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THE CHINESE MADONNA.

The features of the child evince its nationality. The book in its hand identifies it with the Chinese conception of an infant sage. The picture was found by Mr. Berthold Laufer in the mansion of an official in Si-ngan, China, and is of unknown age.

THE
CHRISTIAN MYTHOLOGY.

BY

BRIGHAM LEATHERBEE

“Knowledge is power, but ignorance is the mother of devotion.”

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THE CHRISTIAN MYTHOLOGY.

That Christianity, as to-day presented by the orthodox, is far different from the Christianity promulgated by the early fathers, few are so blinded as to doubt. Christianity, like all other religions, came not into the world full-grown, but from the simple conceptions of its early followers became gradually elaborated by the introduction of pagan forms and customs until it supplanted its early rivals and gave its adherents a compact and solid theology not very different from that of its predecessors. However, before considering the genealogy of Christianity, or its heirlooms from paganism, let us turn our attention to what were presumably the beginnings of the religious views of mankind.

Probably the true source of that human characteristic which is defined as the religious instinct and which is supposed to be an elevating and moral agent, is to be found in the superstition which originated in fear of the unknown. The first ages of human life were so devoted to the animal needs that little attention was given to anything else, but later the craving for protection and help from some power greater than himself led primitive man

to look about him for something to sustain and aid him in his struggle for existence. Surrounded by natural phenomena of which he could give no explanation satisfactory to his experience, he came to the conclusion that he was in an environment permeated with bodiless intelligences who governed these matters by supernatural power. Awed to fear by the inexplicable workings of nature, he sought to propitiate the spiritual agencies by bribes, and he did all things for them which he thought would be agreeable to them to keep them in good-natured interest or indifference toward him. And, naturally, he considered that what would be pleasing to himself would be pleasing to them. Therefore, his offerings and his conduct towards these spirits were such as he would have desired shown toward himself. Death and its imitation, sleep, being the greatest mysteries confronting him, he naturally began to consider the spirits of the dead, with whom he seemed to have intercourse in his dreams, as being influential factors in his career; and thus originated ancestor-worship with its highly-developed rites and sacrifices, which in a modified form still exists in the Roman church in the practice of reading masses for the souls of the dead. At the same time, noticing the great benefits derived from the warmth of the sun, to whose rays he owed his subsistence and whose glorious and awful presence was constantly before him, man began to feel grateful to that mighty power which

was the source of all his welfare, and, appreciating that all terrestrial life depended upon it, he came to recognize it as the great creative power.

From such superstitious fear and weakness of primitive man arose all those religious feelings which the pious call instinctive and which have, through progress, evolution, and elaboration, controlled certain races, and from whose union have arisen all the religious systems that have ever flourished. Owing to the varied influences of climate, environment, and racial character, the various forms of worship predominating in different geographical situations have naturally assumed different characteristics, but, when stripped of their surrounding, and often enveloping rites, ceremonies, and superficialities they may all be traced to the above-mentioned fundamental sources.

It is my intention to show, as briefly as possible, that in the Christianity of to-day we have nothing new nor of vital difference from what has always been taught and believed in the many epochs of the past. In common with all religious systems, Christianity has a hero—the personified sun-god of all time—who is of obscure origin, who passes through various episodes common to all, who is finally executed, and who rises once more to renewed power. In our perusal of the subject, we shall first consider the life of Jesus as taught by the Christian church; secondly, the dogmas affecting the source of his power and the results of his

influence; and, thirdly, the rites and ceremonies with which his worship is performed.

I—THE VIRGIN BIRTH.

Some two thousand years ago there is said to have appeared in the notoriously rebellious province of Galilee, the headquarters of Hebrew radicalism, a wandering teacher called Jesus, who passed from village to village expounding certain ethical and socialistic ideas, which were condemned by the Roman government and which resulted in this man's arrest and subsequent execution. After his death, his various pupils continued to preach his theories, and, separating, spread these ideas over various parts of the then civilized world. These pupils, naturally, having a firm belief in their former leader, and desiring to strengthen in every possible manner their faith as well as to increase the number of their proselytes, and, also, being themselves more or less affected by the ancient messianic idea, did not deny Jesus more than mortal powers, and allowed certain pagan theories of deity to creep into their faith. Later, when the vicious and crafty Constantine found it advisable for political reasons to adopt Christianity as the state religion, the great mass of Roman worshipers merely transferred the attributes of their ancient deities to the objects venerated by the new sect.

There was nothing new in bestowing a divine origin on Jesus. All the lesser gods of antiquity

were the sons of Zeus, and, in later times, monarchs were accorded the same origin. It was a common myth of all ancient peoples that numerous beings derived their birth from other than natural causes. Virgins gave birth to sons without aid of men. Zeus produced offspring without female assistance. Almost all the extraordinary men that lived under the old heathen mythology were reputed to have been the sons of some of the gods. The doctrine of the virgin birth is perhaps one of the oldest of religious ideas; it is so universal that its origin is impossible to trace. Therefore, no wonder is excited when we find that most of the religious leaders have been of celestial origin.

Krishna, the Indian savior, was born of a chaste virgin called Devaki, who, on account of her purity, was selected to become the mother of God. Gautama Buddha was born of the virgin Maya and "mercifully left Paradise and came down to earth because he was filled with compassion for the sins and miseries of mankind. He sought to lead them into better paths, and took their sufferings upon himself that he might expiate their crimes and mitigate the punishment they must otherwise inevitably undergo."

The great father of gods and men sent a messenger from heaven to the Mexican virgin, Sochi-quetzal, to inform her that it was the will of the gods that she should immaculately conceive a son.

As a result she bore Quetzalcoatl, the Mexican savior, who "set his face against all forms of violence and bloodshed, and encouraged the arts of peace." The Mexican god Huitzilopochtli was likewise immaculately conceived by a woman who, while walking in a temple, beheld a ball of feathers descending in the air. She grasped this and placed it in her bosom. It gradually disappeared and her pregnancy resulted. The Mexican Montezumas were later supposed to have been immaculately conceived by a drop of dew falling on the exposed breast of the mother as she lay asleep.

The Siamese have a virgin-born god and savior whom they call Codom; the Chinese have several virgin-born gods, one being the result of his mother's having become impregnated by merely treading on the toe-print of God; while the Egyptians bowed in worship before the shrine of Horus, son of the virgin Isis.

Setting aside the mythological interpretation of the miraculous conception of Jesus and the theory that his history is entirely fictitious, and viewing his birth from a natural human standpoint, even admitting that he may have been a "divinely inspired man," a little better than any other human being, there seems to be only one explanation for his peculiar conception as recorded in Luke i.

Some critics of the rational school have not failed to notice a solution of the problem in the appearance of the angel Gabriel and his private

interview with Mary (Luke i, 28-38). Say they very pertinently, why may not some libidinous young man, having become enamoured of the youthful wife of the aged Joseph, and, knowing the prophecy of the messiah, have visited the object of his desire in angelic guise and, having won her confidence in this rôle, gained those favors that produced the miraculous birth? And such an explanation is not improbable when we consider that it is an historical fact that young and confiding women often resorted to the pagan temples at the instigation of the unscrupulous, where they enjoyed the embraces of ardent but previously unsuccessful lovers, under the impression that they were being favored by deities.

So those Christians whose reasoning powers will not allow them to believe in the absurdity of an unnatural conception, and whose superstitious adoration will not permit of their believing Mary guilty of an intentional *faux pas*, try in this manner to reconcile the two, and declare Joseph the guilty man.

According to the Gospels, Joseph, the husband, knowing Mary to be with child, married her (Matt. i, 18); but that is no reason for believing that he regarded the Holy Ghost's responsibility for his wife's condition with faith. He told of a dream in which he had been informed that such was the case (Matt. i, 20-23). He may have believed the dream, and he may not. The most sensible view

is that he, "being a just man," took this method of preserving her reputation, and that he himself was the actual parent. Having betrayed the girl, he honestly married her, but, to defend her and himself from the accusation of a serious misdemeanor among the Jews (Deut. xxii), he invented the dream story to account for her unfortunate condition. Girls have ever told improbable stories to explain like misfortunes. Danæ concocted the shower of gold yarn; Leda preferred to accuse herself of bestiality with a swan to acknowledging a lover, and Europa blamed a bull. Modern damsels have invented more modern but just as innocent agents.

It would seem from the subsequent actions and words of Mary that she must have forgotten that her son was miraculously conceived of God, for we find her reproaching him for remaining in the temple of Jerusalem to argue with the rabbis with, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing" (Luke ii, 48). Again, when Simeon and Anna proclaimed the messiahship of Jesus (Luke ii, 25-32; 36-38), we are told that "Joseph and his mother marveled at those things which were spoken of him" (Luke ii, 33). This would hardly have been the case had they already known him as "the Son of the Highest, who shall reign over the house of Jacob forever" (Luke i, 32-33). Neither would Mary, had she realized that she was the mother

of God, have considered it necessary to resort to the temple (Luke ii, 22-24) to be purified from the stains of her childbirth. Women, having borne natural children, were considered to have become defiled in the act of parturition, through the contact of the perpetually active agency of original sin, whereof they must be purified. The mere fact of her submitting to such a churching is evidence that Mary did not know that she had done anything remarkable in bearing Jesus, and was ignorant of an unusual conception.

Their neighbors, despite the dream, always recognized Jesus as Joseph's son (Matt. xii, 55; Luke iv, 22; John ii, 45; vi, 42; Nicodemus i, 2). The orthodox explain this on the supposition that Joseph and Mary kept all these things in their hearts, and did not tell the actual facts of the case, which seems unlikely. Joseph would want to explain the early birth of Jesus, and Mary would be desirous of saving her reputation, and both would naturally boast of the honor conferred by the Holy Ghost, had they known of it, for in such case Joseph's relation to his god was the same as that of the peasant to his seigneur in the days of the *jus primæ noctis*. The liaison was an honor, and would have been related to save Jesus from the disagreeable allusions made by his neighbors regarding his birth (John viii, 41).

Conforming to the narrations of the miraculous conception in Luke, Mary, and the Protevangelion,

is an old miracle play called "Joseph's Jealousy," in which we find a very natural picture of the good old husband discovering a condition in his wife for which he is not responsible and accusing her in plain old English of adorning his brow with antlers. The following is the dialogue as given in Hone's "Ancient Mysteries Described":

- Jos.* Say me, Mary, this childys fadyr who is?
I pry the telle me, and that anon?
Mry. The Fadyr of hevyn, & se, it is,
Other fadyr hath he non.

To which Joseph very naturally replies in a burst of anger:

- Jos.* Goddys childe! thou lyist, in fay!
God dede nevyr rape so with may.
But yit I say, Mary whcos childe is this?
Mry. Goddys and your, I sey, I wys.

Then in wrath at her obstinacy he breaks forth:

- Jos.* Ya, ya! all olde men, to me take tent,
& weddyth no wyff, in no kynnys wyse.
Alas! Alas! my name is shent;
All men may me now dyspyse,
& seyn olde cokwold.

Mary tries to explain and says that her child is from God alone and that she was so informed by an angel. The suspicious Joseph will not be deceived, and gives way to some words that have since been accepted as a true explanation of the miraculous conception:

- Jos.* An A'gel! alas, alas! fy for schame!
Ye syn now, in that ye to say;
To puttyn an A'gel in so gret blame.
Alas, alas! let be do way;
It was s'n boy began this game,

That closhyd was clene and gay,
& ye geve hym now an A'ngel name.

The old prophecy in Isaiah (vii, 14) that a virgin shall bear a son loses its utility when we recognize that this was the sign given Ahaz that God would preserve his kingdom, although he was then threatened by a coalition of the kings of Ephraim and Syria. If the prophecy referred to the Christ, how could it have any influence on Ahaz? How could he be calmed and made to preserve his courage in the face of danger by a sign which would not be given until centuries after he slept with his fathers? But such was not the case. Isaiah made his sign appear as he had promised (vii, 16), "Before the child shall know to refuse evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings" (the rulers of Israel and Syria). Now, this prophecy *was* fulfilled, either by the trickery of the prophet or the compliance of a virgin, for we find in the next chapter (Isaiah viii, 3), "And I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived and bare a son." And that is the whole story. To apply it to the mythical birth of Jesus is puerile. No one can doubt that so good a Jew as Josephus believed in the prospect of a messiah, yet so little did Isaiah's prophecy impress him that he did not even mention the virgin episode. Probably, on the whole, he thought it a rather contemptible bit of trickery and rather detrimental to the memory of Isaiah.

James Orr, in his treatise written expressly to

prove the historical fact of the virgin birth, denies that the prophecy of Isaiah could be applied to Jesus. Here we have an orthodox writer who firmly believes in the miraculous conception, shattering the great cornerstone of the church's foundation for this belief. He says that the word "almah" was not Hebrew for virgin at all, but meant only a marriageable young woman. He says it can have no connection with Jesus, and thus he agrees with Thomas Paine, but for opposite reasons.

While Orr evidently considers that all pagan tales of divine paternity are legends, he affirms that the case of Jesus is genuine. Just why God became Deus Genetrix only once, he does not explain. If God approved of this method of creation, he would surely have performed it more than once. That he should have chosen a woman at all seems strange, when he could have produced Jesus without female assistance. Why should he have given his son, coexistent with the father, and, as such, undoubtedly of a fully developed intelligence, all the discomfort and danger of infantile life? If Jesus were but another phase of the godhead, one of the divine eternal trinity, it was degrading and ridiculous to have inflicted him with the processes of foetal life, with all the embryonic phases of development from ovule, through vertebrate and lower form to human guise; to have given him the dangers of human gestation and parturition, the inconvenience of childhood, with teething and

other infantile discomforts, and the slow years of growth. Why did he inflict all these things on a part, a third, of himself, in many years of preparation for but a few years of preaching, when he could have produced the Christ in a wonderful manner, full grown in all the beauty and dignity and strength of perfect and sublime manhood? Probably some will answer that then Jesus would have been regarded as an impostor. But no more doubt could be cast on such an appearance than has been thrown on the doubtful story of the purity of Mary. Orr, in his haste to prove his belief, gives a very good argument against it (page 82) in the words, "The idea of a Virgin birth . . . was one entirely foreign to Jewish habits of thought, which honored marriage, and set no premium on virginity." Therefore, it could not have been of Jewish origin. The Jews never accepted it, and it grew up only under the influence of Gentile converts.

It was an idea of classic paganism, an adoption of universal phallism, this conception of a divine impregnation. The doctrine that by conjunction with a woman, God begat the Christ is merely another phase of the phallic idea of the procreative principles of the deity—it is another form of the *deus genatrix*, the generative principle of male procreation.

II.—PAGAN PARALLELS.

