On the contrary, the Bible God acts as if influenced by fury and almighty rage; soon, very soon, angry; very hard to please; punishing and destroying his creatures, as if pain were a good instead of an evil, and man died without a groan. It is not possible to calculate the amount of evil that has taken place on the earth, in consequence of Christians taking for their example the conduct of their God. Let us mark the difference between any misfortune that may befall the human race in the course of events, and the same evil inflicted by the Lord. In the former case, man will sympathize with his unfortunate fellow man; in the latter, however, it *appears* cruel and unjust. "It is just, yes, and also merciful," says the Christian, "for God to destroy the innocent descend-, ants of his enemies, because he has a right to do whatever he pleases with his own."

This mode of reasoning, the believers in the divinity of the Bible resort to, in order to shield Jehovah from the attacks of Infidels, for bringing on the deluge; and the same mode is followed throughout, to justify the Lord in all his warlike movements against the nations doomed to die by the hands of his chosen people. Can we, then, wonder that both Jews and Christians, believing in, and worshipping, a God whose acts are so revolting to every idea of justice and humanity,—can we, ought we, to be surprised that they have drank so deeply of that spirit of cruelty, injustice, and intolerance, that is recorded concerning the dealings of Jehovah with his creatures, in involving in one common ruin the innocent with the guilty? For it is from the horrible character given of the Lord, that both Jews and Christians have in all ages drawn in, as by a kind of inspiration, the same spirit of cruelty and proscription, in imitation of their God.

It is in vain that Christians assert, that the persecution that has attended the progress of Christianity, in all ages, is but the abuse of it No; it has been the *thing itself.* The moral precepts of the New Testament (and many of them are excellent) have never been strong enough to deter men from putting each other to death on account of their difference of faith. Cruel Calvin, with the New Testament before his eyes, and that saying staring him in the face, "*He that hateth his brother is a*

murderer,"—with this before his eyes, he caused the unfortunate Servetus to be burnt by a slow fire, so completely had the doctrines of the Bible destroyed in him all compassion.

To show what baneful influence the doctrines of the Bible have had upon men eminent for their wisdom, justice, and humanity, the following authentic account will fully prove:—In the year 1664, two old women were hanged upon a charge of witchcraft, having been tried by a Jury before three learned Judges, at the head of whom was Sir Matthew Hale, who passed the dreadful sentence of the law, as it then stood, which was put into execution in about two weeks afterwards. A more upright, honest, wise, and humane Judge never sat in a court of justice; and yet, behold! he condemned and caused two poor, ignorant, and defenceless old women to be hanged for a crime they neither did nor could commit The remarks made to the Jury, by Sir Matthew, in substance were the following:—"Gentlemen of the Jury, you have nothing to do in inquiring whether the crime of witchcraft can be committed; the Bible has settled that subject,—but, whether the evidence you have heard is proof that the prisoners are guilty of the charges brought against them,"—which charges were, killing, their neighbors' children by the agency and power of the Devil, and causing them to vomit pins and nails. Here, then, it is clear that it was the Word of God, and not Judge Hale, that brought about the death of those unfortunate women. Had Sir Matthew been an *Infidel*, the page of history had never been stained by the blood of two poor helpless beings.

Let not Christians, then, say that persecution and intolerance are the abuses of Christianity. Its very essence is congenial with blood and torture in all their horrid forms. The moral precepts of the Gospel never have nor ever will so far neutralize the doctrines of the Bible, as to guarantee the human race in trusting power in the hands of the disciples of Jesus. They always will, according to the New Testament, prefer the man of orthodox faith, to men in common, however virtuous.

Having shown the injustice and cruelty of drowning all the inhabitants of the earth,—on account of the wickedness of some who ought to have been made an example to society at large,—let us inquire, what end was obtained by so universal a destruction? Have the human race been more moral, and, on the whole, more virtuous, since the flood than before? If they have not, (and that they have not, the Bible itself fully proves,) it then follows, that no moral good resulted from their being destroyed; and instead of the Lord's anger being softened down, it would rage in all its former fury. If the Lord really said to Noah, what the Bible records, "*that it repented him that he had made man on the earthy and it grieved him at his heart*" it is as much as to say,—"I can bear this distracted state of mind no longer; I will try you and your family, Noah, and ease myself of the

disappointment I have endured from the wickedness of my creation; I will have a better race on the earth which I have made, or man shall cease to exist."

But did a better race succeed? No; for Noah, in time, became intemperate, and in a fit of intoxication became an object of contempt to one of his sons, who, so far forgot his duty to his intoxicated father, that instead of concealing his folly and shame, he exposed it. When Noah awoke from his slumber, and discovered what had taken place, he began most heartily to curse his son and his posterity for ages to come, and also to prophesy evil concerning them, which prophecy, according to the Bible, the Lord approved of and brought to pass. Here, again, Jehovah is disappointed; that is, if he expected a moral world better than the one he had destroyed.

Turning, then, with detestation from an account which represents the Governor of the Universe as having drowned a world and repented he had made it, and also of being grieved at heart, we will notice Noah's preparing the ark and making ready for his singular voyage. Nothing short of repeated miracles could have completed the embarkation of Noah, his family, and the living cargo, or freight. A miracle must have been wrought on all those beasts, whose savage nature had made them a terror to man, in order that they might become tame, and be conveyed to the vicinity of the ark. Another miracle must have been in continual operation on all those who were engaged in procuring the beasts, birds, and reptiles, to induce them to labor without any remuneration for their toils, but the certainty of being left to perish by the flood. A continuation of miracles must follow on, to induce the then population to stand quiet, up to their necks in water, and not to make an effort to force their way into the ark before it was closed up; and also to enable Noah and his family to attend to feeding and keeping clean their respective cages and dens. The water, also, to drown the world, and cover the highest hills, must be created for this express purpose, and then reduced again into its native nothingness. For, from an accurate calculation, it would require one hundred and eight times as much water as is now on the face of the earth, to cover the highest mountain, admitting its height to be no more than twenty thousand feet, and there are mountains still higher. It would follow, therefore, that after the flood, one hundred and eight oceans must be annihilated, there not being room for so much water on the earth.

From what has been said concerning the flood, it is clear that no such thing really took place, but that the whole is fabulous; because, the deluge is said to be in consequence of the Lord's being grieved at the wickedness of the antediluvians. This is no reason why he should destroy them, even admitting the possibility of the fact. His grief could not be lessened by so doing, as men since the flood have been equally wicked as before; and have continued so, down to the present time. If the Lord was grieved then, and repented at having made man, he is still

unhappy and continues to repent, because the evil that caused him then to grieve and to repent, is not removed.

The reader is requested not to lose sight of one thing that is equally glaring both in the Old Testament and the New—that the Jehovah of the Jews is always blundering and making mistakes; the choice he often makes does not answer the end purposed, but falls short. Another and another plan is pursued; still, some striking failures take place. The God of the Bible is as unlike the Supreme Power that governs the material universe, as the swarthy African is unlike the fair complexion of the temperate zone.

As the main object of this work is to prove, as clear as the nature of argument will admit, that the Jehovah of the Jews is not the Supreme Ruler of Nature, let us examine their respective characters. The God of the Jews, in his acts, is governed by no correct principle of justice; he is changeable, and subject to all the passions that, in turn, agitate the minds of mortals. How different is the Ruler of the World, of whom we know nothing, abstracted from the material universe! In the government of the material world, we discover that "*order is heaven's first law*"; that a regular arrangement of causes and effects pervade every department of nature. In it, there is no doing and undoing; no derangement in the wonderful, adaptation of cause and effect, of principles and consequences. In the laws that rule the universe, nothing happens that has the appearance of falling short of ends intended to be carried out; these laws depend not on the will or conduct of mortals; but the more we are acquainted with them, the more we are compelled to admire the wonderful wisdom and harmony of the mighty whole.

Is the kingdom of grace, or, in other words, does the Old and New Testaments present to us a God any way similar to the power that rules the world? The God of Nature, an expression used to convey no other meaning than the power that mingles itself with the mighty whole,—does this power show any thing like partiality to nations, or to sects and parties? Do the general laws, by which the world is governed, indicate any thing in their author of a vindictive or vengeful character. Any thing like disappointment or regret? Does the prosperity of nations, or of individuals, depend (abstractly considered) on whether they worship one, or many Gods, or none at all? On the contrary, the Jehovah of the Bible is depicted as being more unstable than mortals. Ye Jews and Christians! in vain do you vindicate the character and conduct of your God towards the human race, by saying that "he ought to do what he pleases with his own." The conduct of the most cruel and unjust tyrant that ever lived can with more truth and propriety be exonerated than your God; because a tyrant, however wicked and cruel, may have to contend with those who are capable of doing him an injury, and self-defence on his part may form some excuse for his actions. A tyrant may have to come in contact with others, his equals in power and physical force. But

the Christian God is above any personal injury; he has no rivals; possessing all power, all knowledge, nothing can take place by him unforeseen. If mortals, by their conduct, call forth his anger, he chooses to be angry. The human race did not ask for existence; he alone was the projector. If mortals, in the course of their career through life, (as foreseen by him) deserve punishment, he felt happy in punishing them. Ye ministers! prate, then, no longer against the "**unblushing Infidel**"; for, as you maintain that the God of the Bible is the author of the universe, we leave you to blush at the horrible character you portray of him whom you hypocritically call a God of love! Oh! heavens! what dreadful consequences have resulted from the Jehovah of the Jews being worshipped as the author of nature! The worshippers of such a God have in all ages partaken, more or less, of his character for cruelty, injustice, and intolerance; and under this banner "whole armies have marched forth to glut the earth with blood."

Viewing, then, the Bible account of the deluge, in which the innocent were destroyed with the sinner, as but a fabulous tale, had I a voice loud enough to make all mankind hear, I would boldly and fearlessly proclaim it a falsehood, disgraceful to God, and too foolish to obtain credit in the present age.

CHAPTER III. FROM THE CONFUSION OF TONGUES TO THE BIRTH OF MOSES

THE object to be accomplished in this chapter is, to show, from the Bible history itself, the folly and absurdity of admitting the Jehovah of the Bible to be the Supreme Ruler of the Universe; for, after destroying every thing that had life, by the flood, Jehovah, somewhat like a conquering hero, returns to heaven. The war with the human race being over, Divine vengeance is satisfied. No religious worship, that we read of, was then known on the earth. But, behold! a new outbreak occurs, that requires the immediate interference of the God of Israel.

In Genesis, chapter xi., it is recorded, that the then inhabitants of the earth began to build a tower, the top of which was to reach the heavens, that they might make to themselves a great name, and be no more scattered abroad on the earth. What crime it could be considered by Jehovah, for men to unite in building a tower so lofty that the top would reach the heavens, we know not. However ignorant the then inhabitants of the earth were, the Lord knew that they could not annoy him by the erection of a tower to any height they might be inclined to raise it. The writer of the account makes it appear, that Jehovah became uneasy at the progress the workmen were making, and at last could bear it no longer; so he came down, as the term is, and confounded their speech in such a manner that they could not understand each other.

Can it be possible, for men who reflect at all, to believe such glaring nonsense? The writers of the Bible have not only made a God unjust and vengeful, but they have put into his head such foolish whims, as, that after having destroyed a world by a deluge, the innocent with the guilty, he came down from heaven to scare away carpenters and bricklayers from their honest labor; and have made him virtually to say—"Be off! Clear out! I will not permit you to hammer away here!" The conduct of the Bible God towards the builders of Babel, and, in fact, the whole of the then human family, seems to be like that of an un-

feeling father, who cares not for his children, and who is also equally indifferent as to whether the human race worshipped him, or fell down to worship stocks or stones; for, instead of ordering them to build an altar to the true and living God, he ordered them off, to wander abroad on the earth, and do the best they could. And here an opportunity was lost of insuring their conversion; since, as they were all of one language and speech, how easy to convert the whole race at once! Now, here we may discover a *man-made God.* Sometimes he is all jealousy for his own name—all fury against idolatry; at other times, he seems to care but little for the happiness of his creatures, or the honor of his name. After having compelled the builders of Babel to quit their undertaking, Jehovah returns back to heaven; and from the silence of Bible history, he does not appear to have superintended human affairs at all, for hundreds of years after. And now, ye ministers of the Gospel of grace, what have you to say in vindication of the very existence of such a God? The origin of your God is of man's creation; he never had a real existence.

After an absence of many years, having given up, to all appearance, any interest in human affairs, Jehovah turns his attention to Abram and his family, and adopts them as his chosen people. And from this account, we clearly discover the absurdity of believing the God of Abram to be the universal sovereign; for, from the moment of the adoption of Abram and his seed forever, from that very moment the family affairs of Abram, Isaac and Jacob, seem to engross the attention of Jehovah; and, while I am writing, I blush for shame at the credulity of mankind in professing to believe such contemptible trash. What can be more weak and ridiculous than to suppose that the Lord and two angels came to the tent of Abram, and went through all the ceremonies of a pastoral visit,—such as washing of feet and taking water until dinner was prepared, and that while partaking of Abram's hospitality, they inquired for his wife, and then renewed what before had been promised, namely—that Sarah, Abram's wife, should have a son in her old age?

One remarkable feature, throughout the whole of the Bible, presents itself. It is this: that in every movement Jehovah makes among his favorite people the Jews, and in all the correspondence he holds with Abram and his seed, every thing is done by way of experiment on that people; as if Jehovah did not know what would happen until he had gained information by *actual experiment!* In the case of the builders of the Tower of Babel, it is said—"*And the Lord came down to see the city, and the tower which the children of men builded.*" And again—"*Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language.*" And also, in the case of Sodom, the Lord told Abram concerning the cry of the wickedness of the inhabitants of Sodom. The Lord said to Abram—"*I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; if not,*

I will know."—[Genesis xviii. 21.] Abram, having heard of the intended destruction of the Sodomites, remonstrates with Jehovah on the injustice of destroying the innocent with the guilty. Then follows the pleading of Abram with the Lord, in favor of Sodom; and from the willingness of the Lord to comply with the request of Abram,—if the old patriarch had had the moral courage to have gone on with one more request,—Sodom might have been saved. The personage who communed with Abram is, by the inspired writer, called the "*Judge of all the earth.*" The same who had that day dined with Abram, and to whom Abram said, "*Behold, now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes*"!

And now, patient reader, what have Christians to believe in reference to this matter? Why, they must believe that the great immortal God came to the earth from his Unknown abode, in the likeness of *man*, in company with two angels; that he called on Abram, who was surrounded by his flocks and herds, dwelling in a tent, perhaps inferior to our Indian log-houses; that he, the Judge of all the earth, with two of his angels, were (according to eastern hospitality) presented with water to drink, and also, water to wash their feet—a practice most refreshing in a warm climate. An invitation was given them to dine, which they accepted and so particular is the narrative, that, what they had for dinner is mentioned: the calf was instantly slain, and the baking commenced.

And here we may inquire, whether or not this circumstance did really take place, as it is recorded? If it did, then the believers in the Bible, as a Divine Revelation, have to believe that the Great God of all, the Universal Ruler of the Universe, came on earth to the tent of Abram, in the form of a man, with two of the angelic host; and that they *then and there* had their feet washed, and sat down to a dinner of veal and griddle cakes, and did eat thereof, and drink water. Now, if Moses, or any other pretended inspired writer, wrote this, I ask, is not the God of Abram a *man-made God?* He is said to have feet that required washing, and an appetite that required food. He had a mouth, teeth, and also a stomach to receive food; and we may infer that he had hands, for it is not recorded that Abram cut his victuals, or fed him or the angels with a spoon.

If the believers of the Bible consider that the foregoing account is allegorical, and not to be considered as having really taken place, it then follows that human redemption is allegorical, also; for the promise made to Abram was, that *In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.* This promise included the mission of Jesus, who was to save his people from their sins, and also to *heal the nations, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.* Christians, then, if they believe the Bible to be a Divine Revelation, must believe that the Judge of the whole earth, while at dinner, in promising Abram a son, included also, in that promise, the mission of Jesus, *the Saviour of the world.*

And here we may notice the views that Abram had of the Supreme Judge of all. As he appeared to Abram in the form of a man, and as such was treated by him, Abram brought forth water to wash the feet of the Lord, and invited him to dine, which he did; which is proof positive that Abram considered that the Lord was in the habit of taking refreshment, such as eating and drinking, or he would never have thought of giving the Lord such an invitation. If this account be true, the New Testament must be false, when it declares that *no man hath seen God at any time, and that none can see him and live.* But of Abram it is written, that he saw the Lord, face to face, and also that they dined together; and, as if to remove all doubt of its truth, it mentions what they dined on, namely—veal and cakes. It therefore follows, that the account, as recorded of the Lord's dining with Abram, must be taken in its plain and literal sense; because it is connected with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and also of Lot's wife being turned *into a pillar of salt*; which account is referred to as having taken place, by the writers of the New Testament. After the Lord and the two angels had retired from dinner, the Lord informed Abram of his errand to the above cities; which was, to find out whether their ill-fated inhabitants were as wicked as they had been reported; as he (the Lord) was determined to know. It was then that Abram began to plead with the Lord, and to show the injustice of destroying the innocent with the guilty, as from the nature of the crime for which the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were to be destroyed, all the women and children were innocent. Abram, therefore, saw immediately the horrid cruelty and injustice of such destruction as was about to overtake the unfortunate inhabitants of Sodom. In the discussion, Abram had the best of the argument, but his efforts were unavailing. Fire came down from heaven, and they were burnt alive, innocent and guilty together.

From the account it appears, that after the Lord parted with Abram, he also took his leave of the angels; and what became of the Lord, the Bible is silent; but the angels, after having dined with Abram, took supper with Lot. This Lot seems to be the only man in Sodom that was worth saving; and he certainly acted very strange: for when his townsmen insisted on knowing who the angels were, and on what business they came, Lot offered to turn into the street his two innocent daughters, to be dealt with according to the wishes of those vile wretches, if they would but permit him to lodge and entertain the strangers. Certainly, the morality of the Bible is most sublime, and the ways of the Jewish God *past finding out!*

The case of Lot's wife is, to all appearance, very strange. Her crime of looking back, would appear to us much less than that of her husband's in turning his daughters into the street. The history of Lot winds up with a strange account, and not very favorable to strict morality, namely—the project of his daughters in making him drunk, and the disgusting consequences that followed. Thus, it is

clear, that Lot's wife (bless the good old woman!) was the best, in a moral point of view, in the whole family; and only for looking back on her beloved home, she was treated like a dead sow, by being put into pickle. To conclude this tirade of nonsense and folly, we will add—"*remember Lot's wife.*"

It appears from Bible history, that when Abram left his own country, he was any thing but rich; and as his substance consisted in a few heads of cattle, a famine soon overtook him as he journeyed, which induced him to go down into Egypt, the then granary of the earth. To prevent any unpleasant consequences that might result to Abram, because of the beauty of Sarah, his wife, she was instructed to call her husband her brother. It turned out as was expected, for she was recommended to Pharaoh, and taken into the royal palace. Immediately, presents came unto Abram in quick succession, consisting of "*sheep and oxen, and he asses; men-servants and maidservants; and she asses and camels.*" But the Lord, ever watchful over Abram's affairs, troubled Pharaoh and his house; and when Pharaoh discovered the cause of this evil, he remonstrated with Abram for his duplicity, and returned his wife undefiled. So kind, however, was the Lord to Abram, that the presents were made before the cheat was discovered, and he came out of Egypt a rich man.

This may be said to be the beginning of Abram's good luck; and we may suppose that in returning home to their old pasturage, Sarah would laugh and exclaim—"See what it is to have a handsome wife!" Another famine will make brother Abram and sister Sarah the richest couple in pastoral life.

In the course of events, Abram and Sarah had recourse again to the same trick, on Abimelech, King of Gerar, which had been acted with so much success in Egypt. Sarah, on account of her beauty, *at ninety years of age*, was taken by the King; but the Lord, ever the guardian of Sarah's virtue, came to Abimelech in a dream, and threatened him and all his house with death, if Sarah was not given up to her lawful husband. The King remonstrated with the Lord, and justified his conduct by declaring, that both Abram and Sarah had deceived him; and said—"*In the integrity of my hearty and innocency of hands, have I done this.*" The Lord replied—"*I know that you did it innocently, for I withheld thee from, sinning against me; therefore, suffered I thee not to touch her.*" Again, as before, presents of cattle, men-servants, and maid-servants, with a thousand pieces of silver into the bargain, were given to Abram, with his wife, who is as chaste as morning dew.

I have dwelt longer on this account than I at first intended, merely to show the folly in believing that the Almighty Lord of all had any concern in such contemptible fooleries as are recorded in the family concerns of Abram. One thing, however, is omitted; and that is, the quarrel between Sarah and Hagar. The tent or house became too hot to hold those rival women; at last, Sarah triumphed

by turning out Hagar and her love-begotten child, which demanded the Lord's interference, and gave poor Abram no small share of trouble.

From the moment that Jehovah adopted the family of Abram, the Bible account warrants us in supposing that the family concerns of that patriarch particularly engaged the attention of Jehovah; since, for every trifling concern that took place, the Lord was applied to in order to settle the matter. Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau, when about to become a mother, applied to the Lord for information respecting her singular situation; and the Lord informed her that she would be the mother of two celebrated nations, and satisfied her mind as to every other inquiry she made. And here we may ask, how it was that the Lord, in those days, was so easy of access? How every gossipping old woman could lay her case before the Lord, and wait his advice and answer? The reply is at hand. The whole account of the Lord's saying unto Abram, or the Lord's saying unto Moses, and again, "*the word of the Lord came unto Moses, saying,*" is all humbug: no such word ever came; no such conversation ever took place.

Whoever wrote the Book of Genesis, has placed Jehovah in an immoral point of view; as keeping company with unprincipled knaves, and as acting without any regard to the strict rules of justice and mercy; as having a system of favoritism, which does not admit of administering impartial justice. The case of Jacob and Esau is directly opposed to truth and impartiality. Esau was, in a moral point of view, evidently the best of the two; but Jacob was Jehovah's choice. Esau, according to Bible history, was a hardy, industrious, and generous man. Jacob, on the other hand, was his mother's pet; and the deception which he and his mother played on old Isaac, who was blind, is in strict accordance with the conduct of all the Lord's favorites. Jacob, according to Bible history, was, through his whole life, full of deception and trickery. He could lie and take a false oath to deceive his blind father; and by deceit, deprive his brother Esau of his lawful right of inheritance. And yet the Lord was with him, and connived at all his baseness!

But Jacob, conscious of his wickedness, and justly deserving his brother's resentment, fled to his uncle for protection. On his way, the Lord appeared to him in visions; and, notwithstanding his lying and false swearing to his father, promised him divine assistance. Jacob still acted in the same crafty manner, even with the Lord himself; always having his own self-interest in view; for, after the Lord had said, Genesis xxvii., 15, "*And behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of*"—even after this promise from the Lord, in verse 20 it is said—"And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, if God 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 in peace, **then shall the Lord be my God**."

Well done, Jacob! that is making a good Jew bargain. Jehovah and Jacob both kept their word; for Jacob married his two cousins, the daughters of his uncle Laban, and staid with him until he, by the help of the Lord, contrived to jockey old Laban out of the best of his cattle, and ran away back to his own father's house, taking with him, by stealth, the gods of Laban his father. Thus did Jacob not only triumph over the heathen gods, by carrying them off captive, but continued to adhere to Jehovah, his own God, who did not desert him in his recreant tricks. It is not to be wondered that the sons of Jacob should be so base in their actions, after the example of their father; and considering what a mixed breed they were, having so many mothers. Their conduct towards their brother Joseph is a sample of their actions; and although Bible history records the good fortune of Joseph, he, among the rest of his brethren, acted the tyrant as soon as power would permit him so to do.

This chapter will conclude with a few remarks on the life of Joseph, and his career in Egypt. The fame and good fortune of Joseph, depended on his gift of interpreting *dreams*, which finally made him, under Pharaoh, *Lord of the land*; and according to his predictions, *seven years of famine were to succeed seven years of plenty*; by which, Joseph planned the entire subjugation of Egypt. He, by the authority of Pharaoh, bought up all the grain left of the seven years' plenty; and when the famine came, the grain was sold to the inhabitants at the price that Joseph was pleased to put upon it. But the famine continued so long that all the money was spent. The poor, half-starved people told Joseph their situation, and offered their cattle in exchange for grain; the cattle were taken by him; at last, all their cattle disappeared, and the people continued in want; then, offer was made of their lands, which Joseph also took; and with their lands, themselves; so the government took all. But after the famine, Joseph proposed to furnish them with seed wherewith to sow their fields, on condition that, ever after, Pharaoh was to have one-fifth of the yearly produce. How kind of Joseph! Now, if the Bible be true concerning this matter, I ask, could anything be more unjust and cruel?

CHAPTER IV. FROM THE BIRTH OF MOSES TO THE DEATH OF JOSHUA

THIS chapter will put beyond dispute all connection between the Jehovah of Moses and the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe. Whoever drew the picture of Jehovah, as it is recorded in the Bible, made him, in every sense of the word, a mere man; and put him under the same necessity of re-sorting to means for obtaining information, when the subject of inquiry is involved in doubt. For instance: Jehovah informs Abram that the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were reported to be wicked in the extreme; and that he (the Lord) came down to get information on that subject. Again, when the builders of Babel were about to commence their lofty tower, the Lord came down to see what they were doing; and, not being pleased with their intentions, put a stop to the work, and performed a miracle, whereby they were driven abroad on the face of the earth. Besides, the Lord's coming from a certain place to another place for information, implies that, without such movement, the information sought for could not be obtained. These instances, and hundreds of others of the same kind, imply also that the Jewish God had a local habitation. Again, to say that the Lord came to a place, staid there, and then returned back again,—these are movements which are common with men, but cannot be applied to the omnipresent God. The free access that Moses and the Old Testament prophets had to their God will warrant the idea that he resided next door to them, and that the Lord was obedient to their every call.

The children of Israel, after the death of Joseph, began to multiply so fast that the Egyptians feared for their own safety in the event of a war with other nations; and in consequence, ordered the mid wives to destroy all the male children, but to save the females alive. But Moses was saved, according to the Bible, in consequence of Pharaoh's daughter discovering him in the river; and when he came to maturity, the Lord selected him to go to Egypt to demand of Pharaoh,

the king, to let the Israelites go out from that state of bondage in which, for four hundred years, they had been held.

The departure of Moses from Egypt was not very honorable for a future ambassador; for before his departure he murdered a man, and buried him. To escape justice, he then fled to Midian, and became acquainted with a pagan priest, who took him into his house, and ultimately gave him one of his daughters in marriage, and he became his father-in-law's shepherd; and the Lord made himself known to Moses. It was while tending the flocks that he was chosen go to Egypt to demand the release of his brethren, then in cruel bondage. After the Lord had given him his instructions, and, to all appearance, Moses had started on his mission, a remarkable circumstance took place, that must puzzle Bible commentators to explain. It is recorded in Exodus iv., 24, "*And it came to pass, by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him and sought to kill him.*" This meeting appears to have been accidental, for no mention is made of the business of either of them. Here, again, we observe that the writer, whoever he was, has spoken of the Lord as a man. It is not possible for men of sound understandings to conceive of the reality of the Lord's meeting Moses at an inn, if by the Lord, We understand the Almighty Power that governs all Worlds.

On the account as it stands recorded, and as Christians take it as really having happened, the following remarks may reasonably be made, namely: that after Moses had been ordered to proceed to Egypt on his important mission, he loitered his time away in a tavern; and that the Lord surprised him in that place, and showed anger for his contempt of orders, given to and accepted by him. But the cause of a meeting so extraordinary, it is difficult to unravel. It is easily conceived why Moses might visit a tavern; but that the Lord of heaven and earth should follow a creature into a pot-house, and show signs of anger, and a quarrel should be the result, is very hard to believe; for it said, the "*Lord sought to kill him.*" Again, if the Lord sought to kill him, it must be in appearance only, for he could have done it. However, Moses started off.

The account warrants us in supposing, that Moses had staid in the inn long enough for his wife to overtake him, and to upbraid him with neglect. Something is said about his son's being uncircumcised; and taking a sharp stone, she performed that operation with a very clumsy instrument; after which, she exclaimed, in an angry tone, "*A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision*;" as if she meant to say—"Shame on you! to leave it to me to do that which is so revolting to my feelings!" Moses then departed for Egypt, and obeyed the Lord in his journey to his brethren.

We can discover neither justice nor humanity in the course that was taken by the God of Israel, in bringing the Jews out of bondage. On the contrary, the greatest inhumanity and injustice are discoverable in every movement that

Moses made under the authority of the Lord; which fully proves, that Infinite Wisdom and Goodness had nothing to do in the mighty fuss of liberating the seed of Abram from bondage. The plagues that were inflicted on the inhabitants of Egypt, if true, make the conduct of Jehovah more vindictive than any thing we have heard of as proceeding from the Devil himself for the Lord had told Moses beforehand, that he had hardened Pharaoh's heart that the people might know the power of the Hebrew God to afflict the nation. It might have been sport to the man made God of Moses, but not very pleasant and comfortable to the Egyptians, to be lousy, to be stunk to death with putrid carcasses, having frogs for bed-mates, when the Lord had hardened the King's heart. But the worst and most infamous of all the judgments, was the destruction of the first-born. This act would have disgraced the very devil: to institute the Feast of the Passover.

We may indulge in a little mirth in reference to the destroying angel going round the streets, finding out the doors marked with the blood of your paschal lamb, and taking care not to wring the neck of a little Hebrew. Wonder if the destroying angel had a lantern? But, perhaps, he had cat's eyes, and could see as well by night as at noon-day! No wonder, ye Jews, that the inhabitants of Egypt so willingly gave you their gold and silver ornaments to get rid of a people so detestable, and, with them, a more detestable God.

In a short time after the Jews had left the house of bondage, they began to upbraid Moses that they had changed for the worse; and in the course of their journeying, they quarrelled with him, and the Lord had continually to interfere, and to feed them by miracles. At Mount Sinai, Moses halted; and, according to the command of the Lord, the law was given to the nation, as recorded in Exodus, chapter xx. And this boasted law is said to have been given by the Lord, in the hearing of all the Children of Israel. The first commandment contains a spirit of intolerance, which, whether he gave it or not, has never failed to generate in Jews and Christians a spirit of religious persecution which has deluged the earth with blood.

The ten commandments, given by Moses to the Children of Israel, contain, in general, good moral precepts, with the exception of the first. The first begins by the Lord's speaking in a language which all the people could understand:—"*I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.*" This command, which by both Jews and Christians is considered so just and reasonable, contains in it the germ of intolerance. Had this command been given immediately after the recorded fall of Adam, its influence would have had a very different bearing on the peace and happiness of society, than it had at the time, and has had ever since it was given. It would have been both just and right in the Lord of all to demand of his creatures to worship him, and him alone, in the way and manner

he saw fit; since in that case, no evil consequences could have followed from a command so just and proper, as for the creature to obey his Creator.

But at the time the Lord gave the first commandment, the whole world were in the practice of worshipping the gods of their forefathers: the origin of which worship was then lost, and the worshippers were no doubt as sincere in their devotion as the most pious Jew or Christian of the present day. By the publication, then, of the first commandment, at a time when every nation had its particular god, and the worshippers lived in peace, the spirit of intolerance and religious persecution being unknown, the great I am declared a religious war against all the gods, and their worshippers on the face of the earth. But according to Bible history, Jehovah permitted his creatures to wander on earth, and appeared regardless as to what gods were worshipped; and then, after some thousand years, he all at once began to rage against all the religious systems then known.

But it was otherwise with what are called heathen nations. Each had its peculiar god, and also its different forms of worship; and they lived happily with each other on the score of theology. And here we may observe, how unfortunate it has been for the human race, that the Lord did not either give his law sooner, or not at all; for it is plainly to be seen, that if the first commandment had been given by the Lord before men had followed other gods, idolatry would have been prevented, and Jehovah's watchfulness over the worship he had established, would have been productive of universal happiness. But, on the contrary, the command being given so long after, and that, too, when religious systems were flourishing, and temples crowded with devout worshippers, the worst consequences have followed.

The worshippers of Jehovah, whether Jews or Christians, have, by the Bible itself, become intolerant and persecuting; and never have they failed, when power would admit, to destroy the enemies of their God without mercy: so that the first commandment, by coming too late, has proved the greatest curse that ever afflicted the human family. And hence the folly in believing that Infinite Wisdom and Goodness would permit false religion to progress so long before the true one was made known to the human race. After the moral law, or the ten commandments, had been given by the Jewish God, on the mount, amid thunder and lightning, we have it recorded that Moses was ordered to go up to the top of the mount, and there, with the Lord, he staid forty days and nights; during which time Aaron, his brother, remained with the whole of the Children of Israel in camp, at the foot of Mount Sinai.

And now, candid reader, prepare your mind for an account of what took place on the mount, between Jehovah and Moses; and when you have read it, and maturely reflected on what is recorded, then I say, ask yourself whether there is

one word of truth in the account of this strange interview between Moses and his God? Compare it with any of the absurdities to be found in the *Koran* of Mahomet, and discover, if you can, whether the latter is less true than the former.

The Bible record states, that Moses was ordered to ascend the mount, on private business with the Lord, and to leave Aaron in charge of his chosen people till his return. The account clearly states, that Moses was then and there to receive instruction how to fit up and ornament the Tabernacle that was to accompany the Children of Israel in their journey to the promised land. And here we may notice, "*That in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and all things therein*"; yet it required forty days to plan and fit up this moveable church; and before it was finished, the chosen people, with Aaron at their head, became idolators; so that before the Lord and Moses (both hard at work) had completed the church, they lost the congregation. This, to make the best of it, was a dreadful blunder.

After the forty days had run out, during which time Moses and his God were hard at work, and Moses had often received the precaution, "*See that you make all things according to the pattern given on the mount,*"—all at once, the Lord said to Moses, "Do you know what is going on below?" Poor Moses, full of thought, and over-joyed at the prospect of so fine a fit-out, was altogether ignorant of the Lord's meaning. "Why, Moses, that stubborn race you brought out of Egypt, have set up strange gods, and have turned their backs on both you and me"! If this story was strictly true, how Moses must feel on hearing this unfortunate news! We must suppose he would exclaim and say, "Oh! Lord, our forty days' labor is all knocked on the head. Is it possible, Oh! Lord, that they have forgotten what you did for them in Egypt? What a pity it is, Oh! Lord, that they ever got rid of the lice when they left the house of bondage, for if they were now tormented by those nibblers, it would remind them of the lousy miracle you performed for them in the presence of Pharaoh. Those lice, if not destroyed, would have been 'a forget-me-not.'" And the Lord said unto Moses, "Now let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against this people, for I know that they are a stiff-necked race. I will destroy them, and from you shall a great nation spring up." But Moses, not having at this time lost his temper, said, "Oh! Lord God, now do not destroy them; besides, what will the Egyptians say? And also remember what you promised to Abram, Isaac, and Jacob: how you swore that you would give it to Abram and his seed forever." "Well, Moses, you reason correctly. I own I was rather too hasty; upon a second thought, I retract; I will take your advice; but go down and see what you can make of them."

Moses, not well pleased, left the Lord, and went down from the mount; and when he came to the camp, he lost all patience, and, in a passion, not knowing what he did, threw down the stones on which were written the commandments—

and written, too, with the finger of God—and they were broken asunder. No wonder that Moses lost his temper: forty days' labor lost; having had, during the whole time, nothing to eat; and having lost his church members before the moveable church was complete! No one can be surprised that he acted as he did. Moses reasoned so correctly with the Lord, that he cooled Jehovah down, but was not so fortunate with himself.

Aaron, finding himself in a dilemma, excused himself by charging the people with the fault. But Aaron's story was but a lame tale; for, when the people demanded a god, to whom they might pay divine honors, Aaron could have told them to have patience, and Moses would return with proper instructions from their God. But poor, silly Aaron told Moses, that when he threw the rings and bracelets into the fire, out came the calf. At any rate, between the Lord, Moses, and Aaron, a sad blunder was made; and to finish off, Moses commanded the Levites to go sword in hand and kill every man his brother and neighbor; and three thousand were slain, who, if things had been conducted properly, might have been faithful worshippers of Jehovah. Finally, nothing can exceed in folly this foolish story of Jehovah, Moses, and Aaron, except it be the folly of believing it to contain one word of truth.

After Moses had slain the people for their idolatry, not having been reproved by the Lord, he was commanded to prepare two tables of stone, in place of those that were broken, and the next morning to go up again to the Lord, on the mount. It is then said that the Lord descended on the mount to meet Moses; so it appears that the Lord (after the departure of Moses to the bottom of the mount) departed also, into heaven or to some unknown place; for it is recorded that he came down again to meet Moses with the two new tables prepared by him. The whole account of the Lord's interview with Moses, on the mount, implies that Jehovah labored, talked, and acted in concert with Moses, as one man acts with another; and that they remained together forty days and as many nights. Whether they continued their work through the night, we have no account; nor whether they needed candles. At all events, if it be considered literally as a matter of fact, it was a long time for Moses to be without food or sleep; but as Christians are compelled to believe it to be matter of fact, we will remark on it as such.

We begin, then, by asking if the Children of Israel were indeed the Lord's chosen people, how can we account for the neglect in not giving Aaron proper instruction respecting the business of Moses on the mount, so as to prevent the people from seeking after other gods? And, also, how came it to pass that the Lord did not inform Moses sooner of the people's revolt, so that the three thousand that Moses caused to be murdered, might have been saved? And lastly, is it consistent with the attributes of the Governor of the Universe to resolve, in wrath, to do any thing, and then repent and not perform it?

