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CHRISTIANITY
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ORTHODOX THEOLOGY

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Clyde W. Ehrhardt,
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arc

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C. W. Schhardt.

CHRISTIANITY
VERSUS
ORTHODOX THEOLOGY,
OR,
THE DECEPTION UNMASKED.

"Take heed that no man deceive you."

—Matthew xxiv: 4.

BY

A. B. LEVISEE, M. A.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

CHRISTIANITY, OR THE RELIGION WHICH
JESUS TAUGHT TO HIS DISCIPLES, - 9

CHAPTER II.

ORTHODOX THEOLOGY — A NEW WAY OF
SALVATION—PAULISM—SUPERNATUR-
ALISM, - - - 51

CHAPTER III.

CONSTANTINE AND THE CHURCH—THE
REIGN OF FAITH WITHOUT REASON—
DEMORALIZATION AND DEGENERACY
OF THE CHURCH, - - - 167

CHAPTER IV.

THE RELIGIOUS REFORMATION OF THE SIX
TEENTH CENTURY—RESUME, 170

See table

see table

11 20

PREFACE.

The attentive reader of the Scriptures will not fail to find in the New Testament two distinct plans of salvation. The first of these plans is found in the four Gospels, and is the way which Jesus taught to his disciples. It is the religion of love: love God supremely and love thy neighbor as thyself. It is the religion of good fellowship, good works and deeds of charity and loving kindness one to another among men. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you do ye even so to them: for this is the law." By this plan salvation is the reward of obedience to the law, which is God's will, the highest of all law. "If ye would enter into life keep the commandments." If one commits a wrong, let him repent and ask the heavenly Father to forgive him, and he will surely be forgiven.

The reader will find nothing lacking in this plan of salvation. It is complete and perfect.

This is the way which the Christ taught to the world of mankind and is appropriately denominated CHRISTIANITY.

The second plan or way of salvation will be found in Paul's epistles to the various churches. This plan is by God's free grace and not by the law. Says Paul: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Not of works lest any man should boast." "A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified."

The fundamental fact on which Paul bases his theory of salvation is the dogma of original sin, the condemnation of the entire human race to eternal woe on account of the sin of Adam. This necessitated the sacrifice of Christ to redeem the fallen race from this original sin. The subordinate or incidental doctrines involved in Paul's plan of salvation and taught by the orthodox churches, are the divinity of Christ; his incarnation; the trinity of the God-head; the doctrine of election or the calling of some to be saved irrespective of their sins; vicarious atone-

ment; the sure effect of Christ's sacrifice to save the lost; the imputation of Christ's merits to the salvation of unrepentant sinners; faith wholly unrational and underived, and others. Let this suffice for a rough statement of Paul's scheme of salvation. Whatever this may be it surely is not Christianity. It is a system of incomprehensible mysteries every feature of which is supernatural. To distinguish it from Christianity we denominate it PAULISM.

It will be seen at a glance that these two plans differ the one from the other, as widely as the heavens from the earth.

At a very early period, probably during the life-time of Paul, for one cause or another, the leaders of the church embraced Paul's doctrines to the prejudice of the plan of salvation as taught by Christ. Having adopted Paulism they misnamed it Christianity, and in due course made it the creed or constitution of the orthodox church. And the so-called Christian church has for eighteen centuries been falsely masquerading in the guise of Christianity.

The impossibility of comprehending the

teachings of Paul and the uncertainty arising from two rival plans of salvation, threw the Christian world into doubt and spiritual anxiety; and caused schisms, divisions, sects, quarrels, disputes and personal enmities without number in the very bosom of the church. The history of the Church from the days of Paul to this time is but little else than a history of its disorders and lack of harmony. No other subject of human interest has engaged half the learning, labor and talent which have been employed to establish and maintain Paulism as the creed of orthodox theology.

The object of this little book is to point out the foregoing facts and to call the attention of ordinary readers to the great fact that the clergy of the orthodox churches of the present day (in so far as they adhere to their creed) are not teaching Christianity, but Paulism—doctrines widely different from Christianity and resting on no authority but the name of Paul alone.

The argument is that after so long a trial, with results so little encouraging it is full time

to discard Paulism, root and branch, and to embrace Christianity, a religion which no one doubts, the only true religion of humanity.

In writing these essays I have taken no pains to disguise my thoughts. In this age of free inquiry, I know of no reason why one should feel restrained in the expression of his opinion concerning religion more than in other matters. I have accordingly said plainly and direct'y what I think and believe. If I am wrong in any essential particular, I shall be glad to be corrected.

A. B. L.

Clyde, Ohio, March 31, 1899.

CHAPTER I.

CHRISTIANITY, OR THE RELIGION WHICH
JESUS TAUGHT TO HIS DISCIPLES.

In the four Gospels we have four separate and distinct accounts of the teachings and doings of the Savior while here among men. These accounts are the primal and only source of our knowledge of Christ and of the religion he taught. While these accounts differ one from another in some minor details, they agree substantially in all essential particulars. I propose, in a brief essay, to give an outline sketch of the religion which the Savior taught to his disciples, as the same appears on the face of the four Gospels.

Before proceeding, it is proper to say that, so far as concerns this essay, we wholly ignore the question of the divinity of Christ. In any case his religion must be judged on its merits, as these commend it to the human

understanding; and if this religion, as a whole, thus commends itself as true, it matters not whether the teacher was divine, or merely human.

In the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus announced to his disciples the object of his mission. This he did in terms that could leave no doubt in their minds as to the character of the work which he proposed to undertake. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." (Matt. 5:17). What law? What is the law to which the Savior alludes? When the pharisee asked Jesus: "Which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus answered: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang *all the law* and the prophets." (Matt. 22: 36 to 40).

After some very apt and specific instructions illustrating the scope and development

of the second commandment, Jesus, dropping particulars, sums up in a single expression, all the obligations and duties which men mutually owe to each other: "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for *this is the law* and the prophets." Matt. 7:12. These citations leave no doubt as to what was the law which the Savior came to fulfill. This is the law because it is the expression of the Sovereign Will. It is the line traced for the spiritual guidance of man in this erring world. It is the line that separates right from wrong, truth from error. All our discursions, however widely they may range in search for an ultimate basis or standard of moral truth or right, end here. The whole duty of man in his relation to his fellow-beings is summed up in this expression so plain, so complete and so comprehensive, that the simplest can scarcely fail to understand and apply it—"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, for, (because) this is the law." God's command-

ments are the expression of his will and are *authority* because they emanate directly from God, the Sovereign ruler of all.