The orthodox church denies that the Christ had any brothers and declares that Jesus was the only child of Mary, in spite of gospel testimony to the contrary. Matthew i, 25, referring to Joseph, says, "And he knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son," which implies that *after* his birth marital relations began between Joseph and Mary, from which other children were born, for how, otherwise, could Jesus have been the "first-born"? That Jesus had both brothers and sisters is declared in Matthew xii, 46; xiii, 55, 56; Mark iii, 31; vi, 3; Luke viii, 19-20; John ii, 12; vii, 3, 5, 10, and Acts i, 14, while Paul in Galatians i, 19, expressly names "James, the Lord's brother."

As the veneration for Mary increased under the influence of the pagan conceptions of an immaculate mother-queen of heaven, these simple and natural consequences of her marriage could not be tolerated, even allowing for the exceptional conception of Jesus, and the orthodox began to assert that Mary was not only an uncontaminated virgin at the birth of Jesus, but that by miracle she did not lose her virginity by that event. They attempted to explain the above references, first, by asserting that these children were of Joseph by a previous marriage, and later, when they felt it necessary to endow the consort of their pure mother with perfect celibacy, they named them as cousins only. Jerome was so strong a champion for Joseph's vir-

ginity that he considered Epiphanius guilty of impious invention for supporting the earlier belief regarding Jesus' brethren.

The Buddhists were far wiser than the Christians and eluded all such difficulties by causing Maya to die seven days after the birth of Sakya-muni, and by asserting such to have been the case with all the mothers of the Buddhas.

At the time of Jesus' birth a brilliant star is believed to have heralded the event, and has passed into tradition as "the star of Bethlehem." There is nothing novel in this idea, as all ancient peoples were very superstitious about the celestial bodies, firmly believing in astronomical influences on human affairs, and it seems to have been a common idea that the births of great men were announced by the presence of peculiar stars.

In China, a new star appeared at the birth of Yu, founder of the first dynasty, as was also the case when the sage Laoutze was born, while in Mexico the "morning star" was the symbol of the national savior Quetzalcoatl. The primitive Christians, however, did not have to look so far for such an idea, but easily found a parallel in the unusual star reported by the friends of Terah to have appeared on the night of Abraham's birth, which they said shone so brightly in the east.

Not only was the birth of the messiah announced by the brilliant star, but it was also celebrated by the singing of the heavenly host. Similar pheno-

mena occurred at the birth of Krishna, when "the clouds emitted low pleasing sounds and poured down a rain of flowers." On the eve of the birth of Confucius "celestial music sounded in the ears of his mother"; at Buddha's a "marvelous light illumined the earth"; and at the birth of Osiris a voice was heard proclaiming that the ruler of the earth was born.

The savior having been born, he must necessarily be recognized, so the myth of the wise men and their gifts follows—in a fashion very similar to that told of the other saviors. The marvelous infant Buddha was visited at the time of his birth by wise men who immediately recognized in him all the characteristics of divinity. At the time of Confucius' birth "five celestial sages entered the house whilst vocal and instrumental music filled the air." Mithras, the Persian savior, was visited by wise men called magi at the time of his birth, and was presented by them with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh; and the same story is told by Plato in relation to the birth of Socrates.

While it is claimed for all the world's saviors that they were borne by virgins and begotten by God, genealogies of royal descent are traced for them through the husbands of their mothers in a most illogical manner. As may be seen in the New Testament, the pedigree of Jesus is most elaborately set forth in both Matthew and Luke, who claim that through Joseph (whose parentage is de-

nied) the Christ was a direct descendant of King David, though, strange to relate, the connecting generations are different in one inspired gospel from what they are in the other. Krishna, in the male line, was of royal descent, being of the house of Yadava, the oldest and noblest of India; and Buddha was descended from Maha Sammata, the first monarch of the world..

Therefore, it is not surprising to find a royal pedigree for the god Christ, especially when the religious position occupied by the king in rude societies is considered. The Kaffres acknowledge no other gods than their monarch, and to him they address those prayers which other nations are wont to prefer to the supreme deity. Every schoolboy knows of the apotheosis of the Roman emperors, and the monarchs of Mexico and Peru were regarded as divinities. Every king of Egypt was added to the list of gods and declared to be the son of Ra, and even, in some cases, was made the third person of a trinity. Each denied that he owed his birth to the father from whom he inherited the crown, and claimed to have been miraculously begotten. Special temples were erected for the worship of the kings, which was conducted by special priests. The Parthian rulers of the Arsacid house, likewise, claimed divinity and styled themselves brothers of the sun and moon.

The fable of the slaughter of the innocents, which was merely a new form of the ancient myth of the

dangerous child whose life is a constant menace to some tyrant, was copied from several ancient religions, and the flight of the holy family into Egypt has its counterpart in other tales. King Kansa sought the life of Krishna and sent messengers to kill all infants in the neighboring places, but a heavenly voice warned his foster-father to fly with him across the river Jumna, which was immediately done. Salivahana, a virgin-born savior anciently worshiped in southern India, had a similar experience; and fable tells that at Abraham's birth Nimrod sought his life, fearing a prophecy that a child was born who should overthrow his power, and, as a result, he murdered 70,000 newly-born male children. At the time of Moses' birth, Pharaoh is said to have dreamed that a new-born child would cause Egypt's ruin, and he ordered that all the new-born sons of Israel should be cast into the Nile. Similar stories, familiar to all readers of the classics, are told of Perseus, Herakles, Paris, Jason, Bacchus, Romulus and Remus.

All these tales of the birth and early life of Jesus are similar to those of the other and more ancient saviors, and so is the story of the temptation and the forty days' fast. Moses fasted "forty days and forty nights" on the mount where he received the law (Ex. xxiv, 18; xxxiv, 28; Deut. ix, 9, 11). Elijah fasted "forty days and forty nights" on Mt. Horeb (I Kings xix, 8). Joachim, in shame at being childless, retired to the wilder-

ness for a fast of "forty days and forty nights" (Protevangelion i, 6, 7). Buddha fasted and held his breath until he became extremely weak, when Mara, Prince of Evil, appeared and tempted him to break his fast by offering to make him emperor of the world. Quetzalcoatl was also tempted by the devil during a forty days' fast; and the temptation of Zoroaster forms the subject of many legends.

All these myths readily implanted themselves in the Christian mythology, but the execution of its hero gave a great opportunity for mythical expansion and elaboration.

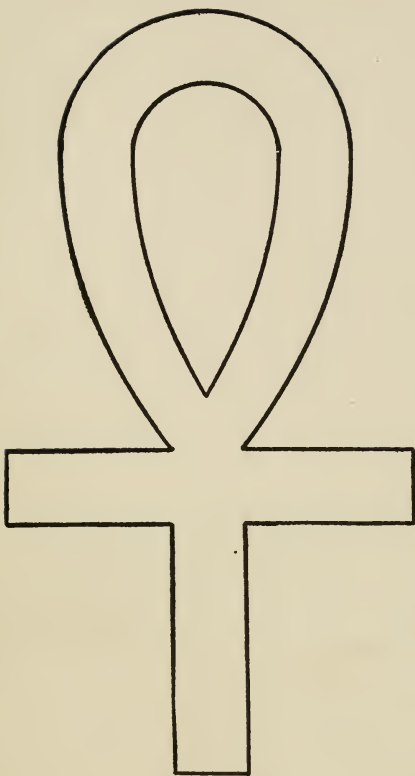
It is taught that Jesus was crucified; whether he was or not nobody knows, although there are more pieces of the "true cross" extant than could ever have flourished as trees on Mount Calvary.

If such a person as Jesus of Nazareth ever lived and was ever executed by the Romans, it is very probable that he was hanged, and the gallows may, very likely, have been of a form similar to that of a rude cross. The term crucifixion does not necessarily imply that one must be nailed outspread upon a symmetrical cross. It was the ancient custom to use trees as gibbets for execution, or a rude cruciform gallows, often called a "tree" (Deut. xxi, 22, 23; Nicodemus ix, 10). To be hung on such a cross was anciently called hanging on a tree, and to be hung on a tree was crucifixion. This rough method of execution was later modified by

the Christians to the present theory of the crucifixion, as they very naturally desired to appropriate the cross for their own especial emblem, owing to the fact that its great antiquity as a universal religious symbol would aid in the propagation of their faith, and since its earliest inception, Christianity has been ever prone to aid its proselyting by the adoption of pagan dogmas, symbols and practices from the so-called heathen theologies.

Of all religious symbols, the cross is the most ancient and sacred. It has from the earliest antiquity been the mystic emblem for reverence and awe, and appears to have been in the aboriginal possession of every ancient people. Populations of essentially different culture, tastes, and pursuits have vied with one another in their superstitious adoration of it. Greek crosses of equal arms adorned the tomb of Midas of Phrygia; and long before the time of the Etruscans, the inhabitants of northern Italy erected crosses over the graves of their dead. The cross was common to Mexico; white marble crosses were found on the island of Saint Ulloa by its discoverers; and it was greatly revered in Paraguay and Peru.

While the origin of the cross, shrouded as it is in the mists of the remotest antiquity, has been the subject of much speculation which has resulted in numerous theories, it is, undoubtedly, a conventionalized result of primitive phallic ideas. Sexual motives underlie and permeate all known religious



THE CRUX ANSATA.

This figure is as useful a key to religious symbolism as the triangle is to plane geometry. In its outlines are involved the cross, the trinity, and the male and female principles of creation. It is the mitre of the pope, the crucifix, and the key, and is seen in the vestments of the ancient Romish confessor. The modern pallium of the priest preserves only the suggestion of the female, appropriate to his feminine apparel—lace, painted garments, and millinery.

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systems. The idea of a creative god naturally gave rise to characteristic symbolical expression of the male and female principles, which were gradually modified and reduced to the tau (a Gothic T), representing the male principle, and the ring, representing the female principle. As a complete expression of the creative power, these two symbols were often placed in conjunction; and the most ancient form of the conjunction was, probably, that of the *crux ansata*, known to the Egyptians as "the emblem of life," which was very simply formed by placing the ring above the T. This emblem is sometimes called the "cross with the handle," because in ancient sculpture it is often represented as being carried by the ring. (See Doane, "Bible Myths"; Inman, "Ancient Faiths," etc.). This handled cross was also sacred to the Babylonians and occurs repeatedly on their cylinders, bricks and gems.

In ancient Scandinavian mythology the great warrior god Thor was always closely associated with a cruciform hammer, this being the instrument with which he killed the great Mitgard serpent, with which he destroyed the giants, and performed other acts of heroism. Cruciform hammers, with a hole at the intersection of the arms for the insertion of the haft, have been discovered in Denmark, and were used in consecrating victims at Thor's altars. The cross, or hammer, of Thor is still used in Iceland as a magical sign in connec-

tion with wind and rain, just as the corresponding sign of the cross is now used among the German peasantry to dispel a thunderstorm; both being expressions of the same idea that the cross is sacred to the god of thunder. As Christians blessed the full goblet with the sign of the cross, so the ancient Vikings made the sign of the hammer over theirs; and the signs were identical.

The practice of making the sign of the cross before eating, which has, in Protestant sects, degenerated to the saying of grace, which again has assumed the form of a prayer of thanks to God for bestowing the sustenance, was originally merely a method of prevention against demonical possession. It was thought that demons abounded everywhere and that one was very likely to imbibe one of these spirits unless he took the precaution of making the sign of the cross, which they could not endure and from which they fled. This belief in the efficacy of a talisman, universal among all peoples from the most barbarous to so-called civilized communities, was not only countenanced but encouraged by Christianity, and even today we find orthodox Christians who—although they cannot be called educated in the highest sense, yet are not to be classed as illiterate—who are still practicing it. Every good Catholic wears a scapular, and many a one carries a little image of some saint to ward off disaster. The sign of the cross is still used in time of danger and is considered a weapon of

miraculous power. Sword hilts are still constructed in the form of the cross to give fortune in battle, and the masts of ships with yards were once considered the symbol of the cross.

The burial of the dead about churches is another modern form of the ancient superstition that within the shadow of the cross demons dare not disturb the body, which was necessary for resurrection and immortality. This idea is a descendant of the ancient savage notion that bodies in the vicinity of the idol were protected. Even in our modern Protestant cemeteries we constantly find crosses erected over the graves in the same superstitious manner, although in most cases it has become merely a surviving custom, the origin of which the performers do not know.

III.—SPURIOUS RELICS.

Accompanying the worship of the cross, we find among orthodox Christians the adoration of the three nails of the passion which are nothing more than a union of the two Egyptian forms of architecture—the obelisk, expressing the male idea, and the inverted pyramid, expressing the female.

Two of these nails are supposed to have been found in the time of Constantine, who adorned his helmet and horse's bridle with them. Rome, Milan and Treves each boast of possessing one of them, while still another may be seen at the church of the Holy Cross of Jerusalem, where it is annually

exposed to the veneration of the people. In 1353 Pope Innocent VI. appointed a festival for these holy nails. Despite these facts, a legend arose in the latter part of the sixteenth century that these three nails were fashioned into an iron ring three-eighths of an inch broad and three-tenths thick and presented by the Empress Helena to Constantine to protect him in battle, and that this ring was later used to support the golden plates of the celebrated Iron Crown of Lombardy.

In reference to the practice of relic worship in the Christian church, it is interesting to note that numerous objects of worship seem endowed with remarkable powers of multiplication. The Church of Coulombs, Diocese of Châtres; the Cathedral of Prý, the Collegiate Church of Antwerp, the Abbey of Our Savior at Charroux, and the Church of St. John Lateran at Rome, all boast themselves the sole possessors of the only authentic "holy prepuce," which was circumcised from Jesus on the eighth day after his birth (Luke ii, 21), and preserved by the midwife in oil of spikenard, which was later poured upon his head and feet by Mary Magdalene (Infancy ii, 1-4).

Likewise, there are numerous "holy shrouds." That at Besancon, which was brought from Palestine by crusaders about the beginning of the twelfth century, won fame by delivering the city from a destructive plague in 1544, while that at Turin had a festival instituted for it by Pope

Julius II. in 1506. Other authentic shrouds may be found at the Church of St. Cornelius at Compeigne, in Rome, Milan, Lisbon, and Aix la Chapelle.

Another much multiplied relic is the Virgin's ring, supposed to have been the marriage ring used at the nuptials of Joseph and Mary. This sacred souvenir was discovered in 996 by a jeweler of Jerusalem and was readily recognized by its remarkable powers of healing and self-multiplication. Many European churches claim to possess this ring and profess to expose it to the devout for veneration, but, undoubtedly, the most celebrated is that held by the Cathedral of Perouse.

Relic worship and belief in the miraculous powers residing in the bones of departed saints, which continues, despite the more general education of the laity, is by no means of Christian origin. In ancient Greece the bones of heroes were superstitiously regarded and those of Hector of Troy were sacredly preserved at Thebes; the tools used in the construction of the Trojan horse were kept at Metapontum; the sceptre of Pelops was held at Chæroneia; the spear of Achilles at Phaselis; and the sword of Memnon at Nicomedia. Miraculous statues of Minerva that brandished spears, abounded, and paintings that could blush and images that could sweat also existed.

In India there are numerous teeth of Buddha which his worshipers believe capable of performing



RELICS.