If nothing had been recorded in the Old Testament of the sayings and doings of the Jewish God, but that which is related concerning him in giving the law on Mount Sinai, and of his giving instruction to Moses how to fit out the Tabernacle, it is of itself sufficient to show the absurdity of Jehovah's being the God of Nature. To unite in one person the attributes of the great and all-powerful God, with the contemptible arrangement of giving patterns for curtains, and a thousand trifling things of no importance whatever, and to take forty days to garnish his church, and, while so doing, to let, from sheer neglect, his people lose sight of Moses, and then to destroy three thousand persons in consequence of such want of foresight, is too much for credulity to digest.

When we notice the importance attached to rites and ceremonies the most unimportant, and then again how lavish the Jewish God is of human life, and totally regardless of human suffering, we dare not for a moment give credence to the strange stories and foolish whims of the Bible God, and palm them upon the all-bountiful Author of Nature. Moses, after coming down the last time from the mount, begins to prepare for the priesthood, by saying, that the firstlings of cattle, whether of the ox, or the sheep which are of the male kind, belong to the Lord; but the firstling of the ass was to be redeemed by substituting a lamb! But if the owner had no lamb to offer, the neck of the ass was to be broken; as if the Lord had said—if you have nothing better to give, I will not accept of a young jack-ass!

Whoever wrote the Book of Exodus, has made the God of Israel appear like unto an old clothes-man, giving orders for a thousand ornaments for his worship, which would disgrace a heathen temple; such as giving orders for all kinds of brass work; likewise, gold and silver ornaments; all kinds of oils and spices; particular patterns of cabinet work; what kind of leather skins, and, also, of what particular color, to grace his house withal: and even down to the cut and color of the garments: not forgetting to give instruction concerning the making of breeches for Aaron and his sons! In the present day, it is no uncommon thing for ladies to wear the breeches; but in those days, when breeches were cut by inspiration, it would have been no small crime for a woman to have stepped into Aaron's inexpressibles, or those of his sons. How is the dignity of the Governor of the World disgraced, by ascribing to him an employment fitting only for a pedler in old clothes!

Let' us compare the majestic grandeur of Jupiter, the supreme god of the Greeks, to the peddling, gossipping concerns that the writers of the Old Testament have palmed on Jehovah, the God of the Jews! Hear what the poet says of Jupiter, when challenging all the gods to oppose his power:—:

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"Let down our golden, everlasting chain,
Whose strong embrace holds heaven and earth and main;
Strive all, of mortal or immortal birth,
By this to drag the thunderer down to earth;
Ye strive in vain; if I but lift this hand,
I heave the heaven, the ocean, and the land;
'T is thus I reign, supremely and above;
Such are men and gods compar'd to Jove!"
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The contradictions, as recorded in the Bible, concerning Jehovah, are so barefaced, that it is impossible to reconcile them. It is said in many parts of the Old, and also in the New Testament, that no man can see God and live; but we are told that Moses conversed with Jehovah, face to face, as one conversing with his friend. It is in many places recorded that God never repents—"*For he (God) cannot lie nor repent.*" In many other places it is recorded that Jehovah has repented and taken a contrary course in his dealings with the sons of men. I again repeat, that if no other account had been recorded of the conduct of the Jewish God, but what we have mentioned, it is impossible to believe Jehovah to be any thing but a *man-made God.*

After the death of Moses, Joshua was appointed as his successor. His business was to complete what Moses had left undone, in subjugating or destroying the nations on the other side of Jordan. The first exploit of Joshua was to send spies to Jericho to examine the strength of the city. These spies entered the house of Rahab, the harlot, where they were treated with kindness; it being such a house as would in modern times be termed a house of *bad fame.* That it was a house of ill-fame, the proof is positive; because the harlot's father, mother, and all the family, were saved when Joshua took the city, because Rahab had concealed the spies: so no doubt remains as to the character of the house, and that it was entirely under her control and that the whole family were supported from the wages of prostitution.

Viewing this account as having actually taken place, as Christians must do, as believers in the Bible, it was a very proper house at which the spies would resort; for it was a house at which all were welcome; where all sorts of news could be collected. After the spies had become somewhat familiar with Mrs. Rahab, they informed her who they were, and the nature of their errand. All on a sudden, they were about to be arrested by the city authorities; and when forced to depart, Rahab extorted a promise from the spies that her whole family should be saved when Jericho should fall. Such a promise, the spies could not

well deny, after having been so kindly treated. Rahab, consequently, let them out by a private way; and, on returning to Joshua, they praised the Lord for having directed them to so hospitable and honorable a mansion as the house of the virtuous Rahab. This was the Lord's doings, as also the exploit of the seven rams'-horn trumpets that threw down the walls of Jericho; and it is marvellous in our eyes—*praised be his name!*

Here, serious reader, pause and wonder how Infinite Wisdom can bring good out of apparent evil, by taking into his employment murderers, thieves, and harlots! and also, how such characters have immortalized their names, when their actions have been connected with faith in the Jehovah of Israel! For this noble act of betraying the city of Jericho, and giving the spies comfortable lodging, and no doubt, also, very agreeable bedmates, Rahab secured the favor of Jehovah, and her name is recorded in connection with many others of equal virtue; for Paul says, in Hebrews xi., 31,—"*By faith, the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies in peace.*" Nothing is acceptable to the Lord, without faith,—that faith "which keeps the souls of sinners as sweet as salt does meat."

After the taking of Jericho and destroying every thing that had life, (the family of Rahab excepted,) Joshua followed in the same destructive course as had been commanded by Moses, which command Jehovah gave on the other side of Jordan. If the warfare pursued by Moses and Joshua did really take place, and Jehovah gave the orders, it is idle prate to talk of a God of justice. And when the Lord is made to say that *he (the Lord) hardened the hearts of those Kings on either side of Jordan*, that a plausible appearance of justice in their destruction might be made out,—for Christians to sing of a God of mercy, is horrible indeed. Whether a God ever commanded or encouraged the Jews in their wars of extermination, under Moses, Joshua, or any other of their generals, or not, Christian nations, as well as individuals, have drank deep of the spirit of religious warfare. A Lord of hosts, a fighting God, has given a sort of license to mortals to torment each other for his glory.

Every Infidel ought to oppose this spirit, and vindicate the Author of Nature from the imputation of cruelty and carnage—an imputation that, is opposed to every idea of justice, and contrary to every thing we can conceive of the Supreme Ruler of all worlds. And hence, nothing can be more honorable to a man or woman of good sense and kindness of heart, than to assert that the God of the Bible is unworthy to be worshipped as the Governor of the Universe; which in fact is to say, that to all pretended divine revelations, they are no less than avowed Infidels—a name that will eventually be as honorable as is now the name of Christian.

According to Bible history, the nations on the other side of Jordan were

so alarmed at the frightful news they received of the Jewish army, and the ravages they committed, that five Kings, with their armies, came out to stop their progress; and in this account, we have the climax of divine interference on the part of Jehovah. After a desperate effort was made by the five Kings to stop the progress of Joshua, and after fighting the whole day, until *towards the going down of the sun*, they retreated. At that moment Jehovah is said to have given support to his chosen people, by causing a hail-storm to descend, and more were slain by the hail than fell by the sword. But when the hail was exhausted, something more was requisite to be done; Divine aid was still wanting. Then Joshua, in sight of his army, said, "*Sun stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon*," and they obeyed his command. So that, according to this miracle, the hostile armies were completely destroyed, and the sun and moon (we suppose) were ordered to pursue their courses.

And now, reader, to believe this improbable, or rather impossible tale, and hundreds of others of the same sort, even in our day, will make a man respectable, and fit to fill any office where intelligence and honesty are required. But to doubt it, and publicly express the doubt, will cause him to be considered infamous, and unfit for "public trust or private care." And this will be the case until men shall be bold enough to express their honest convictions that it is a libel to charge the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe with being the direct, or the indirect, author of the Bible, or having ever chosen the Jews to be his peculiar people.

But to return to Joshua, who appears to be more highly favored with miracles than Moses, as the miracle of the sun and moon standing still, to give time to Joshua to complete his victory over the Kings that came against him, exceeds every thing of the kind on record. The writer, whoever he was, that mentions the sun and moon standing still in the heavens, evidently knew nothing of astronomy; for admitting the truth of the story, and that the sun and moon appeared to stand fixed in the heavens, it was in reality the earth that instantly obeyed the command of Joshua. And another miracle must have followed immediately, to prevent the dreadful consequences of the earth's ceasing from turning round on its axis: for we have but to consider the effects of the earth's instantly ceasing to turn round; the shock would have been so great that trees and houses and the armies would have been thrown high in the air, and the battle would have immediately ended, the combatants being destroyed. But the tale is too foolish to be credited; and it furnishes another proof that the Jehovah of the Jews is not the Author of Nature. In this battle, Balaam, the soothsayer, was slain; and before finishing this chapter, we will give the account as recorded, with some remarks on that celebrated fortune-teller.

When the Children of Israel had left Egypt, and were marching to the land of promise, they had to go through different kingdoms and provinces; and their

numbers, connected with the depredations they committed in the name of Jehovah, caused the inhabitants of those regions to be greatly alarmed; and understanding that their God fought for them and that they were about to pass through the land of Moab, Balak, King of Moab, having learned what had been done by them to the Amorites, sent to Balaam to consult with him, intending, if possible, to stop their progress, or at least, to find out what the Jewish God had destined his people to perform.

In the Book of Numbers, chapter xxii., the account commences. Balaam, it appears, was then what now would be called a celebrated conjuror, or, as country people say, a *cunning man*, by which he made a living, and a good one, too: for, from the Bible story, he appears to be a man well known by princes, and was attended by two servants as out-riders. Like our present lawyers, he never gave his services until he had received a handsome fee; for the King sent off the elders to Balaam, with the rewards of "*divination in their hand.*" Balaam received them, and invited them to stay with him till the next day, for, (as he told them,) he would first inquire of the Lord.

It is then recorded, that "*God came unto Balaam, and said, what men are those with thee?*" This inquiry of the Jewish God appears strange, when he must have known all about it without asking; but here, as in hundreds of other passages, the *man-made God* appears. But, for the information of the Lord, Balaam gives a suitable answer. The Lord then informs the fortune-teller that he must not go to Balak, *nor curse them, for they are blessed.* The elders then returned to the King, to inform him that Balaam could not come, because the God of Israel had forbid him so to do. Again, Balak sent others, more honorable than the first, with promises of riches and honor. The Lord came again to Balaam, and told him to go with the men to Balak, King of the Moabites, but to mind what the Lord had said to him. Balaam went off with the princes of Moab; but the Devil, or something else, got into the jack-ass on which the old fortune-teller rode, and he became skittish; and although then dumb, he seemed to say to his master, "I shall go no further." Balaam became enraged, and laid some heavy stripes on poor jack; but still the animal refused to go on, until neither the Lord nor jack could bear it any longer. The beast then broke silence, and reasoned with the old prophet on his brutality. All of a sudden, Balaam saw an angel with a drawn sword in his hand, who told him if it had not been for jack's superior eye-sight, he would have been a dead man. The angel then told Balaam to go on, but to mind what he did against Israel. What contemptible humbug is all this! two miracles performed to do nothing! The first, to send an angel down from nobody knows where; and the second, to make a dumb ass reprove his owner. And what was Balaam's fault? He was going on as the Lord commanded; and to complete this solemn farce, an apostle quotes it as a real fact that actually took place, by

saying—"And the dumb ass spake with man's voice, and forbade the madness of the prophet."

After returning to Balak, Balaam ordered seven altars to be built, on which were to be offered seven bullocks and seven rams: and again, the Lord came to see the process, and in private conversation with the fortune-teller, told him that it would not answer; Israel must not be cursed. This was repeated by Balaam three times; so that twenty-one bullocks, and as many rams, were offered up to no purpose: and at each offering, the Lord came down and conversed in private with Balaam. Is it possible that men possessed of reason can believe that in this account there is one word of truth, as it respects the Governor of the Universe having any thing to do with it? If this account, or any one like it, was recorded in any other book than the Bible, no man of a sound mind would give the least credit to it. But yet the Christian dares not doubt it; for even the apostles of Jesus speak of it as a real fact that took place with the miracles attending it.

To conclude this chapter of absurdities, we beg the reader to bear in mind—first, that Balaam was not a prophet of Jehovah, but a conjuror; and if he professed any religion, it was that of heathenism. But he (Balaam) had heard of the manner of sacrificing to the Jewish God, and accordingly began by slaying seven bullocks and an equal number of rams; and while the altars were smoking, (if the Bible be true,) the Lord of the whole earth left his throne, and came down to see what was going on. The old fortune-teller was hard at work, and the princes of Moab standing by to hear the result; when lo, and behold! the Lord descends, and we may suppose him to say—"Balaam! why, you are cooking for a large party! Come, Balaam, before you go any further, a word with you, if you please. Come this way. What does all this mean? We must have some private talk about this affair." "Why, my Lord, you know my business. I must do all I can for my employers; I thought that if sacrifice is made, agreeably to your order of worship, you might be induced to alter your mind towards your people: for we have heard that at times, when the fit comes on, you give them a severe thrashing." "Yes, Balaam, there is some truth in the report; but I tell you, once for all, that if you offer all the bullocks in the world, and all the rams beside, you cannot, must not, curse Israel."

No lawyer ever stuck closer to a rich client than did Balaam to the King of Moab; for again and again did he sacrifice to the Lord of Hosts. Another trial, on a mountain, was made, and again Jehovah descends and tells Balaam the same as before. The third and last effort being made, which would incline us to think that the patience of Heaven must have been tired out, was enough to make the doorkeeper exclaim, "Here is Monsieur Tonson come again!" The last descent is made by the Lord, and the prophet gives in, reluctantly. I challenge any minister of the gospel to produce a more absurd story, in any system of theology, than the

account of Balaam, his ass, and the Lord of Hosts.

I will not insult the reader by saying, *do not believe it;* but rather say, *believe it who can!*

CHAPTER V. FROM THE DEATH OF JOSHUA TO THE REIGN OF SAUL

WE now come to the time when the Israelites were settled in the land of Canaan, Moses and Joshua being dead. This period of Bible history, from the death of Joshua to the time of Saul, their first King, is about four hundred years. And, seeing the miracles and wonders performed in behalf of God's chosen people, in the times of Moses and Joshua, we might reasonably expect that the same care would be continued towards them in succeeding generations. But, on the contrary, during the time the different Judges presided over them, nothing but disasters and confusion prevailed; and if their history is to be credited, it must appear as if Jehovah had nearly given them up as a prey to his and their enemies.

Notwithstanding all that has been said and written about Moses being the author of the first five Books, including the Jewish worship, with the laws, ceremonial and moral, it does not appear that the contents of those Books were known and obeyed by the generations that followed after his death; for it is recorded in the Book of Judges, ii., 10, that after the death of Joshua, "*there arose another generation after them; which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.*" If the mighty works had been done in behalf of God's chosen people, which are recorded, it is impossible to believe that they should have been forgotten or disregarded. Can we suppose, that, in a few years, the Declaration of our Independence on the 4th of July, 1776, together with the name of **Washington**, and the heroism of his brave companions in arms, can be forgotten? No; it is impossible. It is then clear, that the Books said to have been written by Moses were not known; or if known, they were not believed in by the people.

After the land of promise had been divided among the tribes of Israel, instead of Jehovah's setting up some permanent form of government, and causing his name to be adored, so as to make his chosen people happy and prosperous, they were, to all appearance, left in the most confused and unsettled state: and

hence it is often said, "*In those days there was no King in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*" It is not too much to infer, that for hundreds of years after the death of Moses and Joshua, the Jewish God, as if he had forgotten his engagements with Abram, Isaac, and Jacob, concerning their posterity, became indifferent to their happiness altogether.

We will now refer to their situation. As it respects government, they had none; it was accidental; and, although it is recorded that their God fought for them, and caused both sun and moon (as the phrase is) to stand still, to give them time to destroy their enemies, Jehovah's conduct was so altered that he seemed to enjoy the troubles of his once chosen people. With all these facts, Christian ministers prate of an unchangeable God! We read of Jehovah's stirring up heathen Kings against his people; and to such a deplorable state were they reduced, that an old woman was their Chief-Justice, and also General of their army. At that time, to say the least of it, no nation under heaven was in so degraded a state. At times, upstart Judges arose; the Lord was with them; and, for a while, all things appeared prosperous. At their death, however, the troubles were renewed. Such was their situation at one time, that they had no weapons of war, nor smiths to repair their ploughs or harrows. Then they *cried unto the Lord*, and he sanctioned them in every dishonorable way to out-wit or murder their oppressors.

In such a state of subjugation were the tribes to their foes when Saul was made King, that only two swords could be found in Israel; and the "*Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen every man his share and his coulter, and his axe and his mattock.*" What folly, then, to suppose, that after all that had been done for God's favorite people, they should have been so neglected, and there should be nothing but slaughter and blood throughout the land of promise! What madness, to believe that the Author of the Universe should permit such carnage, and his whole attention seem to be directed to the foolish quarrels of an unfortunate race, who, by some imposture, had been taught to consider their nation as his peculiar choice!

And as to their religion, by what is recorded, it seems that their proneness to worship the gods of their neighbors, is what brought on the chastisements of Heaven. This is but a poor excuse, and dishonorable to the God of the Universe, to urge on nations to make war on his people, because he was displeased with them for worshipping strange gods. It appears strange, *passing strange*, that Jehovah could not convert his own people. But only substitute the term *Priest,* instead of the *Lord,* and reject altogether the idea of God's having any thing to do with their theology, and the matter is plain and clear. Admitting, however, that the Lord of Hosts had so rebellious a race, and was a spectator of all their departures from his laws, he must be as great a sufferer as the Jews, because he was forever

punishing; for, if anger is to a God a punishment equal to what human beings feel under its influence, then it follows that the God of the Jews is the greatest sufferer. Oh! ye ministers of grace you have preached up an angry God until you have brutalized the human race; and your intolerant spirit has ever been, and will ever continue to be, a *burning coal* taken from the altar of an angry, vengeful God, to be rekindled when power is united to your impositions.

That the reader may form correct ideas of the Lord's fighting for Israel, and delivering their enemies into their hands, and also of the Lord's giving the land or towns to his favorite people that they had taken in war, it should be observed, that it was the manner of expressing the results of a victory among the Jews, and also with other nations. They all claimed for themselves the interference of their respective gods, and to them they gave sacrifice and thanks. As a key, to understand how God fought for his favorite people, it is recorded in Judges i., 19, "*And the Lord was with Judah, and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain, but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley because they had chariots of iron,*" The same idea is to be carried out in explaining such passages as the following:—"*And the angel of the Lord appeared to [such an one] in a dream*"-—"*Thus saith the Lord,*" *&c.*

Now, all that can be made of this is, that the person mentioned, dreamed that he saw an angel, and that he said this or that. Again, it is often repeated, that *the word of the Lord came unto Moses, saying.* Common sense will inquire, how came the word? who brought it? Words do not pass through the air like birds. Suppose it should be reported, that the word of the President of the United States came to some person in New York, saying, *do this or that*, or something uncommon and unheard of, and the inquiry be made, *who* brought this word, and an answer should be required? No reasonable one could be given. It must fill the Christian reader with astonishment to find, that during the time the Judges presided over Israel, (some hundreds of years,) that neither the name of Moses nor his laws are ever mentioned. On the contrary, his laws, both moral and ceremonial, were either suspended or departed from. Neither the Sabbath nor the Passover was observed, and the moral law said to have been given by Jehovah, from Mount Sinai, was broken by the worship of graven images.

If we turn to Judges, chapter xvii., we there find, that after the death of Samson, who judged Israel twenty years, *a young man (a Jew) stole from his mother eleven hundred shekels of silver, which she had put by to make a god for herself and her son's household*,—a worship contrary to the express command of Jehovah, as given in the second commandment; and when her son heard his mother curse most bitterly, he returned it to her. She then loaded him with blessings, and with a part of the silver, and gave the rest to the founder, or artist, and a graven image was made and erected as their god, and a priest hired to perform worship. In the

13th verse of the same chapter, her son exults, and says, "Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest."

To conclude this account of worship, the Levite asked counsel of God, (the image,) and received a gracious answer. This image-worship was the religion of the Danites until they were carried away captive. This, then, is proof positive, that the five Books said to have been given by Moses, were then unknown; and without this admission, it is not possible to account for the silence regarding Moses and his writings for so many hundred years. Not only were the five Books of which Moses is the reputed author, written many hundreds of years after his death, but also the Book of Judges could not have been written till after Kings bad reigned in Israel; because, it is often repeated in that Book, "*And there was no King in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes*"; for until the end of the Judges, no King was ever mentioned, or thought of, among the tribes. It was in consequence of the injustice of the sons of Samuel, that the seed of Abram demanded a King, in order to get just judgment; and in his person to secure a leader in time of war.

The foolish story of Samson, which commences in Judges, chapter xiii., deserves no notice, but for its being ascribed to Jehovah, the God of Israel. The whole silly account, when it is fathered on the God of the Universe, will not fail to convince every man of a sane mind, how human beings have been imposed upon, in ascribing to the Sovereign Ruler of all worlds such contemptible trash. After the Israelites had for forty years been subjected to the Philistines, Jehovah determined to deliver his chosen people from bondage, by raising up a man (then unborn) to war against their enemies. Samson was the person chosen for this business. The story is as follows:—

The mother of Samson had for years lived with her husband, Manoah, but remained childless. Her sorrow, on that account, so prevailed with the Lord, that an angel came down from Jehovah, whom Christians believe to be the allwise Governor of the Universe, and informed her that she should have a son that would war against the oppressors of Israel, and that particular care on her part must be taken during her pregnancy. She was to drink no wine, nor strong drink, nor eat any thing unclean; and no hair must on any account be taken from his head. The woman told her husband the good tidings, and he was over-joyed, and prayed to the Lord that the angel would again descend. This request was granted, and the angel repeated to the husband what had been told to his wife. When these instructions, given by the angel, were ended, out of gratitude to the heavenly messenger, this joyful pair proposed to dress a kid, and invited the angel to partake of it This request was not complied with, but Manoah and his wife were told to sacrifice to the Lord; which they did, and as the flame ascended, the angel went up with it, after refusing to make known his name.

In a few months, Sampson was born; and his parents were particular in observing all things commanded, as it respected the child, until his arrival to manhood; when, behold! this Samson, the gift of the Lord, who was to deliver his countrymen out of bondage, from the galling yoke of the Philistines—this Samson commenced his life by going down to the Philistines, and taking up with different women. Some he took as wives, and with others he carried on any thing but a respectable intercourse; and in all his actions he sought a quarrel with the enemies of Israel. All unknown to his parents, it is recorded that he possessed strength superior to human beings, and that this strength resided in the hair of his head. His enemies discovered this strength, and bribed his wives and concubines to discover how he could be bound, so that they could destroy him. After lying, and submitting to be bound, he betrayed the secret to one of his favorite women. His head was shaved, his eyes put out and he was cast into prison.

In the course of his revels among his ladies, he was waring continually with his wives' countrymen; and such was his dexterity, that he caught three hundred foxes and tied them tail to tail, and turned them into the standing corn and burnt up their harvest. At another time, when pursued by his enemies, it is recorded that he slew a thousand men with, the jaw-bone of an ass; and so mighty was his strength, that the gates of a city were by him carried away with ease, and placed on the top of a mountain; and so terrific was his strength, that his favorite woman, by bribery, at last found out that his almost almighty power was in his hair, which had been from his birth untouched and unshorn; but as soon as his hair was taken off, Jehovah withdrew his strength, and his foes bound him with care, put out his eyes, and cast him into prison. At length, his hair grew again on his head, and his mighty strength returned. He then prayed to Jehovah to enable him to lift up the mighty building in which the Lords of the Philistines were; and having succeeded, down it came with a dreadful crash, and Samson, with all that were within, perished in the ruins.

Now, this is the man who is recorded to have been raised up to restore to the seed of Abram their lost power; whose whole life was a scene of folly and madness. Can any man, in the full exercise of his reason, believe that the Ruler of all worlds would employ such a contemptible creature to bring about his plan of redeeming his favorite people from bondage? Let us take a bird's-eye view of Samson's life; and first, we will inquire, what end was to be answered by raising up this mighty man? Secondly, did Samson perform the intention of Jehovah towards his chosen race?

We proceed to the first inquiry, What end was to be answered by raising up Samson? His whole life was one continued scene of folly and licentiousness; shedding of blood was his practice; and the mighty strength given him by Jehovah, was employed in doing the most wanton mischief, such as none but a

madman would perform. The object of so much murder and bloodshed, we are informed, was to deliver the Israelites from Philistine subjugation; in doing which, he fell a victim to his own folly, in destroying the enemies of the Lord. Can it be possible that the Ruler of all worlds raised up such a madman to carry out his plans? If a story of this kind should be recorded in any other book than the Bible, no credit would be given to it. But when it is recorded as making a part of God's dealings with his chosen people, it is shocking to all our ideas of Infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness.

In the second place, What resulted to Israel by the efforts of Samson? We answer, nothing at all; for in consequence of the wickedness of the Benjamites, a war soon after commenced between the tribes, in which thousands and tens of thousands were slain. The history of Samson, then, is one of those fables with which the Scriptures abound, and which, if recorded by heathen authors, no one could be found who would believe them to be any thing but fables. But being a part of the Bible, Christians attach consequence to them, and father them on the all-wise, all-powerful God, the Ruler of the Universe.

Finally, to show the folly in believing that Samson was raised up to redeem the Israelites from serving the Philistines:—by the battle fought immediately after the death of Samson, the Philistines gained a complete victory over Israel, routed the whole army, and took the ark of the Lord prisoner.

It may be of service to the reader to give some account of the ark of the Lord; and in this, we must be instructed by the Bible account alone. The ark, it appears, was a chest: or box, in which the following things were said to be kept: the book of the law, the pot with manna, and Aaron's rod, by which the wonders were performed in Egypt On the lid or cover were placed two cherabims with their wings somewhat extended, and their necks turned downwards to the cover of the ark, called the mercy-seat. This holy ark was kept in the holy of holies; and when the priests entered in to perform sacrifice on the mercy-seat, the cloud of smoke between the cherabims became luminous. This light was considered by the priest as an acceptance of the offering made by him for the sins of the people. Hence the phrase of adoration applied to the Jewish God, "*Oh! thou God that dwelleth between the cherubims!*"

When the Jews were in the battle with the Philistines, and about to be routed, they brought the ark of the Lord into the camp as a protection against a defeat, and also to encourage the Israelites to fight most manfully: the Lord of Hosts being then in the midst of them, they shouted for joy, as being certain of a victory over their enemies. On the other side, the Philistines, understanding that the God of the Hebrews had arrived in their camp, were afraid, and cried out, "*Woe unto us! who shall deliver us ont of the hand of these mighty Gods?*" The commanders of the Philistines then encouraged their soldiers to battle, urging

them on, so that the Jews might be vanquished; and they slew the Israelites with a destructive slaughter, and took the ark of the Jewish God prisoner, and killed the two sons of Eli, the High-Priest This dreadful news so overcame the old man, who was ninety-eight years of age, that he fell out of his chair and broke his neck.

We may now ask, what will Christians say to God's raising up Samson? Did he deliver the Jews out of their their bondage? But I have wasted too much time on such a contemptible madman and fool; yet I excuse myself in this respect by the desire of showing, that, to call Samson a servant of the Ruler of the Universe, is too contemptible even for ridicule. A few remarks on the fate of the ark of the Lord, will conclude this chapter. The foregoing account is recorded in 1 Samuel, chapter iv.

After the dreadful daughter of the Israelites, and the capture of the ark, the Philistines were afflicted with a complaint that threatened them with destruction; and after consulting among themselves as to the cause of their sickness, they concluded that the capture and detention of the ark was to them more than a counterbalance for the victory gained over the Jews. They therefore agreed, one and all, to send it back to its owners. Before sending it back, we may suppose something like the following conversation took place:—We have defeated the Jews, and slain thousands of them; and although their God was in the camp of Israel, he could not save them from the edge of the sword. But, after all, we are afflicted with a dreadful disorder, which, if it continues, will exterminate our nation. Our complaint is of that nature, that we shall drop to pieces in the streets and upon the highways. Our wives, instead of baking bread, must be continually making poultices, to prevent our being considered as walking pestilences: the ark must be returned. Instead of a God for a prisoner, why, we have the Devil in the box. We must get rid of it; it must be sent back to the Jews. Home it was carried; and when it had arrived at Beth-shemesh, in the time of harvest, the reapers, overjoyed to witness the safe return of the ark, laid down their sickles and ran to look into it. The Jehovah of Israel destroyed the honest-hearted reapers, to the number of fifty thousand threescore and ten, for their impudence.

Can a man on earth be found who can believe the foregoing account to be any thing but fabulous? If this account is matter of fact, what degrading ideas are connected with the existence of Infinite Wisdom and Goodness! If there is any thing Divine about this foolish tale, it then follows, that the Almighty Power that presides over all worlds,—that astonishing Wisdom which strikes us dumb in contemplating the harmony and surprising adaptation displayed in the universe,—associated with such madmen and fools as Samson, and hundreds of others whose freaks are recorded in the Bible. This is opposed to every idea that we can possibly have of his greatness. Let those who are but little acquainted with Astronomy, contemplate the grandeur of the universe, and ask if it be pos-

sible that a Being who arranges all, and who governs all with that exactness which overwhelms not only the ignorant and untaught man, but also the most profound and learned of the human race, should thus act? Mark well the infinite wisdom which is apparent in the vast universe of which man forms but so small a part! For one moment reflect on boundless space, filled with millions of millions of suns, around which revolve innumerable worlds; all of them arranged and upheld by that Power which Christians believe to be the author of the Bible, either directly or indirectly. That this being should mix up with the most abandoned characters on earth, and be forever doing and undoing; forever planning and failing in his plans; choosing his favorites, and then repenting of such choice; inheriting all the infirmities of fallible man; sometimes, tired out with the follies and wickedness of his chosen people, sinking, as it were, down into a state of inaction; again, rising in vengeance, destroying even his chosen people without mercy; at times, appearing to be long-suffering and merciful; at other times, revenging injuries by destruction and death on a present generation, for the errors of another generation long since dead and gone, is inconsistent with common sense.

In fact, the Jehovah of the Bible, from the accounts recorded, appears never to be at ease. Anger, rage, fury, alternately disturb him. The smallest deviation of his chosen people in the performance of some trifling ceremony, would at times call down the most horrid chastisements on both the innocent and the guilty. If the Bible truly records the movements of Jehovah, he must be the most unhappy Being in the universe; for it is said that *he is angry every day.* The previous description of the God of the Bible is but a scantling of what is written concerning his dealings, even with the seed of Abram.

Ye ministers of the gospel! look at the heavens above, and the earth beneath! Mark well the unchangeable order which pervades the whole! How admirably every thing is arranged! how skilfully the means are adapted to the end intended! No arranging, and then re-arranging: no missing the mark—no going beyond or wide of the mark. Before you talk of the "unblushing Infidel," and deal out the vengeance of your Bible God, look at the order, the grandeur the undisturbed harmony that governs the whole; and then pause, and ask yourselves, if it be possible for the Sovereign Ruler of all worlds, to have dictated the Bible, which you so positively assert is the Word of the only true and living God?

CHAPTER VI. THE REIGNS OF SAUL, DAVID, AND SOLOMON

SAMUEL, the last of the Judges of Israel, when very old, appointed his sons to judge the people—"But they took bribes and perverted judgment." The Israelites complained to Samuel of their injustice, and demanded a King, like other nations. Now, considering the unsettled state of the Jews for hundreds of years, "when there was no King in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes" the request was reasonable; for they were tired of the unsettled state of their national affairs. Samuel inquired of the Lord what was to be done? The reply from the Lord was, that Samuel was to let them have a King, agreeably to their wishes; at the same time, it displeased Jehovah, who chose Saul without consulting the people. His choice is recorded to have been pleasing to the Lord, who gave Saul a good character. This kingly government seemed fair in the beginning, and we ought to expect it would have proved a change for the better, as it was by Jehovah's own appointment At the commencement of Saul's reign, he was ordered to go and fight against the Amalekites. The order was thus given:—"*Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel; how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt*" This offence was given some hundred years before, when the Israelites were passing to the land of promise; when the Amalekites opposed them, and refused to let them go through their land. To us, this vengeance appears cruel and unjust. This was visiting the sins of the fathers on the children with a vengeance. At the present day, no tyrant could be found that would imitate such base conduct as is fathered on the all-wise, all-powerful Ruler of the World.

The following statement will serve to make the situation of Saul clearly understood by the readers of this work, and will show the nature of Saul's offence for which he and his family were so severely punished:—Some four or five hundred years before Saul was born, the Israelites were opposed by the Amalekites passing through their land; and when Saul was chosen King, by Jehovah, his first

campaign was to go and destroy the then inhabitants of Amalek, for an offence committed by their forefathers long since dead and gone. Saul was ordered by Jehovah not to save old or young, but to kill (murder) all, from the suckling to hoary old age. He fulfilled his orders as he thought, excepting that of taking their King prisoner, and the best of the cattle to sacrifice to Jehovah's honor; and for this one act of mercy, Saul was deposed, and David chosen in his stead. Now, if Jehovah knew that Saul would not obey the orders given, why was he chosen to be their King at all? And if Jehovah was disappointed, where was his foreknowledge? Does that Power and Wisdom that rules the Universe, blunder in this way? What say you, Christian ministers?

According to what is written, the Jewish God repented that he made this choice! Did he repent? We are told that when Saul was put down, and David made King in his stead, that Jehovah could not, like man, repent in putting down David, though he had done so as it respected Saul. To father such inconsistency on the Author of Nature, is an outrage on justice and common sense. Again, to punish with fire and sword a whole nation, for what their forefathers had done five hundred years before; and to make the God of the Universe the author of such a command,—if blasphemy exists against God, this is it to perfection.

From the short reign of Saul, we cannot form a decided opinion as to his kingly character; but one thing is clear, from the Scriptures, that his act of mercy towards the King of Amalek, offended Jehovah, and both himself and family suffered grievously for it; for Samuel told Saul, that' in consequence of his sparing Agag, the King, his royal authority was taken from him, and *given to a man better than he.* Well might a poet, who wrote on this subject about forty years ago, call Samuel an impostor, and exclaim—:

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"From haunts of men be that impostor driven,
Who thinks humanity incenses heaven."
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In concluding this account of Saul, we may venture to affirm, that he was one of the best Kings on record; his only failing appears to have been his humanity.

We now come to the reign of David, "*he man after God's own heart.*" It appears that his slaying Goliah, first brought him into notice; for which act David was to be rewarded by having Saul's daughter in marriage. Before this took place, however, it is recorded, in 1 Samuel xviii., 10, "*And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul*"; but David could play so well on some kind of a musical instrument, that his performance drove the Devil out of

the old King. From this account it seems, if the evil spirit means a Devil, that Jehovah kept Devils ready to start off from heaven to do any dirty work; a very worthy practice to ascribe to the God of all! It appears that Saul's troubles, and the evil spirit sent to him from the Lord, had nearly made him crazy—and well it might: but I have no pity for him, because there is not one word of truth in the whole silly tale.

David now demands his wife, according to promise; but Saul puts a heavy tax on his intended son-in-law, before his daughter could be given up. The demand made by Saul on David, before he was permitted to marry his daughter, is written in 1 Samuel xviii., 25, an account showing how well cultivated Kings and Princes were in those days, but too filthy for me to detail. Notwithstanding Saul was deposed, and David anointed King, still Saul kept possession of the kingdom, and David was an object of jealousy. At this time, the Israelites were in an unsettled state; and David, although a King, had no resources. A part of the people were with David, but the bulk of the nation adhered to Saul.

Those two Kings, then, both of whom had been chosen by Jehovah, were still opposing each other. Now, what folly to suppose that either of them were appointed by the Governor of all the Earth! Even admitting the historical part to be true, who can believe that Infinite Wisdom had any part in so unsettled a form of government? it being like unto what England was at one time of her history, when two parties were contending for power. What a changeable, unsettled Being do the Scriptures make the Jewish God! and what folly to believe him to be the Sovereign Ruler of all! The regularity and order which is every where and at all times manifest in nature, proclaim to all nations that the Jehovah of the Bible is not Nature's God.

Although David had been anointed King, to the exclusion of Saul and his house, still the old King retained his authority, and David was compelled to be cautious how he proceeded, as Saul was jealous of him as a rival. Now David had recourse to the following expedient:—"*And he collected every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, and he became a captain over them, and there were with him about four hundred men.*" David, in one of his flights from Saul, and being in want of bread, applied to Abimelech, the priest, for five loaves; and the priest answered David, and said, "*There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread, if the young men have at least kept themselves from women.*" And David answered the priest, and said unto him, "*Of a truth, women have been kept from us about three days, since I came out.*" The reader will now see how David began his reign, as the following incident, will also fully confirm. The above account may be found in 1 Samuel, chapter xxi.