Such is the law which Christ came to fulfill. It is the way to life, to the higher and better life. Jesus was not himself enacting this law, as the expression of *His* will. He was only declaring the existing law which he had come to revive and make operative again among his people. This law was as old as the time when Moses led the hosts of Israel through the Red Sea; and when he communed with Jehovah face to face and received from him the law on Mount Sinai. It is, indeed, the divine, fundamental, moral law of man's being, stamped by the hand of the Creator on the heart and the understanding of all men everywhere. Like many human laws this law of human rectitude has annexed thereto rewards and penalties. It is the nature of man to feel the impress of this law and to enjoy its merited rewards of obedience—peace, joy and the pure felicities that always wait upon the doing of God's will; and to suffer the alternative pen-

alties of disobedience—pain, grief, remorse, fear and spiritual agony even to despair.

CHRIST'S MISSION.

In the beginning of his ministry Jesus, no doubt considered his mission limited to the Jews. "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matt. 15: 24.) He even hesitated to bestow a blessing on a non-Jew. And when he commissioned his Twelve and sent them out to teach and preach his religion, he carefully instructed them: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matt. 10:5, 6.) But he manifestly afterwards changed his purpose and enlarged the sphere of his labor to embrace the Gentiles as well. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. (Mark 16:15. See Matt. 24: 14; 28: 19; Luke 24:47). Jesus found the Jews perverse and obstinately opposed to his doctrine and was thus compelled to abandon his purpose to reform them. He

made very few proselytes from the Jews. It soon became obvious to his comprehension that his mission would be a failure unless he could establish his kingdom among the non-Jews. Hence his change of program. The incorrigibility of the Jews was, no doubt, the real cause of this change; and the parable of the king who made a wedding feast for his son, as related in the 22nd chapter of Matthew 1-10, is obviously the apology for this change. This change of purpose is also evidenced by Jesus' unmeasured denunciation of the scribes and pharisees. (Matt. ch. 15 and ch. 23).

Jesus had been born and reared in the Jewish faith. He had no doubt read and was familiar with the injunctions of the Jewish Scriptures: Ye shall not steal; neither deal falsely; neither lie one to another. And ye shall not swear by my name falsely. Neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God. Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbor, neither rob him; the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning. Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a

stumbling block before the blind. Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment. Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty, but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor. Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among the people; thou shalt not hate thy neighbor in thy heart. Thou shalt not in any wise rebuke thy neighbor and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. (Leviticus, ch. 19. See Exodus, ch. 20.)

Jesus was no doubt familiar with all these Scriptures of the Jewish law. But he saw that, however faithfully these may have been observed and obeyed in former times, in his day the Jewish religion had degenerated into a system of lifeless, unspiritual forms and ceremonies, and that the spirit of true religion was wholly wanting. Boldly announcing that he is come to save that which was lost, he denounces the Jews unsparingly. He characterizes them as hypocrites and blind leaders of the

blind. "Woe unto you, scribes, pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and annise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matter of the law: judgment, mercy and faith." Ye impose grievous burdens on your fellows. Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Ye devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. Of fair exterior you are full of extortions and excess—full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness. And finally, "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." (Matt. ch. 23).

A terrible picture, surely, of religious degeneracy. It was to correct this, to reform the Jewish religion and to bring the people back to a practical knowledge of God's law of righteousness and of mutual love and fellowship that Christ undertakes. His effort is to enable the people to comprehend and appreciate the perfect excellence of the law about which the Jews

prated so much and practiced so little. He ingenuously tells his followers: "Straight is the gate and narrow is the way" which leads to that higher and better life to which he is trying to lead them; (Matt. 7: 14) and he labors incessantly and with the utmost pains to illuminate and to make visible and plain to all that narrow way that they might delight to walk therein.

The great Teacher was an extraordinary personality. His whole soul was enthused with the work in which he was engaged. His exalted spirit was able to view the situation from a higher plane than his cotemporaries could do. His view comprehended the entire existence of man here and hereafter. In the broad sweep of his vision he saw that man, after the brief day of this life is over, is destined to an endless life in a higher and nobler sphere. He felt how transient, trifling, unreal and unsatisfying, at best, are the enjoyments of this life as compared with those in store for those who do the will of God. He saw the whole world of mankind astray in by and forbidden paths, blindly

groping their way in darkness and pain, while a richer and brighter life is freely offered to all who will seek after it; and his great soul yearned to rescue and redeem them from their prison house of sin and to place them in the way of light and eternal life.

THE LOGICAL BASIS OF CHRISTIANITY.

Jesus, in the outset and without stopping to offer proof of what seemed to him an obvious and indisputable truth, assumed that God is God over all, that he is the Creator and Author of all, and that to his will, his law, is due the homage and obedience of all his creatures. "Call no man your father upon the earth for one is your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 23:9) In like manner he assumes the immortality of the soul. On these self evident propositions he founds his doctrines. Nothing can be more absolutely consistent with reason or more in harmony with the human affections than the manner of his treatment of the relations and duties connecting man to his Maker. God is our heavenly Father; and

we are his children. Thus by the mere choice of words is at once established between the author of the human race and each of its members the relation of father and child with all the endearments, affectionate ties, and mutual obligations of that closest and most endearing relation. The earthly father is the head of the family and knows more than his children; and, by virtue of his head-ship, parental authority and greater wisdom, knows better what the child needs than the child itself knows. Children naturally feel that reverence and obedience are due to their parents to whom they look for advice, instruction, guidance and support. They have no other resource but their parents. And the heart of man is so organized that one of his greatest pleasures comes from supplying the reasonable natural wants of his children. "If his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish will he give him a serpent? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good

things to them that ask him." Jesus, in full harmony with this filial relationship, teaches his disciples to pray, not to a God of wrath and vengeance, a consuming fire, but to "Our Father which art in heaven," who is full of love, compassion and tender mercy toward all those who seek to do his will. What can be more reasonable than for children with such a Father to be obedient and loving?