"It is interesting to note that numerous objects of worship seem endowed with remarkable powers of multiplication."



WITH THE BLEST.

miracles; and his coat, which as Prince Siddhatto he laid aside on entering the priesthood, has been miraculously preserved, and is still shown.

Jerome, in defending the worship of relics which had been attacked by Vigilantus of Barcelona, did not deny that it was adopted from paganism, but commended it and explained that as this reverence had been previously "only given to idols, and was then to be detested, was now given to martyrs, and therefore to be received."

IV.—TRIAL AND EXECUTION MYTHS.

That Jesus should have been executed, either as an historical fact or as a mythological theory, is not remarkable; and even when considered in the light of his being one of the godhead, there is nothing new in the relation of his death. The idea of a dying god is very old. The grave of Zeus was shown at Crete, and the body of Dionyseus was buried at Delphi. Osiris and Buddha both died, and numerous deities were crucified. Krishna, the Indian god, suffered such execution, as did also the Mexican savior Quetzalcoatl. Representations of Krishna abound wherein he is depicted as nailed to a cross and having a round hole in his side. Prometheus was nailed by hands and feet to Mount Caucasus, with arms extended in the form of a cross.

So immeasurably voluminous have been the writings of the orthodox upon the trial, execution, and

resurrection of Jesus that it seems advisable to consider these matters, from a rational point of view, upon the hypothesis that such a man really lived and suffered experiences similar to those narrated in the Gospels. With that premise the following views are offered:

The attitude of Jesus before Pilate shows him to have been a willing martyr, yea, desirous of martyrdom. In all probability his fanatical mind believed that when the supreme moment should come, when his execution should take place, and when his death seemed instantly imminent, some great natural phenomenon would occur to save him. He undoubtedly believed that he would not die, but that God would miraculously interpose to rescue him and that at that time he would not only be saved, but that the kingdom of heaven would be established under his control. That this was his belief seems to be shown by his cry of disappointment when he realized that nothing supernatural was to prevent his death. When that moment of realization came, his surprise was evident and, unlike many of his courageous followers who died in calmness and bravery, he cried aloud in mental and physical anguish, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. xxvii, 46; Mark xv, 34.)

His indifferent bearing before Pilate showed this faith in his redemption, for when the Roman procurator courteously asked him if he were the king

of the Jews, he replied ambiguously, as had always been his practice, "Thou sayest it" (Matt. xxvii, 11; Mark xv, 2; Luke xxiii, 3; John xviii, 37; Nicodemus iii, 10). But such ambiguity, which had served very well among the lower classes who had flocked to hear and question him, was of no avail before the matter-of-fact Roman, who, as an imperial officer, desired straightforward answers, and was little impressed by Jesus' silence, except that he was rightfully astonished that when given the chance the prisoner should not have availed himself of it to explain his position. Therefore, seeing Jesus had no will to answer his questions except in an exasperating manner, after he had shown a willingness to save him, Pilate delivered Jesus over to the Jews according to the custom of the Romans in regard to the theological disputes of a subject people—but not until he had requested them to spare the preacher. Had Jesus given the Roman a frank explanation of his position as an itinerant preacher, Pilate would probably have saved him, but the chimerical idea of the interposition of God by a miracle, which would glorify him above all else that could occur, led Jesus to make a willing sacrifice of himself and throw away the opportunity offered him by Pilate.

There is nothing noble nor grand in this impudent conduct toward the Roman officer, but there is a good deal of justice and consideration in the conduct of Pilate. There is nothing noble in

Jesus' willingness to die nor in his courting death at this trial, for it was entirely unnecessary and was desired on his part only because he expected a miraculous salvation. According to his belief, he was to be the gainer, and he staked his life for a heavenly glory and lost, although he was probably keen enough to see that in any case his death would increase his fame, for the execution of a fanatic always lends a little glory to a cause, no matter how base, as witness the desire of anarchists for martyrdom and the attitude with which they view those who die for their horrible ideas.

The only question with the Roman was as to whether Jesus had proclaimed himself the king of the Jews, and as he declined to answer this question, Pilate could do nothing to save him. The blind hatred of orthodox Christianity toward Pilate is absurd. Aside from the argument above, there is another reason why his memory should be leniently treated. According to the Christian dogma, Jesus was the son of God, and it was only by his sacrifice, by his actual death, that he could save man. By dying he took the sins of mankind upon himself, and thus became the Savior. As the eternal Son, knowing all things, as a part of the godhead, he knew his death must occur—that was his mission on earth. Therefore, as instruments in the accomplishment of this grand plan, by which mankind was saved, and Jesus became the Savior,

Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate should be regarded as divine agents worthy of glory and praise. Any other conclusion is entirely illogical. But then, who will look for logic in the dogmas of Christianity? When one makes a logical investigation of this faith, he abandons its unreasonable teachings, which cannot be accepted by a logical mind. The person who allows his reason to govern his belief cannot in any way accept the teachings of the absurd and ridiculous Christian cult.

While suffering his execution, Jesus, according to the Gospel writers, lost both his moral and physical courage, and cried aloud in agony, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" In view of this fact, it seems impossible for reasonable creatures to accept the Christian dogmas of the atonement and the trinity, for, if Jesus were one of the godhead and had left his heavenly abode to descend to earth for the especial purpose of saving mankind by shedding his blood for them, he must necessarily have been aware of what was in store for him and have known all the details attendant upon his execution.

Looking at this fable rationally, Jesus was inferior in courage to many of his followers. When we recall the innumerable martyrs who went to meet death with smiling lips, in perfect confidence, the wailing savior, with his doubting cry to God, presents anything but an impressive figure. Surely, to burn at the stake, to lie under the axe, to en-

dures the awful tortures of the Inquisition, were fully as agonizing as a crucifixion; and yet men—and delicate women—who have never pretended to divinity, have borne these things silently.

To be sure, the whole story of the Christ is largely legendary and very uncertain, but, according to the gospels of Matthew and Mark, Jesus was weak in his convictions, afraid to die for his own teachings, and on the whole, his conduct at the supreme moment reminds one of the weak French peasants of revolutionary times rather than the brave nobility. His peasant blood rose to the surface and in his fear he cried, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" although but a few moments before he had assured one of the malefactors who suffered beside him that on this day he should be in paradise (Luke xxiii, 43).

Everything considered, it is not strange that the Jews would not accept Jesus as the awaited messiah who should free them from the yoke of Rome. They desired a strong and powerful leader, not a socialistic wandering teacher, and the prophecies promised a ruler surpassing the wisdom and power of the gorgeous Solomon. There is not one prophetic passage in the Old Testament that can properly be applied to Jesus, although many have been distorted for such purpose. The Jews looked upon him as an impostor and a revolutionist who not only pretended to be what he was not, but who

disregarded their ancient laws and preached a doctrine contrary to that held by their rabbis.

It was not until long after his death that he was regarded as a prophet, and it was not until every proof of his very existence had vanished that divine honors were paid him. To the Jews he was a vagrant revolutionist worthy of death, and the Jews knew him personally; to a large majority of twentieth century Christians, he is a god, and they know absolutely nothing about him, save a collection of puerile myths which tax their credulity as children, but which as adults they accept.

However, regarding the execution of Jesus, there is always the legitimate doubt that it ever occurred. Aside from the fact that the usual mode of death for criminals was by hanging, there is much internal evidence in the gospels themselves which points to the conclusion that the whole story of the execution and resurrection is mythical and was composed from various Hebrew and pagan legends. The dying cry was copied verbatim from Psalms xxii, 1, wherein David "complaineth in great discouragement" over his diseased condition.

V.—DISTORTED "PROPHECIES."

The Jews, desirous that the spectacle of the execution should not pollute the sanctity of their Sabbath, requested that the death of the victim might be hastened (John^{xix} xix, 31). Therefore, according to custom, the Roman soldiers broke the legs of

the thieves, but, finding Jesus already dead, they did not break his legs (John xix, 33). In this the writer of John sees the fulfillment of a prophecy (John xix, 36). In Exodus xii, 46, occur the words "neither shall ye break a bone thereof," which were nothing more than a command of "the ordinance of the passover" (Ex. xii, 43), and applied to the sacrificial animals to be eaten then. But the gospel writers, delving for prophecies, saw with their queerly distorted eyes a prophecy in this and Numbers ix, 12, regardless of the fact that for centuries, in celebrating the passover, the Jews had conformed to this practice of not breaking the bones of the animals eaten. But the biographers saw Jesus as the paschal lamb, and associated him with the meat of the passover. The tendency to regard his body as the solid of the Eucharist has likewise aided in this construction of the passages in Exodus and Numbers into a prophecy. In David's apostrophe to the righteous he says that though their afflictions are many, "the Lord delivereth him out of them all" and preserves him. "He keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken" (Psalm xxxiv, 19-20). This has no reference to the Christ, but the distorted vision of the apostolic writer saw in it such an intent. He says (John xix, 36), "For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken."

In order, however, to be sure that Jesus was

actually dead and, in case he was not, to hasten that event, one of the soldiers pierced his heart with a lance. Here John sees another prophecy fulfilled (John xix, 37), "They shall look on him whom they pierced." This refers to Zechariah xii, 10, where we find the words, "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced." This was the language of a prophet in a diatribe against the enemies of Juda. How could the writer of John have seen a prophecy in this, when the context reads "in that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem" (Zech. xii, 9), and when at the time of the crucifixion, Jerusalem was in the hands of the Romans?

Likewise, the writers of Matthew and John saw in the drawing of lots by the soldiers at the foot of the cross for the garments of Jesus—the usual custom regarding the minor possessions of executed criminals, which were always considered the spoil of the military guard—"the fulfillment of a prophecy" (Matt. xxvii, 35 John xix, 23, 24) found in Psalms xxii, 18, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture," which really was a metaphorical expression of David concerning the treatment accorded him by his enemies. In the preceding verse 16, in the same relation and rhetorical figure, he says "they pierced my hands and

my feet." On the whole, Psalm xxii was a particularly happy composition for the Christian adepts at misconstruction. Neither Mark nor Luke refers to the fulfillment of a prophecy regarding the vestments, but content themselves with narrating the event (Mark xv, 24; Luke xxiii, 34).

It was customary to give the condemned a drink of wine and myrrh to stupefy him and thus decrease the sufferings of execution. When this was offered to Jesus he refused it (Mark xv, 23), probably because he wished to be perfectly conscious at the time when God should miraculously reprieve him. Matthew, xxvii, 34, intentionally falsifies the episode and calls the drink vinegar and gall, so bound is he to see a messianic prophecy in Psalms xix, 21, "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink," which words were really applied by David to his own personal enemies.

VI.—THE RESURRECTION.

Regarding the resurrection, it is interesting to note that, whereas most crucified men lived a number of hours and even a day in this torture, the wounds in the hands not being mortal and the position only affecting the circulation, causing death by exhaustion or starvation, Jesus lived only three hours. Therefore, it may have been that he was not actually dead, but merely in a state of coma, or perhaps a cataleptic condition. The custom he

had of using his subjective mind in telepathic cures, as told in the gospels, seems to point to this conclusion, that, being strongly subjective, his condition here was cataleptic. Many cases are known of men having been restored after crucifixion, and, as the embalming given Jesus in the Jewish custom consisted in nothing more than a wrapping in a shroud with myrrh and aloes, there is nothing to oppose this hypothesis. After resting for a while in the tomb, he may have revived and gone out and been seen by others, after which he wandered away again to die in solitude from exhaustion and lack of food.

It is more probable, however, that this legend was copied from those of other religious heroes, who likewise rose from the dead, as there seems to be much variance between the different versions of the visit of Mary Magdalene to the sepulchre and her meeting with Christ. Matthew says (xxviii, 1) that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary visited the sepulchre (3), where they saw a male angel descend from heaven during an earthquake and roll back the stone from the door and sit upon it (7). And he told them to "go quickly, and tell his disciples" that he had risen, which they did. But as they were going (9) "Jesus met them . . . and they came . . . and worshiped him." Mark tells a similar story with some variations as to the angel, but he relates that Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene "early the first day of the

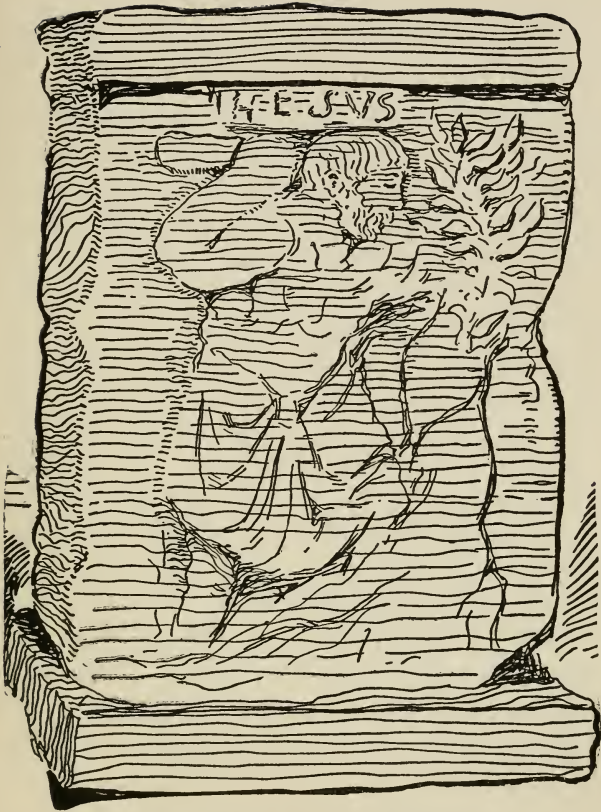
week" (xvi, 9), and not on her visit with Mary, the mother of James, and Salome at the tomb. According to Luke, the women went to the tomb, where they were informed by (xxiv, 4) "two men in shining garments" that Jesus had risen, and they left and told the apostles. No mention is made here of the encounter of Mary Magdalene. John, however, gives a more elaborate version. He narrates (xx) that Mary, going early and alone to the tomb, which she found entirely empty, ran and informed Peter, who verified her story and departed. After she was left alone she looked into the sepulchre again, where she beheld two angels, and on turning away saw Jesus standing by her.

Setting aside the idea of a mythical plagiarism in these tales, and also the cataleptic theory already mentioned, and considering them from yet another point of view, we can still find a rational explanation. The meeting of Jesus with Mary may have been the hallucination of a hysterical woman. According to Mark xvi, 9, and Luke viii, 2, Jesus had cast seven devils out of her, which is surely sufficient proof that she was of neurotic temperament and had been subject to delusions and hysteria. Undoubtedly after the shock of witnessing the crucifixion and death of her master, for three gospels agree in stating that she was present (Matt. xxvii, 56; Mark xv, 40; John xix, 25), this fond woman's mind, which seemed more normal in his presence, again gave way and she returned to her hysterical

condition. On visiting the tomb, she found it empty because "his disciples came by night and stole him away," that they might declare he had risen from the dead, "as is commonly reported among the Jews until this day" (Matt. xxviii, 11-15). As she was leaving, she heard his voice (a common delusion of hysterical subjects) and saw his form (another hallucination), but when she went to touch him, she could not do so. The relation has all the marks of simple neurosis, and yet many modern Christians base their whole faith upon the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians xv, 14, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."