The following account of the progress of David and his small army, is in 1

Samuel, chapter xxv.:—David fled into the wilderness, and while there, he heard of a rich man by the name of Nabal, who had, on a shearing, made a feast for his shearers and friends. David embraced this opportunity, to levy a tax on Nabal, and sent ten young men to ask for a part of the good things prepared for the sheep shearing: "*And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?*" This answer so enraged David, that he exclaimed, "The time my army lay in the wilderness, near to the flock of Nabal, we took nothing from them, and also prevented others from stealing of the flock, and now I cannot get a dinner for me and my six hundred men." "*And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword: and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men, and two hundred abode by the stuff.*" Now, to use David's own words, he intended to slay every man living; Nabal, sheep shearers, and all belonging to him. Don't forget this was the man *after Jehovah's own heart!*

But it happened that Abigail, Nabal's wife, heard of her husband's refusal to David's demands, and she loaded several asses with all kinds of the best provisions, and met David as he was advancing to take vengeance on Nabal. And when David saw her, he said, "*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me. For in very deed, as the Lord God of Israel liveth which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hasted, and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal by the morning light, any that pisseth against the wall.*" It is recorded after this, that in about ten days, "*the Lord smote Nabal that he died.*" Christians, perhaps, will say, it served him right; because he would not give away his dinner to the Lord's anointed. But to complete this account of David, it is written that he married Nabal's widow, and then he had sheep, goats, and all, although he had many wives before; but, being "*a man after Gods own heart*" we Infidels must be silent.

After the death of Saul, David being in favor with the people, and strictly adhering to the worship of Jehovah, his reign bid fair to be happy to himself, and to the nation at large: but he had too many wives, and consequently his family troubles came on thick and fast. One son rebelled against him, and flew to arms; and Solomon usurped the throne after the death of his father, and put to death his elder brother by a former wife, under a pretence the most frivolous, to secure himself a safe possession of his usurped power. Another son ravished his half-sister by another mother; and in return, the ravisher was murdered by the brother of the violated virgin. In truth, if it is true as recorded, David's whole life was one continued scene of blood and slaughter; and on his death-bed he

recommended Solomon to murder others—as his oath prevented him from doing it in his lifetime.

However strictly David obeyed Jehovah, and "turned not aside to worship other gods," in a moral point of view he was a wicked man. His conduct for licentiousness was notorious. In addition to the number of wives he had before the death of Saul, his royal master, Nathan the prophet says that "Jehovah gave him Saul's wives, besides"; but, not satisfied with all this, so contemptible was his conduct, he sneaked about to obtain a sight of an officer's wife while in the bath. Such low, cowardly curiosity would disgrace the driver of a dung-cart. A lady's bath not to be held sacred by this filthy, dirty animal, and yet to be called "the man after God's own heart"! His actions would disgrace the Devil, for Satan offered no insult to Eve: his worst crime was no more than saying—"Madam, the fruit is good, do taste, it will do you no harm, and you will be the wiser; after all."

Never let us forget the artifice the Lord's anointed made use of, in order to conceal his crime. When Uriah, his officer, came from the army with news of importance to David, after the seduction of Bathsheba, the cunning debauchee said, come, Uriah, do not hurry back to the camp; go home to Bathsheba, your wife; she will be happy to see you: go home, my faithful servant, and stay with your wife.

But Uriah refused, by saying, the officers and the army are in the open fields, and I will not go home to take comfort in my own house. So Uriah slept in the gate with the servants. And when David found that he had not been home, he made him tarry another day, and that night got him drunk. In the meantime the King wrote a letter to Joab, the Captain of the host, and sent it by Uriah, to place him in the front of the battle, where he would be killed. The unsuspecting Uriah then returned; to his duty, with his death warrant in his hand; and, according to the orders given to Joab, the commander of the host of Israel, Uriah was placed in that part of the engagement where he fell, covered with wounds and glory.

It will be seen by the orders sent to the Captain, concerning Uriah, by the King, what cowardly artifice was used to murder his noble officer, whose wife, unknown to him, had been seduced. David's words are, "*Set ye Uriah in the fore-front of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him that he may be smitten and die.*" Such an act would disgrace the worst despot on earth, but it was done by "the man after God's own heart"! When Nathan was sent by Jehovah to David, to remind him of his wickedness, it was done, in the way of a parable. David did not at first discover its application: and it is recorded, that "*David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said unto Nathan as the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die." "Thou art the man!*" said Nathan; and David exclaimed, "*Oh! Lord, I have sinned.*" In fact, he was found out, but for which he would not have made this acknowledgment.

After the death of Uriah, David took her (Bathsheba) to wife, and Jehovah made up the matter with him; first, by destroying the child, the innocent victim who had no part in the murder; and, secondly, by saving and pardoning David for crimes of the deepest dye: and, also, the Lord told him, that because of his wickedness he should have discord in his family:—"*Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee, out of thine house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.*" To destroy the innocent child, who had no participation in the crime of the father, is too shocking to be admitted, when it is recorded as the sentence of the just and impartial God. I know Christians will reply, that the ways of God are not as our ways, and that it is wicked in mortals to find fault with what is done by a Being of infinite power, wisdom, and Goodness. In reply, it is contended that the conduct pursued on this occasion by Jehovah, is shocking when ascribed to a God impartial and just, and that it is more becoming mortals, like ourselves, to reject the whole story as a vile falsehood, than to father it on that Being, or that Cause, who:

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"Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees."
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To conclude these remarks on David's life and conduct, we ask, which is the more reasonable supposition, that the whole account, so far as it implicates a God of Justice, is, from beginning to end untrue? or, that a Being of unbounded power, wisdom and goodness, should in any way associate with so abandoned a character as King David? For myself, I prefer the latter. I have omitted another account in the life of David, that requires to be noticed. It is recorded in 2 Samuel, chapter xxiv., that David ordered the people to be numbered. One account says that Satan, and another account says that the Lord, moved David to number the people: no doubt it was done to get the number of the fighting men of Israel; for doing which, the Lord was angry with David; and three modes of punishment were submitted for the choice of the King:—"*Seven years' famine, or to flee three months before his enemies, or to have three days' pestilence in the land.*" The last was chosen, and it is recorded that seventy thousand men died of the pestilence, as a punishment for the offence of David. It is a libel on the Supreme Being to charge him with the authorship of such injustice and cruelty. That thousands of persons may have been cut off by plague, or pestilence, at times, and in different nations, is highly probable—but not by a judgment for other men's sins.

In Homer's Iliad, we have a similar account, written, according to historians, about nine hundred years before the Christian era. In the account of the Trojan War, the commander of the Grecian army, in the sacking of different towns, took many female captives, among whom was one who was the daughter of the Priest of Apollo, one of the Grecian gods. The venerable Priest came to the General, clothed in his robes, bearing the sublime and awe-inspiring ensigns of his god, and demanded the liberation of his captive daughter. The General insulted the Priest by a positive refusal to give up his daughter, and he (the Priest) departed, and offered the following prayer:

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"If e'er with wreaths I hung the sacred fane,
Or fed the flame with fat of oxen slain,
God of the silver bow, thy shafts employ,
Avenge my quarrel, and the Greeks destroy."
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The second General in command inquired of the Grecian Priest the cause of such mortality among the soldiers; and the Priest returned the following answer:—:

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"The King of men, the reverend Priest defied,
And, for the King's offence, the people died."
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The similarity between the Jehovah of the Jews, and the Apollo of the Greeks, is very striking. Jehovah slew the Jewish army because David numbered the people; and the Grecian god slew the soldiers because the Priest had been insulted. The number is exactly the same, each being seventy thousand men. The God of the Jews is said to have been the author of the destruction of the army of the Israelites, and a heathen god the destroyer of the Greeks. The first is believed to be a part of Divine Revelation; the last is acknowledged to be but fiction.

From all the accounts recorded respecting David, to me he appears to have been a wicked man; much worse than Saul, whose worst action seems to have been his humanity in sparing Agag, whom he took prisoner. I cannot, therefore, believe, that the Universal Ruler of all Nature sanctioned his actions, directly or indirectly, any more than he does now, or ever has done, those of any other legal murderer.

A few remarks more will conclude the life and conduct of David. In 1 Kings, chapter i., it is recorded, that David being old and infirm, could get no warmth in bed, and a fair young damsel was sought for throughout the land of Israel, to wait on him by day, and sleep with him during the night, to keep the old King warm. With her he was much pleased, but the account states, that "David the King knew her not." This is a strange tale, for if the sole object was, to get a young woman to sleep with him, then not the fairest, but the fattest, plumpest girl to be found throughout the land, would have been the most proper person for such service; for at that time, David must have had half a score of wives living. It is therefore clear, that warmth was only a pretence for selecting a handsome young maiden to comfort the Lord's anointed; and we may safely infer that David was not cured of his former tricks.

The life and conduct of Solomon must now pass in review. When his father was on his death-bed, he gave his son Solomon instructions to put to death several persons who had been the subjects of David, but to whom he (David) had sworn while living, that he would spare their lives. And accordingly, Solomon, after the death of his father, put into execution the orders he had received, and slew the persons mentioned by David; so that his reign commenced in blood.

And here it is proper to notice, that Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, and the mother of Solomon, in order to disinherit the eldest son of David by his former wife, prevailed on David to have Solomon anointed King, in the lifetime of his father. So that Adonijah, the real heir, was set aside; and the better to secure the throne, Solomon had his half-brother put to death. The cause of this execution, as is recorded, was because Adonijah asked leave of Solomon, the King, to marry the damsel who kept David warm in his old age! Jehovah had chosen a strange family, after turning out Saul from the-kingdom, and Solomon was too pure to let a brother live, after being so wicked as to ask permission to marry the young virgin who had kept the back of his old father warm in a cold night!

After Solomon had slain those men according to the orders before given by his father, he added another to the list, viz., Adonijah, his half-brother. The Lord appeared to him in a dream, and said, "Ask what I shall give thee." Solomon then dreamed that he gave the following reply to the gracious permission:—*"Give, therefore, thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad."* This request is said to have pleased the Lord, who added to it *"both riches and honor"; "and-Solomon awoke, and behold it was a dream."* This account is written in 1 Kings, chapter iii.; and all that can be made of it is, that Solomon dreamed the Lord told him so, and we have nothing but his word for it.

The Bible record of Solomon's riches, and, in fact, the whole of his life, is not entitled to any credit whatever. We may say, however, that some allowance

ought to be made for Solomon on account of the bad example under which he was brought tip in the family of his father; for if the Scripture history of the facts concerning Solomon is to be considered true, then the whole of his reign is the most extraordinary which ever happened in the world. Beginning with his riches, it exceeds every thing in ancient or modern times. The feast at the opening of the Temple was no small matter.

Scripture informs us, that at the dedication of the Temple, Scripture informs us, that at the dedication of the Temple, the sacrifice offered up, was twenty-two thousand oxen, and one hundred and twenty-two thousand sheep. This, when we consider the smallness of David's domains, and the general poverty of his family, is incredible; but as every thing is so wonderful, and the whole of the reign of Solomon is so extravagant, no dependence whatever is to be placed on any of its accounts.

As it regards Solomon's household, the provisions named for each day are the following:—"*Thirty measures of fine flour, threescore measures of meal, ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and an hundred sheep, besides harts and roebucks, and fallow-deer, and faited fowls." "And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen.*" Now, in so small, and in many parts barren land, where could they be raised? But Solomon had need of a plentiful table, for it is recorded that he had seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines! If he had wisdom enough to regulate his house so as to live happy, it must be owned that the Lord had given him more than a common share; but as none but fools or madmen will believe this account, we may let it pass without comment.

The most astonishing inconsistency in the reign of Solo-man, is his continual departure from the worship of Jehovah, who had been his benefactor, and who had also repeatedly warned him of the consequences of a departure from the God of his father. If what is recorded of his riches be true, they were greater than those of any monarch on earth. The gold he is said to have possessed when he built the Temple, exceeds all calculation, and is in strict accordance, in point of magnitude, with his feast at the dedication of the Temple, and with his daily allowance of food for his household, and also with his seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines. But when we consider the poverty of the Israelites up to the time of his father's reign, and also David's poverty until the death of Saul, when at times, David had neither food for himself nor army, neither had he gold nor silver wherewith to purchase it—it may be asked, how Solomon came into the possession of such an immense quantity of gold? and also from what vast extent of country did he procure his horses, when but a few years before, David, his father; could scarcely afford to keep a jackass? Again, where did he procure such numerous herds of cattle and flocks of sheep?

But as I have before said, the greatest inconsistency of all is, that Solomon should worship other gods, contrary to the express command of Jehovah, who had given him wisdom, riches, and honors. Leaving Christians, then, to settle with Solomon, how he, with all his wisdom, could so play the fool and madman in the face of his God, some attention will be directed to the God of Abram, Isaac, and Jacob. It will be recollected that Saul, the predecessor of David, had offended Jehovah by sparing the life of Agag, a captive King. In consequence, it is recorded that the God of Israel repented that he put Saul on the throne. He then chose David, and his family, to succeed the house of Saul; and having made this second choice, he declared he should not repent again.

If this last declaration had been made by man, in his choice, after having before been mistaken, the following mode of reasoning would aptly apply; and Jehovah would also thus reason:—"I made choice of Saul to be King over Israel. I sent him to smite Amalek, and not to spare any soul alive, old age and infancy not excepted; but Saul did not obey my orders, but spared the King and brought him a captive, which I did not expect As I took him from driving mules, and made him a King, he ought therefore to have obeyed my commands. I dethroned him and his family forever. I then appointed David, a man after my own heart. In this choice I was happy. He departed not from my worship or my law, but with a few exceptions. It is true, David committed adultery and murder, in the case of Bathsheba and Uriah; but he repented, and I caused the brat to die out of the way, which made room for Solomon. Now, who could ever have thought that Solomon would have turned out so bad? Why, the fellow, in addition to wisdom, riches, and honor, has now seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines! and not content with this number, he marries the daughters of heathens, prostrates himself before their idols, and builds new temples to their gods; but I promised not to repent again, yet Solomon must be punished. I will not, therefore, depose him, but in his son's reign I will divide the kingdom, and give the greater part of it to one of mean birth. I will not wholly take it away from the seed of David, because I promised him that he should not want a man to sit on his throne; but I will, for the wickedness of Solomon, cause discord among the tribes, that will induce them to fight against each other. It is not for the thousand women that Solomon had, which would not fail to create discord and all manner of misery; neither for putting to death his brother: all that I could have tolerated—but he changed his religion, and worshipped strange gods; I will rend the nation asunder, never more to be united. It would have been more to my honor to have suffered Saul to continue on the throne, for he only disobeyed my Orders once, but the son of David built temples for idolatry, and worshipped false gods, setting my authority at defiance. In his son's reign, therefore, I will bring on trouble in his house, that all Israel may know how great is the sin of worshipping false gods,

and thus rebelling against the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel."

I will now ask the Christian preachers, whether I dishonor the all-wise Sovereign of the Universe, in not believing him to be capable of such tomfoolery as this: in choosing, and again rejecting his former choice: in blundering, to rectify a former blunder, and falling into one much greater, to remedy the first: to be doing, and undoing: to have an end to accomplish, and to make use of means that fail in its accomplishment. Ye priests! if ye are not blind, look at the heavens above, and also on the earth beneath, and then ask yourselves, whether the God of all is the same personage as Jehovah, the God of Israel?

To conclude these remarks respecting the house of David and Solomon:—Even admitting that such personages had a real existence, I cannot so dishonor the Supreme Governor of Nature as for a moment to admit, that he dealt with either David or Solomon any otherwise than he deals with every human being, and I should stand before my fellow men a self-convicted hypocrite, were I to affect to believe.

CHAPTER VII. THE REIGN OF JEROBOAM, AND THE SEPARATION OF ISRAEL FROM JUDAH

REVIEWING the character of the three former Kings, two of whom gave Jehovah much trouble, and David, the best of them, committed adultery and murder, we must say, it was an unfortunate beginning of royal government. After the death of Solomon, his son, Rehoboam, began to reign. The people requested the new made King to ease them somewhat of the taxes and burdens laid on them by his father, Solomon. Rehoboam consulted with his father's old servants on that subject, and they advised him to attend to the wishes of his people; but he, on consulting with his own particular party, returned the following answer:—"*My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.*" This gives us a sample of Solomon's reign, and also of the course intended to be pursued by his son.

Rehoboam's answer produced a revolt, and the kingdom became divided. Ten tribes broke off from Rehoboam, and proclaimed Jeroboam King of Israel, while Rehoboam retained two tribes: so that the Israelites were divided. The ten tribes were called the kingdom of Israel, and the other two, the kingdom of Judah. This is the punishment that the Lord said he would bring on the nations in consequence of the sins of Solomon. So it was then, with the Lord's people, as it has ever been in Christian countries where the aristocracy is every thing, and, the people are considered as nothing. According to Jewish history, Jehovah and the Kings of his own choosing quarrelled, and then the people had to suffer in consequence of disputes in which they had but little or no interest; and one of the strongest proofs that "the God of the Bible" is not that Being whom we believe to be the only true God, is, that when the Jehovah of Moses and the Kings quarrel, the Kings are spared alive, but the innocent people are in some way or other murdered; thus clearly showing, that Kings are by Jehovah worth

more than those who by honest toil cultivate the earth, and labor for the benefit of society,—a doctrine directly opposite to all our ideas of impartial justice.

We now proceed to examine the course pursued by Jeroboam, the fourth King who was chosen to reign over Israel. We ought to find him fitted for so important a station; but, on the contrary, we have again to record another chapter of blunders, far worse than those before mentioned. Saul, their first King, disobeyed the command in sparing Agag, the King, after having destroyed every soul that drew breath. David *followed the Lord with his whole heart*; that is, he never entered into the temple of idols except to destroy them and their worshippers; but he was guilty of two crimes, for either of which, had he been any thing but a King, or Priest, he would have been, by the laws of his own country, put to death. Solomon's character was marked by every thing extravagant; but he did not wholly turn from the worship of Jehovah, only at times, as when he espoused a heathen lady. Then, to prove his love for his new spouse, he worshipped in the temple of strange gods, and also built new churches to their honor. This is a general outline of the three Kings, all of whom were chosen by Jehovah himself.

Jeroboam was appointed, according to what is recorded, in consequence of Solomon's idolatry. I then ask, whether it is not reasonable to expect, that, in the reign of Jeroboam, the worship of the God of Israel would alone be the religion of the ten tribes who were taken from Solomon because of his departure at times from the God of Abram, Isaac, and Jacob? Jeroboam being then, by Jehovah, made King, in preference to all others, and being raised in the family, of Rehoboam, Solomon's son, and only as a servant connected with the family, we cannot suspect that ever a new choice should have been made for the worse. Could this have been the case if Infinite Wisdom had chosen him? No; it is impossible! No sooner, however, did Jeroboam obtain the rule over the ten tribes, by the direct order of Jehovah himself, than he set up a religion directly opposite to the God who had elevated him to such honor and power.

It is impossible for this account to be true, for two reasons that will be given. The first is, that Jeroboam must have known the cause why Solomon's family were excluded from reigning over the whole of the Jewish nation, namely, because he (Solomon) did at times worship what were called false gods. Now, Jeroboam well knew this, and also, that the only way for him to secure his power was, never to depart at any time, or under any circumstances, from the worship of Jehovah. But, contrary to this, he commenced his reign by falling back into Egyptian idolatry. Under pretence of keeping his subjects faithful to his government, by not permitting them to go up to the Temple, at Jerusalem, Jeroboam set up two golden calves, one at Dan, and the other at Bethel, and proclaimed, "*These are thy Gods, O Israel who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.*" Besides, he knew that Jehovah would pardon an adulterer, or murder, as he had done in the

case of David; but on no account did he ever forgive the sin of idolatry.

There is nothing improbable in admitting that the tribes should split into two kingdoms, and have different rulers. This has often been the case; but the only way to account for the conduct of Jeroboam is, by concluding that he knew, the whole to be a trick, and that neither Jehovah, nor any other God, had a hand in the putting up or dethroning of Kings. This being admitted, we can see clearly through the whole matter. Jeroboam then would, from policy, set up a new religion, or revive an old one, so as to keep his subjects from mixing with their old acquaintances of the kingdom of Judah. It is utterly impossible for Jeroboam to have acted as is recorded, if he in truth believed that the only true and living God was his benefactor, and had raised him to regal authority.

The second reason why Infinite Wisdom had nothing to do in the elevation of Jeroboam, is, because he must have foreseen that Jeroboam would have made the matter worse, so far as idolatry was concerned; and this will appear the more striking by the first act of his reign. As soon as Jeroboam came to the throne, he (contrary to the law of Moses) set up images, and made priests of the lower orders of the people, and began himself to worship in the character and office of a priest; for which, a prophet from Judah is sent (by the God who, it is said, gave Solomon the kingdom of Israel) to curse the altar at the time Jeroboam was in the act of sacrificing. Now the conduct of the prophet so sent, will enable us to see through the whole farce. This is recorded in 1 Kings, chapter xiii.

The following is in substance the prophet's mission:—This man of God was sent by Jehovah to cry against and curse the altar at the time Jeroboam was performing sacrifice; and being at the altar, he ordered his officers to lay hold of the prophet, at the same time pointing to him; and instantly the King's arm became useless, and could not be drawn into its proper place. Jeroboam then cried to the man of God to pray that his arm might be restored. The man of God besought the Lord, and a recovery took place. Here, then, was a miracle performed; and Jeroboam, being grateful, invited the prophet home to reward him by an entertainment of bread and water; but the man of God refused, by saying, that he was ordered by the Lord not to eat bread nor to drink water—in fact, to make no friendship whatever, but to return. Off, therefore, he went, after he had performed two miracles; one of which was, to cause Jeroboam to lose the use of his arm; the other, to restore it The prophet, on his way back, was met by a man who made the same request, namely, to go home with him, and eat and drink; but the man of God still refused. The man who thus enticed him, further said, I am also a prophet, and *"an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, bring him back into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied unto him."*

The lying prophet was in the service of Jeroboam, King of Israel; but the man of God, who came to cry against the altar, belonged to the kingdom of Judah.

The man of God, who understood that his first orders were countermanded, went home with the lying prophet, and did eat and drink. The reader will now notice the following three verses in 1 Kings xiii., 20, 21, 22:—"And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the word of the Lord came unto the prophet that brought him back: And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and host not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee, but earnest back, and hast eaten bread and drank water in the place of which the Lord did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcass shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers." If men would but exercise their reason, is it possible for them to believe that the Sovereign Ruler of all had any concern in so paltry a transaction as this?

The sum of the whole account may be expressed in a few words. The first prophet came to Jeroboam, by order of the Lord, to curse the altar. He then and there performed two miracles, as proof that his commission was Divine. He then departed. All was so far right; but, on meeting another prophet, he was told, in so many words, that things were changed, and that he might do now that which he was ordered not to do when he first set out. But the old prophet of Jeroboam, we are told, was a liar; and when they sat at meat, the word of the Lord came to the lying prophet and gave him orders to condemn the first. So that the Lord first employed an honest servant, who performed his errand faithfully, and then took into his service a false prophet and a liar! Believe this who can!

It is possible that Jeroboam may have been King over Israel: this is not the point in dispute; but that Infinite Wisdom appointed him, cannot possibly be true, because he was made King in consequence of Solomon's idolatry. Solomon did not, by sinning himself, corrupt the whole nation; but Jeroboam set up false gods, and the people followed his example, so that the worship of Jehovah, by the ten tribes, was entirely abandoned. Such blundering cannot be admitted, if the true and living God is to be considered as the projector. Besides, Jeroboam was not cured of his error by reformation, although he had been an eye-witness of the miracles performed on his own person. Enough, then, has been said to prove, that the whole account of God's making Jeroboam King over Israel, is without any solid foundation.

We will now turn to the man of God who came to curse the altar, and we shall be able to discover what we are to understand by the word of the Lord coming unto this or that man, saying. And here I call on the reader to keep in mind, that in many places in the Bible, when any thing unfortunate occurred to Jehovah's chosen people, such as the Lord raised up such and such enemies, and also that such misfortunes were from the Lord: also, again, *an evil spirit from the Lord came on Saul*;—all such passages, and many others, mean no more than

that the Lord permitted such events to take place. In this sense, we may say that it was from the Lord that Andrew Jackson destroyed a great part of the English army; but no man is foolish enough to suppose that the Lord had directly any thing to do in the defence of New Orleans. Again, it is repeated in hundreds of places in the Bible, that *the word of the Lord came to this or that person, saying.* Now, apply this interpretation to "the word of the Lord came unto Moses," and all that can be made of it is, that Moses ascribed every order he gave of his to the people, as coming from the Lord. It is in several places recorded that the word of the Lord came to one prophet of Judah, and then this said word was taken away from the first person, and turned over to another prophet who belonged to Israel; and in 1 Kings xxii., 24, it is recorded, that one prophet smote another on the face, and said, "Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?" Nothing can be more clear, than that the whole of the Lord's interference is out of the question.

After Israel and Judah were divided, they continued as two separate governments, with each a King for a leader. Sometimes they fought against each other, calling in other Kings to assist them; at other times, they were united and fought together to oppose the common enemy, their heathen neighbors. In a war with the Syrians, when Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, and Ahab, King of Israel, united their armies against the Syrians, and being on the eve of battle, an inquiry was made of the Lord's prophets, as to what success they would have? Ahab, the King of Israel, called his prophets, four hundred in number, and, on being consulted as to the result of a battle, they one and all said, go fight, for the Lord will deliver your enemies into your hands. Jehoshaphat, being more cautious, said, is there not another prophet of whom we may inquire of the Lord? And the King of Israel (Ahab) said, there is; but I do not like him, because he always foretells something to my disadvantage. Then Micaiah, a prophet of the kingdom of Judah, was called, and he foretold that the event of a battle would be favorable to these kings; but that Ahab would be slain. One of Ahab's prophets then became enraged, and smote Micaiah on the face, and sneeringly asked him, "*Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak to thee?*"

We have here a sample of the prophets on each side They one and all appear to be ready to lie, and deceive each other, in the name of the Lord, and also, to fight for their employers. In this account, it is also recorded that the God of truth accepted of the services of a lying spirit, to deceive four hundred prophets, in order to get rid of a wicked king, the whole account of which is to be found in 1 Kings, chapter xxii.

After the tribes were separated, it was common for the prophets to oppose each other. The kings, also, of each nation aided in the destruction of the prophets, and were worshippers of strange gods. And yet it is recorded, that

Jehovah chose Jeroboam to be king over Israel,—the very man who introduced the worship of idols, to the entire exclusion of the worship of the God of Abram! This choice of Jehovah laid the foundation of scenes of bloodshed too horrid to be ascribed to the all-wise Author of Nature. It could not have been worse, had the Devil been the chooser.

For years after the Israelites became two distinct nations, we read of little else than quarrels and bloodshed; and the prophets of Judah (called the prophets of Jehovah) were much worse than those called false prophets. This can be easily accounted for, as the Jewish religion was then the most intolerant of any on earth. The Kings of Judah gave orders, in the name of the Lord, to destroy all the heathen, as the enemies of Jehovah. The prophets followed up the same practice; at the same time, the prophets of the heathen gods were less cruel, and, morally speaking, much better men. According to what is recorded, whenever power was in the hands of the Kings of Judah, or their prophets, no mercy was shown to the opposite party; and as to prophets, they seemed to spring up like mushrooms, for it was often inquired by kings, is there not a man of God here?

A few remarks on the prophets of those times may be here made. Elijah seems to have had delegated to him almost unlimited power; for lo! he, under pretence of having orders from Jehovah, anointed kings agreeably to his pretended orders. He then foretold what the Lord intended should be done to certain kings and their families. Those kings, then, thus anointed by the authority of Elijah, received orders to destroy such and such families; so that after Jehovah had separated the Israelites into two kingdoms by setting up Jeroboam, nothing but cruelty and murder followed, in consequence of the Lord's making so bad a choice.

It would, judging from what transpired, have been better not to have changed the dynasty, but to let Solomon's heirs continued to have reigned over the whole of the Israetish nation; for in this state of Jewish history, idolatry, murder, carnage, and every bad passion was let loose; and the kings of each nation of the Jews, by the direction of these upstart prophets, showed no mercy to those of their brethren who had, by the fortune of war, fallen into their power. All this horrid state of things originated from Jeroboam being made king, and setting up idolatry throughout the land. Can we then admit, for a moment, that the Sovereign Ruler of all brought on such a wretched state of things, or ascribe to him so foolish a choice as the appointment of Jeroboam to be King of Israel? No! it is utterly impossible.

But to return to the prophets. Elijah and Elisha were, at this time, the Lord's servants. Elijah was foremost, and Elisha acted as his servant. The following circumstance brought Elijah into direct conflict with the kingdom of Israel, and the then called false prophets:—Ahaziah, then King of Israel and Samaria, met

with an accident, and was sick; and he sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub whether he would recover or not Now, Elijah was sent, or, he said he was sent, to say to the messenger, "*Is it because there is not a God in Israel, that thou sendest to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?*" The King of Israel then inquired what sort of a man it was who thus remonstrated with the messenger? And from the account given, he found it to be Elijah, the prophet of Judah; consequently a prophet of the Lord. Elijah was sitting on a hill, and the king sent a captain and fifty men to bring him before him; and this was the order:—"*Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down. And Elijah answered, and said to the captain of fifty, If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.*" And again, another captain and fifty went, and shared the same fate. Then the third captain and fifty were sent; but the captain of the last fifty fell on his knees before-the prophet, and begged for his life, and for the lives of his-men. The Lord then ordered Elijah to go down with the captain to the king.

Now I ask the reader, if his mind is prepared to, believe that these two slaughters, consisting of one hundred men, with their two captains, were brought on them by fire from heaven, as a judgment? What was their crime? They acted as they were ordered by the king. Here we may discover the falsity of the statement; for if any punishment was to follow in sending for the prophet, ought not Ahaziah to have been the victim? This wanton shedding of blood, by the mere calling down from heaven judgments, by an old fellow wrapped up in a bear's-skin, and called a man of God, is too barefaced a lie for the present state of society. There is not one word of truth in the whole marvellous story. Jehovah's murdering the people for the vices of their rulers, is anti-republican; and if men would consult their reason, and employ common sense, the Christian priesthood would be ashamed to preach of a God of mercy, and, at the same time, ascribe to him injustice and cruelty.

Elijah and his man Friday, Elisha, appear to be two of the most cruel of all the band of pretended men of God. They, according to what is recorded, seem to have had a sort of general license to kill and destroy every thing that came in their way. All the prophets and worshippers of the god Baal-zebub, the then worship of the kingdom of Israel and Samaria, were put to death by the stratagem and order of Elijah; and after him, Elisha received an affront by being called "*old bald head*" and for this great offence, the Lord sent two she bears out of the woods, and devoured forty and two little children! The nonsense of the Koran cannot come up to this account. During the lives of Elijah and Elisha, Jehovah could attend to little else than their concerns, for they were forever praying for something to incommode or destroy human beings.

What man is there, at the present day, who can believe that the Author of Nature gave to a mortal, power to withhold the rain or the dews of heaven from descending on the earth, as is recorded was given to Elijah, who told Ahab, King of Israel, (1 Kings xvii., 1,) "*As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my words*"? This miracle is referred to by a New Testament writer, but it is not the more true on that account. I have, however, said enough of Elijah, and, as he is about to go up into heaven, I have no wish to follow him.

I will only mention his ascension. It appears that all the towns and villages round about had heard, by what means I know not, that Elijah was soon to be taken up into heaven; for wherever he and Elisha went, the people said unto Elisha, *know you wot that Elijah is about to be taken from you?* and Elisha nodded an assent, and said, "*hold your peace.*" It appears as if Elijah endeavored to evade Elisha's presence when he would be taken up; but Elisha stuck to him until up he went in a chariot of fire, with horses of the same; and Elisha saw it, and cried out, "*My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!*" In going up, his mantle fell off, Elisha taking it, and with it, the prophetic spirit of his master. Elisha then followed on in the footsteps of his predecessor; and his first act was, to call on his God to destroy some little children, for the enormous crime of calling so odd a looking fellow, "*old bald head*" In truth, we discover in most of the prophets such a spirit of intolerance and rage towards those who were so unfortunate as to differ from or oppose them, that they ought to be considered prophets of the Devil, and not servants of him whose wisdom, power and goodness are stamped on all the works of this mighty universe.

The prophet Jonah seems to have been a man every way unfit for the prophetic service; for when ordered to go to Nineveh, to cry against the wickedness of its inhabitants, he ran away; and, according to the record, his, disobedience produced a violent storm, and when the sailors found that he was out of his road to Nineveh, they cast lots to find out the person who had caused the storm, and the lot fell on Jonah, who confessed himself to be the guilty person. He then told them to cast him into the sea, as the only way to save themselves and the ship. It is written what followed. Another blunder again in the choice of Jonah; and miracles must be performed to cause this run-away prophet to reach his destination. He then again made an attempt to preach repentance to the Ninevites; and they, hearing of the destruction against them, repented, and this made the prophet stark mad; for his consequence as a prophet being hurt, he exclaimed, that *he was tired of life.* Poor, paltry trash for the employment of a God, to reason with and coax a hotheaded creature like Jonah! but, like all the rest of such tales, there is not one word of truth in the whole concern.

Before taking leave of the prophets of the Old Testament, a few remarks may suffice to point out their real character. From the time that Jehovah adopted the seed of Abram for his chosen people, nothing but trouble and vexation on his part occurred; and on the part of the descendants of Abram, Isaac, and Jacob, one disaster after another followed in quick succession. Under whatever form of government they lived, they strayed from his commands, and in spite of his watchfulness, his chosen people would worship strange gods, for which offence they were punished. Heathen kings were stirred up against them, and their subjugation was the consequence. They then cried unto the Lord, and matters were made up for a while. The same scenes again took place, and punishments followed. From the beginning of the Jewish dispensation until it ended, there was continual quarrelling between Jehovah and his favorites, and some of those quarrels were so contemptible that they would disgrace a foolish old man and a peevish wife disputing how the firebrands should be put together, by an evening fire-side. The prophets, also, partook of the same spirit; they abused each other, and sometimes came to blows: they would lie and deceive in the name of the Lord.

But the worst part of the Jewish dispensation commenced with the reign of their kings. Saul was first chosen by Jehovah himself; and, admitting the account to be true, the only crime that is laid to his charge is, the sparing of Agag, the King of the Amalekites, although he had destroyed every other being, both old and young. For this one act of humanity, Saul and his family were rejected by Jahovah. David, his successor, obeyed the Lord in all things respecting religious worship; but he committed adultery and murder, thereby forfeiting his life by the law of Moses. But he was forgiven, and the child, the fruit of his adulterous intercourse, was, by the Lord of Hosts, destroyed. Solomon, his son, and the son also of his companion in guilt, was made king. Solomon worshipped idols at times, throughout his reign, and Jehovah was angry, and resolved to try another line of kings. Jeroboam was then anointed king over ten tribes, and the family of Abram, Isaac, and Jacob were split in twain.

Now, mark! This separation was in consequence of Solomon's idolatry. We might expect, judging from Jehovah's former disappointment, that Jeroboam would entirely devote himself and his people to the worship of the God of Israel. But behold! Jeroboam began with setting up two golden calves, in direct opposition, to the law of Moses, and also to the command of Jehovah, who had raised him from a state of servitude to sit on a throne, savage and only at times departed from the Lord, but Jeroboam excluded every vestige of the worship of Jehovah from his kingdom. This, then, is a just statement of the conduct of those kings selected by the Lord of Hosts, as recorded in the Old Testament And can it be possible that Infinite Wisdom should have been thus disappointed by those

whom he had chosen? The just conclusion, then, is, that the Ruler of all worlds had no concern in putting up or pulling down any of the Kings of Israel or Judah. The history is, from first to last, a cheat on the human race, and blasphemy against the only true God.

From the time that Jeroboam was made king until the tribes were carried away into captivity, idolatry was the sin complained of by all the prophets; it was the constant burden of all their prophecies; and the prophets, one and all, intermixed with their complaints the prediction that the Lord had not entirely cast them off, but that the time would come when he would *raise up unto them a prophet like unto Moses.* Such predictions, often repeated by all the prophets together with continued references to their future renovation and restoration, is what caused a general expectation of some mighty deliverer that would, *in the fullness of time*, appear among them.

CHAPTER VIII. ON DIVINE INSPIRATION

I INTENDED to conclude the review of the Old Testament by examining the passages supposed to be prophetical of Jesus Christ, and, as such, quoted by the writers of the New Testament; but as that has already been done, in a masterly manner, by Mr. ———- (Name crossed out by a former reader. ED) and as his opinion respecting them coincides entirely with my own, I beg leave to refer my readers to the work of that able writer on the subject. Professing Christians believe that what are called the five Books of Moses were given by divine inspiration. I shall, therefore, in this chapter, consider what is to be understood by divine inspiration, abstractly considered, and also with reference to prophecy and miracles. It is contended that Moses wrote the account of the Creation, and that it is true. If so, then all the particulars of that remote age must have been given to the writer by nothing short of Supreme Intelligence. I ask, how was this information communicated? The Christian answers—by inspiration. This does not solve the difficulty. I therefore ask, what is inspiration?