As we are all children of one Father, so are we all brethren. And as members of one and the same family, all on a common level one with another, all affected by like wants and weaknesses, defects and sinful tendencies and all alike needing mutual aid and support, we ought to love one another, forbear each other's faults, freely pardon all offences and thus preserve and promote the harmony and happiness of all. This is just what our heavenly Father desires of his children. Love your neighbor as you love yourself. Your neighbor is your brother. Do him no wrong, but do him all the good you can, *because* he is your brother and the child like yourself, of the heavenly Father.

God knows that if we truly love one another there will be an end of strife and enmities among men everywhere, and peace and harmony will prevail, and that will be the kingdom of heaven.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

The kingdom of heaven occupies a very conspicuous place in the first three Gospels. This phrase seems to be synonymous with 'The kingdom of God.' The one or the other of these expressions meets the eye of the reader very often in the pages of Matthew, Mark and Luke; but neither of them is found in John. The general effect of reading these three Gospels is, that the establishment of the kingdom of heaven is the final consummation of Christ's mission. This is the goal towards which he is always striving and towards which he labors to direct his followers. But the phrase is used so variously and in so many different connections, that it is not easy to fix in the mind a clear idea of what the kingdom of

heaven precisely is. To illustrate we make a few references.

Men are everywhere invited and urged to get into the kingdom of God as the goal of their salvation.

On the other hand: "The kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21).

It puzzles the average reader to understand how the kingdom of God can be in a man and the man to be in the kingdom of God at the same time.

Says the Savior: "My kingdom is not of this world." (John 18:36).

Again he says: "Blessed be ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of God." (Luke 6:20).

How are the poor to have the blessings of the kingdom of God if that kingdom is not of this world?

Again all are commanded to seek the kingdom of heaven. At the same time all are assured that the kingdom of heaven is coming to them and indeed is come.

Jesus says: "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suf-

fereth violence and the violent take it by force." (Matt. 11:12).

On another occasion, Jesus tells the Chief Priests and Elders in the temple: "The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." (Matt. 21:43).

These various characterizations of a thing not tangible or realizable to the senses but resting only in language, are more calculated to confuse one's perceptions than to enlighten them. They incline one to imagine that "The kingdom of heaven" was, perhaps, only a convenient name for the new regime which they expected the Messiah to inaugurate, a common rallying word for the adherents of the new order. But this apparent confusion of ideas should not lead us to suspect that Jesus himself had not a clear conception of what he proposed to do. But the intellect of the people to whom he was laboring to impart his ideas, was exceedingly dull of comprehension and he accordingly varied his language and illustrations to adapt his lessons to their vary-

ing and little capacity. It is no doubt in this view that the great Teacher resorted so frequently to the use of parables as a means of instruction. He tells them: "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man who sowed good seed in his field" etc.

"The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed."

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven which a woman hid in three measures of meal."

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field."

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearls."

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net" etc. (For all these see Matt. ch. 13).

If the characterizations first alluded to leave the meaning of the phrase in doubt, the parables do but little to remove that doubt. It might be an interesting puzzle to propound to a party of young people even in this day, to guess: What is that thing which is like so many things totally dissimilar one to another? While the parables are all more or less des-

criptive of one or another of the Christian virtues, and teach us what every follower of Christ should practice, still these fail, like the other characterizations, to define the kingdom of heaven. There is still one resource.

Who are fit subjects for the kingdom of heaven? We will perhaps get the best idea of what the kingdom of heaven really is, or was in the mind of the Savior, by examining its contents: Who are they that may enter therein?

The kingdom of God consists of "The pure in heart: Of those who hunger and thirst after righteousness: Of the merciful: Of peace makers:" (Matt. ch. 5). Of little children and of those who accept Christ's teachings as little children. (Matt. 18:3; Mark 10:15). Of those who do the will of God. (Matt. 12:50): Of all those who repent of their evil deeds and seek to know the truth: Of those who love their neighbors, forgive all their offenses and do good to them whether friends or foes. (Matt. 5). But let no one deceive himself with the belief that any sham repentance, that anything short

of a sincere desire to forsake his sins and do the will of God, can succeed. "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord; shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 7:21). "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5-20).

To be a fit subject for the kingdom of God one must subordinate all other motives, his avarice, covetousness and selfishness in all their forms and his worldly ambitions as well. It is needful to man to know that "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," (Luke 12:15) to put him in the way of that higher life which the Savior taught. "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:33). "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." (Matt. 6:24).

Perhaps the colloquy between the Savior and the rich young man, narrated in the 19th Chapter of Matthew, is the most complete and

instructive single text as to the qualifications required for entering into the kingdom of heaven. This, it will be noted, is not a parable or suppositious case, but an actual occurrence. The young man inquires of the Savior:

“What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” The question is fundamental; it goes to the very bottom of Christ’s teachings. The question, it will be observed, is not what shall I *believe*, but *what shall I do*, to insure eternal life; and presupposes that the eternal life may be attained by the doing of good deeds. It is not supposable that, if the inquirer was wrong in this assumption, Christ would have suffered such an error to pass uncorrected. But it provokes not even the slightest comment from the great Teacher, which clearly authorizes us to infer that the inquirer was right in that supposition. But we have no occasion to rely upon inferences. Christ’s answer to the young man’s inquiry is clear and direct:

“If thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments.” The question and answer

taken together constitute an unqualified affirmation that the inquirer's assumption was correct and that therefore the way to salvation—to the kingdom of heaven, to eternal life—is by *obedience to the law*.

The young man, as the sequel shows, was evidently short on the second commandment. He had failed to comprehend the broad scope and true meaning of the injunction: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." But I find nothing in the four gospels to diminish or vary the plain import of the Savior's language and teaching everywhere, to the effect that salvation—eternal life—is the reward of obedience to the law, and is therefore not of grace, and not of faith.

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love: even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love." (John 15:10).

"He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I

will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (John 14:21).

"If a man love me he will keep my words and my Father will love him." (John 14:23).

These citations from John do but confirm the teachings of the other gospels. On the whole may we not justly conclude that: "The kingdom of heaven" is the reign of God's will in the heart of man ?

THE INTELLECTUAL BASIS OF CHRISTIANITY.