As noted in various parts of this work, unless Christians believe in the possibility of miracles, the power of a personal devil, and the physical resurrection of the body, there is no foundation for their faith, and it is a mockery.

Not satisfied with having executed their god according to the most approved methods of antiquity, Christians felt the necessity of the presence of some remarkable natural phenomena at the time of his death, for among all ancient peoples it was customary to attribute some remarkable natural convulsions to the death of a great man. When Prometheus was crucified on Mount Caucasus "the earth quaked, thunder roared, lightning flashed, wild winds rent the air and boisterous billows rose." On the death of Romulus, there was "darkness over



A MESSIAH WHO "IS RISEN."

The drawing of this ancient deity, the Lord Hesus, is from a monument in the Cluny Museum, Paris. He was the messiah of the Gauls in Europe and Asia, and his worship has been traced to 2112 B. C. He is fabled to have suffered crucifixion, arisen from the dead, and ascended into heaven.

the face of the earth for six hours," and when Quetzalcoatl died the sun became black! Even in historical times, we find narrations of similar phenomena accompanying the deaths of royalty; and we read in many authenticated histories of the frightful thunderstorms that were coincident with the deaths of Isabella of Castile, Charles the Fifth, Napoleon the Great, and Oliver Cromwell.

Therefore, it is not surprising to find mention of such occurrences at the time of the execution of the Christian god, although we are not prepared for such astonishing and unprecedented phenomena as related by the ever exaggerating author of the "Gospel according to St. Matthew," who states very seriously that "the vail of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

But the execution, while it completes the mortal life of the incarnate Christian deity, by no means finishes the legend. Like the gods of antiquity, the Christ must also descend into hell and perform wonders similar to those of the ancient heroes. All the saviors of mankind had done so—Zoroaster, the Persian; Osiris, the Egyptian; Baldur, the Scandinavian; Quetzacoatl, the Mexican; and

Krishna, the Hindu; while Ishtar voluntarily descended into the Assyrian inferno.

Having descended into hell, resurrection was necessary, for it was unreasonable that the savior of mankind, the son of the supreme god, should remain perpetually in the place of punishment; and, as his life on earth was over, he could no longer abide there, and so the only plausible sequence was an ascension to heaven. Krishna, the crucified Hindu savior, rose from the dead and ascended bodily into the celestial regions, as did Rama, another avatar of Vishnu. Buddha also ascended bodily into heaven when his mission on earth was fulfilled, and marks on the rocks of a high mountain are shown as the last impressions of his footsteps on earth. Zoroaster and Æsculapius also had similar experiences, as did Elijah and Adonis. Osiris rose from the dead and bore the title of "The Resurrected One," his ascension being celebrated in Egypt at the vernal equinox, as is the Christ's and as was Adonis'. Other saviors who rose from the dead were Dionysius, Herakles, Memnon, Baldur and Quetzalcoatl.

Modern Catholics are still taught the fables of the bodily ascension of Jesus, Mary the Virgin, and Mary the Magdalene and many other holy persons, as actual miraculous truths, not to be questioned nor denied.

Very good, but how can educated Catholics of today reconcile such *truths* with their actual scien-

tific knowledge? They know that the earth is spherical, that the stars and planets are members of solar systems, that outside the terrestrial atmosphere is nothing but vast space. There is no such place as a heaven anywhere in these celestial regions, and the zenith of any geographical situation changes every moment. Clouds are mere masses of vapor, not furniture for the repose of the glorified dead. Then whither did these adored beings ascend? Certainly, God in his love for them never flung them far into space to whirl about for eternity.

These Catholics also know the law of gravitation, which would not allow of such a method of transportation. But why ask these questions? No religious person is capable of thinking sensibly on the teachings of his faith, no matter how ridiculous. He accepts, as an adult, what he questions as a child.

While the idea of bodily ascension of the Christ was probably copied into his biography from that of Enoch (Gen. v., 24) and Elijah (2 Kings ii, 11), such stories form a large part of the annals of classical mythology, almost every hero of antiquity having been translated to the heavens when his earthly life was spent. The custom of converting the tombs of prominent Christians into shrines likewise aided this belief, as, it being impossible to discover the burial places of the most conspicuous, the idea arose that they had been physically removed to heaven.

The principal weakness of all the great theological systems now in practice is that they are terrestrial in their conception of God and man. Their foundations were laid at a period when mankind knew little, and cared less, about the planets; at a period when it was presumed that the sun, moon, and stars were either beneficent deities or natural objects placed in the firmament to light the world and please the eye of man by their beauty. Therefore God, as recognized in these systems, takes heed of naught else than this particular world. He totally ignores the other innumerable spheres of matter floating in space, many of which may support life. All his interests center on this infinitesimal portion of his creation. It is with the doings of the inhabitants of *this* planet that he is engaged. For this earth alone he creates man, animals and vegetables; to *this* alone, he sends his only son, or Savior; and it is here, in the purified state, that the souls of men shall eternally dwell after the great judgment.

Since science has proved that our solar system is but one of the many, and that in this system the earth is not the largest nor most important body, should not such absurd theological ideas be abandoned and a grander and vaster conception of the Deity be inaugurated? Should not organized theology turn to nobler thoughts and say with Paul, "When I was a child . . . I thought as a child;

but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (1 Cor. xiii, 11)?

All such doctrines as predestination, which are based upon the sin of Adam, are now anachronistic. The acceptance of the theory of evolution, which entirely destroys the reality of the mythical Adam, sweeps away his biography and leaves no foundation for such dogmas. If the Christian church desires to remain, she must cast aside these worthless doctrines, founded upon false hypotheses, when the minds of men were in darkness regarding the origin of species, and when they saw in these the only solution of their problem.

Having accomplished his ascension and entered on his eternal kingdom, one of the Christ's attributes is that of judging the dead. This idea undoubtedly came from the Alexandrian school of theology, where so many of the Christian theories were promulgated, for one of the best-known attributes of Osiris was that of the judge, and he was generally represented as seated on his throne of judgment, bearing a staff (the crozier of the modern bishop) and holding the crux ansata. Buddha is also supposed to be the judge of the dead.

In connection with the idea of the Christ as the divine judge of men, certain sects of Christians have advocated that of his return to earth at some future period, which will terminate all terrestrial life as it is known to-day, basing this belief upon

Jesus' own proclamation of his second advent, although in his prophecy he declared the coming of the kingdom of heaven to be soon after his death. He even told his disciples that they could not visit all the cities of Israel before he should come again (Matt. x, 23); that their own generation should see these things (Matt. xxiv, 34; Mark xiii, 30); that some of those then listening to him should live to see his kingdom (Matt. xvi, 28; xxiii, 36; xxiv, 34; Mark viii, 38; Luke ix, 1-27; xxi, 32). Such were his words, and it seems strange that people, believing these words, can still regard him as a very part of God. Such improbabilities did Jesus gradually grow to preach, and so wild did he become in his exhortations that even his disciples at times appear to have believed him mad (Mark iii, 21), an opinion in which his enemies agreed (Mark iii, 22; John vii, 5-20; viii, 48-52; x, 20). They certainly had good cause for their suspicion. Was not his conduct in cursing the fig tree for not bearing fruit out of season an act of lunacy (Matt. xxi, 19-20; Mark xi, 13-14), and likewise his arrogant assertion of the power of faith (Matt. xvii, 20; xxi, 21; Mark xi, 23; Luke xvii, 6)? It is, however, quite probable that this idea of a second advent was copied from the Persian theology, it being one of the tenets of the Zoroastrian religion that in the end Ormuzd, God of Light, should conquer Ahri-man, God of Darkness, and that he should then summon the good from their graves, remove all

evil from the face of nature, and permanently establish the kingdom of righteousness and virtue upon the earth.

But such ideas are not unique to Christians and Persians. The Hindus believe that Vishnu will have another avatar; the Siamese live in constant expectation of the second coming of Codom; the Buddhists are looking forward to the return of Buddha; the Jews are awaiting the messiah; and the disciples of Quetzalcoatl expected that deity's second advent—and most unfortunately thought their dream realized on the arrival of the Spaniards, who took advantage of their consequent submissiveness to exterminate them.

VII.—MIRACLES.

It is customary among orthodox Christians to assert that the godhead of their Christ was fully proven by the many miracles attributed to him in the New Testament. But one must not forget that the performance of miracles is one of the most common attributes of founders of new sects, and one which all religious charlatans claim. Krishna lulled tempests, cured lepers, and restored the dead; Buddha, Zoroaster (who walked on water on his way to Mount Iran to receive the law), Horus, Æsculapius, and innumerable others did likewise. Mohammed, not content with miracles of the omnipotent physician type, juggled the moon through his sleeve. Even to-day faith in miracles

is not dead, and miracle-working attributes have been claimed for Mrs. Eddy, founder of Christian Science, Dowie, founder of Zion City, and Sandford, leader of the Holy Ghost and Us.

There can be no doubt in the mind of a student of comparative theology that Moncure D. Conway was correct when he stated in his essay on Christianity that "among all the miracles of the New Testament not one is original. Bacchus changed water into wine. . . . Moses and Elias also fasted forty days. . . . Pythagoras had power to still waves and tempests at sea. Elijah made the widow's meal and oil increase; Elisha fed a hundred men with twenty loaves. . . . As for opening blind eyes, healing diseases, walking on water, casting out demons, raising the dead, resurrection, ascension, all these have been common myths—logic currency of every race."

"One of the best attested miracles of all profane history is that which Tacitus reports of Vespasian, who cured a blind man in Alexandria by means of his spittle, and a lame man by the mere touch of his foot, in obedience to a vision of the god Serapis," says Hume in his "Essay on Miracles," and we might here mention the numerous attested cures resulting from the laying on of royal hands by divinely appointed sovereigns.

The rulers of France, Aragon, and England touched for scrofula, this practice being continued by the latter from the period of its origin with Ed-

ward the Confessor until the accession of William the Third, whose good sense put an end to it. James the Second, the last practitioner of this art, had so great a belief in his curative powers that he set aside certain days on which he touched the afflicted from his throne at Whitehall, while the sufferers came in throngs to kneel at his feet. The princes of the house of Austria likewise held divine power and were supposed to be capable of casting out devils and curing stammering by the touch of their aristocratic fingers.

Numerous cases are narrated in which Jesus, by simply touching the person of the afflicted, effected instantaneous cures. Such were those of the leper (Matt. viii, 2-3; Mark i, 40-42; Luke v, 12-13); the curing of Peter's mother-in-law of a fever (Matt. viii, 14-15; Mark i, 30-31; Luke iv, 38-39), although in the Luke version he "rebuked" the fever; and the opening of the eyes of two blind men (Matt. ix, 27-30). Another method seems to have been by allowing the ill to touch him or his garments (Matt. ix, 20-22; xiv, 36; Mark iii, 10; v, 25-34; Luke vi, 19; viii, 43-48). At other times he simply told the patient, or the agent of the patient, that faith had effected the cure, as with the centurion's servant (Matt. viii, 5-13; Luke vii, 2-10) and the daughter of the Canaanite (Matt. xv, 22-28; Mark vii, 25-30); or told the stricken to hold forth a withered arm or pick up his bed and walk, by which command the cure was com-

pleted (Matt. ix, 2-7; xii, 10-13; Mark ii, 3-12; Luke v, 18-25).

Among all primitive peoples, the principal cause of disease was supposed to lie in the displeasure of some deity toward the afflicted person, who was punished by this deity for some offense or neglect (Psalms xxxviii, 3). One of the favorite methods of the gods in afflicting was sending evil and tormenting spirits into the body of the victim. After more was learned of disease, this theory gradually diminished in strength as regarded some troubles, but for centuries it was the universal theory that mental derangements and nervous afflictions were solely due to demoniacal possession, and all priests and medicine-men resorted to various exorcisms, from the primitive banging of gongs and tooting of trumpets to scare away the spirit, to the prayers and sprinkling of holy water of the mediæval church to rid the patient of the unwelcome inhabitant of his body.

That Jesus believed in this demoniacal possession is undoubted, and he effected his cures by ordering or calling out the devil from the body of the possessed. For example, there is a story of Jesus driving devils into an innocent herd of swine (Matt. viii, 28-33; Mark v, 2-14; Luke viii, 26-34). We also find him casting out and rebuking devils in various instances (Matt. ix, 32-34; xii, 22-24; xvii, 14-18; Mark i, 23-24, 34; iii, 11; Luke iv, 33-36, 41; ix, 37-42).

In all probability, these medical miracles of Jesus were copied from older legends by his biographers. But, even if they actually occurred, they were not miracles at all, for a miracle must be, in the very meaning of the word, performed by the suspension of a natural law, and from all gospel accounts the mental therapeutics of the Christ were performed, if at all, in perfect accordance with well-established psychological laws. They had been performed years before his birth, and they have continued to be performed years after his death, even to the present time. Through the force of faith, the patients were placed in passivity (hypnosis) and treated by suggestions being impressed upon their subjective minds, when present; at a distance, they were cured by the telepathic suggestions conveyed from the healer to their subjective mentalities. There is no miracle here; it is merely a demonstration of telepathic and hypnotic phenomena, governed by psychic laws, and does not place the Christ on a higher intellectual plane than modern hypnotists and mental healers, who consciously and knowingly work within the dispensation of these laws. They are anything but proofs of the godhead of Jesus.

It would seem that the Pharisees had some such idea in mind when they demanded an astronomical miracle and requested "a sign from heaven." But, unable to comply, he evaded this performance by calling them hypocrites and "an evil and adulterous

generation," and saying, "There shall no sign be given unto this generation" (Matt. xii, 38-39; xvi, 1-4; Mark viii, 11-13; Luke xi, 16, 29; John ii, 18, 24; vi, 30).

One of the commonest miracles ascribed to religious leaders of all sects and times, and one which never fails to convince witnesses and hearers of the authenticity of such a leader's claims, is that of restoring the dead to life. Such miracles have been so well attested that there seems little reason to suppose them entirely fictitious.

Everyone has heard of cases of catalepsy, and medical history teems with cases of "suspended animation"; in fact, the only actual proof of death is the entire decomposition of the vital organs; therefore, the cruelty and crime of embalming corpses before such a condition is apparent. Some undertakers actually insist upon embalming before such conditions, because the dead can then be made to "present a better appearance"!

There are numerous well-proven cases of people lying for days in cataleptic conditions, even with slight signs of decomposition due to restricted circulation, and then returning to renewed lives and perfectly healthy states. All Eastern travelers are familiar with the practices of Hindu fakirs who allow themselves to be buried alive for weeks, and are "resurrected" without having suffered. Therefore, it does not seem improbable that some such acts on the parts of various religious leaders may

have occurred which have excited wonder with the ignorant, and interest among the educated. The early Christians proclaimed many such wonderful works, albeit when challenged by a wealthy pagan to produce even one such case, in payment for which he would become a convert, a failure was the result.