Divine inspiration, according to the Christian's idea of it, must have been the source of prophecy and miracles, and implies infinite knowledge and power. Now, as Adam could not have given an account of his own origin, whoever wrote the history of the creation of the world, and of our first parents, must, if divinely inspired, have had all the particulars of the past clearly made known to him. We are told, by the New Testament writers, that "*all Scripture is given by inspiration*"; and again, that "*Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*" Still, divine inspiration remains an inscrutable mystery as to what it is abstractly considered; and, also, with respect to the manner in which it is communicated. It seems strange, to say the least, that divine revelation should be given to the human race by the means of inspiration, and yet the mode of communication be enveloped in profound mystery. As divine inspiration and divine revelation are closely connected, the first being the avenue of conveyance, and the latter being

the subject communicated, I shall define, as clearly as I can, what constitutes divine revelation; but in order, if possible, to prevent mistake, I shall first point out what it is not.

The developments and improvements which man effects by the exercise of his perceptive and reflective faculties, are results which are not obtained through the medium of divine revelation. From being a savage, and wandering in a state of destitution in the forests, he has, by the use of his varied faculties, made advances in civilization and the arts, which at first sight appear superhuman, but which were, nevertheless, unaided by divine revelation. Contrasting the present state of the wonderful and awe-inspiring science of astronomy with that when the best informed of the human race were but ignorant star-gazers, we can but feel proud that we are a part of the human family. Again, when we look back at the period when the frail little bark could not venture out of sight of land, and then contemplate the improvements in naval architecture of our present times, which have presented us with that splendid floating palace, the *Great Britain steamships* we can but see that all this has been effected without any assistance from divine revelation. If, at some future time, by means of improvements in the telescope, inhabitants should be discovered in the moon, we should not be indebted for the discovery to divine revelation. But, the discovery not having been made, should an angel be sent from heaven to make known the fact, such information would undoubtedly constitute a divine revelation. So, then, it is dear that whatever improvement man may make, by the unaided exercise of his faculties, cannot be considered as the result of divine revelation. Divine revelation is that which man cannot know, consequently never has known, and never will know by the aid of his reasoning powers The Old and New Testaments collectively are called a divine revelation; and that the information these books contain, respecting man's duty to his Maker, came from the Almighty; Ruler of the universe, is the Christian's view of the matter.

We will now examine the various inlets, or avenues, by which divine revelation is said to have been communicated to man. According to the scriptures, the first in order is that God himself conversed with men;—secondly, by the medium of angels;—thirdly, by inspired prophets;—fourthly, by dreams;—fifthly, by visions;—and lastly, by his son. These are the principal inlets. We will examine these different modes, and make such remarks as are applicable to each. First, then, as to the assumption that God himself, conversed with men. It is recorded that he appeared to and conversed with, our first parents; also with Noah, Abram, Moses, and even Balaam. The Deity's conversing with Adam and Eve may be considered as the commencement of divine revelation. With respect to the truth of these conversations, and the remarkable appearances connected with them, no positive testimony can be adduced either for or against; we must

therefore take reason for our guide in the examination. We begin, then, by observing, that if such events did actually occur, it is clear that God was accessible to man in those days, and that in a manner very different to what he is in our own times; and, also, that the unknown and invisible being could be approached on the most trifling occasions.

No good having ever resulted to man from such visits from the Great Author of all things, is proof presumptive that they never took place. So far from any moral good having resulted to Adam and Eve from their daily intercourse with Jehovah, we find in the case, of Eve, that, being seduced, either, by the serpent, or her own vicious inclination, she ate the forbidden fruit The ejectment of our first parents from the garden of Eden, would seem to warrant us in believing that the Lord watched over them for evil, and not for good. A pair of human beings brought into existence without experience of the past, or knowledge of the future, must stand much in need of instruction from their Creator; and yet the result of all the recorded intercourse was, they became disobedient; and were driven out of the garden provided for them by no less a being than the Author of the universe. Had the Bible-makers arranged the story so as to have made the conversations and intercourse result in the continuance of our first parents in the garden, the account would have borne some resemblance to truth: but to represent it as having ended in their expulsion, is by far too large a draft upon human credulity, unless they can believe that God is what Christians declare the Devil to be.

If the advocates for the authenticity of the Bible contend that the recorded intercourse between the Lord and our first parents is literally true, that view of the subject is attended with so many difficulties that it is almost impossible to give credit to it But if they contend that it is an allegory, then the probability is that the account of the creation is altogether a fabulous tradition, consequently not a divine inspiration. When the Lord is represented as having appeared to Abram, or any of the renowned men of old, such appearances are not spoken of as being of uncommon occurrence, nor is any surprise manifested. The Lord is always represented as having appeared in a human form. Before the sceptic can believe in the reality of these visitations, he must know for what end they took place; and, also, why the Lord should in the olden times be always ready to appear to, and converse with, his favorites, and in modern times altogether discontinue his visits, as if there were now nothing on earth worthy of his particular notice.

The Bible informs us that three angels in the form of men appeared to Abram, and that one of them was called the Lord, the *Judge of all the earth.* They must have been in the likeness of men: for, they had their feet washed; they dined with Abram, and the particular kind of food is mentioned, which in our day would be denominated veal and griddle-cake. And at this dinner the

promise was confirmed that Abram and Sarah should be blessed with a son in their old age, and that from his descendants one should arise who should be for the healing of the nations. After dinner the Lord informed Abram that he had heard that Abram's neighbors were extremely wicked, and that he and his companions had come to ascertain if the report were correct, and that the vengeance of Heaven was about to fall on Sodom and Gomorrah for their crimes. The good old man plead hard for the inhabitants, saying, "*Far be it from the Lord to slay the righteous with the wicked,*" and thereby in a slight degree averted the dreadful doom. The reader can peruse the account (Genesis, chapter xviii.,) and make his own comments. The writer could as soon believe that the moon is a large cheese, suspended in the firmament, as give credit to this contemptible story. If it should be asked, how Moses obtained his information as to what Abram had for dinner, the answer is, by inspiration.

We will here notice two remarkable appearances of the Lord: one of them to Balaam, the other to Moses, A few remarks on each will suffice. Balaam was a conjuror, and a person of no small consequence in his day. He was applied to by the princes of Moab to prophesy evil against the Israelites, That whole nation, under the guidance of Moses, being in the act of marching through the land of Moab on their route to the land of promise, and having the character of making too free with other people's property, the princes of Moab hired Balaam to curse them. We are told that the heathen prophet judged it best to procure the permission of Jehovah, the God of the Jews, before he cursed his people. He, therefore, erected an altar on the top of a hill, and on it sacrificed seven bullocks and seven sheep. During the sacrifice, the Lord of heaven and earth came down, and called the prophet aside from the presence of the princes of Moab, and forbade him to curse his people. The sacrifice was repeated thrice. On each occasion the Lord appeared to Balaam, giving him leave to go with the princes, but forbidding him on any account to curse the Israelites. The remainder of the tale is to be found in the history of Balaam.

Now, can it be possible, that this account contains a particle of truth? Can we suppose, that the unknown power, whom man calls God, presented himself at the altar of a heathen necromancer, and, whispering in his ear, forbade him to perform his monkey tricks to the detriment of his chosen people? And that three times he should descend from heaven to overawe the old trickster, as if he thought him capable of doing harm to the Israelites? This account is rendered more contemptible by being referred to by New Testament writers, although the scripture declares in many places that "no man can see God and live." Christians little think how largely their credulity is taxed when they are taught to believe that such accounts were given by divine inspiration.

It is written in the book of Exodus, (chapter xxiv.,) that After the giving of the moral law on Mount Sinai, the Lord called Moses to the top of that remarkable place to give him instructions respecting the tabernacle and its paraphernalia. Moses remained there forty days, attending to the commands of Jehovah. The Lord, on a sudden, informed Moses that the Israelites had forsaken him, had set up a golden calf, and were in the act of worshipping before it and dancing for joy. Moses was ordered to go down. Before he left the mount, however, the Lord's anger waxed hot, and he told Moses not to plead for the wicked people. Jehovah, being about to destroy them, Moses besought him not to cut them off, and reminded him that, by so doing, the Egyptians would triumph and say that their God led them into the wilderness to destroy them.

Moses also reminded Jehovah of the promises made to Abram, Isaac, and Jacob, respecting their posterity; and by the arguments he made use of in favor of showing mercy to the Jewish people, at length prevailed on the Lord to suppress his anger. Having descended from the mount, Moses found the people half-naked, and dancing in a state of joyful excitement before the Golden Calf. The man who had but just before plead the cause of his brethren, and thereby prevented Jehovah's destroying the whole of the seed of Abram, found it less difficult to quiet the fury of an angry God, than to keep his own temper; for, when he saw their idolatrous dancing and revelry, he lost all patience, and, throwing down the tables of stone on which the laws were written, made the inquiry, "*Who is on the Lord's side?*" The Levites instantly came forward and declared for the Lord. Moses ordered every man to take his sword and slay his neighbor and friends who had rebelled against Jehovah,—a shocking slaughter ensued, for three thousand were slain on that day!

If this account could be credited, it would be truly harrowing to the reflecting mind. To believers in Christianity, we would say, can you expect persons who depend on the exercise of their reason for the discovery of truth and the detection of error, to believe the account of the transactions of Jehovah and Moses on the mountain? Surely, you cannot. We give the following reasons why it is out of our power to believe it:—The narrative represents the Almighty Ruler of the Universe as possessing the same frailties as his creature, man. The Creator is forty days contriving (assisted by Moses) ornaments and decorations for his own worship. Before these were completed, the people, who were to be the worshippers, deserted their God, and either commenced a new religion or revived an old one. For a considerable time, Jehovah allows Moses to remain in ignorance of what is going on at the foot of the mountain; then, all of a sudden, informs him of it; in a burst of passion tells him to stand out of his way, so as to be no hindrance to him in pouring out his wrath; and seems determined to exterminate the whole race. Moses, less passionate than the Deity, argued strenuously in favor

of his brethren, and pointed out to Jehovah two reasons why he ought to spare them:—first, that their extermination would break the promise made to Abram; and secondly, that the Egyptians would exult in the destruction of their former slaves, Jehovah losing all the honor of having brought them out of bondage with *a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.*

Having thus cooled down Divine vengeance, Moses himself became the Jack Ketch, or executioner of his brethren.

If this account had been found in any book but the Bible, not one person in a thousand would have believed it. It destroys the attributes of the God of all worlds, gives the lie to his foreknowledge and immutability, and then invests him with all the weakness, folly, and mutability of poor, frail, erring man.

With respect to the dreams and visions, of which we find so many accounts in the Old and New Testaments, they are spoken of by the prophets as being the medium of divine inspiration. One of them thus expresses himself:—"*It shall come to pass in the last days, saith the Lord, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old mm shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.*" (Joel, chapter ii.) Now we know that dreams are not the result of divine inspiration. When we read that an angel appeared to a man of God, no more can be made of it than this:—the priest, or pretended prophet, dreamed that an angel appeared to him, and conversed with him.

I have many times dreamed of seeing my first wife, who died upwards of forty years ago. If I were to insist that the dream was a reality, it would be considered by my friends that my mind was disordered; in short, that I was insane. From dreams, we can obtain no correct ideas of realities. If persons, who are much subject to dreams, were to imagine that their dreams pointed to realities, they would be all their lifetime in pursuit of shadows. Dreams and visions would be very uncertain channels for the conveyance of divine revelations, for the supposed angel might be the servant of the Devil instead of a messenger from heaven.

The writings in the Old Testament which are called prophecies, generally relate to the Jewish nation. How are we to know that they are prophecies? In order that there may be no uncertainty with respect to a prophet's pretensions, he should foretell something to come to pass in the lifetime of the persons to whom he declares the prophecy, stating the precise time and place, so that when fulfilled, it should be a million to one against its being the result of guess-work. It would then carry with it a convincing proof of being the result of divine inspiration.

To show the dependence that can be placed on prophecies, we may refer to the Millerite delusion. The pretensions and extravagances of that sect were based on the prophecies of Daniel. I have heard many preachers, of acknowledged learning and talent, attempt to explain Daniel's prophecies with regard to the

time of the second advent; but they generally differed in their views. About the year 1803, a preacher in London, (England,) of first rate abilities, told his congregation, a very large one, to keep, in mind the year 1833, for that he had, after the most laborious calculations, arrived at the conclusion that about that period, signs and wonders would indicate the near approach of him who is to come again in *power and great glory*.

There is no doubt but hundreds of learned men have, since the time that Jesus is said to have left this world, consumed the "midnight oil" in their researches to discover the time of the second advent, but to no purpose. To no purpose, did I say? I mistook. In the case of Miller, it was to a most unfortunate purpose. Thousands of his followers have been in a state of partial insanity; many have been absolutely deranged; some have committed suicide; others sold their lands, abandoned their occupations, neglected their wives and children, and will never regain their former happy homes. Can we suppose that the all-wise Ruler of the Universe would promulgate prophecies so uncertain with respect to their fulfilment, and so disastrous in the effects arising from their uncertainty? I repeat, that prophecy, to answer any good purpose, should be fulfilled in the lifetime of the persons to whom it is addressed; otherwise, the uncertainty attending it renders it worse than useless.

If Daniel had been divinely inspired to foretell any thing relating to Christ, common sense suggests that it would have reference to his first appearance on earth. Instead of this being the burden of his prophecy, he makes no allusion to his first coming, but, according to Christian expositors, his dreams and visions refer to the *second* coming of Christ, and the final judgment. Father Miller's bubble having burst, his sincere but deluded followers are in a state of extreme wretchedness; all of them injured either in mind or circumstances, and most of them in both. Many of them will doubtless reject religion altogether. So much, then, for depending on divine inspiration.

The power to perform miracles is included in the idea of divine inspiration, and implies the possession of a power superior to all human power. The exhibition of a power by an individual, superior to what the united exertions of a whole nation could perform, ought to be credited to the exhibiter as a power *received from on high*,—a conclusion drawn by Christian commentators, and also by Jesus himself, with respect to his recorded miracles; for, he says—"*If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they would not have had sin; but now* [they having seen his miracles, and yet rejected him] *their sin remaineth.*"

Miracles are uncertain evidences of divine inspiration. What an ignorant man might deem to be a miracle, a man of intelligence and education might know to be the result of combined natural causes. What in one age has been currently believed to have been the effect of supernatural agency, a succeeding and more

enlightened age has known as the result of certain operations of nature. Nothing can justly be regarded as a miracle unless it be, past all dispute, beyond human power to perform. To suppose that the Deity makes use of means to promote the improvement of his creatures, which are calculated to mislead them, is to impeach his wisdom and goodness.

Miracles could not have been evidences of divine interposition to the Jewish people, at the time of Christ's appearance among them, owing to the prevailing belief that supernatural beings, called devils, could perform wonderful things, far above man's power or comprehension; and that some of them, more powerful than the rest, could invest mortals with the power of performing-miracles of the same nature as those ascribed to Jesus Christ.

Most of the religious sects at the present day affect to be influenced by something almost amounting to divine inspiration—their religion consisting of feelings, not of action. In the Scriptures we read, "*If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*" I have often noticed the variety of modes in which the spirit operates on different sects. The Methodists, while seeking the Lord, as they term it, will sigh, moan, and howl, and immediately after be in ecstasies bordering on insanity, and bawl so loud that a passer-by might reasonably conclude that some dreadful accident had befallen them. Passing to the other extreme, the Friends, or Quakers, are as dumb as mutes, and will not allow their speakers to open their lips until impelled to do so by the spirit. But the Jumpers, in Wales, (Great Britain,) go ahead of all, for they often perform the journey from their homes to their churches, by the same kind of evolution as frogs make when on their peregrinations in search of water. All these monkey tricks are of much easier performance than feeding the hungry, or clothing the destitute. Can, or, presuming that they can, will the preachers please inform us, which of these three modes of spiritual manifestation will be practised in heaven?

In concluding this chapter, I shall make some remarks on the Mormons, that being one of the last sects, of any importance, which have arisen, professing the Christian faith. They also profess, or their leaders, at least, to be specially moved by the Holy Spirit; in other words, that they are the recipients of divine inspiration. Whatever other denominations of Christians may think of their claims to supernatural gifts, they are founded on quite as reasonable grounds as were the pretensions of the prophets of old, not even excepting Moses, the Jewish legislator; as a brief history of their rise and progress will prove. The following account, the writer had from some of the principal preachers of the Mormon faith:—"About the year 1827, or '28, Joseph Smith, a young man of obscure parentage, presented to the world a production which he called the Book of Mormon, or the Golden Bible; and of which, according to his own account, he became possessed in the following manner:—When about fifteen years of age, being under religious im-

pressions, he used to retire to the fields and thickets in the neighborhood of his home, to exercise himself in prayer. One day, while thus engaged, an angel appeared to him, and informed him that the Lord had a great and important work for him to perform, but that the time had not yet arrived for its consummation. Then, after telling him that he would be again visited, and urging him to pursue a godly life, disappeared. A few years after this, the angel re-visited Joseph, repeating his declaration respecting the contemplated work, and disappeared as before. At length, on a third appearance, the angel directed Joseph to go to a certain spot and dig in the earth, telling him that he would there find something of vast importance. Joseph did as the angel commanded, and found a number of golden plates, on which were impressed characters in a language to him altogether unknown. Having copied a portion of the characters, he sent the copy, by a friend, to a teacher of the dead languages, in New York, in order to ascertain the meaning; but his friend returned without having obtained the desired information. The Holy Spirit then enabled Joseph to translate the inscriptions, and the translation is, denominated the 'Book of Mormon,' being named after the person who, fourteen hundred years before, had, by Divine command, deposited it in the earth." This book can be obtained of the Mormon preachers.

The progress of the Mormons, or Latter-Day Saints, as they designate themselves, has been astonishingly rapid, their number being computed at no less than two hundred thousand, of whom about ten thousand are congregated in the city of Nauvoo, (or Joseph,) in the State of Illinois. This portion of the Mormons had previously located themselves in the State of Missouri, but after suffering great persecution, were driven out of that State by the inhabitants. They then settled in the western part of Illinois, and built the city of Nauvoo, and have nearly completed a splendid temple of unique architecture. They, like the Jews, believe that they are God's chosen people, and that, as *the earth is the Lord's*, they shall have the honor of calling together the Jews, the former chosen people of God, and that all who have not then embraced the Mormon faith will be speedily cut off. As the Mormons make the Bible the ground-work of their religious belief, and are sparing in their allusions to the Book of Mormon, they are likely to become permanently established, as a portion of the Christian world, and will probably become not only a very numerous, but also a powerful sect.

But the demon of religious persecution—let me pause for a moment. I would not knowingly libel any thing, not even religion. Am I not mistaken? Not in the personage, most certainly, but I may be in error with respect to his official character. Perhaps I owe an apology to the religious world. It may be the demon of fraud. At all events, a demon of some description is hovering over this remarkable people, and threatening them with vengeance. Their smoking and desolate homesteads will furnish matter for the future historian, who, with

indignation, will record, that in the nineteenth century, in the favored land of Illinois, the ennobling principles of liberty could boast of no better recognition than an empty name. Give ear, ye advocates of liberty in the down-trodden nations of Europe! A voice would address you from the land of promise. Ten thousand men, women, and children in the State of Illinois, can receive no protection from the Genius of Liberty, but in the coming spring are to be driven from their peaceful happy homes, to wend their way through a dreary wilderness, and seek a resting place on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. "Oh! shame! where is thy blush!" Cannot even tottering age, and helpless infancy, arrest the fell purpose?

The present position of the Mormons, with respect to the rest of the world, so nearly resembles that of the Jews when they were leaving Egypt, that it is not unlikely for them to assimilate their movements in a measure to those of the Israelites, and, believing, as they do, that they are influenced by the Holy Ghost, their historians some centuries hence will probably record miracles as having been performed by the Mormons, similar to what are said to have taken place among the Jews, when travelling under the guidance of Moses, to the promised land. Feebleness of body reminds me that Death is shaking his arrow over me, but surely my mind remains unclouded. Am I really living in the enlightened nineteenth century? And if so, am I on the free soil of America, or in barbarous Russia, and a subject of the Emperor Nicholas?

The Mormons are to be driven out of the United States. Why? "Because they believe themselves to be God's chosen people, and that all other nations must become subject to them." Indeed! and do not the Jews entertain the same belief with respect to their nation? Are they to be driven out along with the Mormons? The Mormons are to be driven out. Why? "Because they speak in an unknown tongue." But a few years ago, the disciples of Irving, a celebrated preacher in London, spoke in an unknown tongue; but so far from their being driven out of the country in consequence, the ministrations of Irving were attended by the principal nobility and statesmen of Great Britain. The Mormons are to be driven out. Why? "Not on account of their religious faith, but because they are a community of thieves." In the English navy the seamen have a very contemptuous idea of the marines, and when a very improbable story is told by any one, they say, "Tell that to the marines," intimating that *they* are weak enough to believe any thing.

We are told that a religious community which numbers ten thousand persons is composed of incorrigible rogues. And yet it is well known that they are very industrious, have well cultivated farms, have built a city, and nearly completed a splendid temple. What says the experience of the world with respect to thieves—that they have been usually found among the industrious, or the idle? What are we called upon to believe? That a highly industrious religious sect,

numbering ten thousand souls, manifests such a total disregard of all moral principle that its existence cannot be allowed in civilized society? Tell it not in Gath! Oh! no; better tell it to the marines.

I do believe that I am in America, and not in Russia, after all. The film is departing from my mental vision. An idea strikes me. It is this. In this country, under certain circumstances, *well* understood by the public, bills of *exceptions* are frequently filed. Aye, now I have it This is a Republic; and a Republic is a government intended for the benefit of *all*, with the *exception* of the Mormons to-day, and of some other religious sect to-morrow; and so on, as avarice, or bigotry, or the tyranny of a moneyed aristocracy may dictate, to the end of the chapter.

The republicans of the State of Illinois have determined that the Mormons shall not remain among them. "Oh! consistency, thou art indeed a jewel" For the benefit of persons visiting Illinois, I shall close with a quotation from the Old Testament, not remarkable, perhaps, for elegance of diction, but having a claim to attention for its truthfulness. It is this:—-"It is useless to search for a *jewel* in a swine's snout."

END OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER on THE FACTS AND PERSONAGES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

TO these persons who can take, without fear, a correct view of Jehovah's dealings with his chosen people, as recorded in the Old Testament, it must appear, that the Jews, as a nation, did not, in any way, do honor to his choice; for, as it regards religion, they neither were at any length of time faithful to Jehovah, nor did they obey his laws. The dreadful punishments inflicted on them, together with the teaching of the Prophets, did not cure them, so as to prevent them from worshipping other gods.

To men of common sense, it is clear that the Jewish God undertook to make of the seed of Abram that which never took place. The attempts to keep them as true worshippers of Jehovah, continually failed; and he, in the language of regret and complaint, says:—"I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." And here we may inquire, how were they brought up? The answer is at hand. They were taught to consider themselves, as a nation, more valuable than any people on earth; and this pride caused them to act with hostility in their intercourse with, the Gentiles, and to rob and murder all nations less powerful than themselves; for doing which, they had from the Lord a direct order. To *show mercy* was forbidden, and they were punished for so doing.

The command was—"*Thou shall do no murder.*" This command had to do with Jews only. To others it was said, "*Spare not a soul alive.*" Again, "*Thou shall not steal,*"—that is, from Jews: from all heathens, steal all you can. "*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife,*" &c. Remember!—the wife of a Jew; but when the Lord commands, you must murder other men's wives, and take their daughters for the most wicked purposes. This is the manner the seed of Abram were brought up; and, in these particulars, they seldom disobeyed the Lord.

In this manner the Jews were educated by the Lord of Hosts. Can we then wonder that they, in a moral point of view, should have been the most cruel and wicked of any nation on earth? It follows, that they were a disgrace to that God who selected them as his own; and the Jewish dispensation ended in a complete failure: so that it is recorded, that the Lord "*hateth his own inheritance.*" Jehovah failed to rear up and protect a nation who should serve as a pattern to the rest of the human family. They axe acknowledged, by both God and man, to have been the worst people on earth.

We are now about to consider another attempt, on the part of the God of Israel, to recover and convert his disobedient people to the new covenant, or dispensation, by sending the long-expected Saviour of the seed of Abram, according to the flesh. Here we ought to expect that a double degree of caution will be manifest on the part of the Jewish God, so that no mistake may happen to the Jewish nation in their reception of, and obedience to, his Son, as an ambassador of peace and reconciliation; because, if the mission of Jesus was not clearly understood by the Jews, another scene of trouble, more dreadful than their former disobedience, would follow as a consequence. We ought to expect that Christ would be instructed so to present himself to his brethren, that his person and his plans for their recovery would be self-evident. No guess-work can be allowed, as it respects the vast importance of his mission, or the identity of his person. It needs no argument to show, that, when an end or object is to be fully obtained, the means must be adapted to answer the end intended, or a failure is the consequence.

Here we may ask, for what purpose did Christ come to the Jews? Was it to fulfil the promises made to them by Jehovah, *that he would make a new covenant with them, and write his laws on their hearts; not according to the covenant he made with their fathers, when he brought them out of Egypt, but that he would write his laws on their hearts, and their sins and iniquities remember no more, and that they should be to him a people, and that he would be to them a God?* In fact, we cannot admit of the possibility of any mistake or failure to happen in Jehovah's plan of salvation, when we consider that the seed of Abram longed for and expected the Great Deliverer of Israel. No trickery or deception ought to be resorted to in a case involving such dreadful consequences. It is highly dishonorable to the God of the Universe, to admit of any double-dealing on his part, when his people were

prepared to receive the Messiah.

The situation of the Jews, as a nation, at the time it is said that Christ made his appearance among them, ought to be kept in view, in reading this introduction. They expected a king, or a deliverer, to arrive, agreeably to what they had learned from the Old Testament. Hence, their inquiry was, "*Art thou he that should come, or do we, or are we, to look for another?*" As much as to say, we long for his appearance, but we have had false Christs; and the repeated impositions practised on our nation makes us cautious as to giving credence to any pretender, without full proof of his being the true, the very anointed of God. No inquiry could be more reasonable; for it is clear that the Jewish nation were open to conviction, and ready to receive with joy the sent of Jehovah; but repeated deception and disappointment had made them slow to believe in the pretensions of any that came to them in the name of the Lord.

We need not be surprised that the seed of Abram should have been so scrupulous in believing, until they had incontrovertible proof that the hope of Israel had arrived. They considered that event as the end of all their troubles; and relying on the promises made, to God's chosen people by the prophets,—that the "*sun of, righteousness should arise with healing in his wings*" that his identity would be as clearly known, and all obscurity entirely removed as to his being the true Christ, the hope and expectation of Israel. The Jews, as a nation, were not prepared for any thing short of a full manifestation of Jehovah's promises in the person of the Messiah, that he would be their "*Prophet, Priest, and King*" It is not possible to conceive that a single Jew could be found who would stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed. This, then, was the feeling and expectation of the Jews, at the time it is recorded that Christ came as the deliverer of Israel. It follows, then, that the only thing the Jews required, in order to receive and obey Christ, was, unerring proof that Jesus was the promised Messiah; for they were earnestly waiting for that glorious event.

We will now inquire, whether or not his introduction to the Jewish nation was the most probable way to convince them that the long-desired, the long-expected Redeemer of Israel was come? It must ever be kept in mind, that the coming of Christ was to the Israelites of vast importance, when we consider their former troubles, how they had been forsaken by their God, sold, as it were, into severe bondage, and scattered over the face of the earth, in consequence of their departure from the God of their fathers. To all which, it may be added, that they had been deceived by false Christs: so that, as a nation, they ought to, and doubtless did, fully expect that the true Messiah, on his arrival, would convince every real Jew that he was the sent of God, and that the evidence would be different, in all respects, from what had before attended impostors and cheats. Of all the embassies ever sent by one nation to another, none ever equalled in importance

the one where the Son, the only Son of God, was the ambassador.

In the intercourse between nations, and when a minister is sent out from one nation to another, one thing is always provided for, and on no account is it ever omitted, namely:—proper credentials are always prepared and sent by one nation to another, so that the identity of the ambassador is indisputable. This indispensable qualification appears to have been omitted in sending Christ to the Jewish nation, and it proved most unfortunate to those ill-fated people; for it is evident, from Scripture, that they mistook Jesus for an impostor, since one of the apostles admits, that if they (the Jews) had known him, "*they would not have killed the Lord of life and glory.*"

Here, then, was the fatal mistake, the unfortunate error; and now we may ask, for what was Jesus sent? Jehovah knew that they would not receive him, and that a failure would be the consequence. But if Jehovah did not know of his rejection, what then are we to say of the attributes of the God of Israel? Taking either side, involves the greatest absurdity, and is shocking to every idea we can have of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness.

If Jesus, on his arrival to the Jews as a nation, intended to prove his divine mission by the performance of miracles, he appears to have taken the wrong course to carry conviction to the minds of his fellow countrymen. Instead of performing signs and wonders before the most learned of his nation, he associated with the most ignorant classes of society. These were chiefly fishermen, who could be easily imposed on by any sleight of hand, performed by a dexterous juggler. It was to the most learned and competent men of that day to whom his appeals ought to have been made; but on the contrary, he employed such vulgar abuse as—"*O, generation of vipers! how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*" It may safely be inferred, that such abusive language as this would be considered by the priests and rulers sufficient to stamp its author as a man of low character and violent temper.

Again, instead of opening his mission with the declaration of Jehovah's former promises to the Jewish nation, *that the God of their fathers had sent him to recover the lost sheep of the home of Israel*, he tells them that the holy temple was then *a den of thieves*; and at another time, commences with a cord, or rattan, (like a drunken man,) to drive men from the temple. Is it possible to conceive that such could be the conduct of him who was proclaimed to be "*Peace on earth and good will towards men*"?

Again, miracles, as proofs of Christ's divine mission, ought to have been performed before the most learned and talented men among the Jews. On the contrary, it was the ignorant and unlettered part of society who were the witnesses of his mighty deeds; for it is impossible for men who are unacquainted with the laws and phenomena of nature, to form any thing like a correct judg-

ment of those laws, so as to know what were their natural operations, to the exclusion of divine power. So that a performance of any thing, however wonderful to ignorant and untaught men, would, to others, who were better acquainted with the laws of the universe, be no miracle at all.

In conclusion, then, so far as miracles are concerned, a miracle must be something performed by another, that is impossible to take place without superhuman aid; and before persons who are so fully acquainted with the laws of the universe, that imposition would be impossible. Now the Jews, at the time of the coming of Christ, if he did come at all, had no such knowledge. In that age, many strange things were believed, that never had any real existence. For instance, it was fully believed by the Jews, and nearly throughout the world, that evil spirits or demons took possession of the bodies of men, and ceased, not to torment them in a thousand ways; and the casting out of these was considered a miracle. Jesus is said to have performed many miracles of this kind. Mary Magdalene had seven of them ejected by the Saviour. So it is recorded.

But now, no man of science gives the least credit to such tales; so that the fact is, no devils ever were cast out, because none ever entered the human body. If Jesus, then, pretended to cast out devils, when he knew there were none possessed of them, how can we exempt him from the charge of being a deceiver? If, on the other hand, he believed that Mary Magdalene had seven, and that they left her by his orders, in that case, what shall we say as to his knowledge?

At the present day, should a person apply for medical aid to cast out a devil, such person would be considered a lunatic. This is proof positive that Jesus partook of the superstition of the age in which he lived; and that his pretensions to cast out devils by the power of God, were incompatible with his mission as the Son of God, the Redeemer of Israel.

The history of Jesus, as recorded in the four Gospels, fully represents him as acting like most reformers in all ages and nations, namely, by abusing men of wealth and power. But, unlike most others, Jesus represented himself as the only Son of God, by whose authority he (Jesus) called the priests and the rulers of Israel by names the most offensive, thereby exciting their opposition to his mode of teaching and acting. At the same time, the lower grades of society did then, as they do at the present day. They considered him as a reformer, the friend of the people, in proportion as he was lavish in his abuse of the most violent nature.

In concluding this chapter, we may safely infer, that if Jesus was sent into the world to be put to death as a sacrifice for sin, his manner of preaching to his countrymen, and his violent abuse and denunciations against the then rulers of Israel, were calculated to bring about his tragical end. But, on the contrary, if Jesus came from God, To *restore the lost sheep of the home of Israel*, as the Jews, one and all, expected the Messiah would do, it then follows, that the Jews, as a

nation, were deceived, and in putting him to death, they thought him a blasphemer, having no claim to be considered as the true deliverer of his nation. If Jesus came from God to the Jews, as their long-expected Saviour and Deliverer, and every blessing, as it respected them, depended on their giving him an obedience agreeable to his mission as an ambassador of peace, to mistake him for an impostor, was a misfortune more deplorable than all the misfortunes, as a nation, the Jews had ever experienced from the call of Abram until the time that Christ is said to have arrived in the land of Judea. If, in reality and truth, he came from the Jehovah of that people, as they had for ages expected, then, instead of his collecting together a few fishermen, common sense would instruct us to suppose, that the Lord's anointed would go direct to the priests and Jewish, rulers, and accost them in the following way:—"The long-expected, the long-desired, is now in the midst of you. I am the true, the very Christ, the anointed of Jehovah, of the seed of Abram. My beloved mother will lift her hand, and swear on the altar of her God and my God, the Father of us all, that I am the offspring of God, and that in the absence of all earthly intercourse, she brought me forth, and that angels announced her miraculous conception, before I saw the light; and that I am endowed with power from on high, to do before your longing eyes miracles and wonders, such as all former pretenders could not perform. But, as you have before been deceived by impostors who have forged my name, and assumed my character, believe me not for my word, but for my works' sake. Mark well my deportment Give credit to my mighty deeds only when they are openly addressed to your senses, that no doubts may remain as to the identity of my person, and the high commission of which I am the bearer; and being fully convinced of my Messiahship, obey me as the earthly representative of your heavenly Father, while I unfold the blessings that await you, in the fulfilment of the promises made to Abram and his seed forever." Instead, however, of thus openly and frankly making known the object of his message to his nation, Jesus begins by making use of expressions the most insulting, charging the priests and rulers with crimes of the basest description, in the worst language possible; the direct tendency of which was, to arouse their worst feelings, leaving them in doubt what to think of one who arrogated to himself authority over the Mosaic law, and whose teaching was so obscure as not to be understood even by his own disciples. In speaking of himself and the kingdom he was about to set up, he said that his death formed a part of the divine arrangement included in his mission; as much as to say, I must be put to death before my plane can be developed. At times, in the course of his preaching, Jesus referred to his future exaltation, as the "Judge of quick and dead." At other times he represented himself as the only true light that enlightens every man that cometh into the world; and yet, he courted obscurity in most of his preaching, so much so, that one of his most intimate friends (Judas) was

bribed to inform the rulers who this extraordinary man was, and where he could be found.

What would be thought of an ambassador, sent from America to England on business of the first importance, if, instead of proceeding to the Court of St. James, at London, he should be found lecturing to fishermen and people in the lower walks of society, and at the same time, in language of the most violent kind, abusing the British Government? In fine, such was the preaching and acting of Jesus during his stay in the land of Israel, that to me it appears impossible to discover the object or the utility of his coming. No wonder, therefore, that the Jews rejected him altogether.

CHAPTER I.

WHATEVER may have been the moral character of the Jews, as a nation, at the time the reputed Messiah came among them, the priests and the people not only expected his advent, but they also considered that event as an end to their then subjugation, and more than a renewal of their former greatness and glory. And here the reader will perceive that they (the Jews) had no prejudice against the appearance of such a personage; the only thing they required was, his certain identity, that they might know the true Messiah was among them. Nothing could have been more favorable to his reception than such a universal expectation. This general belief throughout the nation was on their part equivalent to their saying to the God of Jacob, "We have long waited, and most ardently desired, the fulfilment of the promise made to Abram and his seed forever." This short statement is faithful, and true as to the feelings and expectations of the whole Jewish nation.

In this stage of our remarks, every thing appears to warrant the conclusion, that, on the part of the descendants of Abram, no difficulty stood in the way of their submitting to their expected Lord and Master. To make him fully known to them, so that no mistake could possibly happen as to his person and authority, belonged to Jehovah alone; for if the Messiah promised, seemed in nowise to be represented in the person of Jesus, then the Jews would have been sure to have rejected him as another impostor of the same sort as had previously imposed on their nation. In reviewing, then, the New Testament, the object of the writer will be to show, that Jesus, the pretended Saviour of the world, was not sent from God, and consequently, the New Testament is not of Divine authority.

In the following inquiry, I shall not dispute the existence of Jesus, *as a man*, living about the time recorded of him, but take for granted the history of his life, with the exception of his divine mission, as this method will be better understood by the reader, as excluding irrelevant matter. In the Gospel history, then, it clearly appears, that Jesus wrote nothing of his own sayings or doings; it was all done by others. This omission to give a clear code of morals, adapted to the

Gospel dispensation, and also rules and regulations for this new sect, will appear strange, when we refer to the formation and regulation of the Jewish Church. Moses, or whoever was its founder, took great pains to record the most minute things connected with the Jewish worship; while, on the contrary, the Christian Church is left in such a state of uncertainty, that its author wrote not a word himself, nor, for aught we know, did he give orders to his followers to commit to writing any thing he did or said, not even of the miracles he so often performed. It must appear passing strange, that a religion of such vast importance to the whole human race should be, as it were, left to chance, as to the manner in which it was to descend to posterity, when compared with the minuteness of the Mosaic code. Of the four evangelists, no one in particular had orders to write the life and doings of Christ, so that the inference is this: that all the history of the life of Jesus, including his death and resurrection, is but the testimony of others; consequently, we have no certainty that Christ ever said or did those things recorded of him. So that it amounts to this—somebody has said that Jesus performed miracles; and the same may be said of the rest of his sayings and doings; and we may add, that somebody has written that he was put to death, and that on the third day he arose from the dead.