In view of the mythical and supernatural signification attached to religious faith in the current Christian Theology, it will be instructive to note the motive of the Savior as evinced in his method of teaching. It is patent everywhere on the face of the first three gospels that Jesus addressed his lessons solely to the rational understanding of his hearers. A mere inspection of the texts as we find them recorded reveals the unmistakable purpose of the Teacher to insure to his disciples a full intellectual comprehension of his doctrines as the basis of their faith in the truth of his religion. It is

their understanding that he relies on. He makes no appeals to their faith, their passions, prejudices or fears. He does not urge them to accept and believe anything which they do not understand; and he takes great pains to make his instructions appear rational and therefore comprehensible to the common understanding. "He opened his mouth and taught them." His language to the multitude is: "Hear and understand." (Matt. 15: 10). "Hearken unto me, every one of you and understand." (Mark 7: 14). Let one read the Sermon on the Mount with a special view of discovering the motive of the Teacher. Every line reveals the direct purpose of the Teacher to convey to the hearer a mental perception of the truth of what he was teaching. The Teacher himself saw the truth and the boundless wealth of joy embraced in it and his spirit yearned to assist others to know it and to feel it as he did. He knew that obedience to the law insures everlasting life, and he makes haste to tell them what the law is and how to obey it: Be merciful and kind to all. Be just in your dealings. Be charitable

in your judgments of others, remembering that you are yourself imperfect. (Matt. 7:1-5). Subdue your passions and moderate your ambitions lest they lead you out of the straight path. (Matt. 18: 7-9). Be mindful of the poor to relieve their distress according to your ability and opportunity. Love your neighbor as you love yourself. (Luke 10: 30-37). The scope of this injunction is very broad. It seems to embrace the whole human family. For a perfect sample of oral teaching read the last six verses of the fifth chapter of Matthew. "I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you." Why? "That ye may be the children of your Father in heaven" who is absolutely impartial in dispensing his blessings. "For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." With such an example of impartiality before your eyes what right have you to be partial in your treatment of your fellow beings? That is what God does and we should do as much like God as possible.

But as if this were not enough to justify the injunction to love and do good to one's enemies, and in order to make this instruction appear entirely reasonable and satisfactory to all, he adds: "For if ye love them which love you what reward have ye? Do not even publicans the same?"

"And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?"

It is no merit to love those who love you, though it would be a great demerit not to love them. But to love those who hate you is a positive merit which wins the approval of our heavenly Father. And in addition to these reasons, why a man should love and do good to his enemy, it no doubt occurred to, or was suggested to them, that by this mode of treatment they might reclaim and rescue a fellow man from error and thus lift him to a higher plane of life.

Again: Christ teaches his disciples to pray to God: "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Observe the care he takes to

show the reasonableness of this. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matt. 6: 12 to 15; see also the parable of the king, Matt. 18: 23 to 35).

The beautiful parable of the Sower so familiar to all readers of the Gospel affords another striking illustration of the earnest effort of the Savior to impart to his hearers an accurate conception of his religion and of the manner of propagating it. His disciples asked him: "Why speakest thou to them in parables?" In answer to this question he tells them: "This people's heart is waxed gross and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears and should understand with their heart* and should be converted. Therefore speak I to them in

*NOTE:—In the time of Christ the human heart, and not the brain, was supposed to be the seat of the intellect.

parables; because they seeing, see not, and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand." He saw at once the utter incapacity of the masses to comprehend the abstract ideal which he desired to communicate to them, and like a true teacher, attempts to convey his idea in a concrete form, that the truth might somehow find a lodgment. He makes no appeals to the faith, volition, fears or prejudices of the people. His sole purpose is to plant the seed of truth in the rational understanding. He wants them to have a reasonable comprehension of his doctrines. If he can set them to thinking of the reason why so little of the seed grew successfully, and why so much of it failed to bear fruit, they may at length be able to apply such thoughts to the more recondite subject of the kingdom of heaven and to see clearly how it is that only a comparative few are in the kingdom of heaven by virtue of their obedience to God's will, while many are astray outside. "He that receiveth seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word and

understandeth it." The explanation of the parable, as a whole, is a perfect picture of what may be seen in every community of christendom.

But it is needless to multiply proofs of a fact in evidence on every page of the four gospels.

It is alleged and no doubt believed by many that Jesus resorted to miracles to attest his divine origin and character. But we must not fail to distinguish the Teacher from his doctrines. The religion which Christ taught is something quite apart from the Teacher himself; and while, as many believe, Jesus resorted to miracles in support of his divine character, he never dishonored the religion he taught by such methods. His doctrines bear the impress of truth, and need no such authentication. These stand upon their own base and can stand on no other. His doctrines are addressed to the plain, normal understanding and he seeks to establish them nowhere else. "And many more believed because of his own words." (John 4: 41; 5: 24). An adequate knowledge

of the truth induces belief of that truth; and belief in the truth of Christ's teachings begat faith in the Teacher. This was the true faith of Christ's followers. What other faith but that of Truth and Reason does a Christian need? As a reasonable being what other Faith is *possible* to man.

FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

The greatest of God's mercies is forgiveness. Jesus plainly foresaw that whatever might be the attractions of his religion, however perfectly adapted that religion might be to the wants of mankind, all would not accept it. He saw that man, constituted as he is, and surrounded as he is in the midst of so many worldly cares and allurements, would be diverted, in one way and another, from giving to his religion the attention it deserved, and would carelessly continue to drift along in the ways of error and unrighteousness as before. This expectation is beautifully displayed in the parable of the Sower. (Matt. ch. 13). He therefore assures his followers that God is as

merciful as he is just, and that he desires the salvation of all (Matt. 18: 14); and therefore delights to pardon the transgressions of all who earnestly seek the ways of truth and life. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." (Matt. 12: 31; Mark 3: 28). (As theologians have not been able to determine with any considerable degree of certainty what this excepted sin is we make no account of it). No doctrine is more clearly or fully taught in the first three gospels, (it is not mentioned at all in John), than the forgiveness of sins. But this free pardon which God promises for our transgressions and violations of his law is on two conditions:

(1) Repentance. "Christ came to call sinners to repentance." (Matt. 9: 13). Repentance true, sincere and heartfelt, is a condition precedent to pardon. "Except ye repent ye shall all perish." (Luke 13: 3). "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of heaven is at hand: repent ye and believe the gospel." (Mark 1: 15). "And the disciples went out and preached that

men should repent." (Mark 6: 12). It is said that "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." (Luke 15: 7). "It behooved Christ to suffer And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24: 47).