Orthodox Christians proclaim that Jesus raised from death Jairus' daughter, in entire forgetfulness of the actual words accredited to their leader, which were, "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth" (Matt. ix, 24; Mark v, 39; Luke viii, 52), showing his opinion that she was in a cataleptic condition. While neither of the first three gospels says aught of the raising of Lazarus, we find it in John, who seems to have substituted it for the story of Jairus' daughter, which does not appear in his gospel. According to this hyperbolic and probably demented authority, Jesus raised Lazarus to life after he had been dead four days (John xi, 17), although Jesus maintained that Lazarus was *not* dead (John xi, 11). He declared that "this sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (John xi, 4), or, in other words, Jesus believed that the unfortunate Lazarus was obliged to undergo this frightful experience that his seeming resurrection might cause gaping among the vulgar, and add to the prestige of the miracle worker. For this reason, he purposely postponed going to

the dying man, whom he might have saved, that he might later have the glory of bringing him to life! Excellent ethics! Finally, however, when he did depart, he said positively, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep" (John xi, 11). Having arrived at the sepulchre, he approached it, groaning and weeping, in a most theatrical manner, such as would appeal to a highly strung audience, and cried in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" whereupon the dead man arose and came out (John xi, 33, 35, 43).

Now, this may have been catalepsy, and it may have been the strong voice and will of the Christ which caused the awakening, but, in all probability, if the affair ever occurred, it was a preconceived dramatic incident. All the actors were partisans of the professed messiah, and the whole story reads like a play, and undoubtedly the words "come forth" were the cue for the waiting man to appear.

It is by such contemptible methods that religions are established. If the tale were due to the imagination of the author of John, it is most discreditable to him, and places his hero in a very bad light. If it actually occurred, it shows Jesus as a vain-glorious boaster, anxious to show his power to the vulgar, and desirous of gaining a following by charlatanry, either by raising a hypnotized man or by creating a cheap melodrama.

It had been prophesied (2 Esdras xiii, 50) that the messiah should be a miracle worker, which

probably caused Jesus to affect this rôle when he accepted the part of the messiah, and to condescend to soil his mission by charlatanism, even to the raising of the dead in imitation of the former prophets, Elijah and Elisha (I Kings xvii, 16-24; II Kings iv, 18-37).

It is rather amusing to hear Theodore Christlieb, that well-named, sturdy old German supporter of orthodoxy, boldly assert in irrevocable simplicity and straightforwardness, in his "Modern Doubt and Christian Belief": "However much in other respects our opponents may differ, they all agree in the denial of miracles, and unitedly storm this bulwark of the Christian faith; and in its defense we have to combat them all at once. But whence this unanimity? Because *with the truth of miracles the entire citadel of Christianity stands or falls.* [The italics are his own.] For its beginning is a miracle, its author is a miracle, its progress depends upon miracles, and they will hereafter be its consummation. If the principle of miracles be set aside, then all the heights of Christianity will be leveled with one stroke, and naught will remain but a heap of ruins. If we banish the supernatural from the Bible, there is nothing left us but the covers" (pages 285-6).

VIII.—ATONEMENT AND SALVATION BY FAITH.

The dogma of the atonement which very naturally resulted from the theological interpretation

of the crucifixion, was readily accepted by the Christian church. The idea of averting disasters by sacrifice and thus causing one devoted victim to bear the load of the sins of others, in payment of which his death was acceptable, is one of the greatest antiquity, and we find sacrifices of various kinds offered to propitiate the deities, from the simple offerings of primitive man to the more elaborate sacrifices of a more complicated society. Finally came the idea of human sacrifice and then the culminating theory of the sacrifice of a divine being whose suffering should atone for all the sins of mankind. The belief of redemption from sin by the sufferings of a divine incarnation was general and popular centuries before the time of Jesus. In the temple of the moon the Albanians of the eastern Caucasus kept a number of sacred slaves. When one exhibited more than usual symptoms of inspiration, the high priest maintained him in the utmost luxury for a year, after which he was anointed and led forth to be sacrificed. After his death, the people stood upon the body as a purification ceremony, it being believed that the dead man was possessed of a divine spirit. The ancient Greeks were also familiar with the use of the human scapegoat, and it was customary at *Marsailles*, one of the busiest and most brilliant of the Greek colonies, to sacrifice an inspired man when the city was ravaged by the plague. All are familiar with the old Jewish practice of using the

scapegoat as the vehicle for the expiation of sins, and the whole theory of the atonement is little more than a modernized expression of the old idea that the sins of the community may be delegated to one agent to be sacrificed for the purification of the rest.

The prophecy, as it is called by John, made by Caiaphas, the high priest, "it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not" (John xi, 50; xviii, 14), which has been seized upon by the Christians as a reference to the vicarious atonement, is nothing more than the opinion of an ardent orthodox Jew that if Jesus were permitted to live and preach he would destroy the ancient faith and his converts would abandon the old religion. The words "it is expedient *for us*" qualify the whole statement. They signified that the priesthood would be without a following were he allowed to continue. The idea of a vicarious atonement for all the people would have been of no expediency whatever to Caiaphas and his class. They felt that if orthodoxy fell by Jesus' preaching, the Romans could easily crush them, for it was only by their union and the support of their ancient rites that they could form any front to the imperial government; it was by these alone that they had any political significance. Once dismembered, the Jews would be scattered to the corners of the earth (John xi, 52). This was the meaning of Caiaphas' words, and he was correct,

for such was the actual case. When orthodoxy was undermined, the Jewish nation was ruined.

The doctrine that God was angry with humanity because of its ancestors' transgressions, and would forgive its sins only on its acceptance of belief in the godhead of Jesus, is so entirely at variance with the Jewish teachings, which held that God freely forgave penitents on the confession of their sins (Ex. xxxiv, 6-7; Neh. ix, 17; Ps. ciii, 3; cxxx, 4; Is. xxxiii, 24; Dan. ix, 9) that it was never accepted by them.

Some old Christian writers believed that it was to the devil that the Christ was sacrificed. Their belief in the justice of the Supreme would not allow them to think that he demanded the sacrifice of an innocent for the sins of the guilty. Proclus of Constantinople, in the age of Austin, wrote that "the devil held us in a state of servitude, boasting that he had bought us. It was necessary, therefore, that all being condemned, either they should be dragged to death, or a sufficient price be paid; and because no angel had the wherewithal to pay it, it remained that God should die for us."

While such an idea is certainly of a higher moral nature than that which states that God sacrificed his own innocent son for man, it has the unfortunate result of attributing to the devil greater power than to God; for if the devil could demand and receive a part of the god-head as ransom, then God himself was weaker than the arch fiend.



ANUBIS OR THOTH.

He "weighed the defects and merits of departed souls, so that Osiris might judge and sentence them."



RAISING THE DEAD.

In the Egyptian religion, Horus, son of Osiris, raises the dead by communicating the life-giving principle. Note that he employs the *crux ansata*.

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Hislop, in his "Two Babylons," commenting upon the Chaldean doctrine that it was "by the works and merits of men themselves that they must be justified and accepted of God," utterly condemns it, and glories in the dogma of the atonement with great and illogical pleasure. Having reviewed the Egyptian belief that Anubis weighed the merits and defects of departed souls, so that Osiris, in accordance with the result, might judge and sentence them; and the Parsee belief that the Angel of Justice sat on the bridge of Chinevad, which connected heaven and earth, weighing souls to decide whether or not they should enter paradise, he condemns such theories as "utterly demoralizing," and asserts that no believer can ever have "any solid feeling of comfort, or assurance as to his prospects in the eternal world," which very fact would seem conducive to clean lives and good deeds. Then he continues in ecstasy to exalt the immoral Christian doctrine of "justification by faith alone," which he declares *alone* "can produce a life of loving, filial, hearty obedience to the law and commands of God," and by which man may reach salvation "absolutely irrespective of human merits, simply and solely through the righteousness of Christ."

This is one of the most absurd and immoral doctrines of all the absurd and immoral doctrines of Christianity, and one which leads to all varieties of crime and misery. A man who believes that simple faith *alone* is a perfect and acceptable pass-

port to eternal bliss will take no pains to lead either a decent or useful life. He is at liberty to commit all the crimes known to his nature; he may murder, steal, rape, and lie with impunity, for his faith in Christ will save him from his well-deserved punishment; while a man of high ethical standards and immaculate moral principles, who spends his whole life in self-sacrifice for the progress of humanity is doomed to damnation, unless he believe! What a horrible doctrine! What a blasphemous conception of the justice of God!

Every student of comparative theology knows that such views of atonement were centuries old at the date of the supposed birth of the Christ, and that all sorts of sacrifices were made at the altars of different gods with the same idea of atonement; but, aside from this, is there not something cowardly and mean in trying to shirk the responsibilities of one's actions upon either an animal, a man, or a god? Is it not contemptible to suppose that the death and suffering of another will allow one to go unpunished, or that such suffering is a license for humanity to sin? All that is ridiculous, blasphemous, and illogical appears in this stupid dogma.

IX.—THE TRINITY—MARIOLATRY.

The dogma of the trinity, which was introduced, strongly advocated, and finally successfully lobbied through the famous Council of Nicæa in 315, by that astute theological politician Athanasius, Bishop

of Alexandria, split the Christian church in twain and threw Europe into turmoil and bloodshed.

Athanasius was the leader of the Alexandrian school of Christian theology which drew its inspirations and ideas largely—one might almost say, exclusively—from ancient Egyptian sources. The Egyptians were an essentially religious people whose deistic ideas were surrounded by ceremony, priest-craft, and mysticism, all of which made such a deep impression upon the pliant minds of the Alexandrian Christians that they molded their new faith in the form of their old.

The Egyptians highly revered the number three, which they generally represented under the form of a triangle. To the Egyptians nothing could be perfect or complete unless it was of three component parts. Therefore, their gods were generally grouped in sets of three, many cities having their own especial trinities. Horus was divided into three persons, and Osiris, Isis and Horus were worshiped under the sign of the triangle.

But Egypt was not alone in her trinitarian ideas. The theory of sex worship had a strong hold on all the peoples of antiquity, and it is not surprising to find similar religious expressions in India. One of the most prominent features of Indian theology is the doctrine of the divine triad governing all things. This triad is called the Tri-murti and consists of Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the preserver, and Siva, the destroyer. It is an inseparable unity

though three in form. The inhabitants of China and Japan, most of whom are Buddhists, worship God in the form of a trinity. The Persians have a similar triad composed of Ormuzd, the creator, Mithras, the son, and Ahriman, the destroyer. The ancient Scandinavians likewise worshiped a triple deity who was yet one god, and consisted of Odin, Thor, and Frey.

One of the many weak points in the doctrine of the trinity, and one that must be noticeable even to Christians, is that, according to the New Testament, the apostles themselves never seem to have recognized the divinity of Jesus, but always treated him as a human Jew like themselves. This attitude of the early Christian disciples is noted by Priestley, who remarks in his "Corruptions of Christianity" (page 136): "It can never be thought that Peter and the others would have made so free with our Lord, as they sometimes did, if they had considered him as their *maker*, and the being who supported the whole universe; and therefore must have been present in every part of creation, giving his attention to everything, and exerting his power upon everything, at the same time that he was familiarly conversing with them. Moreover, the history of the *temptation* must be altogether improbable in such a supposition. For what could be the offer of the kingdoms of this world to him who made the world, and was already in possession of it?"

Numerous texts which tend to affirm the humanity of Jesus have been stumbling blocks in the paths of the trinitarians, and they have taken great pains to explain away these embarrassing texts, even at the cost of much ingenuity and absurdity. Paul, the real founder of the faith, in his first epistle to Timothy, says: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the *man* Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. ii, 5); and again in his first epistle to John he remarks: "No man hath seen God" (1 John iv, 12). Such phrases as "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God" (Matt. xix, 17), and "But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God" (John viii, 40), do not appear to be fitting remarks for the second person of the trinity. Again, the words, "My Father is greater than I" (John xiv, 28), were likewise difficult of explanation by those who held that every member of the trinity is coequal, but Austin got around this by declaring that "Christ having emptied himself of his former glory, and being in form of a servant, was then less, not only than his Father, but even than himself"!

The same writer asserts that the words, "that the Son knew not the time of the day of judgment, but only the Father" (Mark xiii, 32), means that while Jesus did know something of the trinity, he would not make it known to others—thus making a downright liar of his God.

The whole of trinitarianism is epitomized in the phrase of Peter Lombard, who, having made the impossible arithmetical assertion that no one person of the trinity is less than the other two, says: "He that can receive this, let him receive it; but he that cannot, let him, however, believe it; and let him pray that what he believes he may understand."

Jesus having been ordained one of the godhead, the only begotten son of the most high god, the worship of his mother naturally followed; for who could reasonably refuse to bend the knee to the one virgin of all humanity, considered worthy of the honor of bearing the incarnate deity? It was all the easier for the Christian church to adopt this practice, that it had been one of the principal features of the ancient theologies. All nations have worshiped a pure, chaste queen of heaven, a personification of that beautiful celestial body that smiles so benignly down on earth every month. In every land the moon was worshiped as a mother goddess, pure, beautiful, and loving; for there is not the slightest doubt that the virgin queen of heaven, so commonly worshiped by all nations, was merely a personification of the moon.

Isis, mother of the Egyptian savior Horus, was worshiped as a virgin and was styled "Our Lady," "Queen of Heaven," "Mother of God," "Intercessor," and "Immaculate Virgin." She was commonly represented with the divine infant seated on



ISIS AND HORUS.

The Egyptians frankly surmounted the effigies of their Virgin Mother with the figure of a fish, the form of which suggests the reason. The fish was associated with Isis, representing the female element in creation. It is associated with the *dies Veneris* (day of Venus). Friday is fish day, and Friday is named after Friga, a goddess of the ancient Scandinavians, Anglo-Saxons, and Germans, corresponding to the Roman Venus. That Roman Catholics profess to eat fish on Friday by way of abstinence in commemoration of the crucifixion does not mislead those acquainted with the antiquity of the symbol.

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her lap, or standing on a crescent moon, and having a glory of twelve stars about her head.

With the adoption of the worship of Isis to Christianity, the crescent moon became a sacred symbol of Mary, who was often portrayed standing upon one. It was held peculiarly sacred by the Greek church and a large crescent moon of gold adorned the dome of St. Sophia at Constantinople. When the city fell in 1453 before the Turkish arms, the Sultan adopted the crescent as a symbol of his victorious power and as a humiliation to his Christian enemies, and thus again the religious significance of the crescent changed, and as an emblem of a Mohammedan power soon came to be regarded by the forgetful Christians with horror and a deadly hatred.