It is from such vague and unauthenticated writings, written by nobody knows who, nor when they made their first appearance, that the foundation is drawn on which rests the Gospel Dispensation; and as the different writers have given different accounts of the things said to have taken place, no reliance can be given to any of the facts recorded as having actually occurred. The different writers have also given rise to doctrines so opposite to each other, that every sect can find Scripture evidence for the support of its respective dogmas. Eighteen hundred years have then passed away, and we are still ignorant of what is, and what is not, Gospel.

Is it possible that any thing can be more directly in opposition, than the Universalists and the different sects that believe in endless punishment in a future life? Again, can any two things be more opposite than the doctrines concerning the person of Christ, as held by the Unitarians and the Trinitarians; and yet, both of these doctrines are taken from the New Testament, which contains all that is written of him. And what is still more wonderful, each of these sects are positive with respect to their own opinions, and are surprised at each other's ignorance of God's Word; and even at the present day, they only want full power, and they would soon come to blows. Not only these opinions, but many more, equally opposed to each other, can be supported by referring to God's unerring Word. It is a common saying, "the glorious uncertainty of the law"; I will add, it is the glorious uncertainty of the *Gospel* which has made so many priests, and also, it is its uncertainty which has been in every age of the church the cause of thousands

of honest persons meeting a violent and cruel death, for the glory of God.

The reader will in the following pages discover, that my main object is to show that Jesus was no more sent from heaven to save mankind by the sacrifice of himself for the sins of the world, than others are sent to build houses or dig canals; and that the plan, as it is called, of human redemption, has brutalized the human race, and stood in the way of moral rectitude, and the development of kind and humane feelings. Although Matthew and Luke have recorded the miraculous conception of Jesus, yet, as it is omitted by Mark and John, I shall begin my remarks with the baptism of John. As it respects the heavenly origin of Jesus, he never mentions it in the course of his ministry, neither does his mother. Jesus, in speaking of himself, said he was *the son of man.* Now, if Joseph, or some other man, was not his father, he (Jesus) then went by a false name; for, in that case, he was but the son of a woman. We will leave this point of disputation with the Christians, and begin with the baptism of John.

After Jesus had been baptized by John, it is recorded, that there came a voice from heaven, saying, "*Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.*" (Mark i., 11.) "*And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness, and he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan.*" What possible end was to be obtained by this journey into the wilderness, and what kind of spirit it was that drove him there, we have no information. At any rate, in a forlorn state, and very hungry, Satan made his first visit to the Messenger of Peace. Jesus seemed no way surprised at this Satanic intrusion. They conversed together as old friends. We may suppose Satan to open the conversation somewhat in the following manner:—

"Why, Jesus! you seem to be any thing but in comfortable quarters. This is carrying temperance rather too far; nothing to eat or drink, and surrounded by wild beasts as hungry as yourself! I have heard that you represent to your nation that you are sent to them from Jehovah, your father. Now, if you have any thing to communicate to them of importance, this secluded spot is very unfavorable to make known your mission. Come, give over fasting, for *if you are the Son of God, command these stones that they be made bread?*" This observation, or, as it is called, this temptation of the Devil, caused Jesus to make this reply:—"*It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth ont of the mouth of God. Then the Devil taketh him up into the holy city, [or coaxed him to leave the wilderness,] and setteth him on a pinnacle of the Temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written,, he shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the Devil taketh him up into art exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the worlds and*

the glory of them; and saith unto him, all these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall dawn and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the Devil leaveth him, and behold angels came and ministered unto him." (Matthew, chapter iv.)

To those Who are not afraid to examine this strange account, it must appear unworthy of the least credit. In the first place, as it stands recorded, the Devil and Jesus act as if they had been old and intimate acquaintances. This is the first announcement we have that any such personage as the Devil ever visited this earth, except he is the same identical being who, upwards of four thousand years before, came to the garden of Eden and tempted Eve, and was the cause of herself and her husband's being expelled from that abode of innocence. If it were the intention of the writers of the life of Jesus, that it should be understood that the Devil had been resting quietly, and enjoying himself, and then appeared, ripe for new schemes of mischief, and Satan reasoning within himself was resolved again to try his hand,—is it possible, when this account is duly considered, that one person in a thousand can give credit to such nonsense?

A few remarks on Christ's temptation by the Devil will suffice to show its absurdity. In the first place, then, can we believe that a being of Infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, ever has, or does now, keep in existence a Devil whose whole aim and happiness consist in tempting God's creatures to rebel against their maker and benefactor; and that God has given him power and capacity to induce men and women to commit every sort of crime that disgraces humanity? Besides, so artful is this Devil that man has but a poor chance to escape his cunning attacks and devices. We are told that the Lord is angry with the wicked every day; and yet for all that, he has made a being of immense power who possesses unbounded malice against both God and man. Would any man, who was in his right mind, keep in his employ a person who would daily destroy his property, and breed discord among his steady workmen? None but a madman could so act; and shall we suppose that the all-wise ruler of the universe would follow in the path of a man out of his senses?

Again, according to the account in Matthew, the Devil seems full of life and impudence; while the reputed Saviour appears sheepish and stupid, and seems willing to follow the Devil about at his bidding! We have no account as to the form in which the Devil appeared, whether as a rich man or a loafer; whether fat or lean, and how old he appeared to be; neither are we informed in what kind of dress he walked through the street of Jerusalem, whether it was in the costume of the age, or in the livery of hell. At any rate, Jesus seemed rather scared at the old serpent. Jesus commenced his mission more like a hermit than as a messenger of peace; to God's chosen people. In fact, there is, in Jesus, through his whole

life, something so unearthly that his existence as a man is very doubtful. In the whole account of the temptation of the Devil, the evidence of its being a mixture of fable and falsehood is, apparent.

Besides, it is altogether unaccountable how Jesus and the Devil became so well acquainted with each other; for Jesus was a Jew by nation, and strictly obeyed the law of Moses; but Moses is completely silent as to the existence of any such personage as the Devil. At the time when it is said Jesus came to the Jewish nation, they had, during their captivity, embraced the theology of their conquerors; and on their return to the land of their nativity, brought with them the-belief in the existence of good and bad angels, and also the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments,—dogmas unknown to, and never taught by, Moses. It is clear, then, that the very existence of a Devil never was a doctrine of the Old Testament, but on the contrary, it was borrowed from eastern mythology; and Jesus, finding that the Jews professed to believe it, fell in with it, as also a heaven and a hell, and a judgment to come, which doctrines were all of heathen origin. The Old Testament is silent as to what constitutes orthodox Christianity. Ye Christian ministers! your heaven and hell, by the teaching of which you gain wealth and live like princes, is nothing but an echo of by-gone ages, which had its origin in the imagination of the priesthood of an antiquity anterior to the existence of Moses or of the Jewish nation!

But to return to the temptation of Jesus by the Devil. And here it may be asked, how it can now, or ever could, be considered a temptation at all? If Jesus was what they say he professed to be, *the sent of God*, he knew well that the Devil had nothing to give him by way of inducement to distrust his Father's superintendence and care. Jesus might have said to Satan, "You lying old Devil, you know that you have no kingdom to bestow; you likewise well know that you have not land enough whereon to build a hovel, in which to shelter your favorite associates, the swine!" But, on the contrary, Jesus seems to act with great respect towards the Devil. He made no objections to follow Satan wherever he chose to lead him. We are ignorant of the object Jesus had in view by retiring into the wilderness; and how the Devil came to be acquainted with his destitute situation, we are also at a loss to conjecture. Likewise, we have yet to learn whether Satan resided among the Jews, or dwelt in the regions of the air, as he is called "the Prince and power of the air, the spirit which works in the hearts of the children of disobedience."

The number of forty years, or days, is repeatedly chosen by the writers of the Old Testament, in which to perform something wonderful, and of great importance. Thus, the Jews were forty years going from Egypt to the land of promise, during which time nearly all that came out of bondage were destroyed for their disobedience against the God of Abram, Isaac, and Jacob. Jehovah and

Moses were forty days on Mount Sinai, preparing ornaments for the Jewish worship, during which time Aaron and the rest of the Israelties returned back to worship the gods of their former oppressors; so that it appears, before the church of Jehovah in the wilderness was ready to sing his praise, and thank him for bringing them out of bondage, both Aaron and the people were singing and dancing before the golden calves of Egypt! The number forty has been most unfortunate for Jehovah's plans; for, in addition to repeated failures connected with the number forty, it is recorded that Jehovah was grieved forty years for the transgressions of his chosen people; and Jesus, after forty days' fasting, surrounded by devouring beasts and hungry vultures, behold! the Devil came skulking along with brazen-faced impudence, and Jesus, the better to get rid of him, broke up his solitary abode. Thus, again, the number forty concluded without any apparent object being effected.

Whoever wrote this account of Christ's temptation, as if it was not foolish enough, has added, that after the Devil had withdrawn from making Jesus such tempting offers to enlist into his service, angels came and ministered unto him. What the nature of the service was, which they performed, we know not; but one would suppose their first inquiry ought to have been, whether he did not wish to have his dinner as soon as possible? The whole of this account is so contemptible, that I shall not give it any further attention.

If we contrast the submissive conduct and humble deportment of Jesus, when in conversation with the Devil, with his manner and intercourse with the rulers and priests of his own nation, he appears, in reference to the latter, whom we should expect he would have treated with that respectable language due to their standing in society, and consistent with his dignity as the Messenger of Peace, to great disadvantage as a divine teacher: for it must be ever borne in mind, that Jesus must be considered, according to his own account, superior to all that ever came before him, and to the imperfections found in men in common, and even in the prophets of old, so that he must so conduct himself that his sayings and doings must be capable of standing the most rigid moral scrutiny. But, instead of his appealing to the Jewish rulers in the most courteous manner—instead of his plainly stating who he was, and the vast importance of his coming on earth, he begins by upbraiding them in a way calculated to disgust them, and thereby frustrate the object of his mission. He calls them "a generation of vipers" and asks them "how they can think to escape the damnation of hell?"

Although the chief priest and rulers were over-anxious in their inquiries as to whom he was, and by what authority he so openly condemned others, he treated them as unworthy of a civil reply; for, let the moral conduct of the Jewish priests and rulers be what it might, admitting it was very bad, nothing could justify him in the use of insult and the most violent vituperations. What kind

of reception would an ambassador meet with in England, should he, before his' mission was fully understood by that Court, abuse the rulers of that kingdom, and at the same time associate with a few obscure individuals as witnesses of such abuse? Would he be considered a fit person to represent the authorities who sent him? for, never let us forget, that of all the missions sent by one nation to another nation for the settlement of any difficulties that might exist between them, none ever was of such importance as the one which Jesus was to present to "*the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*" Let us also bear in mind, that the rulers among the Jews made every inquiry as to whom he was, and the purport of his coming. Yes, every effort on the part of the Jews was made to draw out of him from whence he derived his authority: but his answers were any thing but to the point, for, he said on one occasion, "*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,*" and that was no answer at all.

I am well aware what Christians will say in this case: that his miracles were sufficient evidence; but all the proof we have that he did perform miracles, is, somebody has written that he did so. But here I shall dispute the performance of some of his miracles, from the New Testament account of them; and, in my next chapter, I shall show that modern discoveries have proved, beyond dispute, that some of the miracles said to have been performed by Jesus could not have taken place, for if any person in the present age, were to pretend that he could perform similar miracles, he would not only be considered an impostor, but would also be deemed an ignoramus.

CHAPTER. II.

OF all the miracles said to have been wrought by Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels, the casting out of devils are among the foremost. The case of Mary Magdalene is often referred to by Jesus himself; it is related that no less than seven had taken possession of her person. It is truly wonderful, that at the time of Christ's preaching, the old Devil of all, and a host of subordinate ones, appeared to be more active than at any other time of which we have any account The Old Devil came forward after an absence of more than four thousand years; for, we have no account that he, either in person or by proxy, had visited God's chosen people, admitting that it was he, who, by the agency of a serpent, or by any other means, deceived Adam and Eve, by which deception, pain, and even death, followed as a consequence. Satan might well think that he could afford to rest awhile, till Jehovah should make some new movement to benefit the human race.

How the Devil came to know that Jesus was about to commence preaching repentance for the remission of sin, we have no means of finding out; but, when Jesus had retired into the wilderness, behold the Devil was close at his heels, and they seemed to be as well acquainted as two old playmates. The Devil was well fitted for discussion, for he appeared well versed with the Old Testament. However, if he were the same Devil who outwitted Jehovah in Paradise, he failed to obtain a victory over the Son in the wilderness. What became of him after his defeat on the Temple, and when he came down from the mountain, we have no account No mention is made of his being concerned in riding the hogs into the sea. We must, therefore, leave him, and attend to the triumph of Jesus in ejecting them from their strong holds.

The first in order which we shall review, as being possessed of devils, will be Mary Magdalene, out of whom, it is recorded, Jesus cast seven devils. This woman must be considered most grievously afflicted. How they operated on her—whether it was by inflicting bodily pain, or a mental disease, we know not; at any rate, she seemed incapable of getting rid of them. The number being seven,

and having dispositions opposed to each other, they no doubt often quarrelled among themselves, and disturbed her in her sleeping hours; at all events, her gratitude and attachment to Jesus is proof positive that she preferred their room to their company.

Christians, in speaking of Mary Magdalene, convey the idea, that, previous to the casting out of the devils, she did not bear a good character. But this is a mistake; for, if the New Testament account of devils taking possession of persons, be true, and that no human power can eject them, it then follows, that Mary Magdalene was truly unfortunate, since no less than seven of these intruders were constantly about her. We are left to conjecture how the number seven could have been discovered. If Mary had been compelled to have had seven teeth extracted, the number could have been fully known to those who stood by; but how, or in what way, it could have been known that seven devils were cast out, unless they appeared visible to the by-standers, does not appear. But we will not dwell too long on such sheer nonsense, as not one word of truth is in the whole story of casting out devils; for the best of all possible reasons, because there were none at all to cast out. It is recorded that the Jews were troubled with devils of different kinds, such as unclean devils, deaf and dumb devils, and, in one case, a kind of devil which could not be cast out only by prayer and fasting. If, at the present day, a person was to apply for medical aid, and hint to the doctor that his wife was really possessed with (not seven) but one devil, the doctor would consider such a man a fit subject for a lunatic asylum.

As it respects demoniacal possession, it is, or rather was of heathen origin. The Jews, as a nation, believed in its truth, as did also the surrounding nations; consequently, if a person had a complaint attended with fits, or any thing rather out of the common way, by which human beings were afflicted, such a disease was considered a possession of one or more evil spirits. But now, that the laws of nature are better understood, and medical science more fully developed, demonology, as well as witchcraft and sorcery, are given up altogether. No doubt now remains, but that the whole was the effect of ignorance and fraud; and consequently the casting out of devils by Jesus and his apostles, had no reality in it whatever. It is not possible for us to conceive why demons or devils should have taken possession of human beings, admitting that they have a real existence. We are ignorant as to the state of mind of these beings. Whether in those days they took possession of men and women out of rebellion against God, or, having no real home, were only wanderers, and felt more comfortable when dwelling in the bodies of animals or of human beings, we cannot determine. The latter, however, appears to have been the case; for, an one occasion, when Jesus was about to expel a legion, the devils *besought him to permit them to enter into the swine*; but it is recorded, that the hogs started off down into the sea, and were drowned. What

became of the devils, we know not. If this miracle took place, one thing is clear, namely, that the devils, with all their cunning, made a bad calculation as to the security they would have m the swine.

At the time Jesus is said to have lived among the Jews, the casting out of devils was a common occurrence; for Jesus, in reply to the charge that he cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince or chief of devils, says, "*If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore they shall be the judges,*" So that, after all, it follows, that what so many could do without the authority of Jesus, was no miracle at all. It was nothing short of imposition, and failed of being any proof of his divine mission. The truth is, that casting out devils was a heathen practice, among many other things, of heathenish origin; and Jesus, according to the New Testament, fell in with it, as he did with many doctrines which the Jews brought into the land of Israel when they returned from their long captivity. The Jews brought back with them the belief of a future state of rewards and punishments, the existence of the soul, a heaven for the virtuous and good, and a hell for the wicked; also good and bad angels, and a future judgment, over which Jesus said to the Jews he was appointed to be the judge. Notwithstanding the silence of the Old Testament as to the tenets above noticed, yet Jesus fell in with them, and he also threatened the Jews that they were in danger of that very hell and damnation which they gathered from their heathen conquerors. Ye Christian priests! your heaven and hell, and also your devil, belong to and originated in a heathen mythology, the beginning of which is lost in a remote antiquity. Yes, Christian doctors! your heaven and hell, which, from the hope of the first, and the fear of the last, you teach as divine truths, and, by so doing, live in splendor,—these very doctrines have nothing divine about them, and you ought to know it.

Leaving, then, the miracles of casting out devils, which were no proof of the divine mission of Jesus, because others, it is said, could, without his aid, do the same, we must refer to the other miracles said to have been performed and intended to establish his claim as being the true Messiah, *the sent of God.* If the miracles that Jesus performed, had been intended to remove all doubts that the Jewish nation had as to his being an impostor, such miracles ought to have been sufficiently convincing for that purpose; for, on such test, his reception or rejection entirely depended. Now, from the accounts of his appealing to his countrymen, and reproaching them for their unbelief, he does not, to all appearance, wish nor try to convince them; for, it is said of his, miracles, that "he did not many mighty works because of their unbelief." Their incredulity as to his being the true Christ, is a reason why he should have followed up miracle after miracle, until unbelief would have been impossible on the part of the Jews; for, the reader must keep in mind that the dispute with Jesus and the Jews was not of a moral

character: it was as to his authority in assuming to be greater than Abram, or all the prophets of the Old Testament.

Again, Jesus says, "*Woe unto you* [of such a town or village,] *for if the mighty works which have been done in you, had been done in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes.*" "Therefore it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for you." Now here we can see, that the miracles were not of the sort to convince. Then, why not produce others more strong? Besides, it showed Jesus to be ignorant of the human mind, his condemning men for not believing when the evidence was not strong enough to convince them. It is true, according to the accounts of Christ's preaching to the Jews, that instead of argument he resorted to abuse of the coarsest kind, and the same conduct is pursued by Christians towards unbelievers at the present day. In some instances, Jesus charged the persons on whom a miracle had been performed, that *they should tell none of it.*

Again, the evidence arising from the working of miracles must always depend on the information possessed by those before whom such signs and wonders were wrought. If Jesus intended to rest his Messiahship on the wonders he intended to perform, in such a case the most learned and best informed of the Jewish nation were the proper persons to be the judges for, in our day, in the nineteenth century, we have daily proof that so universal is ignorance, and so credulous is the mass of society, that such trash and inconsistent doctrines as those taught by Joseph Smith and his famous Golden Bible have gained thousands Of believers, and the greatest part of them are sincere, and would suffer death sooner than renounce what they believe to be a divine revelation to Smith, and others of the same stamp. The most learned and intelligent of the Jews knew this truth, as many of their ignorant people had been led away by false Christs, and lost their all, and their lives also. No wonder, then, that they should watch closely every movement made by Jesus, the then reputed Messiah. There are, in the present age, many things discovered and known to the most unlearned, that, in former times, much less remote than the time in which Jesus is said to have lived, Would have been thought miraculous, and the persons performing them as possessing power more than human. So that we may safely conclude, that Infinite Wisdom would not have made use of so uncertain a species of evidence as miracles, to convince the Jews that the *sent of God was come.* Other and more certain means would have been resorted to, so that the Jews could not have mistaken the real Christ, and put him to death for an impostor.

If we attentively examine the life of Jesus, as written by the four evangelists, we shall be surprised at many parts of his proceedings. His uncourteous language to the great men of his nation must strike the reader very forcibly. He preaches humility and meekness, and soon we perceive him arrogating di-

vine honors, and calling those, who came before him, robbers and thieves. He commands his followers to *judge not*, and the next moment he judges others, and condemns them without ceremony; and although it is said of him, that "a bruised reed he would not break, and smoking flax he would not quench," and that "*his voice could not be heard in the street,*" yet we find him using something very little short of outrage and violence. In the affair of the Temple, for instance, it is recorded that Jesus took a cord, and began to attack those sitting about that sacred place, "*overthrowing the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves,*" calling them "*a den of thieves.*" Such conduct the Jews could not expect from their long-wished and earnestly-desired Messiah.

Even at twelve years of age, his conduct seems to have had something strange about it; namely, his absenting himself from his home. When his parents found him, and told him that "*they had sought him sorrowing,*" he said, in reply, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" This answer appears not to have been understood by his relations; but if Joseph was not his father, his mother could not wonder at his straying from home; she would have said to Joseph, "As you are not his father, he has reference to the Holy Ghost." His conduct also partook of the same strangeness at the marriage-feast. When the wine was all out, his mother told her son of it; his reply was not very dutiful—"*Woman,*" says he, "*what have I to do with thee?*" At such a place, on the night of a marriage ceremony, there seems something so unearthly about him, that he never appeared at ease in any company; such an absence of mirthful enjoyment was calculated to spread a gloom throughout the whole party.

But that which appears very strange in Jesus, is his using language that even his disciples did not understand, such as, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand;" that he "came down from heaven;" for, says Jesus, "*No man hath ascended up into heaven, but he who came down from heaven, even the son of man, who is in heaven.*" And again, "*Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;*" and to the rich man, who asked him what he was to do to secure the kingdom of heaven, Jesus said, that in addition to loving and fearing God, and doing his duty to his neighbor, he "*must sell all he had, and give it to the poor.*"

The reader must ever keep in mind the true merits of the case between Jesus and the Jews. It was not, whether they were more immoral than their heathen neighbors, nor as to their being more or less learned than surrounding nations; for, we do not find that Jesus ever made any inquiries as to their mechanic arts, or the state of agriculture practised among them. Neither do we find that Jesus interested himself as to their progress in the science of astronomy. The last of these we can conceive would have been very useful; and it might be supposed that he could impart some knowledge in regard to it, since, in his passage from heaven to earth, he must have crossed: some of the planetary orbits, and no doubt

observed their satellites then undiscovered; but to communicate such important information was not included in his mission. His only object was, to convince the Jews that he, and he alone, was the true and undoubted Messiah promised by the prophets to redeem and restore the Jews, as a nation, to their former greatness and glory. Every either subject was useless, and only stood as an hindrance in the way of the great purpose of his coming.

I have before stated, that miracles must ever be considered doubtful evidence to prove that the performer is any thing; more than what men in all ages have pretended to be; and to pretend to do what is far beyond human agency, presupposes that the persons who are to be the judges, know where human power ends, and divine power begins. But for this knowledge, no just and certain rule can be laid down; consequently, it is folly to conceive that Infinite Wisdom would make use of means so ill-adapted to the end m view. It would be but an attempt to prove a doubtful truth, by means equally if not more doubtful.

But, before closing this chapter, we will inquire into the probability of any miracles having been performed, as mentioned by the New Testament writers. And here our attention must be turned to the internal evidence afforded by the New Testament itself. We shall there find internal or indirect proof, that those miracles never took place, and that the whole of them were ante-dated; that is, after the persons were dead who are said to have been the performers. If this can be made out, miracles will then receive a shock from which they never can recover. To do this, will be the work of what remains to be done in this chapter.

John the Baptist is the first personage we shall select. The miracle said to have taken place at the baptism of Jesus, is recorded by John, as follows:—"*And after Jesus came up out of the water, 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.*" (Matthew iii. 16, 17.) Again, in John's Gospel, i., 36, when John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said of him, "*Behold the Lamb of God.*" *John also said of Jesus, that *he knew him not till it was told him, that on whomsoever he (John) should see the Spirit of God descend, the same is he*—meaning the true Christ. Now here are repeated miracles to convince not only John the Baptist, but also all that were present at the baptism of Jesus. Such evidence ought to have stopped any future inquiries as to the real Messiahship of Jesus; but there are strong doubts as to the truth that any such wonders were exhibited at the time they are recorded to have taken place.

I shall proceed to present those doubts to the reader, as truth is my object, and I am not afraid to follow after it:—in Matthew ii., 1, 2, it reads, "*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?*" This question, sent

by John to Christ, shows clearly that John did not hear of the wonders wrought by Christ until he (John) was in prison for his reproof of Herod. This account makes it almost certain that the whole story of John's baptizing Jesus, and also of the voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom 1 am well pleased," is a fabrication altogether, and that John had never heard of Jesus until his confinement For this conclusion, we have twofold proof: since if John had baptized Jesus, and the wonders were performed as recorded, John could not have required any further evidence us to his being no pretender, but the true Messiah, the hope and expectation of Israel. On the part of Jesus, his reply would have been, "Why, John, what do you mean by sending a question as to whom I am? You heard the voice from heaven when I was baptized; you also saw the dove descend on my head; and now you send two of your disciples to inquire of me, by saying, 'Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?'"

If we consider John's question to Jesus, and also Jesus's reply, it will be plain that John had not even seen nor heard much of Jesus, till after he was in prison. What, then, aha** we say of those wonders at the baptism of Jesus? The answer is at hand, which is, that there is no truth in the story. The probability is, that it was recorded from hearsay evidence, by some person unknown, and antedated so as to correspond to the time of John the Baptist; but that such evidence was given to John, of the identity of Jesus, as to prevent any future inquiry, there can be no doubt, admitting it ever took place; but John's sending his disciples to Jesus to ascertain the truth of his being the true Messiah, fully destroys the truth of any voice being heard by John, or the Holy Spirit descending like a dove on the head of Jesus.

The ignorance of all the disciples of Jesus, as it regards who he really was, is remarkable, if it be admitted that he performed what is said of him. We will notice the Apostle Peter, as he may be fairly considered the representative of the twelve. It is written, that when Jesus and Peter were together, behold! old Moses and Elias (Elijah) came so near to the earth that they held conversation with Jesus, and that Peter, somehow or other, knew them; but he, so far from being alarmed at seeing those two old prophets, was unwilling that they should return, and even proposed to Jesus to prepare for their stay. Surely, that was an age of miracles and wonders! We have an account of the old Devil's crawling out from some hole or cave, and following Jesus into the wilderness; and, again, we have two old prophets returned, hovering in the air, and conversing with Jesus; one of whom is said to have died a thousand years previous to the time of his holding this supposed conversation with Jesus from the clouds; and the other, at nearly the same time, was taken up into heaven in a chariot of fire! Those two strange personages must have had business of great importance with Jesus. Are we to consider this strange visit to have taken place, when the truth of it rests

on the same authority as all the other miracles and wonders which are recorded concerning the mission of Jesus? If Moses and Elijah did not in truth and reality talk to Jesus from the clouds, in the hearing of Peter, in their real persons, or by their apparitions, it then follows, that there is no truth in any of the miracles or wonders said to have been performed, to prove that Jesus was *sent from God*; for all the miracles and wonders which (it is said) took place, stand or fall together.

If, for instance, the Devil did not find Jesus in the wilderness, and go with him into the city, and tempt him to throw himself from the Temple—if this is not strictly true, why, then, it is false as to Moses and Elijah's talking with him from the clouds. This incredible story, if related in any book but what is called the Word of God, would not be credited by one in ten thousand; but being found in the life of the Redeemer, the man who rejects it and proclaims it unworthy of credit, is considered an enemy of God, and will have the sentence of "*Go, ye cursed*," &c. As so much importance is attached to what is called the Word of God, we will discuss a little further the business which brought Moses and Elijah so near to this earth. As to where Moses or Elijah reside, we have no knowledge, and what is the nature of their employment, we know not; but if they still live, they must have some location, and also, we suppose, must be employed about something—but these things we must leave to those who are better acquainted with other worlds, while our attention will be directed to the business of the heavenly visitors.

If Moses had any interest in the mission of Jesus to the Jews, he could have been serviceable to him, as he had been their former leader, and therefore could give him useful hints concerning them. We may suppose he would introduce the subject of Jesus's mission in the following manner:—"I am Moses, the former leader of the seed of Abram, and hearing that Jehovah had sent his son Jesus to convert them to the true worship of God, and the practice of justice and truth, I come to offer my services, as I am well acquainted with that disobedient race; and, in truth, I had a terrible time of it with them: only think of forty years in the wilderness, always murmuring, and worshipping strange gods, for which, at times, they were cruelly punished; Jehovah destroyed thousands of them for resisting my authority; but they were incurable. He would have, at one time, so great was his wrath, destroyed them all; but I told him what the Egyptians and the heathen in general would say, and he altered his mind, and killed off the worst of them: for, getting a little out of temper with them at one time, in consequence of their murmurings, Jehovah became angry with me, and I was prevented from enjoying full possession of the promised land. It always surprised me how it came about that Jehovah should select them from the rest of the human race, for in my lifetime nothing was ever made of them; they even disgraced the God who had made them his choice. I left them in thy hands of Joshua, as the most

proper person to rule over them; but how he got along with them, I have not heard." "Your offer, Moses, is duly appreciated; but the Jews, as a nation, are now a different people from what they were when you had to manage them. My course will be different altogether from what you pursued. Farewell! Moses and Elijah." We may suppose that Jesus would say to Peter, "As for your purposing to erect three tabernacles in this place, one for myself, one for Moses, and another for Elijah, it is proof that you are entirely ignorant of my future dealings with my own nation; for, in a few months, such things will transpire, that even you, Peter, all zealous as you are, will swear off and deny any knowledge of me."

Now, reader, nothing can be more extravagant than to suppose that such conversation took place between Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. But if those two old prophets did really descend, and converse with Jesus, then what I have supposed is no more extravagant than that two prophets, who had not been on earth for a thousand years, should pay a visit to Jesus, and hold converse with him. These miracles never occurred, and the world has been imposed upon and plundered by men, who, by telling such tales, have lived in idleness; and their quarrels about what Jesus said or somebody said, or did, have in every age been the cause of evils of every kind, and of rendering human beings ignorant and wretched.

Christians, in speaking of the divine mission of Jesus, urge is miracles as proofs that he came from God with full authority to give laws to, and finally *to judge both quick and dead*; but the proof is wanting that he ever performed one miracle. All the evidence we derive from the miracles said to have been performed is not, that we know they were wrought by Jesus, but that it is by somebody recorded that he did the mighty works attributed to him, and which to us is no evidence at all. To believe, then, what is written, without knowing by whom, or at what time and place it was written, is to believe without evidence, which would be a voluntary degradation of the noble faculties which have been conferred upon man.

CHAPTER III.

PETER, of all the twelve apostles, seems to have been more in the confidence of Jesus than the rest; since when he and Peter were alone, his inquiry of Peter was as to what the people thought of him. For he said to Peter, "*Whom do the people say that I, the son of man, am-?*" Peter answered him, that different opinions were abroad concerning him. Some said one thing, and some another; but the general opinion was, that one of the old prophets had returned. Jesus then turned to Peter and asked him as to his own conviction, and received for answer, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*" In consequence of this declaration of Peter, Jesus then grants him superhuman power. To Peter, he says—"*Upon this rock will I build my church. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged he his disciples, that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.*" (Matthew xvi., 18, 19.. 20.)

From the subsequent conduct of Peter, it is not possible for him to have witnessed the astonishing miracles said to have been performed in his presence. Peter was present when Moses and Elijah conversed with Jesus; and while Peter was speaking to his Divine Master, "*Behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and, behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*" Now, if there were such a demonstration as this, (and many such proofs Peter had been favored with,) how is it possible for us to account for Peter's denying that he even knew Jesus at all? This ought to be sufficient for us to conclude that the accounts of those wonders performed in the lifetime of Jesus, are false statements, written after the reputed resurrection of Jesus, and the death of Peter, and that neither of them saw nor believed any thing of the kind whatever.

In the present chapter, I shall notice the mode adopted by Jesus to prove his Messiahship. In this investigation, we shall discover a want of openness and plain-dealing as it relates to the communication of his objects as the expected *hope and deliverer of Israel.* The reader must ever keep in mind, that the object of Christ's coming, so far as the Jews were interested, was, first, to prove, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that the true and only Messiah had arrived among them. Until this was settled, nothing which Jesus said or taught would be of any avail, because, unless this point was established, none would admit his authority to enforce any thing that appeared in opposition to Jewish theology, or to the ceremonies of the laws of Moses, the observance of which, the Jews could not be prevailed upon to neglect; for it clearly appears that the Jewish priests and rulers never showed any disposition to resist, or in any way to treat with disrespect, the *holy one of Israel.* The Jews, then, were in a favorable state of mind to receive him whom they had so long and so earnestly expected and desired. But, as that nation had before been deceived, a double degree of caution became necessary to detect deception and expose imposture; for, until Jesus had proved, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that he had the sanction of Heaven for all which he taught, the Jews could place no reliance on his pretensions.

It will now be proper to notice the introduction of the mission of Jesus to the Jews. If he came by the divine command of the Governor of the Universe, we ought to expect that his mission would be clearly made known to all those who were interested. Nothing of such vast importance must be guess-work; and the first and most important of all inquiries would be, who are you, and by whom are you sent? for, until these inquiries were 'finally settled, his sayings could not have their full effect; since, as it has before been remarked, the moral state of the Jews was not the point at issue, until his mission was made known, and each party came to a right understanding. When, therefore, the Jews understood who Jesus was, and the high authority under which he taught, to correct their moral defects would make a part of his teaching, and their minds would have been free from the obstacles that stood in the way of attending to his precepts.

The erratic method resorted to by Jesus, in his converse with his nation, as recorded in the history of his life, seems very singular. So high a personage as the *only Son of God* to be sent on a mission of peace and reconciliation to his chosen people, it certainly must be expected that his steps would have been directed to the most learned men of his nation, and that all offensive language would have been withheld, even admitting that the Jews were immoral to a very great degree. But the acquaintances of Jesus were the most ignorant and unlearned of the Jews, and were, from the nature of their employment, incapable of judging correctly of those signs and wonders which Jesus produced as proofs of his divine authority. The learned priests and scribes were the proper persons to have resorted to, as

being alone competent to examine and explain all those predictions which related to Christ's coming, as foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament. What would be thought of a Minister Extraordinary, who, being sent from Washington to London on business of the first importance, should he, instead of repairing to London, make known his mission, by hints and indirect sayings, to some untaught fishermen, and, at the same time, abuse, and also make use of the most threatening expressions towards the heads of the government to whom he was sent? Could it be expected that such conduct would be productive of any thing but failure? This is exactly similar to the conduct pursued by Jesus in his intercourse with the Jewish rulers. Can we, for a moment, admit that Infinite Wisdom could have sent such an ambassador on the all-important subject of the salvation of the human race? Jesus repeatedly reproaches the Jews in general, and his disciples in particular, for their want of faith in his divine authority: at the same time, he makes use of sayings that it was impossible for them to understand.

Jesus often referred to his treatment and death. How was it possible for them to understand this prediction? It never could have entered the minds of the descendants of Abram, Isaac, and Jacob, that the true Messiah must suffer death before he could begin to restore the Jews to their former greatness. Instead of calling together the most talented and the most influential of the Jewish nation, and openly making known to them the object of his delegation, he associated with that portion of society whose knowledge of Jewish history was very limited; and, as if he dreaded publicity, often charged them to "tell no man that he was the Christ"—the very opposite course to what appears to be consistent with the important object of his coming. Taking the history of Christ's life, and also, more particularly, that of his teaching, he seems to have no settled plan whatever. At times, he seems to be in the strictest sense a Jew, not only as it regards his nation, but, also, most strictly following the law of Moses, submitting even to all its ceremonies. At other times, he opposes his sayings to those of the law of Moses, and openly forgives sins, without having any recourse to the offering of sacrifice according to the Mosaic law. Sometimes, he speaks of being not only "*Lord of all,*" but that they would "*see him coming down in the clouds, in power and glory, to judge both quick and dead*"; and then, again, speaking of his poverty, as "not having where to lay his head." His living a life of wandering and mendicity, at times making a great excitement in one place, and suddenly departing to another,—these strange movements (admitting they occurred) entirely took off the attention of the heads of the Jewish people, and caused him to be considered as any thing but the promised *restorer of Israel.* In addition to his unsettled state, his repeated attacks on the rulers, holding them up to the scorn and contempt of the people, had generated such feelings in the minds of the priests and scribes, that they considered him as a pretender to the Messiahship. Besides the hostility

he showed to rich men, in speaking of the almost impossibility of their entering that kingdom which was included in all his teachings, namely, "*The kingdom of heaven is at hand,*" when a rich man asked him "what he was to do to inherit eternal life?" the answer of Jesus to him was, in addition to what the rich man had done, "Go and sell all, and give to the poor, and follow me." We are told that the rich man refused to do that, and Jesus then said of the rich, "how difficult it was for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." This is the wild and levelling doctrine taught by modern prophets. Nothing can be more unreasonable and unjust. If such doctrines as these had, in in the time of Jesus, been practised, he would have drawn a host of idlers after him. Besides, to teach such an unqualified practice as the one proposed to the rich man, must, at that time, have convinced every well-informed man how very unfit Jesus was to regulate society. I well know that Christians will consider this mode of examination of the sayings and doings of Jesus, as wicked and horrible; as opposing the weak judgment of man to the infinite wisdom of God. In reply to this, I would say, it is by investigating the teachings of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament, that we can perceive its defects, and thereby fully discover that the wise Ruler and Governor of all never sanctioned doctrines such as those said to have proceeded from Jesus.