Can anything be more reasonable than this requirement? On the other hand, would it not seem to the ordinary understanding most unreasonable in man to ask forgiveness *without* this repentance? The king (in Hamlet) in the agony of his soul, incredulously exclaims: "May one be pardoned and retain the offense?" Jesus tells his followers, in effect that God desires the salvation of all his people and has prescribed a very easy and natural way by which they may attain that salvation. But you are not in the way which God has prescribed, and you can never find it in any other. Therefore I say to you "Repent and believe the gospel," which teaches you the way to the better life. I see in you the elements of a higher life and that the conditions are fairly favorable, if you will

only open your eyes to see the vast opportunities and possibilities of this earthly existence, to see the truth and obey it. You are all in the wrong way. You have all sinned against your Maker by departing from his law, and there is no help for you but to forsake your former ways and submit yourself to the will of your Maker and follow and obey his laws, subordinate your passions, your pride, your ambition, all of which are daily leading you out of the true way. Subject yourself to God's will under the guidance of your reason and knowledge of the truth, obeying in all things the will of your heavenly Father which is your reasonable duty. On these conditions God will pardon your sins.

The man that cannot accept and perform such a condition for such a purpose, has lost his reason or has never learned properly to use it.

There is also another condition precedent to God's pardon.

(2) Mutual forgiveness one to another among men. When we pray to God, even when our lips formally repeat the language of the Lord's prayer; we say: "Forgive us our debts *as we*

forgive our debtors." (I apprehend that if the whole truth were known, we thus often pray for our own condemnation). "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you; but if ye forgive *not* men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matt. 6: 12 - 15). The king showed no mercy to the servant who oppressed his fellow servant and refused to forgive his debt; "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." (Matt. 18: 35.) "Forgive and ye shall be forgiven." (Luke 6: 37). The sinner who asks God for pardon must come with clean hands. No man may ask God to forgive his transgressions who does not freely forgive the offenses which his fellow men commit against him. "Be ye therefore merciful as your Father also is merciful." (Luke 6: 36). "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother

and then come and offer thy gift." (Matt. 5, 23, 24).

On these conditions, and I believe these are the only ones required, man is offered the forgiveness of his sins. We are aware that baptism is once mentioned as a condition but this is not generally held by theologians as a saving ordinance. We are also aware that there are other texts which have been construed as requiring belief in the divinity of Christ as a condition of salvation. (Mark 16, 16; John 3: 18, 19, 36): These scriptures are more or less ambiguous; and, though they may bear the construction suggested, it is far more reasonable to make them conformable to the teachings of Christ in general touching this question. Nor is God's mercy exhausted by a single pardon. It lasts as long as the culprit can repent, even to seventy times seven. (Matt. 18: 21, 22).

Nor are these conditions something super-added to the former requirements of a religious life. These are included in the great summary of Christian duty, the Golden Rule. "Whatso-

ever ye would that men should do to you, that do ye even to them, for this is the law." For, if a man love his neighbor, he will surely speedily repent of any wrong or offense he may have committed against him; and still more will he be ever ready to forgive the offences of that neighbor against himself.

Only two conditions to insure God's pardon of our sins and to restore us to the favor of our heavenly Father, however far we may have fallen away—Repentance towards God our Maker; and mutual forgiveness one to another! two virtues without which no man can ever progress, the very stepping stones to the higher life for which humanity yearns day and night. It is on these alone that is conditioned the forgiveness of our sins, a complete passport to the kingdom of heaven.

Here is a Holy Trinity without the slightest mystery, without any atoning sacrifice, without any shedding of blood, any supernatural faith or stupendous miracle, a Trinity which every Christian can easily understand and believe; and which he believes *because he does understand*—

Repentance, Mutual Love and Forgiveness. These and these alone insure man's salvation. These three Harmonies stand together as one for the salvation of all who do the will of God.

Jesus seizes upon the relations which connect man with his Maker on the one hand, and with his fellow man on the other, as the starting point, the fundamental basis of his religion. Man naturally and reasonably owes to his Creator true reverence, homage and obedience to His will as the Sovereign Ruler of all; and to his fellow-men, good faith, kindness, truth and justice, and whatsoever he would have others do to or for him. This is the normal state of man, more ideal, no doubt, than real. For, owing to man's imperfect nature, his passions and weaknesses, he has not been able to keep in that state of normal perfection. His undeveloped reason in the infancy and youth of his race, left him the victim of his appetites, which soon assumed control of his actions and led him to disregard and violate the moral laws of his being. His feeble and

unenlightened reason failed to control the storm of passion in his soul, and he soon fell out of harmony with God and with his fellow men. Ever since discord and strife, unrighteousness and sin have prevailed among men. And at the coming of Christ the burthen of the prophets for ages had been to lament over this fallen condition, to exclaim against it and to denounce the rulers for their crimes and iniquities and to threaten them with the most appalling vengeance of Jehovah. When Jesus came he saw and appreciated the situation. He saw the whole world of mankind living totally unmindful of God's will and of their mutual obligations towards one another, but, on the contrary, preying upon and devouring one another. He saw his own race, the Jews, the vaunted chosen people of God, steeped in superstition and vice and hypocritically practicing a multitude of so called religious rites and ceremonies as degrading, as void of any religious merit in the sight of God, as were the practices of the heathen themselves. He saw that such conditions, left to themselves, lead

only from bad to worse. Jesus also saw and felt in the impulses of his own great soul that man has within him capacity for a higher and better life than that he saw about him.

It was the question of a remedy for this distressing condition of affairs. He saw that man with all his weakness and tendency to err is endowed with the faculty of reason and moral sense, which enable him to discriminate and distinguish between right and wrong, between truth and error. Whoever can do these things is in the way to progress. The need of the case is light, knowledge. The *remedy* for this disorder, this wretchedness that everywhere abounds, is the *law*, God's law of righteousness: love God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself. This is the remedy. The only relief for you in your present misery and the only thing that can put you in the way of progress towards a better life is obedience to this law. Conform your daily life to its requirements. You are out of harmony with God and with your fellows. You cannot progress or be happy until that harmony is

restored; and obedience to the law can alone restore it.