The ancient Chaldees believed in a celestial virgin-mother to whom the erring sinner might appeal, and Shin-moo, the mother goddess, occupies a conspicuous place in Chinese worship. The Babylonians and Assyrians worshiped a goddess called Mylitta, whose son Tammuz is said to have arisen from the dead.

In India they have worshiped for ages Devaki, the mother of Krishna, and Maya, the mother of Buddha, both of whom are represented with the infant saviors in their arms. Their statues, similar to the Christian madonnas, are found in Hindu temples, and their portraits are always accompanied by halos.

Sochiquetzal, mother of Quetzalcoatl, was worshiped in Mexico as the mother of their crucified savior. As queen of heaven and the chaste and immaculate protectress of women, the Greek Hera and her Roman prototype, Juno, were worshiped by the ancient classical world, while the virtuous Diana of Ephesus held a similar place in Phœnician mythology.

All the ancient beliefs in the virgin queen of heaven and her miraculous child probably had more or less effect on the growth of virgin worship in the Christian church; but it was undoubtedly Egyptian influence which was most powerful in the adoption of it, just as it was in regard to the trinitarian dogma. The worship of Isis and Horus was introduced into Rome during the early days of the empire and was readily accepted. And with its introduction came those basalt images of the goddess and her child which have since been adopted by the Christians as ancient representations of Mary and Jesus, albeit they are as black as Ethiopians. Many centuries before, the worship of the Greek goddess Hera had been instituted at Rome under the name of Juno, and she was especially regarded as the chaste and immaculate protectress of women. And it was the combination of the worship offered to these two deities that the Christian church condensed into the worship of the mother of Jesus, to which it added the attributes of Diana, making Mary the patroness of chastity as well as fruitful-

ness! In Dante's day it was customary to invoke the Virgin Mary at childbirth just as Juno Lucina was invoked by the pagan ancestors of the Italians.

The worship of the virgin as *theotokos*, the mother of god, was promulgated at the general council of Ephesus, which was called by the Emperor Theodosius II in 431, and, after that date, and up to the present time, we find this lowly Jewish peasant girl delineated in all the insignia of royalty and portrayed in the most beautiful and patrician type of classical beauty.

With the adoration of Mary rose the legend that she, too, had ascended bodily into heaven and was there crowned by her son and bidden to sit eternally upon his right hand that she might plead with him to mitigate the punishments of sinners, thus allowing that the judgment of this second member of the holy trinity might be fallible, or at least open to influence.

Having raised the virgin to this immense height, the natural sequence was to go a step farther and grant to her also immaculate origin. This idea was first noticed in the eleventh century and steadily grew until in 1494 Sextus the Fourth officially recognized it and gave it the solemn sanction of the church, and in July, 1615, Paul the Fifth instituted the office commemorating her immaculate conception. Virgin worship has continued to grow and flourish, and even so late as 1854, Pius the Ninth

issued a bull officially declaring Mary the "Mediatrice" between Christ and the faithful.

Mary is not, however, the only intercessor that stands between man and his God. There is an immense horde of saints who also occupy positions of honor about the heavenly throne. These immortal semi-human beings are created by a decree of the Roman pontiff and their canonization has often been due to whimsical reasoning. That all the apostles, martyrs, and early Christian fathers should have been raised to this holy peerage is not so remarkable; but that such honor should have been conferred on the wicked, unscrupulous, and vicious Constantine, and his almost unknown mother Helena; on the powerful and warlike Charlemagne; and on the ambitious and ungrateful Thomas à Becket, seems strange to say the least.

X.—THE SAINTS—GOOD AND EVIL SPIRITS.

That this army of saints was originally created to replace the body of heroes and demi-gods of antiquity cannot be doubted. The compliance with which the church converted pagan deities into Christian heroes is perfectly well known, and it is shown in many ways. Ancient statues were declared to represent newly canonized saints to whom pagan attributes were unhesitatingly given—often most ridiculously. At the temple of Sebona, in Nubia, the Christians replaced the figure of the old god of the temple, which appeared in a fresco, by

that of St. Peter, thus depicting King Rameses the Second as presenting his offering to the Christian saint! The statue of Jupiter in St. Peter's at Rome has been declared that of the erstwhile fisherman, and its original thunderbolts have been replaced by the keys, which the Christian mythologists have filched from the god Janus to bestow on their revered patron in accordance with the promise of Matthew xvi, 19. Rome is full of proofs of this conversion of heathen to Christian deities. The temple formerly sacred to the Bona Dea was dedicated to the Virgin Mary; the church of Saint Apollinaris stands on the spot formerly dedicated to Apollo; and the temple of Mars was given to St. Martina. The very names of some of the saints have an old familiar sound—as St. Baccho, St. Quirinus, St. Romula, St. Redempta, St. Concordia, St. Nympha, and St. Mercurius.

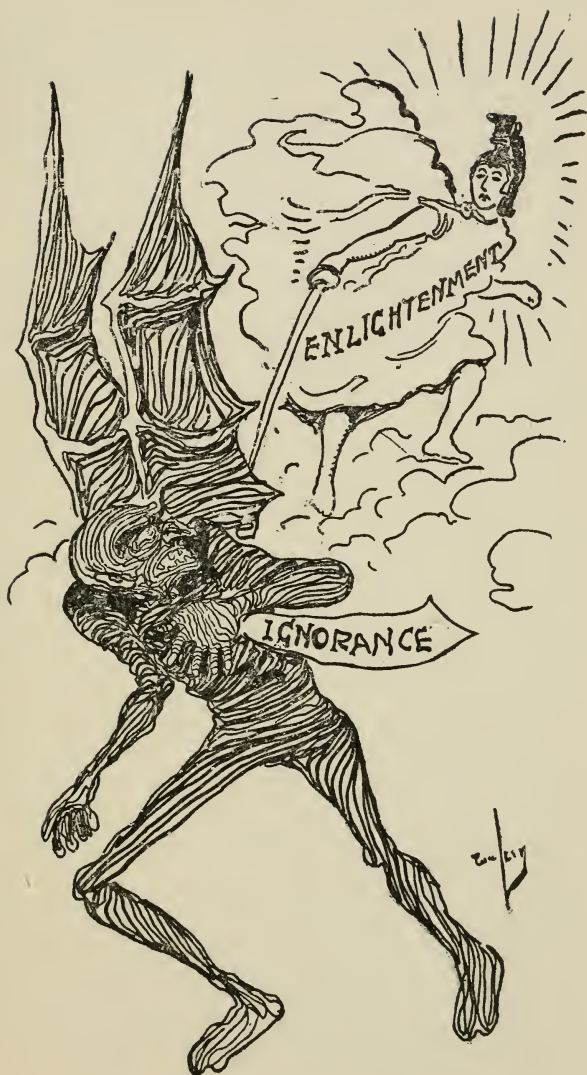
The Christian symbolism of its heroes has also a decidedly pagan flavor. The ancient winged lion of the Egyptian mythology is made to portray St. Mark; the sacred bull denotes St. Luke; while St. John is generously supplied with both the eagle of Jove and the hawk's head of Horus.

The idea of intercession, which is the principal attribute of all the saints, is also a very ancient religious theory and probably came with the other dogmas already mentioned from Alexandria, as we find that the Egyptians believed that some of their gods—and particularly the four gods of the dead—



THE PALLIUM.

The symbolism of that part of the dress of the priest and nun which conforms to the superimposed portion of the *cruz ansata* is too plain to need explanation. The idea of the creative parts and of birth is involved.



acted as mediators with the stern judge Osiris and attempted to turn aside his wrath and the punishment of sins.

Much akin to the saints, though differing from them in form and in never having been mortal, are the angels. These beings combine the wings of the Roman victories with the sweet voices of the Teutonic elves and the classical sirens, and are in many ways similar to the famous northern valkyries who wore shirts of swan plumage and hovered over Scandinavian battlefields to receive the souls of falling heroes. The Hindu *apsaras* and Moslem *houris* belong to the same family. A few years ago a bitter controversy arose in New York Episcopal circles as to the sex of these unearthly creatures, some strenuously advocating their masculinity, while others gallantly asserted that they were essentially feminine, but the earlier idea was that they were entirely sexless, combining the characteristic virtues of both sexes.

Apart from both saints and angels stands another figure in the Christian mythology—one, however, that has no actual counterpart in the ancient faiths. This is Satan. The classical religious systems had no such conception, their king of the dead being a gloomy and austere deity without any of the malicious or mischievous propensities of the more modern devil, and having no designs upon the welfare of mankind. The medieval conception of the devil was a grotesque compound of elements derived

from all the pagan mythologies which Christianity superseded. From the sylvan deity Pan he gets his goat-like body, his horns and cloven hoofs; his lameness was due to his fall from heaven, in imitation of the fall of the Roman Vulcan; and his red beard was taken from the lightning god Thor, as was also his power over the thunderbolts; while his pitchfork is the converted trident of Neptune.

That much of the absurd fabric of Christianity is built upon a belief in Satan cannot be denied, for the whole theology is based upon the necessity of a savior whose death atones for the sins of mankind, which were consequent upon man's fall from grace through the machinations of the devil. Had man never fallen, there were no need of a savior. Had man never been tempted, he would never have fallen, and in no words was the necessity of a belief in the devil more plainly set forth than by that most orthodox writer, des Mousseaux, in his "Moeurs et Pratiques des Demons," published in 1852. He says: "The Devil is the chief pillar of Faith. He is one of the grand personages whose life is closely allied to that of the church, and without his speech, which issued out so triumphantly from the mouth of the serpent, the fall of man could never have taken place. Thus, if it were not for him, the Savior, the Crucified, the Redeemer, would be but the most ridiculous of supernumeraries and the cross an insult to good sense!" In his preface to "Les Hauts Phenomènes de la Magie,"

des Mousseaux repeats this theory: "If magic and spiritualism were both but chimeras, we would have to bid an eternal farewell to all the rebellious angels now troubling the world; for thus we would have no more demons down here. . . . And if we lost our demons, we would lose our Savior likewise; for, from whom did that Savior save us? And then there would be no more Redeemer; for, from whom or what could that Redeemer redeem us? Hence, there would be no more Christianity." He evidently regards Satan as "the prince of this world" (John xii, 31; xvi, 11); "the god of this world" (Cor. iv, 4); and "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. ii, 2).

The universally accepted belief of Christendom in the almost absolute power of the devil was the cause of the most awful persecution of innocence that the world has ever seen. While the tortures of the heretics by the Inquisition had some cause of a political as well as ecclesiastical nature, the houndings of those accused of witchcraft and sorcery had no foundation save in superstition and gross ignorance. During the Christian era millions of persons have been destroyed for this crime in conformity to the command, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Ex. xxii, 18). The Roman church recognized and punished the crime; Luther approved of the burning of witches; the Scotch reformers did likewise, and the Puritans of New England delighted in the persecution.

While all religiously orthodox people accept the narrative of scriptural miracles with unquestioning faith and never cast a doubt on the greatest improbabilities so long as they are told of biblical heroes, these very people assign all the seeming supernatural affairs of post-scriptural times to the devil. Psychological phenomena which, if performed two thousand years ago by Jesus (such as the resurrection of Lazarus and the materialization to the Magdalene), they accept without hesitation, they brand as trickery or a delusion or Satan, when placed before them by a professed Spiritualist.

Witches and wizards were condemned to horrible deaths by the medieval church for performing the very identical acts for which the same church canonized departed saints and instituted offices for their adoration and worship; and modern Christians smile and sneer derisively at fortune tellers, but condemn in holy horror as heretics those who refuse to believe in the foreseeing powers of the ancient Hebrew prophets.

This Christian devil-worship, for it can be called little else, crept into Judaism during the Babylonian captivity, and was originally a recognition of the dual powers of good and evil, seemingly coequal. By placing Satan in opposition to God, in giving him eternal life, and endowing him with miraculous powers, and even allowing him to upset and vanquish the plans of God, Christians have made Satan equal, if not superior, to the Deity. A Puritan

bigot hanging witches in New England was admitting in the plainest manner his faith in Satan's power, though it never occurred to him for an instant that these curious happenings might be attributed to God. The power of God to perform miracles was then, as now, a matter of the past. With the Protestant Reformation came the idea that no longer did God interfere for the benefit of man. In the seventeenth century God had ceased to work by other than natural agencies. His miraculous powers, if not lost, were at least suspended. But not so Satan—that archfiend was as powerful as ever, if not more so. He could inflict magical tortures on God's divinely elect and make them writhe in agony. Pious Cotton Mather had ceased to believe in divine miracles, but he had no doubt of devilish ones, and it appears to all students of that dark and shameful period of our history that the belief was rampant among the majority that God was vanquished and Satan ruled. Never was belief in the dual principles of good and evil more surely set forth in ancient Persia than it was in New England by such harsh, cruel, and bigoted priests as Mather and Parrish.

Today, while all churchmen have grown more liberal, we still find both in pulpit and pew innumerable believers in the power of Satan to tempt and force erring humanity into wrong and sinful paths in miraculous salvation from which by God they have no faith. Today, instead of earthly and

present salvation by the Deity from the clutches of Satan, the belief seems prevalent that a post-mortem salvation is more efficacious, and that all that is required for eternal bliss is belief in the vicarious atonement of the Christ. To hear our orthodox friends declaim on the powers of Satan almost makes one ready to believe that God is dead and Satan rules supreme. Such is the blasphemy of demonic faith.

While Satan, as the arch-enemy, is somewhat similar to the Persian Ahriman, he is not alone in his wickedness. When Christianity came into power and supplanted paganism as the Roman state religion, it immediately debased all of the pagan gods, whom it did not appropriate to itself as saints, to devils and assigned them subordinate positions in hell, under command of the great Satan. And thus, all the beautiful water sprites, sylvan nymphs, spirits of the air, and other lesser deities, became the associates of wickedness, and, as such, continued, until a very recent date, to hold sway over the superstitious imaginations of the majority of Europeans.

The mediæval church likewise invented the famous *succubæ* and *incubi*, the former demons impersonating the beautiful nymphs of the old mythology and attacking the virtue of youths with their seductive arts, while the latter, in imitation of the ancient satyrs, sought the virginity of unsuspecting maidens; all of which may readily be learned of in ac-

counts of the many trials held by "the Holy Inquisition," in which such were condemned as had held intercourse with these demons.

In many cases, women swearing to have had intercourse with *incubi* were merely suffering from erotic and nymphomaniac hallucinations, while others may have found it a convenient excuse for explaining illicit impregnations. Men, falling under the charms of women, found it a convenient method for disposing of their loves, after the infatuation had passed, by declaring them *succubæ*; and monks, who had contracted venereal diseases, laid their sufferings to these same fair demons. In the case of the monks, however, the *succubæ* were often of purely hallucinatory origin, due to excessive asceticism together with the suppression of natural desires and a too faithful conformity to the ordinance of celibacy. Nymphomania is also prevalent in convents, owing to the unnatural sexual lives led by the nuns, who either remain truly chaste or abandon themselves to all sorts of debauchery and perverted lubricities. In former times these rages of demented women were supposed to have been caused by possession of demons, which tormented them at the orders of magicians, and advantage was often taken by the unscrupulous to accuse their enemies of the crime of sorcery, and thus cause their execution.