In taking a candid survey of the teaching, manner, and life of Jesus as it is written in the evangelists, we find that both he and his apostles lived a wandering life. How they raised funds, we know not, but it seems that Judas Iscariot was treasurer; and that he loved money better than he did his master, his betraying him to the rulers for thirty pieces of silver, fully proved. His having no fixed home, and following no regular and permanent employment, will throw some light on the system of morals which Jesus inculcated. Although some of his moral precepts were undoubtedly good, and calculated to make those happy who reduced them to practice, still others there were, which, if practised, would create disorder-—such as that which repudiates the taking any thought for the morrow. There is a vast difference in taking prudential thought for the morrow, and always looking at the gloomy side of what may possibly happen. Jesus makes no distinction; but in his explanation he leaves the subject more obscure than if he had not left any comment at all. Jesus says, "*Consider the lilies of the field; they toil not, neither do they spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." And again, "Take no thought for the morrow, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, nor wherewithal ye shall be clothed, for your heavenly father knoweth ye have need of all these. But seek ye first the kingdom of heaven, and its righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Again, "If a man sue you at law and take your coat, let him have your cloak also:*" and many more precepts of the same nature, which are impracticable, and which must be left to prudence and common sense to carry into practice.

But this very imperfect code of morals could be practised better by Jesus and his followers, considering their mode of life, than by others who had fixed homes. How Jesus and his apostles lived, as to their means to buy food or clothing, is unknown,—unless they lived the lives of mendicants, or, to speak more plainly, by what they could pick up, which is implied in the saying of Christ: "for," says he, "*foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has not where to lay his head,*" To persons so situated, the taking thought for the morrow would be but of little use; but by those persons who had homes, and who, by labor, had to provide for a family, such morality could not be practised. We will give but one instance.

Suppose a person had business from home for some weeks, and had given his wife orders to provide his linen, with other things, for his journey; and when the time arrived for him to leave home, his wife had, agreeable to the precepts of Jesus, taken no thought for the morrow,—would such an excuse satisfy the husband? No. Prudent forethought is connected with every thing moral; and without it, society would be entirely broken up. But to persons living a wandering life, and not knowing from one day to another how they should fare; and rising in the morning ignorant how it might turn out as to where they could lie down at night—to such, the sayings of Jesus would better apply. But to those who were settled and had fixed homes, the *taking no thought for the morrow* would break up every family who should attempt it. Had we been of the Jewish nation, and lived in the time of Jesus, in all probability we should have considered the conduct of Christ very strange. Sometimes, he upbraided the Jews for their unbelief; and at others, charged his own apostles to keep as a secret that he was the Christ.

The only way to understand this strange history of the Messiah is, to reject the account of his preaching altogether; and to consider the whole of his ministry as being written by unknown persons from hearsay only. And it is nearly proof positive that no such person as Jesus existed, who said and did those things ascribed to him; for it is utterly impossible by his history, admitting it to be correct, to gather, from the evangelists' account of it, for what he came, and also what end was answered to the Jews. They we're left in a worse state than if Jesus had not been among them: for, as the Jews mistook the object of his mission in consequence of the obscurity of his preaching, so the different sects, to this day, have not decided what is Christianity.

The history of the life and preaching of Jesus, is such a confusion of opposite doctrines, that, after eighteen hundred years' investigation, by men the most learned; and after thousands and tens of thousands of volumes have been written, and commentators have endeavored to settle the different and conflicting accounts of what he taught, it still remains unsettled whether Christ is part God and part man, or whether he had a natural father, and is to be considered

as nothing but a man, but of superior holiness of life. It is not settled whether Christ died for all, or only a part of the human race. Again, it is not yet agreed on by Christian sects whether baptism should be extended to infants, or be administered exclusively to adults. These, and many more subjects, are by different parties viewed differently; at the same time all and each appeal to the New Testament in support of their respective creeds.

I will now appeal to the reader whether a God of infinite wisdom and power would be the author of a religion which could give rise to so many contradictory doctrines? which in the life-time of the propagator was not understood? and for eighteen hundred years has been a fruitful field of discord, war, and murder, instead of producing "peace on earth and good-will towards men?" It has never failed to be a source of war, hatred, malice, and ill-will towards men; and nothing but the extension of Infidel Principles can secure the human race against a recurrence of those dreadful scenes, which, for ages, converted this otherwise happy world into a slaughter house of human victims. To my brother Infidels, then, I say, "Ye are the salt of the earth." If you cease from your noble exertions, the human race may again exhibit one mass of theological putrefaction. If Infinite wisdom and power had ever undertaken to give a revelation to man, we should not have witnessed any blunders or mistakes. A revelation coming from such a being, would have been directed to some beneficial end, and, like the eternal laws of the universe, the means made use of would not have failed to bring about the glorious end intended. But the Bible, including the Old and New Testaments, is not only unworthy of its pretended high authority; but it portrays the all-wise Governor and Director of all worlds as a being changeable, cruel, and unjust.

In addition to the obscure manner resorted to by Jesus in his speeches, he seldom conversed with any of his countrymen of any distinction. It was always the lower ranks of society to whom he directed his sayings; so that, to the most learned and opulent of the Jews, he was little known; for when the higher powers were about to take him into custody, to them he was unknown. It then became expedient to offer a reward to some one to point him out to the officers appointed to arrest him. Judas Iscariot was the man who seemed willing as well as competent, to conduct this ungrateful business. Jesus had often said that *one of his apostles would betray him.* There is something very strange in the saying of Jesus, that *he had chosen twelve apostles and one would betray him.* If Jesus came to the Jews as the promised and expected Messiah, the very idea of betraying him implies that he did not intend that the Jews should ever know him as *the sent of God.* At all events, Jesus, at the time Judas made him personally known to the chief priest and rulers, complained of the deceitfulness of Judas, which is full proof that he did not wish at that time to be put on his trial.

But in what did this betraying consist? The Jewish rulers wished to have the man pointed out to them who had made so much noise and stir among the lower order of the people. Judas took the reward, and if Jesus were really sent by the Lord of all to his nation, this betraying was only giving him an opportunity of openly avowing his Messiahship. Here then was the time for him to show such signs and wonders as to prevent any doubts as to who he was, and of the important object of his coming; for if *he came into the world to die for the sins of mankind*, Judas then was of vast importance in bringing about that which was before ordained by the *determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.* But if he (Jesus) did not intend to suffer death, then, and only then, had he cause to complain of Judas as a traitor. Jesus, in speaking of Judas, says, "*it had been good for that man if he had never been born:*" but if the salvation of mankind depended on the death of Christ, a more important person than Judas was never born of woman. Whether such a man as Jesus ever lived or not, it is impossible to determine; but admitting that such a man as he is said to have been, did exist, it does appear that his life was a scene of incongruities bordering on insanity. And the whole of his public ministry was so erratic, that it seems as if he had no specific object in view.

CHAPTER IV.

NOTHING can be more unreasonable than to admit, for a moment, that the Almighty Power which governs the vast unbounded universe, should be the author, either directly or indirectly, of a system which has produced so much cruelty, carnage, and bloodshed, as the Christian Religion—a very large portion of which has been brought about by the discordant doctrines attributed to the preaching of Christ. If God is its author, (which is more than doubtful,) if, in addition to the evils with which human nature is afflicted, he had intended to make man's misery complete, the Christian religion seems well adapted to secure that end, for it is the key-stone of human wretchedness. A great amount of evil has resulted from the different sects that have arisen from the New Testament.

A few particulars will suffice to show that the various doctrines, all gathered from and founded on the sayings of Christ, have created discord and persecution among the followers of Jesus, the pretended pacificator of the human race.

One of the most destructive sayings of Jesus—one which has entailed on the human race a system of continual evil, and which bids fair to last for ages to come, is the delegated power given to the Apostle Peter, and which is, to the present day, claimed by his successors. Peter, being asked by Christ as to what the Jews thought of him, answered that "some thought that one of the old prophets had returned from the dead, while others thought differently." But, says Jesus to Peter, "*Whom do you say that I am?*" Give me your opinion. Peter replied, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of God.*" This answer was responded to by Jesus, and to Peter he said, "*Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven;" and Jesus added, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*" (Matthew xvi., 19.)

After appearing to give Peter unlimited power, he tells him that "*the chief priest and scribes will put him to death, and that he should be raised the third day.*" Peter, not understanding this sad reverse, and out of regard for his master, rebuked him, but very mildly, by saying, "*Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee.*" At this, Jesus seemed to lose his temper, and said, "*Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence to me.*" Jesus then tells Peter that "*The son of man should come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, to reward every man according to his works,*" Jesus then adds, "*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.*"

Now it was not possible for Peter, or any one else, to understand Christ's meaning. He tells them things concerning his second coming, before they understood his object as it related to his Messiahship. Besides, what he told them would surely come to pass in their time, is not yet fulfilled. This obscure mode of teaching runs through all his speeches; and he continually reproaches them for their want of faith in his doctrines. A method so incoherent appears to approach to insanity.

But to return more immediately to the power given to Peter. A power so undefined as was given to Peter, at a time when he did not even comprehend the final destiny of Jesus, cannot be admitted to have been given. But as this part of Christ's history was written long after his leaving this earth, the writer, whoever he was, wrote from hearsay; and there being no one to question its truth, it became, like many other sayings, reputed as coming from Jesus. Inconsistent as it was, it became one of the doctrines of the church; and the successors of Peter retain it in the Catholic Church at the present day. This original power given unto Peter is still invested in the person of the Pope of Rome, and through him down to the rest of the clergy. This power, said to have been given by Jesus to the church, has been productive of discord. The Popes have held and acted upon it as a divine prerogative bequeathed by Christ to his church, which has been denied by other sects, so that quarrels have been the consequence. And hence both rich and poor, learned and unlearned, have, and do still, confess to the priest their sins, and receive pardon.

All the evils that have resulted from such foolery, sprang from the authority said to have been by Jesus given to Peter. What a rich harvest have the priests reaped from this delegated power! Can men, possessing one grain of common sense, believe that such power was ever given to mortal man? But the different sects will say, that Jesus never intended that it should be thus understood. This does not mend the matter at all; for God must have foreseen what use would be made of it. The consequences, therefore, rest with Him. But are we prepared to admit that Infinite Wisdom would have left unguarded, doctrines of such vast importance to the peace and harmony of his church?

Again, the shocking consequences which have followed the institution of the Sacrament, or Lord's Supper. Jesus, according as Christians believe, instituted the breaking of bread and drinking of wine, as an emblem of his body being broken, and his blood being poured out as a sacrifice for sin. But this doctrine or ordinance, being undefined, the different sects of Christians have practised it under the impression of its sacredness, taking its literal meaning instead of regarding it as a token of remembrance. The Catholic believes, or professes so to do, that after the descendants of Peter have prayed over, and consecrated, the bread and wine, its nature is changed into the real body and blood of the Saviour. One horrible consequence which has resulted from such tomfoolery, has been, the burning of hundreds of human beings at the stake, for not admitting so important a truth. This evil, and many others, has arisen from the obscure doctrines taught by Jesus, whom the scriptures describe as being the light of the world. Jesus, before being taken into heaven, told his disciples that it was for their good that he should leave them; for, to make up for his absence, *he would send the Holy Ghost, who would be a comforter, and would lead them into all truth.* How far this promise has been fulfilled, we have the evidence of eighteen hundred years; for, immediately after Jesus had left his church, they became divided, and ever since they have butchered each other without mercy. This is the comfort, then, that Christians have received by the coming of the Holy Ghost.

Another fruitful field of slaughter and blood has been thrown open in consequence of Jesus withholding from the Christian church the real nature of his being. So confused was he on this subject, that, even now, Christians do not agree. Some contend for his manhood alone, and that, like all other men, he had an earthly father,—the Unitarians, for instance, and other sects. But the real Orthodox contend that Jesus was born of a pure virgin, who, though a mother was yet a virgin. These contradictory views are supported by the life and history of Jesus. Does it require any thing more than common sense to repudiate the divinity of a Book containing such opposite statements of the same accounts, or facts? It is the uncertainty of what Christianity really is, which has caused so much evil in the world; and this has arisen from the dark and obscure mode of teaching attributed to the Son of God. Those Christians who have embraced views so opposite to each other, but who have taken them from the same Word of God, have, in every age, been the most implacable enemies, and have seldom failed, when power has been in their hands, to inflict the most cruel torments on those who differed from them. Indeed, the history of the Christian Church is one continued record of persecution and cruelty.

I was, for some few months, called on by an Orthodox deacon, who earnestly requested me to reflect on the dangerous situation I was in as an unbeliever, being totally unprepared for a future state. I asked, if I were in a worse

state than an Unitarian? You admit, said I, that they, many of them, are good men, and will not be excluded from heaven. He replied, that, morally speaking, they might be good; but, he added, that my claim to heaven stood on equal, if not superior ground to theirs, as they did not believe in the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus for sin; consequently, they had neither part nor lot in the matter.

All the intolerance and persecution which have deluged the earth with blood, have arisen from Christianity not having ever been defined. Hundreds of different creeds have been founded on the sayings and doings of Jesus and his apostles, as found in the New Testament; and there are yet materials for many more. Each sect regards all other sects as being wickedly obstinate, and resisting the truth. All this misery and destruction, arising from the different construction of the doctrines said to have been delivered by Jesus, would never have taken place, if the all-wise Ruler of the Universe had dictated them; but the evils they have brought on the world can never be reconciled as coming from a Being of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness. If such a Being had ever given a revelation to the human race, there is no doubt but that it would have been adapted to man's reasoning powers; that mistakes would not have opposed its progress; thousands of books would not have been required to explain what Infinite Wisdom had proclaimed; no fires of martyrdom would have been lighted, to compel men to believe what none could understand.

If God had been the author of the Christian religion, it would, like all his works, have been so arranged, and the means so wisely adapted, that the intention or end would be fully answered. But the religion of the Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is a continual trial of experiments on man. And what has religion made of him? Is he generally fit to be trusted, in word or action? Is he generally humane and tender-hearted? No! very far from it. Society is, in its best state, very defective in humanity. The accumulation of riches is the Christian's object. Gold is the god he adores.

It is impossible for Christians to deny that the persecutions and burnings, the cruel torture, and every infliction of cruelty practised by one sect towards others, who honestly differed from the most powerful, were all in consequence of the different sects embracing and maintaining opposite doctrines; all of which were founded on the teaching of Jesus. Can we, then, believe that the Almighty Ruler of all worlds would have sent his Son to teach mankind something that should involve the human race in a never-ending quarrel, by teaching so obscurely that two persons, equally honest and intelligent, should form opposite opinions; knowing, as the Almighty must, that such teaching would engender hatred and malice, and be the cause of producing unheard of cruelty and torture?

How dreadful it is to reflect on the mad fury of religious zeal, when the persecutor and the persecuted are equally sincere! The first, believing he ought

to put to death those who differ from him, for the glory of God; and the latter, considering that his crown of glory can be obtained only by sufferings death the most horrid to bear! Poor, unfortunate creatures! Both parties are objects of pity. The evils resulting from the different doctrines collected from the teaching of Jesus, have, for eighteen hundred years, converted the otherwise happy world into a pious mad-house. The doctrine of human depravity, although it may not have been so productive of evil as some others, is a libel on human nature. It is taught by Jesus; the preachers repeat it weekly from the pulpit; and the necessity of a new birth results from it. A thousand pulpits thunder forth vengeance against man because of the hardness of his heart. We are told that he has rebelled against his God; that he is at enmity with him, and that he has turned his back to his Maker.

All this is done to humble man, and to bring about his conversion. The Scriptures also represent the Almighty as angry with poor, feeble man, and that he will eventually pour out his wrath in never-ending torments! These doctrines, so earnestly taught, and so fully credited, constitute a principal part of what comes from ten thousand preachers; and if we examine the truth of them, none can we find. As it respects man's rebelling, and turning his back on his Creator, man's error and misfortune has ever been in trying to find out something about his Maker.

This curiosity, no doubt, originated in a state of ignorance. And even in the present day, man has yet to learn the inutility of every attempt to discover any thing as to the being and nature of a Supreme Power that is supposed to govern the universe. We are lost in wonder and admiration when we contemplate the mighty universe! but of the Grand Regulator of all, we are, and no doubt shall ever remain, in total ignorance. It is a libel on man, then, to teach that human beings are at enmity against God. I ask my readers, both male and female, whether they ever had those feelings of hatred against the unknown Governor of the grand and sublime universe? But Christian priests proclaim it; and to those who believe it, it is a source of lamentation; and being under the belief that man is the natural enemy of God, the minds of such persons become prostrated, and then this otherwise happy world is despised and neglected for a future state of supposed bliss.

Let any one attend a Protracted Meeting, where there may be some hundreds of persons, and among the number, many youths of both sexes; both young and old are appealed to by the speakers, who describe them as enemies of God, and as having turned their backs on the God of goodness. They become alarmed, not having before conceived that they could have been so wicked. I have seen upwards of fifty, at one time, sobbing and crying and imploring mercy, who, poor, weak mortals, until this foolishness of being at enmity with God was preached

to them, had no conception of their dreadful enormities and danger. By exciting the feelings with falsehood, this process is called conversion and the work of the Holy Ghost. At the same time that the most virtuous females are denounced as deserving damnation for their wickedness, and told that, without repentance, their future state will be wretched to all eternity, should one word derogatory to the character of these females, thus represented by the priests, be spoken by any body else, an action for slander would be instituted.

But as long as people will give up their reason, and be hoodwinked with the nonsense that God is angry, and that they are every moment in danger of falling into hell, so long will the Christian priesthood riot in profusion and plenty, by dealing out damnation to those whose only crime is enmity against God. So completely hoodwinked is man, that he attends weekly, and pays well into the bargain, to hear the priest deal out endless damnation to nine-tenths of the human race; and it is ten chances to one that he also is included among the subjects of the Devil! Should an Orthodox preacher, for a few Sundays, preach on moral subjects, and consider that morality was the one thing needful in the Christian Church, the congregation would complain that their souls required more substantial nourishment. The preacher must return to the old mode of teaching, and again shake them over the lake of fire! And hence it follows, that, as the people, are not satisfied without having the wrath of God the constant theme, the preacher gives it as they wish to have it. An angry God; a cunning, crafty and tempting Devil; and the enmity of man's wicked heart: this is the set of tools by which the Christian teacher carries on his theological trade. The discordancy of religious opinions, and all of them taken from the doctrines as taught by Jesus and the apostles, each preacher referring to the favorite passages which support his views, is and will be, a never-ending theme of disputation; and at some future period, may renew the practice of burning each other alive for God's glory.

Nothing but the spread of Infidelity can completely stop this dreadful evil. We have only to suppose, that, at some future time, the savages who have been what is called converted by preachers of opposite sects, such as the Calvinist and the Universalist, or the Trinitarians and Unitarians, should, by some cause not now foreseen, be left by the missionaries to support the Christian church; then the savage converts of different sects would be very likely to fall on each other, and the fires of Smithfield, which Infidelity, the companion of humanity, has extinguished, may again blaze on the Islands of the Pacific Ocean. This is a very probable case; for, in the present day, the same Bible is the text book of all denominations, and all of them would persecute if they had but the power. Christianity is now what it ever has been, and what it ever will be, a persecuting religion; and, although the fires of martyrdom cease to torment the human race, the embers are still emitting smoke, and may again be rekindled. Nothing short

of *unbelief in all divine revelation*, openly and fearlessly avowed, can guarantee the human family against a renewal of the religious butchery of past ages.

CHAPTER V.

TAKING the Orthodox views of Christianity, there are four personages connected with divine revelation, and each has a different department to act out. The first three are the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Leaving, for the present, the first three, our attention will, in this chapter, be directed to the fourth and last, namely, the Devil. And so much consequence do Christian sects attach to the existence of the Devil, that, to deny it, or even to doubt it, would be enough to separate a member from the church. Religious people must have a Devil; for, as the Devil, by his incessant cunning and temptation, is the indirect author of men's sins, so, on the other hand, the Saviour stands ready to ransom the guilty. It then follows, that the sinner, after all, stands on pretty good ground; for, if the Devil tempts him to commit one-half of his crimes, and the Saviour pardons the other half, man is not in much danger of being condemned.

In this chapter, it will be seen, what an amount of evil has arisen to the peace and happiness of the human race, not from what the Devil really has done, but from what mortals have believed he has done, by supposing him to have almost unlimited power. And here we can perceive, what evil has transpired from what never has, nor ever could have taken place, but from what has been believed to have really happened. This has been in consequence of the credulity of the human mind when reason is departed from, and man becomes the creature of imagination. It is then that man can give credit to the most glaring absurdities, and honestly reject the plain dictates of common sense. It is then that he leaves the solid earth on which he treads, and launches into the region of airy nothings; and, by the ductility of his mind, creates beings of so terrific a nature, that, at the thought of them, the stoutest hearts have been made to quail. This is strictly true as to the existence and influence of the Devil.

That the New Testament sanctions the existence of the Devil, there remains not a doubt. The temptation of Christ is proof positive. But that alone should not suffice. The case of Mary Magdalene, and also the expulsion of devils by Jesus and his disciples, put all doubt out of the question. When we consider the terrible

consequences of this belief on the peace and happiness of the human race, we can but pity the deluded creatures, who, in different ages of Christianity, have been sufferers for the supposed commission of a crime that never was, nor ever will be committed. All nations, in all ages, have credited, to a lesser or a greater extent, the existence of a being, or beings, of a malignant nature, possessing power beyond man's conception; who, from some cause unknown, delighted in doing mischief to the human family. And ever since the introduction of the Christian religion, it has been credited that such wicked spirits could delegate power to human beings equally wicked as themselves; by which power, they, for a time, could vent their malice, and do wonders by selling themselves, or by some infernal contract could do harm to, or among those of, their neighbors who were so unfortunate as to fall under their displeasure.

This sin, which never was, and never can be committed, has ever been thought the worst of crimes; and less mercy shown to the supposed guilty person than if guilty of murder itself. And so extensively has it been credited, and so great has been its influence, that laws have, in most nations, been passed for its punishment; and thousands, and tens of thousands have been put to death under circumstances of torture at which the human heart sickens. Surely, if our minds are not entirely darkened by the ignorance of past ages, we must be able to see that the Bible has been the most destructive book that was ever written; and is unworthy to claim infinite power, wisdom, and goodness for its author. If the belief in witchcraft and sorcery had been confined to the ignorant and unlearned of all nations, its evil would have been so limited that not much misery would have followed, because men of good sense and talent would have stood in the way of its progress. But, unfortunately, this has not so happened. Its evil influence has ascended to the highest classes in society. The king on his throne, and the learned judge seated in the chair of impartial justice, have partaken of its deadly contagion. The reader will now be presented with facts of the most undoubted authority, showing what wretchedness has occurred from believing in the existence and malignity of the Devil—a doctrine supported by divine revelation.

The first fact that is brought forward, took place at Bury, St. Edmonds, in the County of Suffolk, (England,) in the year 1664. Amy Duny and Rose Callender, two poor women, who were ignorant, and of the coarsest materials, had, for eight years previous, the reputation of being witches. So horrid were they considered, that the fishermen would not sell them fish, and the boys in the streets were taught to fly from them with horror. The principal charges against them were, that the children of two families had been many times seized with fits in which they exclaimed that they saw Amy Duny and Rose Callender coming to torment them. They vomited, and in their vomit were often found pins, and once or twice

a two-penny nail.

One or two of the children died. To support these allegations, a wagoner appeared, whose wagon had been twice overturned in one morning in consequence of the curses of one of these witches. Sir Matthew Hale presided at the trial, assisted by Sir Thomas Brown, two of the most able and learned Judges then in England. Those two poor women were by the jury found guilty, and hanged on the seventeenth day of March, 1664, one week after their trial.

Sir Matthew Hale refused to sum up the evidence, but left it to the jury, to whom he said, "That the Scriptures left no doubt that there was such a thing as witchcraft; and instructed them that all they had to do, was, first, to consider whether the children were really bewitched; and, secondly, whether the witchcraft was sufficiently brought home to the prisoners at the bar." The Jury found them guilty, and they were hanged as before stated.

Here we have a shocking account of the credulity of the human mind. The whole English nation were laboring under a mental delusion. Here it was not to be said, "*O, ye of little faith!*" but, "*O, ye religious madmen! your faith has changed your nature from kindness and pity, to perform acts of cruelty which the savage cannibal would shudder to put into practice.*" I would here remind the reader, that Judge Hale was considered a just and humane Judge. What a dreadful state a nation must be in, when such laws as have been referred to, were in full force, and the jurisprudence of England was, as it were, under the influence of a Being the supposed enemy of man! And it may in truth be said, that an unknown and invisible world governed one that was known and visible.

Now, in the case of those two poor women, who were really murdered, the question arises, who were their murderers? Was it Judge Hale, or the Jury? It was neither. It was the Bible-—a book which records the existence of a Devil, the sworn enemy of God and men. Reader! can you withhold pity from two poor creatures in such circumstances, and can you still praise to the skies a Book that has made the best and wisest of men cruel brutes,—who, at the same time, were happy to have a chance to make war against the Devil, by destroying two helpless beings whose only crime, in all probability, was poverty and ignorance? Every humane unbeliever must exclaim, "O God! O Nature! what havoc have ignorance and superstition made among your works!"

Nothing could be better calculated to give importance to the credibility of the activity and influence of the Devil's employing and entering into a league with wicked and ill-disposed persons, after Christianity became established, than the Scripture account of the Devil's tempting Jesus, and endeavoring to make a contract with him to obey and submit to his proposals. But as the Devil was nonsuited by the Saviour of mankind, it might be expected that after Jesus had left this world, the Devil would endeavor to enlist into his service many of those who

had embraced the religion of that Saviour whom he had tried to seduce.

In the course of time, in the middle or dark ages, when' men's imaginations were active, and reason was nearly banished from among Christians, it became a matter of faith and certainty, that persons in different towns and villages had really entered into a contract, for a certain number of years, with the Devil himself; and to carry out and complete this supposed covenant with the enemy of God and man, a motion was started of the Devil's Sabbath, on which, a place being appointed, wicked men and women could meet and contract with Old Lucifer himself; and books were printed to show the nature of the contract After this strange opinion became fully credited, and witchcraft was made a crime punishable by law, those persons who were accused of witchcraft were tortured, in order to compel them to own that they had attended the Sabbath of the Devil.

Another fact will now be stated, to show what ideas of the Devil's influence prevailed in England and Scotland, in the days of Elizabeth. James the First, of England, who, succeeding Elizabeth, was born in 1566, was the only direct heir to the Crown of Scotland, and had a prospect of succeeding Elizabeth in England, which he did on the death of the Queen. James had witnessed a great number of prosecutions for witchcraft, in Scotland, in the reign of Mary; and he, as might be expected, most firmly believed that the Devil was very active in the country of his birth; so that, when he came to the Crown of England, his mind was di-rected to put a stop to the prevailing crime of witchcraft and to break up the Devil's Sabbath, he believing that numbers of his English subjects were visitors to those unholy meetings. A circumstance will now be mentioned which will fully prove what views the people of England and Scotland had of the activity of the Devil in drawing persons into his service and kingdom; for it is impossible to evade the truth, that the existence and opposition of the Devil against the progress of the Gospel, was strengthened by what had been recorded of the Devil in the New Testament.

James the First, of England, is here cited to show what was then the prevailing opinion of the existence of witchcraft in that kingdom. And although it is painful to reflect on the sufferings of thousands, it may, by its recital, assist those who are still somewhat in darkness, to discover how the human race have been deluded. James the First had fixed his mind on a daughter of the King of Denmark. A splendid embassy was sent from England to conclude the treaty of marriage, and to bring home James's royal consort; but the ships met with violent storms, and instead of arriving at the capital of Scotland, the news came that the ship in which the Princess had taken passage, was driven back on the coast of Norway; nothing uncommon m these seas at that, season of the year. The King, being disappointed, sailed to the place where the shattered ships lay, and the marriage was consummated; and the King and Queen remained at Copenhagen,

and did not arrive at Edinburgh until the first of May, 1590. The storm was, after their return, considered to be the result of some supernatural interference.

The King, after his return, suspecting that witchcraft had something to do in raising the storm which drove his intended wife on the coast of Norway, set to work to make discoveries; and two of his female servants were suspected of causing the storm before alluded to. Their names were Geillis Duncan and Agnes Sampson. Both of them were put to the torture to extort confession. These poor young women, broken down and exhausted by so dreadful an operation, became willing to answer such questions as this royal blockhead had prepared to put to them. Agnes Sampson told the King, that she, in company with two hundred other witches, had sailed in sieves from Leith to North Berwick Church; how they had there encountered the Devil in person; how they had feasted with him, and what obscenities had been; practised. She related, that in this voyage they had drowned a cat, having first baptized it; and that immediately a dreadful storm arose, and in this very storm the King's ship had been separated from the rest of the fleet. Inconsequence of this confession, Agnes Sampson was condemned to the flames. The system of torture resorted to under cir-circumstances of suspicion, compelled poor suffering creatures to answer any questions put to them to satisfy their cruel tormentors and in many cases, after all, they were put to death. King James the First published his Dialogues on Demonology in three books. But many years after he renounced his belief in the real existence of Witchcraft altogether; and in the latter part of his reign, declared that all he had done was the effect of delusion.

These were dreadful times for humanity. Thousands and tens of thousands of victims suffered every kind of torture that savage, ingenuity could devise; and what made it the more to be deplored, the ignorant creatures who inflicted the torments were honest in their abhorrence of those unfortunate persons, who suffered for what was, in those dark ages, considered the worst of crimes. In what horror, then, were persons held who could be so wicked as to have dealings with the devil? The case of James is here recorded, to show the reader that the belief in witchcraft was not confined to the ignorant: and unlettered portion of society; but that England, and Scotland, and, it may be said, every Christian nation with its government, and the army also, were all laboring under this delusion. And the truth of its existence was then, and is now, supported by the New Testament, and fully confirmed by the Devil's temptation of Jesus, the Christian's *Son of God*; for the desire manifested by the Devil to entice Jesus to enter into his service, did, in those dark ages, strengthen persons in the conclusion that the Devil, although he failed to seduce the Redeemer, would continue to enlist, if possible, great numbers into his service. The firm belief of his attempts on the *Son of God* would dispose persons to credit the fact that people of abandoned charac-

ters would hire themselves to the Devil. In the days of Oliver Cromwell, a story is recorded by Echard, the historian, as shockingly illustrative of the credulity of the age in which he lived. It takes its date from the morning of the third of September, 1651, when Cromwell gained the battle of Worcester against Charles the Second. It is on the authority of Colonel Lindsey, who was senior captain in Cromwell's own regiment. The story recorded is, "That on the morning of the battle, Cromwell took with him Colonel Lindsey to the side of a wood, not far from the army, and bade him alight and follow him into the wood, and to take particular notice of what he saw and heard. And having secured their horses, and walked some little way into the wood, Lindsey began to turn pale, and to be seized with horror from some unknown cause. Cromwell asked him how he felt himself? He answered, that he was in such a trembling that he never felt the like in all the conflicts and battles he had ever been engaged in. 'How, now,' said Cromwell, 'what! troubled with the vapors? Come forward, man.' They had not gone far, before Lindsey stood still, and said it was impossible for him to go one step further. Upon which, Cromwell called him a faint hearted fool, and bade him stand there and observe, or witness. And then the General, advancing to some distance from him, met a grave elderly man with a roll of parchment in his hand, who delivered it to Cromwell, and he eagerly perused it Lindsey, a little recovered from his fear, heard several loud words between them, particularly Cromwell said, 'this is but for seven years, I was to have it for one and twenty.' The grave elderly man told him positively, it could not be for more than seven. Cromwell cried with great fierceness, 'It shall, however, be for fourteen years.' Cromwell then took his parchment, and returning to Lindsey, 'Now, Lindsey,' said he, 'the battle is our own, I long to be engaged.' It did then commence. After the first charge, Lindsey deserted his post and rode away with all speed to a friend's in the county of Suffolk, and never returned. Cromwell offered a great reward for him, dead or alive. Cromwell died on that day seven years, September 3, 1658."

It is of no consequence whether this story is true or not It fully proves that at that time it was believed, that men sold themselves to the Devil.

CHAPTER VI.

TWO more remarkable cases will, in this chapter, be made known to the reader, to show that for hundreds of years the Devil, or rather the belief in his existence, was a source of terror to all Christians, and must have operated on almost every transaction in which society were engaged. In almost every town and village, to be surrounded with wicked beings who had entered into a contract with Satan to be empower-ed to perform deeds of darkness which no prudence could guard against, must have had an influence on the peace and safety of almost every family. But now, that the delusion has nearly passed away, and mankind are no longer subject to such terror, we may be happy to think that our lives are exempted from the evils which afflicted our forefathers. And nothing but an open avowal of our unbelief in all systems which in any way sanction the existence of a Being who has made a large portion of the human family crazy, can prevent a recurrence of past ignorance with all its baneful consequences.

Joan of Arc, called the Maid of Orleans, an unfortunate creature, demands our pity. Her tragical history ought to impel every humane person to do all in his power to prevent mortals from again witnessing scenes of so dreadful a nature.

Henry the Fifth, of England, won the decisive battle of Agincourt in the year 1415, and some time after concluded a treaty with the reigning King of France, by which he was recognized, in case of that King's death, as heir to the throne. Henry the Fifth died in the year 1422, and Charles the Sixth, of France, in less than two months after. Henry the Sixth was only nine months old, at the time of his father's death; but such was the deplorable state of France, that he was the same year proclaimed King in Paris, and for some years seemed to have every prospect of a fortunate reign. John, Duke of Bedford, the King's uncle, was declared Regent of France. The son of Charles the Sixth was reduced to the last extremity. Orleans was the last strong town in the heart of the kingdom which held out in his favor; and that place seemed on the point of surrendering to the conqueror.

"In this fearful crisis, appeared Joan of Arc, and, in the most incredible manner, turned the whole tide of affairs. She was a servant in a poor inn at

Demremi, and was accustomed to perform the coarsest offices, and, in particular, to ride the horses to a neighboring stream of water. Of course, the situation of France and her hereditary King formed the universal subject of conversation, and Joan became deeply impressed with the lamentable state of her country, and the misfortunes of her King. By dint of perpetual meditation, and feeling in her breast the promptings of energy and enter-prize, she conceived the idea that she was destined by Heaven to be the deliverer of France. Agreeably to the state of intellectual knowledge at that period, she persuaded herself that she saw visions and held communications with the saints. She then had conversations with St. Margaret and St. Catherine of Fierbois. They told her that she was commissioned by God to raise the siege of Orleans. She then presented herself to Baudricourt, Governor of the neighboring town of Vaucouleurs, telling him her commission, and requiring him to send her to the King at Chinon. Baudricourt, at first, made light of her application; but her importunity, and the ardor she expressed, at length excited him. He put on her man's attire, gave her arms, and sent her, under an escort of two gentlemen and their attendants, to Chinon. Here she immediately addressed the King in person, who had purposely hid himself behind his courtiers, that she might not know him. She then delivered her message, and offered, in the name of the Most High, to raise the siege of Orleans, and conduct King Charles to Rheims to be anointed.

"Desperate as was then the state of affairs, Charles and his ministers immediately resolved to seize the occasion that offered, and put forward Joan as an instrument to revive the prostrate courage of his subjects. He had no sooner determined on this, than he pretended to submit the truth of her mission to the most rigorous trial. He called together an assembly of theologians and doctors, who rigorously examined Joan, and pronounced in her favor. He referred the question to the Parliament of Poictiers, and they who, previously to meeting, were persuaded that she was an impostor, became convinced of her inspiration. She was mounted on a highbred steed, furnished with a consecrated banner, and marched, escorted by a body of five thousand men, to the relief of Orleans. The French, strongly convinced by so plain an interposition of Heaven, resumed the courage to which they had long been strangers.

"Such a phenomenon was exactly suited to the superstition and credulity of the age. The English were staggered with the rumors that every where went before her, and struck with a degree of apprehension and terror that they could not shake off. The garrison, informed of her approach, made a sally on the other side of the town, and Joan and her convoy entered without opposition. She displayed her standard in the market place, and was received as a celestial deliverer. She appears to have been endowed with a prudence not inferior to her courage and spirit of enterprise. With great docility, she caught the hints of the comman-

ders by whom she was surrounded, and, convinced of her own want of experience and skill, delivered them to the forces as the dictates of Heaven. Thus the knowledge and discernment of the Generals were brought into play at the same time that their suggestions acquired new weight when falling from the lips of the Heaven-instructed heroine. A second convoy arrived, the wagons and troops passed between the redoubts of the English, while a dead, silence and astonishment reigned Among the forces so lately enterprising and irresistible. Joan now called on the garrison no longer to stand upon the defensive, but boldly to attack the army of the besiegers. She took one redoubt, and then another. The English, overwhelmed with amazement, scarcely dared to lift a hand against her. Their veteran Generals became, spell-bound and powerless, and their soldiers were driven before the prophetess like a flock of sheep. The siege was raised. Joan followed the English to a fortified town which they fixed on as the place of their retreat, and all the English were made prisoners. The late victorious force now concentrated themselves at Patay, in Orleanois. Joan advanced to meet them. The battle lasted not a moment; it was rather a flight than a combat. Fastolfe, one of the bravest of the English Generals, threw down his arms, and ran for his life. Talbot and Scales, the other Generals, were made prisoners.