The religion which Christ taught to his disciples is the law of love applied in the full, broad sense in which the great Teacher propounded it. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," properly understood, embraces it all. It is not a religious dogma invented as a part, to bolster up a fictitious system. It is the great central fact or principle of human happiness and progress. It is the great fundamental moral law of man's being, impressed on the heart and the understanding of every son and daughter of Adam's race. It is the religion of love pure and simple. There is nothing new in it. It was old and as perfectly understood, as an abstract truth, when Abraham and his people wandered forth from Ur of the Chaldees to the land of Canaan, as it was in the time of the Savior, or as it is today. Nor is there in it anything artificial, subtile, mysterious or obscure, supernatural or unreasonable. It is preeminently

the religion of Reason. It is addressed to the reason; the reason comprehends and accepts it, appropriates and applies it. Its requirements are wholly conformable to our wants temporal and spiritual, and place man in perfect harmony at once, with his Creator and with his fellow beings. This religion is as true philosophically as it is religiously. While it builds up and establishes the kingdom of heaven in the heart of the individual who practices it, it promotes the cause of humanity and increases the aggregate force of civilization in general. The man who, inspired with the love of peace and good will among men, dissuades his neighbor from avenging a wrong, or from committing a crime; composes a strife between two hostile neighbors; or who freely forgives his neighbor a wrong committed against himself, has thereby acquired to himself a positive increase of moral force and of joy and strength in his heart; has rendered a valuable service to the society in which he lives and has taught his neighbors a true practical lesson of Christian virtue which they cannot fail to understand and

which may aid them in getting to the better way.

All men are the children of the same heavenly Father; and every man is your brother. It matters not how defective and degraded he may be, he is still your brother. Do not make him an outcast; he is not an outcast, but a lost sheep to be sought after and reclaimed if possible. Take him by the hand. It will comfort him. Lift him up. It will increase his confidence in himself and in you as a brother. Help him to employment if need be. Look after him. Visit him. Help him to feed and clothe his wife and children as the occasion may reasonably require. Assist him in any way to respect himself and to take care of himself. By this treatment of your unfortunate brother, you will enrich the treasures of your own heart while you prove to the recipient of your favors that you are indeed a disciple of Christ, that you love your neighbor as yourself; and you will thus do much to convince him of the truth, worth and beauty of Christianity; and that it is not a hollow, hypocritical sham as is too often believed. One such

example of practical Christianity among living men is worth many prayers and sermons.

One of the inviting features of Christianity is, that every virtuous act brings its immediate reward. There is no room to doubt that every act of obedience to God's will as set forth in the gospel of Christ, is amply rewarded in this life. We do not have to wait for a future life to obtain the promised blessing. Every true disciple of Christ obtains a share in the greater life while here on earth.

The remedy which Jesus found and preached to the people is ample and perfect for all that accept and apply it. The fault is not in the law, but in ourselves that we do not see the light and walk therein. It is the habitual disregard and violation of God's commandment to love our neighbor—the lack of that brotherly love and good will one towards another, disposing men to be honest and just in all their dealings and intercourse with their fellow-men—it is these that cause the discords, strifes and enmities among men and make so many men and women unhappy in

the world. From the beginning Christianity has encountered many obstacles to hinder its acceptance and forward march. Among these hindrances the greatest and most persistent has always been and is yet, *selfishness*. If man could once completely emancipate himself from the tyrannous dominion of selfishness and, guided by Reason, employ his energies in doing the will of his Maker, he would no doubt have a new revelation and a new life.



CHAPTER II.

ORTHODOX THEOLOGY—A NEW WAY OF SAL-
VATION—PAULISM—SUPERNATURALISM.

Every great fact is connected with every other great fact, backward and forward, extending through time and space. The link or tie that connects these facts is the eternal law of cause and effect. The orthodox theology of the nineteenth century is no exception to the universal law of causation. As a product it had its causes which produced it, causes of which it was born. If we would judge correctly of the character of the offspring we naturally take account of the character of the antecedents, the parentage of that offspring. The orthodox theology of the nineteenth century is the heir, the successor, the offspring of the religions that preceded it; and in order to comprehend its constitution and peculiar characteristics, it is important to notice the general

character and features of its ancestors. The immediate predecessor of the Christian religion was the Jewish or Mosaic religion. The early teachers and founders of the new or Christian religion, especially Jesus and Paul the apostle, had been reared in the Jewish faith. In view then of accounting for the character and form of the orthodox theology in the centuries following the time of Christ and his Apostles, it will be important to briefly notice the character of the Jewish religion itself, which, no doubt imparted many of its features to the new religion. Let us then briefly inquire into the nature and character of

THE JEWISH RELIGION.

About seventeen centuries before the coming of Christ Moses led the Israelites out of their bondage in Egypt. The Israelites, embracing all the descendants of Abraham, whom Moses undertook to lead to the promised land, Canaan, were an immense throng, 603,550 males over the age of twenty years, (Numbers ch. 1), which, embracing all males

and females, old and young would probably give a total of two and a half millions of souls. These people had been in the strictest sense enslaved by the Egyptians for 230 years.

“The Egyptians did set over them task-masters to afflict them with their burdens.” “And the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor. And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and brick, and in all manner of service in the field; all their service wherewith they made them serve was with rigor.” (Exodus 1:11, 12, 14).

The natural effect of such a course of treatment so long continued, was to make the people mentally and morally rude, ignorant and unappreciative. The recitals of the narrative sufficiently show that they were in the strict sense extremely low in the scale of intellectual and moral development. Moses, seeing the magnitude of his undertaking, soon perceived the imperative need of some fixed rules, laws or regulations for the instruction, guidance and control of this vast mass of undeveloped, ignorant humanity.

They had been three months out of Egypt;

had arrived at the foot of Mount Sinai and had pitched their camp there. Moses knew these people, had already frequently heard their unreasonable complaints, and no doubt felt deeply the weight of the problem of governing them while educating and developing them. It was with him the question of formulating a system of laws adapted to the exigencies of the situation. The great law giver easily saw that he could not safely rely on the intelligence, the reason or the moral or religious sentiment of this ignorant mass of ex-slaves, as a controlling principle. But the necessity of the case is to devise a plan by which they might be controlled, and which would at the same time develop their intellectual capacities and their moral and religious sentiments. He considered that in their bondage they had been habitually governed by their task-masters through fear and violence and were inapt to recognize or obey any other or higher motive of obedience. Moses also evidently distrusted his ability to impose his unaided authority on this rude mass of people

- without some extraneous support. Hence the frequency of the expression: "Thus saith the Lord God."