One of the most famous of these horrible affairs was that of Loudin in Poitiers, where the nuns of

the Ursuline convent, becoming hysterical and demented, swore themselves afflicted by Urbain Grandier, a priest of the local church, and despite the attempts of the rational bailiff and sensible civil lieutenants, some enemies of the curé among the exorcists managed to secure the arrest, torture, and final burning of the unfortunate man in 1632. Later, it was discovered that, being personally attractive, handsome and gallant, Grandier, who never denied his numerous amours, had incurred the enmity of the Loudin nuns by entirely ignoring their advances; and hell hath no fury like a woman scorned! These libidinous women, constantly brooding over disappointment to their fond hopes, gave such a character of demonic possession to their neurosis that advantage could be taken of it by rival priests to rid themselves of an envied enemy. The writhings, gesticulations, convulsions, etc., of these unfortunate women, combined with the indecency of their actions on the approach of the exorcists (caused merely by the approach of a male), were believed by the vulgar to be demonstrations of demonic possession. Other nuns, seeing the attention and notoriety thus gained by these sisters, although themselves free from dementia, could not resist the temptation to simulate its forms and thus acquire renown for themselves.

Thus arose those horrible demonical scenes which occupied the attention of all Europe during the seventeenth century and seemed to point to the pos-

session of all convents by devils. And not convents alone, for other hysterical women, without the walls, possessed of the same rage for notoriety, took up the character of demonic possessed and spread the vulgar superstition until it seems that every woman in Europe who was so unfortunate as to be in any way afflicted with tendencies to hysteria, neurosis, idiocy, or dementia of any character whatever, came to be regarded as in the power of a demon, which in turn was the slave of some magician. And thus, through the influence of an ignorant and unscrupulous priesthood, a powerful engine was placed at its disposal for the removal of enemies. Executions for sorcery continued until their very number and barbarity palled, and the wearied people were ready for their abolition, when the Reformation opened and with the accession of power, Protestantism, in this matter, at least, swayed the masses to reason once more.

Dr. Figuier, in his "Histoire du Merveilleux," explains these demonical possessions as entirely due to hypnotism, and, ignoring the nymphomaniac theory, asserts that the exorcists themselves hypnotized the nuns for their own glory and for purposes of vengeance. One page 234 of volume I he says: "L'appareil déployé par les exorcistes, leurs adjurations, leurs gestes imposants et forcenés, tenaient lieu des manipulations que nos magnetiseurs emploient pour endormir leurs sujets. Operant sur des jeunes filles nerveuses, malades, mélancoliques,

les exorcistes produisaient chez elles une partie des phénomènes auxquels donné lieu le *somnambulisme artificiel*.”

The universal belief in evil spirits became a powerful engine for the advancement of the church. By its use all those who were inimical to the church could be put out of the way as comrades of devils, and, furthermore, the theory was advanced that only by the exorcisms of the church could man be protected from malevolent powers. Holy water, signs of the cross, repetitions of the name of Mary had full power to annul all the machinations of the demons, but only in the hands of the true believers was this efficacious. To preserve one from the dangers of demonic spite, absolute orthodoxy was essential, and thus a great premium was imposed upon strict adherence to the church. Thus was gross superstition a most powerful factor in the growth and spread of Christianity. According to Lecky: “There was scarcely a village or a church that had not, at some time, been the scene of supernatural interposition. The powers of light and the powers of darkness were regarded as visibly struggling for the mastery. Sainly miracles, supernatural cures, startling judgments, visions, prophecies, and prodigies of every order, attested the activity of the one, while witchcraft and magic, with all their attendant horrors, were the visible manifestations of the other. . . . Tens of thousands of victims perished by the most agonizing and pro-

tracted torments, without exciting the slightest compassion. . . . Nations that were separated by position, by interests, and by character, on this question were united." And the germ of all this evil lay in the very foundation of Christianity—the faith held in supernatural agencies.

The belief in the supernatural agency in the temptation of Eve, the temptations of Jesus, the possibility of the miraculous conception, and the miracles of Christ, were but stepping-stones to faith in innumerable invisible but potent powers. One who can conscientiously believe in the supernatural as found between the covers of the Bible can, by but a slight stretch of the imagination, believe any preposterous tale that is woven about a supernatural agency. If one can believe a woman can conceive without contact with semen, one can believe some old woman can dry up his cow. If one can believe that Jesus actually raised Lazarus from the dead, one can believe that a man can kill him by sticking pins in a wax effigy. If one can believe that Elijah ascended to heaven in a fiery chariot, one can believe that Goody Jones rode a broomstick through the air. If one can believe that the Christ was actually tempted by the devil, one can believe in *succubæ* and *incubi*. It is all a matter of logical reasoning. As soon as a Christian's intellectual powers develop to a point where he can find no place for the miraculous in the world about him, he begins to doubt that which was in the world

before him; but, regarding theological tales, he either places them in another category or ignores them, unless faced with them, when he crawls and calls them "sacred mysteries." That an old woman can sour his milk or kill his child by the evil eye he does not believe, for reason has taught him otherwise. And for the same reason he would not believe his daughter if she told him she was pregnant with a miraculous child. He did not believe Josephine Woodbury when she made a similar statement in Boston a few years ago. But he does believe it of Mary, because it is a "holy mystery," and is in another category. He has inherited his faith from a long line of orthodox ancestors, and he has never stopped to consider it by the light of pure reason. It is fortunate for the dogma of the virgin birth that it took root when people believed such things, otherwise Mary would have been adorned with the scarlet letter.

Feasts, fasts and elaborate ceremonials were important features of the most ancient worships, and it is not, therefore, strange to find somewhat modified adaptations of them in the Christian church. For, wherever Christianity wandered and found firmly implanted religious theories and customs, it immediately gave them new significations and accepted them, until finally the greater part of paganism was gathered from all parts of the civilized world and amalgamated into one strong theological organization. Find-



JUDGING THE DEAD.

Like the Christian demi-god, the Egyptian deity Osiris is represented upon his judgment seat. His resurrection and ascension were celebrated in early spring, at about the time known in Christian countries as Easter.



VULCAN.

ing in almost every nation a festival at the winter solstice, in commemoration of the accouchement of the celestial, virgin queen of heaven, and the birth of the sun-god, the Christian fathers decided to adopt the 25th of December as the natal day of their Christ.

Mithras, Osiris, Horus, Bacchus, Adonis and Buddha were all said to have been born on this day, and it is the date of one of the greatest religious festivals of India, during which the people decorate their houses with garlands and make presents to relatives and friends; a custom adopted by the Christians in much the same manner as was that of the ancient German yule-log, burned in honor of the sun-god.

XI.—RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS AND RITES.

The winter solstice was also the time of the great Scandinavian festival in honor of Frey, son of Odin and Frigga, who was supposed to have been born at this time. The Jews, likewise, have a feast beginning on the 25th of December, which lasts eight days, and is in memory of the victory of the Maccabees over the Greeks. It is called the feast of Hanuca.

A great annual festival, called the "feast of lamps," was held by the Egyptians in the early part of the year in honor of the goddess Neith, during which lamps of oil were burned all night before the houses. This festival was renamed

Candlemas or the "purification of the virgin," and was adopted by the Christian church.

The ancient pagan inhabitants of Europe annually celebrated a spring festival which began with a week's indulgence in all kinds of sports and was called the *carne-vale*, or taking farewell of meat, because a fast of forty days immediately followed. In Germany this was held in honor of the Saxon goddess Hertha, or Ostara, or Eostre—as you may prefer to call her—whose name was adopted as Easter by the Christians as the name to be applied to the end of their lenten period. Among the Syrians it was the custom to celebrate an elaborate festival at the time of the spring equinox in honor of the glorious Adonis, beloved of the great goddess Astarte. This worship was later introduced into Greece, whence it traveled to Rome with the majority of Grecian mythological theories. It was later introduced into Egypt, where it was annually celebrated at Alexandria, the cradle of Christianity, until the latter part of the fourth century, when a Christian significance was given it.

The myth of Adonis is too well known to need repetition here, and its parallel to that of the Christ is readily seen. The ceremonies now held in Rome at Easter are but slightly different from those held there at the same time of year centuries ago. This similarity was explained away by the assertion of the Christian fathers "that

a long time before there were Christians in existence, the devil had taken pleasure to have their future mysteries and ceremonies copied by *his* worshipers"—a very simple and satisfactory explanation!

That Easter is in reality an astronomical festival in honor of the sun-god seems conclusive from the fact that it occurs on no settled date, but takes place on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the passing of the vernal equinox, which, for convenience, is fixed at March 21.

Among the many Christian fasts of pagan origin none is more familiar to all than the weekly Friday abstinence from meat. Under the old mythology, Friday, the *dies veneris*, was sacred to Venus, and on that day the devout worshipers of this charming goddess ate nothing but fish, as all the "finny tribe" were sacred to her, and considered proper diet for those that worshiped at her shrine.

When the Bishop of Rome assumed the power and dignity of head of the western church, he also assumed all the prerogatives of the ancient *pontifex maximus* (who was supposed to be the direct physical communication between the people and the deities), and many of the attributes of the emperors. He adopted the gorgeous vestments of the ancient high priest and even stretched forth a foot to be kissed, as Helio-gabalus had done. He considered himself capa-

ble of raising such as he saw fit to semi-divine honors by canonization, just as the emperors had raised altars to their favorites, and he claimed precedence over every monarch of the earth, just as they also had done. But the Roman pontiff is not unique in his position of viceroy of the deity. The grand lama of Thibet is considered as the representative of Buddha and has the power of dispensing divine blessings on whomsoever he will. Taoism also has a pope who resides on the Lung-hû mountain, in the department of Kwang-hsi, who bears the surname Chang and is called "Heavenly Master."

The best known rites of the Christian church are probably those of baptism, confession and communion, with which are associated the ideas of purification, prayer and transubstantiation.

The rite of baptism, like all ideas which refer to the purification of sin by water, is a most ancient one. Rivers, as sources of purification, were at an early date invested with a sacred character, and every great river was supposed to be permeated with a divine essence and its waters were believed to cleanse from all mortal guilt and contamination. The Ganges and the Jordan are well known examples of this faith, and vases of Ganges water are to be found in almost every dwelling in India for religious purposes. In Mongolia and Thibet children are named by the priests, who immerse them in holy water while

reading a prescribed prayer, after which the name is bestowed. Baptism preceded initiation into the mysteries of both the Egyptian Isis and the Persian Mithras, and was held to be the means of regeneration and of remission of sins.

Tertullian, noticing the great similarity between the Christian and pagan baptisms, naïvely remarked that the devil "baptizes some, of course, such as believe in him and are faithful to him; he promises expiation of sins from the bath, and, if my memory of Mithras serves me still, in this rite he signs his soldiers on their foreheads."

Much akin to baptism is the general use by the Christian church of so-called holy water, which is ascribed to Pope Alexander the First, who ruled during the first century. This pontiff probably did little more than officially to condone, by his papal sanction, the very general use of lustral water, which the Romans had inherited from their pagan ancestors; for lustral water was always kept in vases at the entrance of the Roman temples, that those passing in and out might sprinkle themselves with it; and the priests used a sprinkling brush called the *aspersorium* with which they threw the purifying water over their congregations, in the same manner as modern priests use the hyssop. The druids gave, or sprinkled upon, the worshipers water in which mistletoe had been immersed or steeped.

Similar to the idea of purification by baptism is that of purification by confession and prayer. The idea involved in confession is that the declaration of the crime relieves the conscience of its criminality. In Iceland and among the Scandinavian and Teutonic peoples in general, murder ceased to be a crime when the slayer had declared himself guilty. Among the Jews confession was practiced, the purpose of its institution being that the priest might judge of the sacrifice required for the expiation of the sin committed, and, also, that every crime might be rehearsed over the scapegoat. The Peruvians confessed their sins to their priests with the exception of the Incas, who confessed to the sun. At the famous Samothracian mysteries a priest was especially charged with hearing the confessions of great criminals and with granting them absolution.

Among Protestant Christians confession is often made directly to the supreme deity in the form of prayer, which, like most other religious practices, is an eminently pagan custom. The Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, Persians, and most other ancient peoples offered sacrifices on the altars of their gods to propitiate them, and accompanied these offerings with prayers. Today, instead of presenting wines and viands to his god, the devout Christian offers verbal expressions of a contrite spirit or, more

often, asks a favor. He demands, begs, or advises through this method, according to his own nature and disposition.

The expression used in modern orthodox Protestant prayers, "through our Lord, Jesus Christ," is merely the concrete expression of the idea of mediation. The great supreme God was looked upon by most nations of antiquity as being too great, too sublime, too holy, to be addressed directly; and, in this lofty conception of the deity, they prayed for favors to mediators whom they created to request boons from the real ruler of heaven and earth.

Among the Hindus, supplications were addressed to the various apotheosized incarnations of Vishnu, rather than to the great Brahma; the Greeks made supplication to numerous lesser gods, rather than to Zeus; Persians addressed Mithras instead of Ormuzd; and the modern Romanist kneels to saints and martyrs, or Jesus or his mother, at whose shrines they place offerings which are bribes for favors; but almost never do they immediately supplicate the supreme God. In this they are certainly less blasphemous than their Protestant fellows, who do not hesitate to talk familiarly to God of the most trivial affairs.

Belief in the efficacy of prayer is an absurdity which owes its origin to a hereditary trait of humanity, descended through a long line of

superstitious ancestors. Primitive man prayed to his dead fathers for their good will, believing them more powerful in their post mortem state than during life. The ancients offered prayers at the shrines of their various gods and, among all nations, from time immemorial, deities have been supplicated to bestow gifts and avert misfortunes. The overcharged mind of the superstitious has ever found relief in expressing its troubles to the imaginary beings on whom it has bestowed superhuman attributes. All over the world, in all languages, have arisen various petitions to the deities, and still do they continue to arise. Savages pray to their idols, Moslems crouch facing Mecca to pray to Allah, Hindus pray to the avatars of Vishnu, and all Christendom besieges the throne of God in constant supplication.

Can any rational mind believe that these numerous, varied and even antagonistic petitions will be answered? Some are praying for rain, some for a cessation of it, some for health, some for happiness, some for material blessings, and some for spiritual welfare. Vain repetitions! The material universe is governed by immutable laws which all the breath in creation wasted in prayer cannot in any way affect; while such spiritual benefits as morality, character and virtue "are equally dependent on the invariable laws of cause and effect." Prayers for forgive-



BACCHUS.

The first miracle attributed to Jesus, that of changing water into wine, was in imitation of this Roman deity—Dionysus in Greek mythology. Because as the god of wine his disciples drank to his memory, Christians celebrate their savior in the wine of the sacrificial ceremony of mass and communion.



KRISHNA.