"The siege of Orleans was raised on the eighth of May, 1429; the battle of Patay was fought on the tenth of the following month. Joan was, at that time, twenty-two years of age. This extraordinary turn having been given to the affairs of the kingdom, Joan next insisted that the King should march to Rheims, in order to be crowned. Rheims lay in a direction expressly through the enemy's garrisons. But every thing yielded to the marvellous fortune that attended upon the heroine. Troyes opened its gates. Chalons followed the example. Rheims sent a deputation, with the keys of the city, which met Charles on his march. The proposed solemnity took place amid the ecstasies and enthusiastic shouts of his people. It was no sooner over, than Joan stepped forward. She said, she had now performed the whole of what God had commissioned her to do. She was satisfied. She entreated the King to dismiss her to the obscurity from which she had sprung.

"The Ministers and Generals of France, however, found Joan too useful an instrument to be willing to part with her thus early, and she yielded to their earnest expostulations.

"Under her guidance, they assailed Laon, Soissons, Chauteau, Thirry, Provins, and many other places, and took them one after another. She threw herself into Compiegne, which was besieged by the Duke of Burgundy in conjunction with certain English commanders. The day after her arrival, she headed a sally against the enemy; twice she repelled them, but finding their numbers increase every moment with fresh reinforcements, she directed a retreat. Twice

she returned to her pursuers, and made them recoil; the third time she was less fortunate. She found herself alone, surrounded by the enemy, and having performed prodigies of valor, she was compelled to surrender herself a prisoner. This happened on the twenty-fifth of May, 1430. It remained to be determined what should be the fate of this admirable woman. Both friends and enemies agreed that her career had been attended with a supernatural power. The French, who were so infinitely indebted to her achievements, and who owed the sudden and glorious reverse of their affairs to her alone, were convinced that she was immediately commissioned by God, and vied with each other in reciting the miraculous phenomena which marked every step in her progress. The English, who saw all the victorious acquisitions of Henry the Fifth crumbling from their grasp, were equally impressed with the manifest miracle, but imputed all her good fortune to a league with the Prince of Darkness. They said, that her boasted visions were so many delusions of the Devil. They determined to bring her to trial for the tremendous crimes of sorcery and witchcraft.

"They believed that if she were once convicted and led out to execution, the prowess and valor which had hitherto marked their progress, would return to them, and that they should obtain the same superiority over their disheartened foes. The Devil, who had hitherto been her constant ally, terrified at the spectacle of the flames that consumed her, would instantly return to the infernal regions, and leave the field open to English enterprise and energy, and to the interposition of God and his saints. An accusation was prepared against her, and all the solemnities of a public trial were observed. But the proofs; were so weak and unsatisfactory, and Joan, though oppressed and treated with the utmost severity, displayed so much acuteness and presence of mind, that the court, not venturing to proceed to the last extremity, contented themselves, with sentencing her to perpetual imprisonment, and to be allowed no other nourishment than bread and water for life. Before they yielded to this mitigation of punishment, they caused her to sign with her mark a recantation of her offences. She acknowledged that the enthusiasm which had guided her was an illusion, and promised never more to listen to its suggestions.

"The hatred of her enemies, however, was not yet appeased. They determined in some, way to entrap her; They had clothed her in a female garb; they insidiously laid in her way the habiliments of a man. The fire, smothered in the bosom of the maid, revived at the sight; she was alone, she caught up the garments, and; one by one adjusted them to her person. Spies were set to watch for this even; they burst into her apartment. What she had done was construed into no less offence than that of a relapsed heretic. There was no more pardon for such confirmed delinquency. She was brought out to be burned alive; in the market place of Rouen, and she died embracing a crucifix, and in her last mo-

ments calling upon the name of Jesus. A few days more than twelve months had elapsed between the period of her first captivity and her execution."

The preceding history of Joan of Arc, is taken from "Godwin's Lives of the Necromancers." Reader! we see in this tragical account, the dreadful effects of human credulity. The unfortunate; Maid of Orleans, who so well deserved a monument for her patriotism, was thus cruelly put to death. Her hard fate fully shows how superstition fortifies the mind against compassion and the dictates of common sense. In that the of religious intolerance, whole nations, had caught this theological fever. Kings and Parliaments, Judges and Generals, from the highest to the lowest, were alike the subjects of that awful contagion. Justice was banished from the earth, and humanity had no existence. From whence proceeded this state of savage barbarism? The answer is presented to us in bold relief. It was the effects of human credulity. It was brought on by believing without examination; and, in the New Testament, faith is urged as the thing most pleasing to God, and unbelief as the greatest sin. The existence of the Devil, and his enmity, to God and man, being supported by the New Testament, to be guilty of forming a contract with the Prince of Darkness was considered a horrid crime. The origin of sorcery, (which consisted in holding a communion with beings from the fabulous world of spirits,) is lost in the night and darkness of antiquity, but all ancient-nations and people were believers in its reality.

It was of heathen origin, yet the Jews practised it, and individuals followed it for a livelihood, as, for instance, the witch of Endor. Christians have also been believers in it in connection with all the different branches of magic.

But that which has established its truth among Christians, is the part performed by Jesus during his ministry. By his own temptation by the Devil, the Existence of the Devil is put beyond all doubt And when Jesus was about to cast out a devil, the devil is reported to have cried out to the Saviour, "*We know who thou art, and art thou come to torment us before the tinte?*" This mode of expression to Jesus by the Devil who was about to be cast out, implies that when the Devil was ejected, he had to return to hell, his native place of torment. It would lead us to infer that devils were permitted to leave their dread abodes, and take possession of men or animals, as a cessation of torture; but when cast out, they had to return home, their vacation being run out Admitting this to be warranted by the New Testament, we can account for those devils whose names were "Legion," petitioning to *be permitted to enter the herd of swine.* So, then, it appears that the devils had other motives in taking possession of human beings than to rebel against God, or to torment men. It was a fine holiday to blow off the soot and ashes, and to get fresh air. At any rate, Jesus, by pretending to cast out devils, fully admitted their existence. And by the temptation of Christ, is proved a desire on the part of the Devil to enlist persons into his service.

CHAPTER VII.

THE reader will not fail to notice, that the personage known by the name of the Devil, Satan, &c., is treated of more fully than any other recorded in the Old or New Testament. The reason is, because his influence exceeds that of all the prophets, and even of the Saviour himself. So destructive has been his supposed reign, throughout the earth, that hundreds of volumes could be written, and still the half would remain untold. In the conclusion of this chapter, an account will be given of witchcraft in Sweden, which far exceeds any thing on record. The bare recital fills the mind with horror, pity, and indignation.

Before giving the dreadful tale, it will not be amiss to indulge in a few thoughts on the probable origin of the existence of a Being who has been a terror to all nations, both learned and ignorant. As the writer is convinced that every thing pertaining to theology is of man's creation, it may be useful to express his opinions how it has happened that all religions have been based on two beings who have ever been opposed to each other, namely, a God and a Devil. Their opposition to each other is the ground-work of every system, whether it be of saint or savage.

To attempt to go back to the origin of theology, as to when or where it first assumed the form of religious worship, is to begin at the beginning of the human race. Religion may be compared to a chain, the first link of which is hidden in the darkness of past ages. The curtain is continually dropping; and the most that we can do is, to peep behind one of its comers. We find ourselves connected with that link which we call Christianity. How many preceding links there may have been, we know not, nor have we any means of knowing. All, therefore, is but conjecture. But carrying our ideas back to a time we know not when, to the beginning of that theology, the basis of which is a God and Devil opposing each other, the following memories are presented:—Before human beings were acquainted with the laws of nature, the universe must have presented to them appearances which surprised and alarmed them. Receiving no ideas but through the medium of the senses, the first idea which must strike them would be, the

great contrast between a mighty power and their own weakness. They would discover from what they saw around them, a mighty power which no prudence could guard against, and which no strength, which they had, could oppose. They would see, that, if by accident, they fell into water, it would destroy life; if, by any means, their dwellings took fire, it would consume them; that thunder was calculated to alarm them, and that death, often followed the storm; and also, that the slightest accident often caused severe pain, and sickness followed, without their being acquainted with the original cause of all these evils. The first men, then, must have been astonished with the mighty power which every where surrounded them, when compared with their own weakness. Sometimes tasting the sweets of life, and at others, its evils, the first gave them pleasing sensations, the last, pain and distress. Having, then, nothing to guide them in drawing conclusions but the objects by which they were surrounded, they inferred that the mighty power which was every moment visible to their senses, and from which they received every thing that contributed to their happiness, resided in a being like themselves, but possessing wisdom and goodness.

To these children of nature, who saw "God in the clouds, and heard him in the wind," by a simple process of the mind, such conclusions were very natural. The first theologians, then, who, by way of reasoning, we place at the fountain head of all religious systems which have come down to us, were convinced of the existence of a Supreme Power who governed the destinies of the human race. Power, then, was the first idea which man had, in the infancy of his rea-son, as to the existence of a God; and it is all that the great-est and wisest of the human race have ever discovered of the Being called by that name. And in this view of the subject, there is no man living who is an Atheist. The power that presented itself to untaught man, required no laborious investigation to discover. It struck his senses with as equal a force as it does the profoundest philosopher. On the contrary, the wisdom and goodness ascribed to God, resulted from a knowledge of the order and wonderful adaptation which pervades the universe, the investigation of which has employed master minds in all subsequent ages.

But untutored man must be overwhelmed with thinking of that power to whose bounds he could set no limits. The wisdom and munificence that run through all nature, were to him unknown. To those, therefore, from whom theology took its rise, it was a world of confusion. Ignorant of cause and effect in the order of nature, and their imaginations being active, while their reasoning powers were undeveloped, every thing they saw or felt was to them a mixture of pleasurable or painful sensations. The pleasure, ease, or comfort which they enjoyed, would be considered as the gift of a good power which conferred such blessings. On the other hand, it would appear inconsistent to them to ascribe the evils attending them to the author of good, they being incapable of judging that

good (pleasure) and evil (pain) could proceed from the same power.

In reasoning from what they saw, they concluded that power was connected with, and resided in, living beings, who had life and motion like themselves. Hence they inferred, that the power from whom they received good, existed somewhere to them unknown. Proceeding in the same track in which they, in imagination, first set out, they conceived this power to be a Being whose residence was in the starry heavens. Untaught man, having imagined a Being from whom he received all the good, in following on in the same course soon came to the certain conclusion that the God who was the author of all his happiness, must have a location, a dwelling above, in some of the stars—at any rate, beyond the ken of mortals. As men's thinking powers became move expanded, but still under the influence of imagination, they would conclude that this Being who dwelt in the skies, would, of course, have his attendants who fulfilled his orders, and added splendor to his habitation.

It appears, that by such a train of thinking, under the influence of the imagination, that the religious system which has come down to us, and which, from time to time, has had additions and modifications, namely, the existence of a God and of a place called Heaven, inhabited by angels, had its origin. Ignorant of the laws of nature, the power of imagination has produced, owing to the organization of the human mind, a world of fiction, consisting of a God, angels, and a habitation in the skies. By the same process of reasoning, (though feeble,) yet propelled by an active imagination, which had fixed the habitation of a good Being in the skies, in a splendid city, with attendants singing his praises, and eager to execute his orders, untaught man now turned hi# attention to the author of his misfortunes and misery. Being totally ignorant that a portion of pain was indispensable to the full enjoyment of happiness in his precarious life, he could not think that pleasure and pain proceeded from the same being; which must have induced him to conclude that an evil and malignant being existed, nearly equal in power to the one that was good; and to such an one, he ascribed all pain and misfortune.

Here, then, are all the materials for a system of theology which has been propagated and believed in by every nation under heaven, in which have been included "saint, savage, and sage." In all the hundreds of systems of religious worship, the before-mentioned materials have been the ground-work, with the exception of the Jewish; for, during their dispensation, the Devil made no part of it. But when Jesus came to gather up "*the lost sheep of the house of Israel,*" along came Mr. Devil to oppose him. As the imagination had created a Devil, the Father of all evil, something was still wanting to complete the whole; and that was, an abode of darkness and horror. Hell, then, is his dread mansion, over which he reigns triumphant.

It has been reserved for the Christian Religion to depict hell in all its awful terrors. The New Testament represents hell as a place of torment by fire never-ending, where the unfortunate occupants are forever burning, but kept alive, and never consumed. The hell of the Greeks and other nations is less horrible, being represented as the abode of darkness, humiliation, and sorrow. But Christianity has a God in heaven, and a Devil in hell, forever contending with each other, like gladiators of old for the prize; and that prize is the human race. But the same New Testament represents that the Devil will have by far the greatest number of prisoners, so that, in the final winding up of this holy war, *Old Nick* will win the field.

The same process of reasoning, which led man, in the infancy of his reason, to personify the power who presided over the human race, induced him to infer that his pain and misfortune emanated from a malignant being, who delighted to do him harm. He then, by the simple process of his imagination, concluded that there must be two opposing powers which governed the affairs of mortals. The good, proceeded from a being who showered down blessings on mortals; and all evil and pain, from a being who took pleasure in the unhappiness of the human race; and his residence, to correspond with his evil disposition, was by them fixed in the gloomy regions of darkness and horror. This, then, Christians, appears to have been the origin of your God and Heaven; and also your Devil and Hell. That both heaven and hell are of heathen origin, there can be no doubt; and it is also equally clear, that the Jews, when they returned from captivity, brought these doctrines back with them into Judea. They then made part of the Jewish faith, and Jesus embraced them; for he pretended to cast out devils, and the Devil enticed him in the wilderness to rebel against God and enlist into the service of his Satanic Majesty. And this heaven, which originated in heathenism, Jesus promised as the reward of his faithful followers; and with this very hell he threatened the disobedient.

What can Christians say (after this) of the divinity or the antiquity of the New Testament? Its doctrines originated in an age unknown, among a people more ancient than Moses, or than Adam, who is said to have been the first man. Yes! ye ministers of grace, your heaven and hell, by the proclaiming of which you alarm the good man, but make the wicked man worse, have no more existence in reality than the heaven and hell of Mahomet. But if there be a heaven, such as you preach up, and the road to it be as difficult as Jesus declared it to be, many of you will have to put up at the half-way house; you will never reach the end of your journey.

The following account of witchcraft in Sweden, is extracted from "Godwin's Lives of the Necromancers:"—"The story of witchcraft, as it is reported to have passed in Sweden, in the year 1670, and has many times been reprinted

in this country, (England,) is, on several accounts, one of the most interesting and deplorable that has ever been recorded. The scene lies in Dalecarlia, a country forever memorable as having witnessed some of the earliest adventures of Gustavus Vasa, his deepest humiliation, and the first commencement of his prosperous fortune. The Dalecarlians are represented to us as the simplest, the most faithful, and the bravest of the sons of men;—men, undebauched and unsuspicious, but who devoted themselves in the most disinterested manner for a cause that appeared to them worthy of support, the cause of liberty and independence against the cruellest of tyrants. At least, such they were in 1520, one hundred and fifty years before the date of the story we are going to recount. The site of these events was at Mohra and Elfdale, in the province that has just been mentioned. The Dalecarlians, simple and ignorant, but of exemplary integrity and honesty, who dwelt amid impracticably mountains and spacious mines of copper and iron, were distinguished for superstition among the countries of the north, where all were superstitious. They were probably subject, at intervals, to the periodical visitation of alarms of witches, when whole races of men became wild with the infection, without any one's being able to account for it.

"In the year 1670, and one or two preceding years, there was a great alarm of witches in the town of Mohra. There were always two or three witches existing in some of the obscure quarters of this place; but now they increased in number, and showed their faces with the utmost audacity. Their mode, on the present occasion, was, to make a journey through the air to Blockula, an imaginary scene of retirement, which none but the witches and their dupes had ever seen. Here they met with feasts and various entertainments, which it seems had particular charms for the persons who partook of them. The witches used to go into a field, in the environs of Mohra, and cry aloud to the Devil in a peculiar sort of recitation, "*Antecessor! come and carry us to Blockula.*" Then appeared a multitude of strange beasts: men, spits, posts, and goats with spits run through their entrails, and projecting behind, that all might have room. The witches mounted these beasts of burden, as vehicles, and were conveyed through the air over high walls and mountains, and through churches and chimneys, without perceptible impediment, till they arrived at the place of their destination.

"Here the Devil feasted them with various compounds and confections; and, having feasted to their heart's content, they danced and then fought. The Devil made them ride on spits, from which they were thrown; and the Devil beat them with the spits and laughed at them. He then caused them to build a house to protect them against the day of judgment, and presently overturned the walls of the house, and derided them again. All sorts of obscenities were reported to follow upon these scenes. The Devil begot on the witches sons and daughters; this new generation intermarried again, and the issue of this further conjunction

appears to have been toads and serpents. How all this pedigree proceeded, in the two or three years in which Blockula had never been heard of, I know not that the witches were ever called on to explain. But what was most of all to be deplored, the Devil was not content with seducing the witches to go and celebrate this infernal Sabbath; he further insisted that they should bring the children of Mohra along with them.

"At first, he was satisfied, if each witch brought one: but now, he demanded that each witch should bring six or seven for her quota. How the witches managed with the minds of the children, we are at a loss to guess. These poor, harmless innocents, steeped to the very lips in ignorance and superstition, were, by some means, kept in continual alarm by the wicked, or, to speak more truly, the insane old women, and said as their prompters said. It does not appear that the children ever left their beds, at the time they reported they had been to Blockula. Their parents watched them with fearful anxiety. At a certain time of the night, the children were seized with a strange shuddering; their limbs were agitated, and their skins covered with a profuse perspiration. When they came to themselves, they related that they had been to Blockula, and the strange things they had seen, similar to what had already been described by the women. Three hundred children, of various ages, are said to have been seized with this epidemic.

"The whole town of Mohra became subject to the infection, and were overcome with the deepest affliction. They consulted together, and drew up a petition to the royal counsel at Stockholm, entreating that they would discover some remedy, and that the government would interpose its authority to put an end to a calamity to which otherwise they could find no limit. The King of Sweden, at that time, was Charles the Eleventh, father of Charles the Twelfth, and was only fourteen years of age. His council, in their wisdom, deputed two commissioners to Morah, and furnished them with powers to examine witnesses, and take whatever proceedings they might judge necessary to put an end to so unspeakable a calamity. They entered on the business of their commission, on the thirteenth of August, the ceremony having been begun with two sermons in the great church of Mohra, in which we may be sure the damnable sin of witchcraft was fully dilated on, and concluded with prayers to Almighty God, that, in his mercy, he would speedily bring to an end the tremendous misfortune with which, for their sins, he had seen fit to afflict the poor people of Mohra. The next day they opened their commission. Seventy witches were brought before them. They were all, at first, steadfast in their denial, alleging that the charges were wantonly brought against them, solely from malice and ill-will. But the judges were earnest in pressing them, till, at length, first one, and then another, burst into tears, and confessed all. Twenty-three were prevailed on thus to disburden their consciences; but nearly the whole, those who owned the justice of their sentence,

as well as those who protested their innocence to the last, were executed. Fifteen children confessed their guilt, and were also executed. Thirty-six other children, (who, we may infer, did confess,) between the ages of nine and sixteen, were condemned to run the gauntlet, and to be whipped on their hands at the church door every Sunday for a year together. Twenty others were whipped on their hands for three Sundays."

This is certainly a very deplorable scene; and is made the more so, by the previous character which history has imposed on us, of the simplicity, integrity, and generous love of liberty of the Dalecarlians. For the children and their parents, we can feel nothing but unmingled pity. The case of the witches is different. That three hundred children should have been made the victims of this imaginary witchcraft, is doubtless a grievous calamity. And that a number of women should be found, so depraved and so barbarous, as by their incessant suggestions to have practised on the minds of these children, so as to have robbed them of their sober sense, to have frightened them into fits and disease, and made them believe the most odious impossibilities, argued a most degenerate character, and well merited severe reprobation, but not death. Add to which, many of those women may be believed innocent; otherwise, a great majority of those who were executed would not have died protesting their entire freedom from what was imputed to them. Some of the parents, no doubt from folly and ill-judgment, aided the alienation of mind in their children, which they afterward so deeply deplored, and gratified their senseless aversion to the old women, when they were themselves in many cases more the real authors of the evil than those who suffered.

The honest and serious reader is now recommended to pause, and, for a moment, reflect on the foregoing recital; for if ten thousand real devils had been let loose and turned out on the earth in a visible and bodily form, and had been permitted to do their worst against the human race, if such a thing had actually taken place, the evils inflicted by them would have been little compared to what has really taken place by men's believing in the existence of an invisible Devil, who never had a being but in the imagination of mortals. The destructive influence which has spread over the whole earth has brought to a premature grave thousands and tens of thousands of harmless beings, who have been charged with holding converse with this supposed enemy of God and man. Of all the crimes which have been committed on earth, to sin against Orthodox faith has been considered the worst; when, in fact, it is no sin at all. There is nothing immoral in it. To differ from any man, or from all men, about religion, cannot be a crime. It is the inherent right of every human being; and to rob him of that right is the worst of felony. But to punish a man with death in addition, is to unite robbery and murder. And what makes it worse is, that religious offenders are put to death without pity or mercy. Few, very few tears of compassion ever have

fallen for them, where Christianity has been the prosecutor.

The baneful influence which has spread over the world, by believing in the existence of the Devil, is shocking to humanity. It has been computed that as many as one million persons have suffered, in various ways, since the commencement of the Christian era. Some have been banished; some have been branded and imprisoned; others put to death, after having been tortured in the most cruel manner; and thousands have been out-lawed and driven from their peaceful homes without pity. All this has taken place because the Scriptures teach and support the existence of a Devil, the inveterate enemy of God and men. There is no doctrine more fully carried out in the New Testament than the existence and hostile activity of the Devil. Jesus, it is said, "*cast them out.*" He also was tempted to rebel against God, and to worship the Devil. In the Book of Job, the Devil is represented as being permitted to afflict Job. And Jesus threatens the ungodly with a punishment in connection with the Devil and his angels. If a devil has no being whatever, why should Jesus pretend to cast out devils? And if there be, in truth, such a personage as the Devil, possessing such power, and, also, forever opposing Almighty power, can it be possible that a God of goodness would permit him to live and annoy God and men?

We see that it is the height of folly to suppose that such a personage ever did live, or does now; but the belief of it has been one of the greatest curses which ever befel mankind. Here, then, let us bring up the idea, and reflect upon it, that all the evil which has taken place, and all the sufferings endured by the unfortunate beings in the dark ages, may possibly again occur. The Bible is the same, and mam is the same. The difference is in the actions of men in different ages. When reason and the morality of things are man's guide, then he is peaceable and humane; but when acting under the imagination, he is capable of becoming as bad as is the Devil.

In concluding this chapter, let us look back to those times of ignorance and superstition. Let us place ourselves by the misortunate victims who were put to torture and death for a crime they could not commit. Could they, in their extreme pain, but have had a hope that a day would arrive when a band of master spirits would arise on the shores of the Atlantic, who, by reason and the moral fitness of things, would upset and prostrate the systems under which they so severely suffered-—could the poor, suffering victim, with his broken heart and fractured limbs, have had assurance, when his tortured mind was about to quit its lacerated boundary, that a time would soon surely come when the truth of the Bible and the existence of a Devil would cease to be made the instruments of unspeakable misery and torment, it would have been a cheerful ray of comfort amid the devouring flame. The time *has* at length arrived, and we ought to improve it. Let us, then, with untiring perseverance and moral courage, give the death-blow to

the Divinity of the Old and New Testaments, and thereby forever obliterate, not only the incentives to, but also the remembrance of all religious persecutions.

CHAPTER VIII.

AS this work is about to be concluded, it will be of importance to the reader that a comprehensive view be taken of the mission of Christ to the Jewish nation. In doing which, an opportunity will be given to such of my readers as may hitherto have been afraid to doubt the truth of the Divine authority of the Bible, to see, at one glance, its absurdity.

In the four Gospels, which contain the sayings and doings of Jesus during his ministry among the Jews, and also in the Epistles of the Apostles, it is uniformly declared and enforced, that the main purpose of Christ's (*the anointed of God*) coming into the world was, to die. And this death was required by the Father as an atonement for the sins of mankind, that whosoever believed in and obeyed him, their pardon should be sure, not for any thing which they had done as it related to justice, chastity, or humanity, but for the ransom paid for their sins by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. An apostle, in speaking on this subject, says—"*He (Christ) being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have, by wicked hands, crucified and slain.*" This decree, then, was absolute, and every movement then made by Jesus, and also his preaching and conversation with the Jews, was so arranged, that die he must, to save a lost and ruined world.

This, according to the Scriptures, was the divine arrangement between the Father and the Son. This doctrine is taught in the New Testament. And in such a lost condition were the human race, that Jesus *freely gave himself as a ransom to be completed in due time.* If the New Testament does not teach this, it is not possible to know what it does teach. To die, then, as a sacrifice for sin, included the sum and substance of the Gospel, or good news.

Having laid down the ground-work of human redemption, we proceed to carry through the plan said to be the work of mercy and goodness flowing from the mighty God, the author of all things. In the examination of such an arrangement, it appears impossible to conclude that the Author of the Universe can be considered as the God of the Jews and Christians. The Jews had always been

taught to believe that they were God's favorite people, and they retain the same faith to the present day. For ages before the Christian era, they not only expected the coming of the Messiah, but also, that no nation but their own would be interested in that glorious event. It never entered their minds that he would come in any disguise, for many impostors had appeared, who, being discovered, their Messiahship procured them certain destruction. The Jews, therefore, inferred, that when the proper time should arrive for the long-expected and ardently-looked for Messiah to appear among them, their nation would be raised to more than its former greatness, and God's chosen people would be held up to the nations of the earth as confirming the truth of what their ancient prophets had foretold of their future prosperity.

It could never, therefore, have entered the minds of the Jews, as a nation, that the Messiah would come in any disguise. And it must have been far from their thoughts to expect that he, when he should arrive, would load them with violent abuse, and reproach them as being too low to be considered as any thing else than a nation of hypocrites. If Jesus came into this world to die, then every thing which he taught, and also all the intercourse which he had with his own people, was preparatory to that event. That the Messiah would come to the Jewish nation to dwell among them, to be their leader, to exalt them above all other nations, was what they had been taught to expect. Instead of which, he calls them "*a generation of vipers!*" and pronounces terrible things against the heads of the nation, commencing his denunciations with "*Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites!*" Such violence and abuse surprised them, coming from one who said "*he came to seek and to save that which was lost.*"

Again, Jesus said that "*he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*" But Jesus gave them no quarter, but sent them head and heels to the Devil. The Jewish rulers must have been more than human to have quietly taken such vulgar abuse. Sometimes, Jesus seemed to soften down in his conduct, as when he says, "*O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not.*" So erratic is Jesus depicted, in the account we have transmitted down to us, that we are at a loss as to forming an opinion concerning his manner of treating his own people. But as it was "*by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God*" that he was to be a "*sacrifice for the sins of mankind,*" his mode of addressing the rulers of Israel was calculated to bring about the "*will of his Father.*"

Admitting, for the sake of argument, that Jesus was the true Messiah, the Jews were in a worse state than if he had not appeared among them. The statement made by Jesus of the destruction of Jerusalem, and of his second coming, confounded all their ideas of the Messiah's kingdom. In the twenty-third and twenty-fourth chapters of Matthew, after having pronounced a number of dread-

ful predictions against them, he winds up in chapter twenty-third as follows, "**YE SERPENTS! YE GENERATION OF VIPERS! HOW CAN YE ESCAPE THE DAMNATION OF HELL?**" In the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, Jesus gives a long account of his second coming. How was it possible for the Jews to understand what he there describes? Their desire was, to know if he was the Messiah promised by the prophets; and, if so, what steps he would take for the exaltation of their nation, so that they might enjoy all they had been induced to expect when the "*sun of righteousness should arise with healing in his hands.*"

For Jesus to tell his disciples and the Jewish nation what would be the signs of his second coming, before they under-stood what his object was in coming the first time, must appear very strange. From the particular account which Jesus gave of his second coming, the Jews must have understood him to mean, that although he professed to be the true Messiah, yet his stay was but short with them. As yet, his time for operation was not come. The discourses of Jesus to his countrymen, were all calculated to mislead and confound them. In his sermon on the Mount, he claims an authority of his own superior to the law of Moses. Matthew, chapter v., verse 33—"*Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself but shall perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I say unto you, swear not at all*" Verse 38—"*Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheeky turn to him the other also.*" What could the Jewish rulers think of a man, who, without any ceremony, set up laws in direct opposition to the laws of Moses, when, at other times, he declared himself a follower of Moses, and that he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it? Such inconsistent teaching as this, will not admit of Infinite Wisdom's being the author.

In Matthew, chapter xiii., 10, it reads—"*And the disciples came and said unto him, Why speaketh thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." Verse 13—"Therefore speak I to them in parables, because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand." Verse 14—"And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see and shall not perceive." Verse 15—"For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted and I should heal them*"

Now this mode of treating the Jewish nation is perfectly in character with the plan, in accordance with which, Jesus came to lay down his life for sinners; for had he convinced the Jews that he was the expected restorer of Israel, no

Jewish arm would have been raised against him; nor would it have been possible to have prevailed on the national rulers to have attempted his life; since although the priests and Pharisees might, in a moral point of view, have been wicked in the extreme, still their veneration for, and their earnest expectation of the coming of, the Messiah, would have prevented any hostile feelings against "*the anointed of the Lord, the Holy one of Israel.*"

But if the preaching of Christ, and his arrangements, were of such a nature that the Jews supposed the whole to be an imposture, then the case took a different turn altogether. Instead of the Jews refusing to receive Jesus as the sent of God, they put him to death from the hatred which they had towards any one who they supposed had fabricated his authority and office. If the main object of Christ's coming to the Jews was to die for the sins of mankind, both Jew and Gentile, and thus become a willing sacrifice for sin,—if this was the plan of human redemption, it then follows that the Jews did that part which, in the divine arrangement, was allotted for them to do. Then the conduct of Jesus was consistent in keeping them ignorant, so that their part might by them be carried out. If he had convinced them, that he was, in truth, the sent of God, but that they must hang him on a tree, the plan of human redemption would have failed, for they, immoral as they might be, never would have put him to death.

There could be no other way of bringing about the death of Christ, but by keeping the Jewish nation ignorant that he was the Messiah. The course that was pursued by Jesus, would imply that his orders were to so act among them, that their condemnation would be just for rejecting him; but on no account to perform miracles sufficient to convince them, for in that case the Jews would not have condemned and put him to death as a blasphemer and an impostor. Again, if Jesus came on earth to die, and without shedding his blood there could be "*no remission of sin*" what mockery for him to exclaim "*O Jerusalem! Jerusalem I how oft would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not*!" For if the Jews had sheltered themselves under the wings of Jesus, how was he to die as a sacrifice for sin? But he was not put to death, they knowing him to be the Christ, but on the contrary, they condemned him for pretending to be the very anointed of the Lord. And although the story was propagated that Jesus arose, after his descent from the cross, the Jews as a nation did not give credit to it, nor have they till this day. If, therefore, "*there is no other name under heaven whereby men can be saved,*" but by believing in Christ and in his dying for the sins of mankind, then the Jews, ever since the death of Christ, and also the present race, are lost and forever shut out from that pardon which was procured by the death of Jesus, which was brought about by the instrumentality of the Jews by the condemnation of the Messiah.

The account of Judas, in what is called betraying his Master, is strange indeed. In speaking of that circumstance, Jesus says, "*It would have been better for that man if he had never been born.*" Now if Jesus came to die, Judas, by informing the authorities where he was to be found, did no more than bring to pass what was before ordained should take place. Judas, then, was but the instrument to accomplish the plan of human redemption, by informing the Jewish authorities when and where they could secure the object which they sought after. The very idea of betraying Jesus, proves two things:—first, that Jesus was but little known to the Jews, except from report; and, secondly, that although he held often said he came to lay down his life for sinful man, yet he intended to evade death as long as possible. It was owing to this obscure method of teaching, that his disciples, although always with him, could not understand fully what his objects were; and though he had so often told them of "*the kingdom of heaven being at hand,*" they understood him not.

To bring the position of the Jews nearer, at the time of Christ's appearance in Judea, let us suppose ourselves to have been Jews, then living, and expecting and desiring his coming. At length, it is said, "he is arrived." The first inquiry would very naturally be, is he the true Messiah, or is he an impostor? If, then, to our inquiries made to him on that point, we had received in return nothing positive, but the vilest abuse, and threatenings of damnation in a future world, could we be expected to view him as the promised deliverer? When the Jews heard him denouncing them as hypocrites, and, at the same time, assuming an authority over Moses, and the laws of Jehovah given by Moses, and calling the Temple (for which they had so high a veneration) a den of thieves, it must have had a tendency to shut up their minds against his divine mission. If Jesus wished the Jews to be convinced of his being the personage whom they had long expected, he should, in the first place, have attended to their inquiry, "*Art thou he which should come, or are we to look for another?*"

This question being settled, by indisputable evidence, Jesus would have had a foundation for correcting what was wrong, and exposing their base conduct. But he began at the wrong-end, by upbraiding them for their evil doings before he had 'convinced them of his being appointed to abrogate, or, in any way, to alter, the law of Moses. We may then safely conclude, if Jesus was divinely commissioned to the Jews, that it was not intended they should believe in him. But who, for a moment, can think, that, if the Almighty Ruler of the Universe had sent him, his mission would have been marked with trickery and deception, and have failed, and the Jews have been left in a state far worse than if he had never been among them? Can we reasonably conclude, that a Being of infinite wisdom and goodness would have sent his Son to the Jewish nation, without giving them any evidence of his being the Messiah, and then have taken advantage of their

unbelief to deal out judgments against them?

If Jesus was sent into the world to die, and by dying, became "*a sacrifice for the sins of mankind,*" then the Jews, by putting him to death, brought to maturity what God had ordained should come to pass. In that case, then, it is clear, that Jesus was so to act, that the Jews must not be convinced that he was the true and real Messiah, for had they believed in him as the restorer of their race, whom they had long expected, they would not have slain the "*Lord of life and glory.*" Then, how would he have paid the "*ransom for lost sinners*"? But, on the other hand, if Jesus was sent by God to the Jewish nation, and gifted to perform signs and miracles to convert them, how did it happen that they remained in sin and unbelief;—their whole race, the seed of Abram, remaining in that state until the present time? The Jews have surely been an unfortunate people. To the Jews, then, 1 must say, "I know not which demands the most pity—you, or your God; for, after all the attempts to subject you to his will, you are a race of outcasts, and have been plundered by all the Christian nations on earth. After all the pains taken by the Lord of Hosts to convert you, every one has failed; but the last failure is the most to be deplored. From the time Jehovah is said to have called Abram, your progenitor, and selected him from the rest of the human race, and promised him and his seed forever, blessings from which the rest of the world were excluded, Jehovah and your generations have ever been on bad terms. You are spoken of in Scripture as a stiff-necked, rebellious people. On the part of God, he has always appeared as if he was angry with your conduct. Forty years together, he says, he has been *grieved with your disobedience.* To such a height has been his displeasure, that thousands and tens of thousands of your nation have been cut off by the terrible judgments of the Lord. You have been led into captivity and sold as slaves, time after time, and Jehovah has even threatened to destroy your whole race.

"Jehovah, in his anger, has raised heathen kings against you, and the slaughter has been dreadful. But when you have turned to the Lord, and humbled yourselves, he has attended to your cry, and delivered you out of their hands. Jehovah has, at times, inspired prophets who have foretold that you should one day have a personage appear among you, restore you to your former greatness, be to you a God, and you should be to him a people. This personage is said to have been among you, but *you knew him not.* You, then, from obedience to Jehovah, rejected Jesus as an impostor, and considered him as arrogating to himself Divine honor, and finally put him to death. And, for eighteen hundred years, you have suffered the most cruel treatment from every nation among whom you have dwelt. You have been the most unfortunate people on earth; but you still cling to your prophets, and are looking for the coming of the Messiah.

"And what appears more unfortunate than all your past evils, is, you have put to death, through mistake, your last refuge, the true Messiah. There are, at the present time, upwards of one hundred millions of Christians who maintain and believe that the same Jesus whom *ye slew and hanged on a tree, is in truth both Lord and Christ,* the same whom your nation so long and so earnestly looked for. If, then, faith in that Christ whom you rejected, has opened the kingdom of heaven to the Christian world, while your whole race is shut ont, the Christians owe you a debt of everlasting gratitude, for by this sacrifice they are to enter into the Supper of the Lamb, and your unfortunate race have the door closed against them. But do not despair, for the Infidels of the present day are your friends. They will make all right They will, if you attend to them, convince you that your forefathers were imposed on, when in a state of ignorance, by some artful impostor, who persuaded them that the seed of Abram was chosen by God to the exclusion of all other people and nations.

"In the infancy of your nation, Moses, or some other artful leader, took advantage of your inexperience, and by antedating miracles said to have been performed in behalf of your ancestors by Jehovah, but which never were performed, and which at the time was incapable of refutation, your nation imbibed the reality that the seed of Abram was the *chosen of the Lord.* This conviction for thousands of years has been received, and has been handed down from father to Son till the present time. Yes, ye seed of Abram, (by this name I address you,) by considering yourselves the chosen people of God, this conviction has been your perpetual curse. Your faith in the ancient accounts of those miracles and wonders, wrought in your behalf by Moses, has been your fatal delusion. You consider it not possible for your fore-, fathers to have been deceived; for, say you, the miracles and wonders were performed before your whole nation.