Moses having taken all needful precautions to guard the secrecy of his interview (Exodus ch. 19), proceeds up into the Mount to communicate with God and to receive from Him the laws for the people; and, after a prolonged absence, he returns to the people with the Tables of the Law written by God himself. "And He (God) gave unto Moses when he had made an end of communing with him on Mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God." (Exodus 31:18)... "And the writing was the writing of God graven upon the tables." (Exodus 32:15, 16).

Such was the occasion and such were the circumstances in which was instituted the Jewish religion. That religion was born of the emergency. It was brought forth by Moses to meet the exigencies of a numerous people just snatched from the grasp of the most oppressive bondage, a people ignorant, degraded,

coarse and unimpressible, a stranger to all forms of government save only the arbitrary will of a task-master. These people had every thing to learn before they could properly assume and perform the duties of citizens in a social state. The law, the contents of those tables of stone, is supposed to be spread upon the records from chapter 20 to 31 inclusive of Exodus. Every clause is under the sanction of "Thus saith the Lord God." Here is, no doubt, the origin of the dogma of divine inspiration of the holy scriptures. Here is the origin and foundation of that clause in the creeds of the protestant churches of the present day, requiring the neophyte to profess belief in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the word of God. These laws constitute at once a Civil Code and a Religion. They regulate the relations of the people, their duties and obligations of one to another, their labor and their rest, the observance of the Sabbath and the mode of keeping it. But the civil part of these laws is the least important. Their chief feature is the most elaborate and

imposing religious ceremonial ever invented and which was probably intended by the author as an educational means to catch the eye and occupy the attention of the people and to teach them to know and revere a Deity they did not see, and thus gradually to raise their thoughts to higher conceptions of the true object of worship. The whole system abounds in sacrifices. The religion of Moses, however, is wholly limited in its application to the present life. There is nowhere a line or word indicating that Moses had any notion of a future state of being or of the immortality of the soul. Briefly, the Mosaic law was prepared for an idolatrous people, semi-barbarous and very ignorant of all the duties of free citizens in civilized life. Moses himself was but a half-civilized cruel despot; and the Deity whom he worshiped is a God of jealousy, anger, wrath and vengeance. The contents of a single chapter of the reputed Mosaic writings, furnish ample proof of these assertions. We quote from the thirty-second chapter of Exodus.

“And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the Mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron and said unto him: Up, make us gods which shall go before us: For as for this Moses, the man that brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.” (32:1).

Aaron complied with the command of the people and made a golden calf and the people worshiped it. As a matter of history the Israelites, in all their history as a nation, continued to apostatize and to lapse back into idolatry.

When God saw this apostacy of his chosen people he said:

“Now, therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them.” (32:10).

Then Moses interposes in behalf of the people and says to God (almost in the tone of command) :

“Why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people. Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.” “And the Lord repented of the evil which he had thought to do unto the people.” (32:12, 14).

In this act of that tragedy, (for it was a tragedy as will shortly appear) Moses seems to have outranked Jehovah and to overrule his purposes. But what a God is here described! Vacillating, weak, unstable, bloodthirsty and cruel.

But, as Moses, approaching the camp, saw what had been done in his absence,

“His anger waxed hot and he cast the tables out of his hand and brake them beneath the Mount. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire and ground it to powder and strewed it upon the water and made the children of Israel drink of it.” (32:19, 20).

Now notice that Moses in the most inhuman, bloodthirsty and cruel spirit, proceeds to do on his own account just what he had an hour before professed to have persuaded God not to do.

“Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said: who is on the Lord’s side? Let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them: thus saith the Lord God of Israel: Put every man his sword by his side and go in and out from gate to gate throughout

the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men." (32: 26, 27, 28).

Such is the origin and character of the Jewish religion; in which Christianity has its root; and from which are drawn some prominent features of the current orthodox theology of the nineteenth century.

ORIGINAL SIN.

The doctrine of Original Sin, or the sin of Adam, is the fruitful source of orthodox theology. It is claimed by the theologians that this transgression had the effect to damn eternally the whole human race. The matter is of sufficient importance to justify a careful examination.

In the second and third chapter of Genesis it is related that God placed Adam and Eve in a garden in which was the tree of life and knowledge.

"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,

thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Genesis ch. 2:16, 17). "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise: she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat." (Genesis 3:6).

When God coming "to walk in the garden in the cool of the day," finds out what had happened, He first curses the serpent who tempted and beguiled Eve. He then tells Eve :

"I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be unto thy husband and he shall rule over thee." (Genesis 3:16).

"And unto Adam he said: Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying: Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return." (Genesis 3:17, 18 and 19).

These texts, I believe, embrace all the essential parts of the narrative of Adam's fall. Granting the perfect integrity and authenticity of the account of this tremendous act as given, several considerations are deducible.

(1) The penalties for this transgression are *limited to this present natural life*. The language used, "All the days of thy life;" "Till thou returnest unto the ground," prove this incontestably. And the nature of the penalties are such as can only apply to persons in this material state of existence.

(2) There is not a line or word in the entire narrative giving the slightest hint that there is or may be any future life, or that man possesses any spirit or soul that survives the death and destruction of this body to live in any form or condition in a future state. Nor is there any such in the entire Mosaic writings.

(3) Without manifest perversion of sense and without the grossest violation of the proprieties of language and common sense, material and temporal penalties, specially limited and

only adapted to the present life, cannot be construed and interpreted into spiritual and eternal punishments in a future, spirit life.

(4) Adam and Eve were created sinless, but subject or liable to sin, as is fully shown by the fact that they yielded to temptation and ate the fruit in violation of God's command.

These considerations to the contrary notwithstanding, this childish fiction was accepted and enlarged by interpretation to apply spiritually as well as materially; and it was early in the history of the Christian church incorporated as a fundamental doctrine of orthodoxy. From that day to this the doctrine that Adam's transgression involved the entire human race spiritually as well as materially in the woes of eternal perdition—that every child is born already condemned to eternal woe—has been and is yet the fundamental fact of orthodox theology.