Otherwise Christna, this Hindu savior, at a date earlier than 900 B. C., anticipated in his life much of the history of the Christ.



A BUDDHIST "TEMPTATION."

ness of sins are perhaps the most common, as well as the most absurd, that are daily offered. Sin is the breaking of a material or moral law, and no law can be broken without the transgressor's incurring the penalty. Is it not absurd of the church to preach the immutable justice of God, and at the same time declare that sinners may escape punishment by prayer?

Communion, or union with the deity, is an idea of great antiquity and has been common to all religions; although the methods practiced are numerous and varied. The more common mode, however, is by the consumption of consecrated foods and drinks, with the idea that these have acquired (by the act of consecration) a divine character of which the communicant becomes a partaker through their reception. The dogma of the eucharist was instituted many centuries before the Christian era and was believed in by the ancient Egyptians (from whom the Christians probably received it through the Alexandrian school), who, at the time of the celebration of the resurrection of Osiris, ate a sacred wafer, which, after consecration by a priest, was declared the flesh of the god. In ancient Greece, bread was worshiped as Ceres and wine as Bacchus; and, when the devout ate the bread and drank the wine, they claimed they were eating the flesh and drinking the blood of their deities. The ancient Mexicans used bread of

corn meal mixed with blood, which, after, having been consecrated by the priests, was given to the people to eat as the flesh of Quetzalcoatl, much to the surprise and horror of the first Spanish missionaries, who ascribed it to mockery of their holy eucharist due to Satan.

XII — THE EUCHARIST.

The primal origin of the eucharist probably occurred far back in the period of universal anthropophagy. Most savage and semi-savage peoples have practiced cannibalism because they believed that by eating the flesh of the dead they gained the qualities of the deceased. Just as some Africans eat tiger to become brave, savages ate their courageous foes to attain their virtues. Following this same idea further, the belief was established that by consuming the flesh of a god, supernatural powers might be acquired. Thus the early Christian missionaries to the New World found such customs in Peru and Mexico.

Father Acosta described one of these festivals which occurred annually each May in Mexico, wherein the statue of a god was made of dough, and "killed" by an arrow in the hand of a priest. The god was then broken in pieces which by means of "certain ceremonies . . . were blessed and consecrated for the flesh and bones of this idoll." These pieces the priest gave "to the people in manner of a communion who received

it with such feare, and reverence, as it was an admirable thing, saying that they did eate the flesh and bones of God."

Likewise came the idea that sacrifices to the gods in some way attained godlike characteristics, and so the Guatemalan priests ate the bodies of the sacrificed.

The words of the modern Roman priest, "hoc est corpus meum," which are supposed, by some magical influence, to cause the actual transubstantiation in the celebration of the eucharist, remind one forcibly of the dotting of the memorial Chinese tablet by a mandarin, by which official act the spirit of the departed, to whom it is dedicated, is presumed to take up residence in the new abode.

As a logical deduction from a given hypothesis, any Roman priest is greater than the virgin. She conceived God but once, while the priest may through his mass create the body of the Christ whenever he so desires. Every time a priest performs this function he is the father of God.

However, in spite of the absurdity of the practice, to deprive the communion of the real presence is to make it a senseless and useless ceremony. While the communicants believe in the efficacy of the wafer as the actual body, there is reason for absorbing it, as they thus unite themselves with the actual spirit of the Christ. But

the moment this dogma is rejected, the rite becomes futile, and nothing is more ridiculous than its perpetuation in the Protestant churches. The quibble that it is performed in memory of Jesus is a fallacy. In Unitarian churches it is an ar-rant absurdity (one that is retained in many cases simply because the old historical churches of that denomination have inherited fine old communion plate which is proudly displayed), and one can only respect and admire Ralph Waldo Emerson's stand in the matter, when he preferred to relinquish his remunerative and honorable pastorate in the Second Church of Boston (the only pulpit he ever filled) rather than celebrate this anachronistic and indefensible rite.

Jerome carried his reverence for the eucharistic bread* so far that he considered that the table on which it was consecrated, together with the cloth in which it was wrapped, and the other utensils connected with its service, were to be worshiped with equal respect as that given the body and blood of the Savior. This theory led to the consecration of altars, which by a decree of the Council of Epaone, in 517, in imitation of the Jewish and pagan sacrificial altars, were or-

leavened
*The use of ~~unleavened~~ bread by the Greek church caused great disputes between it and the Latin in the eleventh century, but the latter finally accepted it on the argument that as the Christ instituted the supper during the passover, he must have used it, as there was no leaven procurable at that time.

dered to be of stone, which material had been originally chosen as the most suitable material for the execution of the sacrifices, whose blood should flow over it, without danger of absorption.

Another of the ancient pagan ideas which took a strong hold upon Christianity and rose to an abnormal power during the middle ages was that of monasticism with its accompanying asceticism. There is scarcely a religion of ancient and modern times that does not recognize asceticism as an element of its system. Buddha taught his disciples a religion of abstinence, and, among the Buddhists, there are ordained and tonsured priests, living in monasteries under vows of celibacy, while there are similar asylums for women. Brahmanism also has its orders of ascetics and Hinduism has its fakirs. Fasting and self-denial were observances required by the Greeks of those who desired initiation into the mysteries; the Jews observed many fasts; and the Egyptian priests passed their novitiate in the deserts engaged in prayer and living in caves. Like many other Christian customs, the monastic habit probably came from Egypt, and it was considered by Gibbon to have had a potent influence on the fall of the western empire, in that it removed from active and useful life so many able-bodied men and women.

XIII.—SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY.

Having now shown that there is nothing new in Christianity; nothing in which it differs essentially from the older faiths; having shown that it brought no new ideas in its dogmas, practices, or morality, but a few words are necessary to explain its marvelous growth and rapid acceptance. Christianity grew so rapidly, and was adopted so readily in many parts of the world simply because it was so cosmopolitan and elastic. It went forth to proselyte in a very conciliatory manner, embracing and absorbing every deeply rooted theological idea and custom which obstructed its path, and, in every way, exerting itself to propitiate its converts. And it was not until it became strong and powerful and was well supported by fanatical adherents that it dared to assume the rôle of conqueror. Then, when the period of its strength was full, its tone changed and, strong in self-confidence, Christianity became militant and strode forth in armor to vanquish with the sword and fill the world with blood.

One of the reasons for the rapid acceptance of Christianity among the Romans and its remarkable growth in their dependencies was that for centuries the people had ceased to take their religion seriously. The vulgar masses, undoubtedly then as now, and at all times, unthinkingly swallowed all that was taught them of their deities, but the writ-

ings of cultivated men show clearly that for centuries the worship and reverence of their ancestral gods had but slight influence upon their ethical ideas.

Lucretius (95-52 B. C.), the exponent of the Epicurean doctrines, regarded the gods as the creations of human fear. Ennius (239-169 B. C.) translated and expounded the writings of Euhemerus (316 B. C.), wherein it was claimed that all the ancient myths were historical events, that the gods were originally kings who were accorded post mortem worship by their grateful subjects. The Stoics regarded the gods as personifications of the different attributes of nature. Cicero adopted the Platonic conception of the deity as mind freed from all taint of matter, while Ovid made the gods ridiculous in his mocking "Metamorphoses," and, in his lascivious descriptions of their amours, degraded them forever as ethical models. Horace likewise mocked them.

The glorious military conquests of the Roman arms in Asia and Africa brought the soldiers into contact with alien religions, and the germs instilled in the minds of the armies spread among all the peoples of Rome's domains, upon their return. Likewise the ever-increasing influx of foreigners, bringing with them their native gods and theological systems, had more or less influence, while the apotheoses of the emperors gave a powerful impetus to the degradation of the ancient faith.

The vulgar clung to their ancient shrines and the cultured sneered at them for so doing. They bent the knee in public and they laughed mockingly in private. In such a state was the religion of Rome when the first Christians began to proselyte; and on such fertile ground, amid the ruins of an ancient faith, the seed readily took root and rapidly spread out. Any other faith, supported by sturdy, conscientious and indomitable missionaries, would have done the same. The old faith was dead and the time was ripe for something new and vigorous.

As the civilized world was then under one powerful government, which allowed no political discord within its borders and which granted absolute religious freedom, the Christian missionaries could travel in safety from one province to another and, without fear of molestation, could propagate their doctrines among the people through the media of the Greek and Latin tongues, which were universal throughout the empire. Early Christianity was merely a sect of Judaism, and as the Jews were scattered all through the Roman provinces, every Jewish settlement having its synagogue which the Christian missionaries visited in order to preach their message, "the new religion, which was undertaken in the name of the God of Abraham, and Moses, found a sphere already prepared for itself." The new sect was naturally welcomed by the Roman Jews, as it was a purely national religion, founded upon the teachings of a Jewish peasant for the

Jewish people. There is nothing in the gospels which portrays Jesus as anything other than a prophet to his own nation. While his moral doctrines, like all ethical principles, are applicable to all races, he was ignorant of all peoples save his own, and it was to them alone that he preached, proclaiming his messiahship for them only. He was content to remain within the boundaries of his own country and expressed no wish nor desire to visit other lands. Had it remained as Jesus desired, Christianity would never have been separated from Judaism. It was owing to the direct disobedience of Peter and Paul in this particular, that Christianity spread among the gentiles (Acts xiv, 46). In sending forth his apostles to preach his mission, Jesus commanded, "Go not into the way of the gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. x, 5-6). When appealed to by the Canaanite woman, he said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. xv, 24). It was to the Jews that he spoke when he said, "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matt. v. 13). "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. v, 14). It was in reference to the twelve tribes of Israel that he so numbered his apostles (Matt. xix, 28). And it was of his compatriots that he thought when prophesying his resurrection, "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come" (Matt x, 23). There is no thought

of a universal mission in all this. His mission and sacrifice were for his own nation, and, as Paul writes to Titus, he "gave himself that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people" (Tit. ii, 14).

Thinking probably of the political strife which his messiahship would cause, Jesus said, "I came not to bring peace, but a sword" (Matt. x, 34), in which remark he was a truer prophet than the heavenly host that sang at his birth "on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke ii, 14). "The Church of Rome has shed more innocent blood than any other institution that ever existed among mankind," says Lecky in his "Rationalism in Europe" (vol. ii, p. 40). The Holy Office in Spain burned over 31,000 persons and condemned to punishment hardly less severe 290,000. During the reign of Charles the Fifth 50,000 heretics were executed in the Netherlands and on February 16, 1508, the Holy Office condemned all the inhabitants, numbering 3,000,000 of people, to death as heretics, and Philip the Second confirmed the decree and ordered its instant execution.

The whole history of Christianity, in all its forms, reeks with blood and smells to heaven with carrion. In the first centuries Christians persecuted pagans or, divided among themselves, persecuted each other as heretics. Later arose the feuds of orthodox and Arian, then came a united Christendom against Islam, followed by Protestant wars.

In these Catholics murdered, pillaged, and devastated Protestants and burned and tortured them as heretics by ecclesiastical tribunals; Protestants persecuted and executed Catholics and, divided among themselves, persecuted one another. In the sixteenth century Anglican Episcopalians persecuted Catholics and Nonconformists. In the seventeenth century Puritans persecuted Catholics, Episcopalians, and Quakers, and so on. The whole history of this religion is a long narration of blasphemous and degrading theories propagated by violence, hypocrisy and crime. Christian charity is a delusion which is found only among the persecuted, who, the instant the scale turns, become the ruling faction, forget its meaning, and hasten to avenge their sufferings in persecutions. No other religion has so bloody a history as Christianity. The old heathen religions went calmly on their way, indifferent to one another and showing the most perfect toleration. Rival gods of rival nations were worshiped in temples side by side, without conflict or ill feeling. Buddhists and Brahmins mildly flourish in proximity. But Christians who believe that the Christ was sacrificed for love of humanity, that their gospel is one of love, peace, and good will, vie with one another to outstrip the ferocity of wild beasts.

While many students believe that Jesus was a purely mythical being, without actual existence save in the brains of religious Christians, I see no rea-

son to doubt that a certain Jewish rabbi may have come out of the rebellious province of Galilee about the time of Herod. Such messiahs had come before him and such have succeeded him. Some of the messiahs subsequent to Jesus were: one who appeared in Persia in 1138, another in Arabia in 1167, and one in Moravia at the close of the twelfth century. Eldavid proclaimed himself messiah in Persia in 1199, Sabathai Tzevi assumed the title of "King of Kings" in 1666 and was executed at Constantinople by the Sultan. So late as 1829 there appeared in India the eight-year-old son of a peasant who was a wonderful serpent charmer and was called Marayum Powar. It was an ancient belief that the ability to handle serpents unharmed was a proof that one had become perfectly holy—absorbed in God! Therefore, numerous people came to believe Powar a god and in ten months ten thousand followers were about him, baptizing and performing miraculous cures—and his cult seemed well on the road to establishment when, over-confident of his power, he was bitten by a serpent and died. His followers, after vainly awaiting his resurrection, dispersed.

That Jesus' whole career is lost in encircling myth is no proof that the original figure never existed. There is plenty of historical evidence to show that the central portion of Europe was once ruled by a king named Karl, and we do not doubt this simply because a great cloud of myths has been

gathered about the name of St. Charlemagne, any more than we feel bound to believe that because he once lived he must now necessarily exist, sleeping in a mountain, until it shall be necessary for him to spring forth and save the German fatherland.

One set of students assert that the Christ was merely the personification of vegetable life, claiming that his death and resurrection typify the death and revivification of vegetation. Others hold that he is the modern phase of the eternal sun-god. To sustain this hypothesis the following allegorical interpretation of his supposed career is offered as an explanation. He was born on the early dawn of the twenty-fifth day of December, the day on which commences the sun's apparent revolution around the earth; his birth was announced by the brilliant morning star; his virgin mother was the pure and beautiful dawn; his temptation was his struggle with the adverse clouds which he dispersed; his trial, execution, and death were emblematic of the solar decline and crucifixion at the beginning of winter; his descent into hell was typical of the three days of the winter solstice; and his resurrection and ascension refer to the return of the sun after its seeming extinction.

I have now shown that among the great majority of the nations of antiquity, no matter as to how they may have differed in the details, all held one general idea of faith in a savior-mediator between man and the supreme deity. Some such medium

seemed necessary to them, for they had not reached that intellectual plane on which one feels able to hold direct communication with the creator. Modern Christianity, in all its forms, still panders to this ancient superstition that man must needs have an agent between himself and his God. He must have an intercessor between his weakness and God's power—and vengeance.

But when the human mind is freed from superstition and men learn that right living and a clean ethical code is all that is required, then they will cease to bow, either physically or mentally, to any humanly invented mediator, and their enlarged ideas of the justice of the supreme deity will prohibit any belief in impossible demi-gods. However, for the majority, that happy time of emancipation is still in the distant future, and, until its dawn lightens the general intelligence, men will continue to adore and supplicate the mediator whom inheritance and environment have taught them to revere, as Krishna, Buddha, Mithras, or the Christ, as the case may be.

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