"In this consists your error. There is no certainty as to who wrote the history of the wonders, said to have been wrought in your behalf, nor at what time they were first recorded. But the internal evidence of the books ascribed to Moses, fully prove him not to have been the author. The same evidence also proves that the first five books were not written till after the reign of the first kings of Israel. So that, by antedating the wonders recorded to have taken place in the infancy of your nation, and then by a cunning impostor to have been subsequently presented for the first time to the Jews, giving them an account of those wonders of old, an ignorant nation would be likely to believe them; and in that case a whole people would be converted at once, giving credit to an absurdity producing an influence in the world which has far exceeded any imposture that ever has been Saddled on the human race. The dreadful error into which your forefathers fell, and by handing down to their posterity the foolish story of your being *a chosen people*, the greatest curse which could befal you, you have, without

doubt, been the most unfortunate people on earth; for by considering yourselves *God's chosen people*, you have despised the rest of the human race, and you have in return been persecuted and plundered. You have been treated by all nations as outcasts.

"On the ground-work of your having been chosen by the supposed God of the universe, the world has assumed an appearance very unlike to what it would have had, if no such imposition had been practised on your progenitors. Wars innumerable have taken place, and rivers of blood have flowed through the earth, occasioned by theological strife. Religious quarrels, ending in the application of the rack and torture, and persecutions in quick succession, have been the result, and thousand of horrid cruelties have taken place in every age, all in consequence of that curse of all curses, the belief that *God has a chosen people.* Although it had doubtless been thought by your nation the highest possible honor to be chosen by the Lord, this has proved your greatest misfortune; for from this source, Christianity has been produced. You may exult in the idea, that you have in your sacred books, the doctrine of but one God, notwithstanding your religion and its Christian offspring has been more cruel and intolerant than any on earth. According to your own books, your nation and the God who chose them, were forever at war; your people continually rebelling and receiving chastisement, till, at last, you are to appearance forsaken. But as has been before mentioned, the Infidels are your friends; for, by means of free discussion, and the diffusion of useful knowledge, they will ultimately destroy that intolerant spirit which has been the earth's greatest curse, and you will eventually, with the rest of the human family, open your eyes, and discover the folly and absurdity of believing in a God "partial, vengeful, and unjust." And then you will be no longer *Jews*, but will become men."

CHAPTER IX.

IN the preceding chapter we have endeavored to ascertain the object of Christ's coming into the world, but without being able to arrive at any positive conclusion. As it respected the Jews, they did, and they had a right to expect, that his, coming would be to them a blessing; and not, by any means, that it would prove disastrous in its consequences. It is, by Christians, contended that the primary object of the Messiah's advent was, to die for sinners; by which death he would make an atonement for the sins of the world. In this view of the case, (and the Scriptures seem to bear it out,) the Jews were altogether deceived, and are therefore objects of pity. The kingdom of heaven being opened to the world at large, to both Jew and Gentile, the Jews were unsuspectingly shut out. That Christ did not intend to convince the Jews that he was the Messiah, seems to be warranted from the manner of his preaching to them; his violence, and the abusive language he used, being calculated to prejudice them against him. And again, if Christ was to become a sacrifice for sin by expiring On the cross, somebody must put him to death, and the Jews are said to have been his executioners. The Jews, therefore, did that which the divine mind intended they should do. But such double-dealing and deception, in order to entrap the Jews, could never have originated with the Great Eternal, the unchangeable ruler of all things.

In reading the history of Jesus, (written nobody knows by whom, or whether by his authority or not,) we must judge of him by the account as it stands. It certainly appears strange that we have no intimation that Jesus gave any orders to his Apostles to write, or in any way to transmit to posterity an account of his life or doctrines. And it appears more singular, when we consider in how particular a manner the laws of Moses were written, which, without doubt, is what kept the Jews from being divided into a number of sects. But so neglected were the sayings and doings of Jesus, that, soon after his death, forty or fifty Gospels were abroad; an equal number of sects sprang up, and the various religious dogmas were introduced, which, till the present day, have divided the Christian world, and, at times, have produced wars, persecutions, and blood. On

so important a subject as the salvation of the human race, it might reasonably be expected that the founder of Christianity would have left some documents to guard against so destructive an evil. This entire neglect, if not positive proof against the divine mission of Jesus, must create doubts leading to the conclusion that the Christian religion is deficient as to the evidence of its divine origin. It appears from the Gospels that Jesus was a moral reformer; that the priests and rulers were proud, haughty, and of wicked dispositions; that the founder of the Christian religion exposed their hypocritical pretensions, and that, by thus exciting their malice, he fell a victim. This has been the fate of hundreds of moral reformers, in different ages and nations.

Christians, of all sects, could they be brought to reason impartially on the mission of Jesus, would have their faith shaken, from the following considerations:—Admitting, as all Christians do, that the Jewish religion is of divine authority, and had for ages been by the Jews considered as such, to set that aside and introduce another, required authority from heaven, but such authority was never given. The bare word of Jesus, that he was the sum and substance of the law of Moses both moral and ceremonial, seems to be insufficient. The Jews, however base or immoral they were, as a nation never showed a want of faithfulness when their religion was assailed. So that it appears, that to do away with the form of worship, and introduce a new order of things, required something more than the obscure sayings of Jesus, who was but little known at the time of his death. If, by the coming of Christ, a new dispensation was to supersede the old, then the highest and the most incontrovertible authority should be produced. But this was not the case, for Jesus often charged those whom he had cured of some disease, "to tell no man" how they were made whole: as much as to say, "Keep secret with respect to the person who restored you to your former state." We need not wonder that the Jews rejected Jesus, seeing that he assumed an authority higher than that of Moses; for, at the giving of the law on the mountain, it was Jehovah himself who spake to them. The Jews, then, considered that the same God who gave the law, and he alone, must change it, or introduce another, and not a person whose object in coming they could not comprehend, and who taught doctrines, a very great portion of which, were of a threatening and menacing character.

And, finally, so little did Christ's disciples understand of his divine mission, that, when he was betrayed, Peter, the boldest of them all, became alarmed, and denied any knowledge of him. This was very strange in Peter, if it was a fact that he heard Moses and Elias, at a former time, conversing with his Divine Master. But be that as it may, Jesus is reported to have suffered death on the cross, one of his disciples informing against him to the rulers, for the paltry sum of thirty pieces of silver, and another swearing he never knew him. This has often hap-

pened, when a bold reformer has been taken into custody; his followers would disown and forsake him; but it is not likely that Peter would thus have acted, had he witnessed the mighty deeds said to have been done by Jesus. I remember hearing an Unitarian minister remark, that "If Moses could return from the dead, how he would be surprised to read what was written of him after his death; and that he would say that the wonderful things reported of him, he knew nothing about." This, no doubt, would be the case with Jesus, as all his mighty works are recorded *of* him, but none were recorded *by* him.

As his resurrection was the key-stone of the Christian arch, some observations on that all-important event will be made. Whatever Jesus communicated to his disciples respecting his rising from the dead, during his life, is not recorded; but it appears that his death entirely frustrated their expectations. The resurrection of Jesus presented the most favorable opportunity to dispel all doubts of the Messiahship of him whom the Jews had put to death as an impostor. It will be in order, then, to observe what steps were taken by Jesus, after his resurrection, to convince the Jews, and the world at large, that his mission was from heaven. This, of all times, was the fittest to convince the Jews of their unfortunate mistake. The short account given in the Gospels, does not afford much light on that subject. But if the Jews, as a nation, had still retained their unbelief, such incredulity must soon have given way by his continuing among them.

If the Jews, from mistaken convictions, did put Jesus to death, it seems but just that they should have had a chance to rectify their unfortunate error. But owing to the short stay of Jesus on earth, after his resurrection, and he being the most of that time in company with his disciples, the Jews had not an opportunity of fully investigating the reality of his death and re-appearance, and his deportment after it was said he was returned to life. The greatest difficulty experienced by Christians in defending the divine authority of the New Testament Dispensation, is, to account for the sudden departure of Jesus, who, according to the Scripture record, was taken up into heaven in a few weeks after his resurrection. To an inquiring mind, there are many objections which deserve notice. The writer does not pretend to say that the thing is impossible, because to deny the possibility of it would be to set limits to the power that governs the universe.

We will examine the account of Jesus's leaving this world so soon, to discover if possible, what end was to be obtained by his sudden departure from the scene of his suffering and degradation. It seems reasonable to suppose that it was of the highest importance for Jesus to stay on earth to establish Christianity on a sure foundation. It is written that he told his disciples that it was for their good that things were so arranged that he should leave them, for if he went away, he would send the comforter to them, who was to be their guide, and to bring to their remembrance the things he had told them; and also that the Holy

Ghost, the comforter, would, to make up for his absence, lead them into the way of truth. This is, in substance, what they were to expect. But unfortunately it did not take place, but the reverse; for, from the accounts which have come down to us, a great number of sects sprang up in a few years after Jesus left the world, and numerous gospels were extant, which, for a number of years were quoted by the early Fathers of the Church, and were considered authentic; but were afterwards rejected, and are now bound up together and called "The Rejected Gospels."

In the beginning of the fourth century, the Christian sects were not only numerous, but began to assume a spirit of intolerance and persecution, and when that monster, Constantine, became a convert to Christianity, religious quarrels were of the most violent character. Not to dwell on the particulars of these religious differences, we may ask, what did they quarrel about? The answer is at hand. They quarrelled about something that Jesus was reported to have said or taught. Their disputes were not of a moral, but of a theological description. In these disputed subjects no standard of reference could be set up. Jesus was at the right hand of his Father, and their differences could not be settled by him. Quarrel after quarrel followed in quick succession; the strong persecuted the weak; and the earth was deluged with blood. Constantine, the Roman Emperor, hoisted the banner of the cross; and after having murdered nearly the whole of his own family, he sought consolation from that religion which says, that "the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin."

The history of Jesus, including his doctrines, and also what the apostles taught concerning him, and the belief in his second coming; the different opinions that have arisen concerning the person of Christ; and also, the various dogmas collected from the writers of the gospels, all taken from what is called divine revelation, have never ceased to generate quarrels among the different churches professing to be Christian. Ever since the commencement of Christianity, there has been little else but religious animosity among the different sects—each of them professing to have the truth, to the exclusion of all the rest; all of them appealing to the same word of God to support their various dogmas. We may then ask, has that proclamation ever been fulfilled, that was made by *multitude of the "heavenly host*" namely,—"*Peace on earth and good-will towards men"?* But no doubt its fulfilment is, in point of truth, equal to its ever having been given; for angels are airy nothings, and have no existence but in the imagination.

From what has been stated, it will be seen that the religious quarrels which have taken place from the commencement of the Christian era, arose from the uncertain standard appealed to by the various sects. They all referred to some particular passage or passages recorded, either by Christ or his apostles. Every sect had a portion of truth supported by Scripture authority; and it has at times happened, that whole congregations, as well as individuals, have changed their

opinions concerning what the Scriptures taught. For instance: a Church, believing that the Scriptures taught the doctrine of the Trinity, have given up that doctrine, and embraced Unitarianism. The Scriptures remained the same; it was their opinions that underwent the change. In fact, every sect has Scripture for its support; so that it is plain to be seen, that the New Testament is not, nor ever can be, a true and certain rule to which a reference can be made, whereby disputes can be ended. The Old Testament was superior in this respect to the New. And now, after eighteen hundred years' fighting; in which time, tens of thousands have been victims, and the earth has been drenched by human blood, nothing is certain as to what Christianity really is. Can it then be possible, that the God of the Universe would have left that religion (to establish which, his Son expired on the cross,) in such a wretched state of uncertainty, by calling him so early to his holy habitation? Impossible.

If Christ was taken from this earth, he has now a local habitation, and, also, he must be actively employed. Can Christians conceive where he is, and what he is doing? Is it possible he would have remained so long absent, knowing, as he must, that the cause for which he suffered would be so wretchedly carried on? The absence of Christ, if not the entire cause, is one cause of all the religious wars and bloodshed among nations, and, also, of the hostile feelings of one sect against another. Had he remained on earth, there would have been but "*one Lord, and his name one*." If Jesus died for the salvation of the world, common sense would dictate, that, after his resurrection, he would dwell in that world for whose salvation he came, and not have been taken into heaven before his plan of redemption was arranged; so that, instead of union and harmony prevailing in his absence, by disunion, persecution, and religious warfare, the different churches exhibited a complete confusion of tongues.

If Jesus had remained on earth, all religious persecution would have been prevented; for if his laws and regulations had been written, and to each church a copy had been sent, it would not have been possible for any difference of opinion to have brought on disorder so as materially to have disturbed the peace of his church. And if any dispute had taken place, Jesus, dwelling on any particular spot on earth, his authority could, in such a case, have been appealed to, and the matter would have been peaceably settled. But, after his death and resurrection, there was nothing to which a reference could eb made, but certain Gospels written by unknown persons.

In summing up this matter, the following remarks may safely and truly be made:—In a short time after Jesus arose from the dead, it was declared by his apostles, that he had ascended into heaven, and had left orders for the Gospel, or good news, to be proclaimed throughout the world; and that after remaining with his disciples a few weeks, when on a journey with some of them, a cloud

intervened, and they lost sight of him. Before his death, Jesus had told them to watch for his second coming, for that it would be sudden and unexpected; and he also added, that there were those standing among them that would live to see it, and that he should then appear in glory, attended by angels, judge the world, and reward every man acccording to his deeds. The apostles taught this, doctrine, and the early Christians looked for that event with eager expectation. But a long and dreary night of religious intolerance has nearly passed away, and Jesus has not yet arrived; during which night, the world has witnessed scenes of horror unknown to the most savage ages of antiquity.

All this confusion and wretchedness must have been known by Jesus, and also by his Father, at whose right hand it is recorded that he is sitting. Now can Christians conceive where Christ has been, or what he has been doing? Strange, indeed, does it apppear, that, during the disorder and violence in which the Christian Church was involved for ages, when thousands of honest, pious, and sincere Christians were put to death, their Redeemer could sit quietly in heaven and not interfere in their behalf! Perhaps it ought to be more strange, that it was the will of God that Jesus should ever have left that world which was the scene of his suffering.

Looking at the plan of human redemption, from the time of the birth of Jesus, and the incomplete finish made of it by his being taken up into heaven, leaving his followers ignorant of what he meant during his preaching on earth;—knowing, too, that the various sects have kept the world in an uproar, destroying each other by thousands, and that all these evils have taken place in consequence of Jesus being quietly seated by the right hand of God,—these considerations, and many others not noticed in this work, convince me, that the mission of Christ was not of Divine authority.

The following remarks will contain, in substance, the strongest objection against the divinity of Christ's mission; and are given by the author as presenting his final conclusions on that subject And here he would ask—If the God of the Bible is, as Christians believe, the Author of the universe, what are we to understand by the assertion, "*That Jesus is seated at his right hand?*" God is a spirit pervading all space, of whom one of the Scripture writers says, "*In him we live, and move, and have our being.*" The same idea was expressed by the Greeks in reference to their supreme God,—"All things are full of Jupiter." How, then, can it be believed that the unknown power who is the God of all creation has a local dwelling place?

Jesus, after his resurrection, declared that he had "*flesh and bone.*" How, then, he can be located with an universal spirit, is beyond human conception As Jesus is a being possessed of a tangible form, he must have a place of residence; and it is impossible that he can dwell with *his God and Father* in any other than a

local habitation. The supposition, then, that the Almighty Ruler of all worlds has a palace on some fixed star, or planet, where Jesus has for eighteen hundred years resided in company with the Infinite Creator, surrounded by angels conversing and singing; the Devil, during the same time, "*going about like a roaring lion seeking whom he might devour*" while Christians were cutting each other's throats in consequence of their disputes about the meaning of what Christ said, or the object of his performances on earth, is very unlikely, to say the least of it.

It seems astonishing that men, possessed of the noble faculty of reason, can believe that Jesus is now alive in some unknown world, and in company with the Sovereign Ruler of nature. In conclusion, the author of this work (over whose head seventy-three summers' suns have passed,) would say that he does not, *cannot* believe that the Jesus of the Christians has any existence but in the imagination of his followers.

REMARKS ON THE MORALITY OF NATURE

HAVING concluded my remarks on the Old and New Testaments, I have thought it proper to give a chapter on Morality. I do this to prevent the reader from concluding that, because I am not a believer in the Divine authority of the Old and New Testaments, I disregard all moral obligation, and do not hold myself accountable to God, Nature, or my fellow beings. Nothing can be further from truth than such a conclusion. If no such being as God exists, who will judge every man at the final day of accounts; and if no such judgment will ever take place, admitting all this, even then should I stand in the same relation to my fellow beings in a moral point of view.

Christian preachers, generally, teach their hearers the entire worthlessness of good works, without they are connected with faith in the Gospel. This mode of treating unbelievers has a bad effect on the minds of church members, who, giving full credit to the pastor of the flock, are taught to consider that the person, or persons (however just, humane and virtuous they may be in all their actions,) who do not come up to the standard of their faith, are wicked, and will, at the day of judgment, be condemned, and their sentence will be, "*Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.*" &c. We need not wonder, therefore, at the intolerant spirit which is so active among all professing the Christian name. Notwithstanding the moral precepts taught by Jesus, his followers, at the present day, pay but little regard to them. To believe in the Saviour, and consider him as the endorser of their sins, and presenting their claims at the throne of the Eternal, form an easy way for expiating a life of wickedness and cant. If we compare the moral character of professing Christians with the precepts taught by Jesus, we shall be surprised at the vast discordance between their profession and their practice. We find that, in practice, Christianity is hostile to justice and humanity.

This is easy to be accounted for. It is because the Scriptures represent our most virtuous actions as worthless in the sight of God, and without faith we are

told it is impossible to please him; and this is not all: much depends on what kind of faith it is. The followers of John Calvin think the faith of the disciples of John Wesley but little better than the faith of devils, "*who believe and tremble.*" It has been because men have judged by their faith, and not by moral rectitude, that one Christian sect has persecuted even to death, others who have borne the Christian name. It was this spirit of intolerance that propelled John Calvin to cause Servetus to be burnt by a slow fire, not because he was a wicked man, nor was it for want of faith in the Christian religion, but because the faith of Servetus did not agree with the faith of John Calvin. Had moral excellence been the standard of their friendship, and virtue the bond of their union, Servetus would have died in peace, and Calvin would not have been handed down to posterity as a cold-hearted murderer.

It is the common practice of Christians, when in conversation with Infidels, to boast of the purity of Christ's moral precepts; but in all their sayings and doings with Infidels, the want of faith is the unpardonable crime which induces them to fix the badge of infamy on the head of the unbeliever. No doubt cruel Calvin would very good-naturedly shake hands with a brother of his own church and creed, and love him for Christ's sake; but at the same time torment poor Servetus to death, as the enemy of God, for God's sake. Oh! ye persecuting Christians! your prayers ought ever to be opposed to a day of judgment, and your constant hope should be, that it will never take place, for "*how can you escape the damnation of hell?*"

It is the high estimation of faith, enforced by Christ, and also insisted on (as the sure passport to glory) by his followers, that compels them to consider virtue as worthless, when it is not in connection with what is called saving faith, which makes it clear to be seen that Christianity in its practice is not favorable to morality; for as the Scriptures truly say that "*no man can serve two masters,*" so faith will be always uppermost, and justice and humanity be placed in the background. On this principle, hard-hearted Calvin acted towards Servetus. Christians are commanded to do good for evil. "*If your enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.*" This is pure morality. Thus we see that morality has no chance of justice when faith is the prosecutor. The moral precepts of the New Testament have never been strong enough to neutralize the violent and intolerant spirit that runs throughout the Scriptures, and which is the very life of the Christian faith. Had Servetus been a criminal of the worst kind, condemned to die by the laws of Geneva, Calvin, no doubt, would have had feelings of pity for him; but his crime came under the dominion of faith, which will not, which cannot admit of one grain of mercy.

On the contrary, Infidel morality has no alloy. It is unadulterated. Like pure gold, it is current at all times, and in all places. Like the bright orb of day,

it shines by its own native brightness. Its principal attribute is humanity, which, in its exercise, is not confined to creeds, or professions; but like the bountiful hand of nature, it dispenses its blessings even to the unthankful and unworthy. If justice demands its aid, the balance is held even without regard to color or clime. I have often been reminded, that if we did not take the Scriptures for our guide, we should then have no rule to regulate our actions. This remark would be more conclusive, if Christians generally acted up to what they profess; but this is not the case; nor will it ever be, so long as faith is the only sure passport to the Christian heaven, for it is a fact that many preachers of the Gospel are the worst characters in society. At the same time that they are preaching up holiness of life, it is discovered that they for years have been living in the indulgence of the most filthy of vices; and thus while they are thundering against the Devil as the enemy of souls, they are only abusing their betters.

This being the truth, it is time that morality should be dissevered from all religious creeds, and stand on its own intrinsic merits. Religion has taught man that he is poor and helpless; that he has no power to act; that he has no desire to perform virtuous actions, and that he himself and his fellow beings are, by some (to him unaccountable) destiny, thrown at so vast a distance from his Creator, that he can approach him only by the means of kneeling and prostration, and that he is so far indebted to his Maker, who will have full payment to the last cent. Being ignorant of his real situation in the universe, and also of the resources of his mind, he overlooks or undervalues the strength he possesses, and neglects the means which God or nature puts within his reach to be both virtuous and happy.

In this state of mind, he seeks for happiness in a religion the author of which is depicted as a being like himself. It is, then, the vast importance which has been attached to faith in the Redeemer, which has made the path to heaven so smooth, and easy for the Christian traveller, that moral rectitude has been thought of but little consideration in his road to glory. Let me, says the Christian, make sure of my interest in Christ, and my salvation is sure. Hence, we often find, that even Gospel ministers are men of the basest description; at the same time their hearers are consoled, with believing that their immoral pastor is sound in the faith, resting firmly on the "*rock of ages*."

The importance of faith is not the abuse of Christianity; it is the thing itself. Jesus taught it to his disciples, and blames them for having so little. But when Peter, his trusty servant, in a passion, cut off a man's ear, his divine Master only gave him a gentle rebuke, telling him to be careful how he used the sword, for he might have to go in mourning for his own ears.

The consistent Infidel, who renounces all religious creeds, and who views the whole human family as beings possessing the same faculties, subject to the same wants, and liable to the same misfortunes as himself, can, by the use of

his reason, without the aid of revelation, discover the duties which he owes to himself, and also the true relation in which he stands to his fellow mortals. He, by what he observes around him, and by what he feels within himself, can see clearly the correct line of duty, and can, at any time, draw a just conclusion as to his moral standing in society. But it is far otherwise with the Christian, whose whole dependence is on what his Saviour has done for him. He is alternately disturbed with doubts and fears as to the ground on which he stands; and being taught, that his best efforts to attain a moral elevation by a steady course of virtuous actions, is considered by his Maker worse than nothing, he loses sight of the high responsibility he stands in, in relation to his fellow man.

In proportion, then, as faith is considered superior to moral virtue, the first is sought after, and highly valued, and the latter is neglected as of little consideration in securing happiness in this life or in that which is to come. We need not, therefore, be surprised that Christians, as a class, fall far below Infidels in point of moral rectitude. Christianity, at best, is a cold-hearted system; its followers are generally unsocial. They are taught to "*love not the world nor the things of the world.*" Jesus himself says to his disciples, "*Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world; but because I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*" Pride and intolerance are leading features in the conduct of Christians generally. These defects among professors of religion, arise from the belief that faith in Christ, as their Redeemer, secures them heaven; and as it respects the duties of life, they hold them very lightly, regarding them as, matters of little or no weight in the article of salvation.

Professors of the Christian religion, at the same time that they consider that faith in the divine mission of Jesus secures them an acceptance with God, and that moral rectitude without faith in the Redeemer, is worthless in the sight of God, are compelled to admit, that where good works and virtuous conduct are wanting, the faith of the individual not being supported by Justice, Humanity, and Chastity, with all the virtues which adorn human nature, the damnation of such an one is doubly sure. So that, after all, this thing called faith borrows all its brightness and real value from moral rectitude. Faith, like a planet, is in itself a dark body, and has no light but what it receives from the bright sun of moral excellency.

The very nature and spirit of the Christian religion, is intolerant. It says, "*Whosoever believes, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned.*" This is the firm ground on which the Christian stands, and where he must continue to stand. If he quits this strong hold, he ceases to be a Christian, and, of necessity, becomes an Infidel. It follows, then, that believers in the Divine authority of the Bible must continue to be, what they always have been, intolerant and persecuting. How differently do those feel who have given up all ideas of

Divine Revelation! They attach no consequence to faith, whatever. They have no disposition even to blame, much less to injure persons who believe in the most absurd inconsistencies. They, on the contrary, feel the most lively interest in their happiness, knowing that no one can control the honest convictions of the mind.

The Infidel, then, has the advantage, in a moral point of view, over the Christian, for the following reasons:—The Infidel has not to defend the character nor the actions of any God or Gods, particularly of a God "partial, vengeful, and unjust." He imbibes no angry feelings, by believing in a God of cruelty and carnage. The Infidel has divested his mind of the nonsense and inconsistency of considering unbelief as a crime; and, also, of the fallacy that men can credit absurdities on insufficient evidence. He perceives that every man's religion is, to a very large extent, a consequence of the circumstances of his situation in early life, and the influences which surrounded him at his birth. The Infidel, therefore, has no inducement whatever to injure those who differ from him in opinion; for, by detaching all importance from faith, and referring entirely to good and virtuous actions, he escapes all those angry theological quarrels in which Christians are more or less involved. So that the mind of an unbeliever is in a sound and calm state, not harrowed up by the terrors of an avenging God, and the thoughts of endless damnation.

These evils, and many more, the Infidel is not exposed to; consequently his mind is at rest; his sense of degradation is not because he is taught to believe that he is a poor lost sinner; he feels degraded only in proportion as he neglects the duties which he owes to his fellow men. The unbeliever, then, being free from the terror of doubting that which he feels it is impossible for him to credit, commences to walk in the path of moral rectitude, considering his own nature, and the connection he occupies in relation to society, composed of beings like himself. He listens to the voice of reason, and clearly understands that which God or nature has done for him, and also that which remains for him to do for himself. Leaving forever all religious dogmas, calculated to bewilder his mind, his moral path is as clear as light. No longer standing on the fearful precipice of faith, trembling at every step, or chain-bound in a state of inaction, the Infidel cheerfully travels on in the practice of justice and humanity with a calmness of mind to which the Christian is a stranger. He has no angry God to dread, nor any tempting Devil, against whom the Christian must forever be on the watch.

All human beings on arriving at maturity, find themselves placed by an unknown power in a world, in which they will have to enjoy pleasure or happiness, and also to endure pain. This is the destiny of all, without exception. The same power which propelled us into existence, has made it a law of our nature to dread or shrink from pain, and also to desire and love ease and pleasure. And here we

can at once discover what God or nature has done for us, and likewise what is left for us to perform for ourselves. This, then, is the stock of moral material with which mortals commence a life of pleasure and pain. The same unknown power has also given man and woman reason, by the exercise of which they can augment their pleasure, and reduce their pain. By the use of man's rational powers, he can plainly discover his duty towards beings like himself. He loves happiness, ease, and every thing which makes life worth having; so also, do his fellow beings. He hates and retreats from positive pain; so does every being which has life, animals not excepted. What revelation, then, but this, does man want to teach him that which he owes to himself, and likewise those things he ought to practise to every being that has life and feeling?

And the voice of God, or nature, calls to every rational being in language which, but for false religion, all would understand. Mortals! attend to what is done for your permanent happiness. Ignorance and neglect are the causes of most of the evils which, torment you. You are made to love happiness; you are also made to shrink from and hate pain. Every human being is subject to the same laws; only attend to the moral this contains. You have no excuse for inflicting pain on any living creature, because you know that every being possessing life is governed by the same feelings as yourself. God, or nature, has so arranged things as to induce mortals to practise virtue, and to be kind to every thing that possesses life and feeling; because, by acting agreeably to the laws of your own organization, you become happy in yourself, and have the additional pleasure of making others happy also. What excuse, then, can men have for neglecting the duties they owe to every thing that has life and feeling? Do they need a revelation to inform them that they ought to be just and humane? Do they require information from heaven to inform them that cruelty to man or animals is wicked? Let them but consult their own feelings; full information is at hand calling on them to practise kindness and compassion.

Do men and women need the Bible to learn the duty incumbent on them toward their offspring? Must we read the pretended word of God in order to discover that the husband ought to be kind and in every way faithful to his wife, (making allowance for her weakness, either of body or mind,) and perform every duty connected with her permanent happiness? Man requires no Divine aid, beyond the exercise of his reason, to inform him that, in order to be happy in this life, he must be *just, peaceable, sober, and temperate in all things; chaste, a lover of truth, kind, and humane* to all beings who possess life. Let every human being, then, turn to the laws of his own organization, namely, to his love of happiness, and aversion to pain. These laws will give him unerring instruction as to the duties which he has to perform, and also as to what evils he is to avoid.

This is indeed a Divine revelation, which will never deceive or lead astray. Man carries it within himself. It differs from all pretended Divine revelation. It is suitable at all times, and in all places. It requires no priest to explain it. It changes not with times and circumstances. These laws of our nature (the love of happiness and aversion to pain) are a never-failing revelation, to which we can always refer with entire confidence, as a true revelation of God or nature. Away, then, with the childish question, "If you take away the Bible, what will you give us in its stead"? The short and final answer to which is, study the laws of your organization, and direct your reason to their interpretation, and let the priest read his Bible, and exclaim against unbelief. The reader will now understand the views the Infidels have of moral rectitude; and if the principles are faithfully carried out in our journey through life, the end of all will be peace. These moral principles were enforced (for upwards of eight years) in Tammany Hall. They are now spreading far and wide, and instead of producing evil in society, they are calculated to ensure "*peace on earth and good-will towards men.*"

It is because the Christian world have been taught to depend on a Saviour for the pardon of the worst of crimes, believing that the price was paid by Christ as a ransom from the captivity of the Devil, that it is destructive of pure morality. The apostles maintained this doctrine; and from them, till now, the true and Orthodox faith is, that moral rectitude has nothing to do, abstractly considered, with the salvation of the soul, but faith in what Christ has done and suffered. This doctrine is not only unfavorable to virtue, but it places the basest of mankind in a superior point of view to those whose whole lives have been distinguished by the practice of correct moral actions. That divines view and act on the vicarious sacrifice of Christ as being alone sufficient in the last hour to save sinners, we need but to refer to the attention paid by them to criminals up to the last moments of their lives. It is faith in the Redeemer, which gives a passport to glory to a wretch, who but a few days before had murdered perhaps a good father and mother. No matter what his crimes, or how large the number, only let him believe in the Saviour, and, although the guilty criminal is considered unworthy to live one hour longer on earth, yet according to the Gospel plan of salvation, he is promised, and induced to believe that he will in the evening of the same day join in the song of angels and chant the praises of the Great Eternal.

If the doctrine of saving faith be true, the thief or murderer, if the law lays hold of him, and the fear of the gallows induces him to rely on Jesus, goes directly to heaven; whereas, if he had been honest and virtuous, but had not faith in Christ, he might have died in his sins and gone to hell! Oh! how consistent is Orthodox salvation with justice and truth! In one case, the Orthodox Christian is in truth consistent. It is this: that in this life, even in New York, a man will not be admitted as a church member, however virtuous. He must be a sinner,

or he cannot be admitted. So, also, in heaven, a good man must not enter. It would be no injustice to say that every religious society should have it written in large capitals over the door-way of its building—"*No honest men admitted as members here—sinners are always welcome.*" The same should be posted at the gate of heaven. Although this statement may to some appear wicked and untrue, it is correct in the Christian spirit, and also true to the letter. Honest men have no business in Christian churches, as they will also be rejected in heaven. The worst of characters make the best Christians, if they can bring one grain of mustard-seed faith to the altar of Jehovah.

The Christian who depends for salvation and acceptance, in a future life, is never at rest in this. He has no correct standard whereby to judge whether he has saving faith. His hopes and his fears are regulated by his feelings, not by his conduct. If, for instance, his animal spirits are depressed, he desponds, and considers that the Lord has withdrawn from him the light of his countenance. He trembles, and in the agony of his mind, cries out, "*I believe, O Lord, help thou mine unbelief.*" Let him become cheerful, and his mind become buoyant, he then considers himself sure that he has, what is called, an interest in Christ.

Moral rectitude is out of the question. All the moral virtues combined, and brought into action, are as nothing, in the sight of the Christian's God. The sinner's debt is paid, by the sufferings of Jesus on the cross. So that, according to the plan of human redemption, if Jesus had been acquitted on his trial, the whole human race would die (as the Scripture phrase is) in their sins. It then follows, that, as man's acceptance with God, and the salvation of his soul, is in consequence of the sacrifice made by Christ on the cross, his moral rectitude is of little consequence. The all-important state of the believer is, not the soundness of his morals, but the relying by faith on Jesus for what he has done by his suffering on the "accursed tree." This doctrine is the consolation of the murderer at the gallows; and the same reliance on what Jesus has suffered for the human race, was what consoled and supported Andrew Jackson in his last moments, as reported by the newspapers.

The Christian religion, by teaching believers to trust in a Saviour for the pardon of crimes of the worst description, has been an obstacle in the way of attaining to that moral excellence which is calculated to dignify human nature.. Faith, the "*pearl of great price,*" has, ever since the introduction of Christian theology, obscured the path of virtue, and invested its haughty possessor with an intolerant disposition, accountable only to the tribunal of faith; and, having broken loose from the restraints of moral obligation, has, as it were, laughed to scorn the principles of justice, of chastity and humanity. And yet, one and all, who profess Christianity, charge those who consider moral worth superior to faith, with demoralizing youth, and corrupting the manners of the age in which they live.

Before concluding this chapter, it will be useful to inquire, in what way the world has been benefitted by propagating the heaven-born doctrine of faith in the Redeemer's kingdom? The page of history bears witness, that, for eighteen hundred years, with but short intervals of rest, a large portion of the earth has been the theatre of *crime and war, cruelty and murder*; and this state of things has been brought about by the uncertainty of what Christianity is. When the reputed Founder of the Christian faith was about to leave this world, to sit at the right hand of his Father, he told them that his absence would be to his followers a real blessing; for it is recorded, that he said to them that "*the Comforter*" would abundantly supply his place—that is, or was to be, the Holy Ghost, who would "*lead them into alt truth, and bring to their remembrance all things which he had told them.*" But this promise, if ever made, proved a total failure; for soon after Christ, their Divine Master, left this earth, upwards of forty different sects arose, and began to dispute and quarrel about what Jesus, while on earth, taught, concerning the kingdom of heaven. Sect opposed sect, party opposed party, and Christianity became involved in mystery. Conventions were formed, and the worst passions soon gave proof that the multitude of angels, who, at the birth of Christ proclaimed, that "*peace on earth, and good-will towards men*" would be realized, were sadly mistaken. Nothing but one continual scene of war, destruction, and slaughter, between Christian nations, and in society, and and even in families, ensued; peace and harmony were unknown. The Holy Ghost, that was to be the comforter, soon made them any thing but comfortable!

This good news, or Gospel, proved to be most unfortunate news to the inhabitants of this world. Thousands and tens of thousands of human beings came to a premature or violent death by rack and torture; the fires of martyrdom were lighted up, and millions of madmen gave glory to God. This is but a mere outline of the horrors arising from faith in the glorious plan of human redemption; and thus mortals when they became believers in the Redeemer's kingdom, ceased to act as men, and became downright devils. If, instead of teaching him the doctrines of the Christian religion, the laws which God or nature had stamped on every human being (which are always present, and which, at every moment of his existence, call on him to attend to the lessons which they teach) had been pointed out to him, man would have learned how to live in peace and happiness, in a society of beings organized like himself, and governed by the same laws, always loving happiness and dreading pain.

To the reader, then, I recommend attention to the hints here given; and in order to form a correct judgment how he should perform the duties which he owes to himself, and also to his fellow mortals, to study and always appeal to the laws of his organization. Let him bring every action to that never-failing index of his nature, the love of happiness and the aversion to pain. Let him sum up every

day his moral accounts by this unerring rule, and this mode will never fail to make his moral path as clear as light; for as he knows that, according to the laws of his nature, he is compelled to love happiness, and to shrink from pain, so also, is every one that has life, governed by the laws of pleasure and pain. The laws of our organization, and the voice of reason united, proclaim to every human being, that the whole of man's duty towards his fellow man consists at all times, and in all places, in increasing his happiness, and reducing his pain.

To know this, so easy to be known, and strictly to practise it, is all the revelation which man requires. But pretended revelation has either obscured moral light, or held out lights that are false and delusive. The false light presented to man, called revealed religion, instead of conducting him safely into the haven of happiness, has continually tossed him, without rudder or compass, on the roaring billows of theology, on which troubled ocean he has met with little else than robbers and pirates.

Never, then, let us forget, that the best men or women are they, whose whole lives are directed to the promotion of the permanent happiness of every thing having life and feeling, and to the reduction of misery wherever it may be found; and that whoever shall thus act, will be not only the best, but also the happiest, of the human race.

THE END.

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