There is not a trace of this doctrine in any of the four gospels. Jesus obviously knew nothing of such a doctrine when he said broadly "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." He certainly did not know

that the whole human race had been already condemned to eternal damnation by reason of Adam's transgression. If he knew of such a doctrine he avoids all recognition of it. In his religion as taught in the sermon on the Mount and as he delivered it to his chosen disciples, every individual is responsible for his own sins only. In the sermon on the Mount Jesus was formally disclosing to his disciples the characteristics and requirements of his religion; and as he was teaching it to them that they might teach it to others, we have a clear right to assume that he taught them all that was essential or needful to guide men in the way of life—to guide them to the kingdom of God. If it had been true that the whole human race was actually already under condemnation for the sin of Adam, from which they necessarily must be relieved before they can enter into life, or take a single step in that direction, can we conceive that he would have omitted to take account of a fact of such transcendent importance? Nor does he mention this doctrine when he sends out the twelve with formal instruc-

tions to preach his religion. The inference, indeed, is irresistible that neither Christ nor his disciples knew anything of this doctrine of original sin. It was the learned, metaphysical and zealous Paul who, sometime after the death of Christ, first deduced and formulated this doctrine of original sin: "For, as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (First Corinthians 15 : 22). And thus, in the hands of the theologians it became the cornerstone of a stupendous system of fictions.

A NEW WAY OF SALVATION, FAITH AND GRACE.

When the rich young man asked Jesus: "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" Jesus' answer was: "If thou wouldst enter into life, *keep the commandments.*" Love God and love your neighbor as you love yourself. Conform your daily life to the will of God. The kingdom of heaven consists of those who *do* the will of God.

The Savior also taught that God desires the salvation of all men, and in pursuance of this desire, he stands ever ready to pardon the

transgressions of all who sincerely repent of their sins and ask his forgiveness. This is the normal law of salvation and was the only one that Jesus seemed to know anything of.

On the other hand the priesthood—the teachers and theologians who came after Christ—seemed to think that Christ's plan of salvation is in some way faulty ; perhaps it is too natural and too reasonable ; or possibly too simple and easy to practice ; and they accordingly find another. Having adopted the doctrine of original sin, they must needs find a remedy for that calamity. They accordingly invent the plan of Salvation by Grace and Faith. Hence their answer to the young man's question :

“By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Not of works lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

This change of plan implies that God saw the error and defect of his former plan of salvation and determined to change it. The change, however, is not the work of God, but plainly of man. Chiefly on these two doc-

trines of Grace and Faith, the early writers and teachers of theology have built a system which has prevailed in the church to this day and which I believe is radically and irreconcilably different from that which the Savior taught. We will attempt to give a brief outline of that system. This will necessarily involve some references to the circumstances in which that system had its origin.

Jesus announces that he is come to fulfill the law,—as I understand this, to reform the manners and religious practices of the people—and to teach them to know God as he is—that he is come to call sinners to repentance and that he is sent specially to the Jews. He inveighs strongly against the manners of the Jews, denounces their hypocrisies and superstitious practices and commands them to repent.

The Jews at the coming of Christ represented one of the oldest, best established and most reputed religions in the world. That religion dated back to the early hours of man's day on the earth. Their scriptures had been

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written and delivered to them by the hand of God himself amid the terrors of Mount Sinai. The Jews were themselves the chosen people of God. They had Abraham for their father and boasted a long line of prophets and wise men. And they no doubt verily believed that the Hebrew race, the sons of Abraham, were the only truly religious people in the world. They were, therefore, not in a mood to relish being told by the Prophet of Nazareth of their sins and shortcomings. And when they became fully satisfied that Jesus had come in a spiritual character only, and not to restore the kingdom of David so long looked for and so devoutly desired, they wholly refused to accept Christ or his doctrines. Here was the parting of the ways. The people divide. Some adhere to the reformer; but many more follow him not.

Both parties—adherents and opponents—proceed to extremes. Christ's enemies, the Jews, feared, hated and crucified the Savior. His friends and followers believed him, loved him and deified him. This deification of

Christ, or the doctrine of Christ's divine origin and character, was not established by any single act; but was first assumed from circumstances, then accepted and finally adopted as a dogma of the orthodox theology.

In this greatest fact of human history did either party act unnaturally? The track of the Jewish race all the way back from the day when Moses in a momentary sally of passion had 3000 of his people slain to appease *his* wrath, to the coming of the Savior, had been traced in blood. It is all only a repetition of deeds of blood and violence. The Jews had lived all their lives under the reign of the force and fear of Jehovah's wrath. What was more natural to a semi-civilized people addicted to violence, treachery and falsehood, than to get rid of a dangerous agitator and religious foe once for all, by putting him to death. And this is precisely what the record shows. Violence and assassination had long been the custom of the times and the people.

On the other hand it could not have been difficult for the people of that wonder-loving

age to believe, or to accept as a belief, the doctrine of Christ's divinity, or perhaps more correctly, that Jesus was himself God incarnated. The age was unscientific and immeasurably credulous. The Greek religion, or mythology, was a wonderful mixture of the human and the superhuman. Their gods themselves, are only men with superhuman powers. It was taught in the philosophy of the Greeks and Romans that good men become gods after death; and their deities, while they have superhuman attributes, have also all the characteristics of mortals. The renowned Greek hero, Achilles, was the son of a goddess. The analogue of Christ's divinity is found everywhere in the mythology of the Greeks. In that wonderful creation of the Hellenic imagination, the amours of the Olympian deities with the daughters of men constitute no small part. Jupiter had numerous offspring by human mothers. Hercules was the son of Jupiter by the maiden daughter of the king of Mycaenae. The divine Aesculapius, the god of the healing art, was the

son of Apollo by an earthly mother. Both these — Hercules and Aesculapius — whose nature was a blending of the divine and human, were only great *men* while they lived, but, after death, *they were counted among the gods*. These ideas were not unknown to the people of western Asia. The campaigns of Alexander 300 years before Christ, and of the Romans afterwards, had disseminated these fancies and a thousand others similar broadcast from the Mediterranean to the Indus. And the idea of transforming a man into a god could not have been new or startling to the people of that age and time. In addition, the Jewish religion itself abounds in signs, wonders and miracles. Such as the witch of Endor raising Samuel from his grave, after he had been dead several years (1st Samuel ch. 28); the story of Enoch translated to heaven before death (Genesis 5:23 and 24); the story of the prophet Elijah, as related in the second book of the Kings; how he brought down fire from heaven which consumed a captain and fifty men, thrice repeated. (Ch. 1:10

to 14). How he parted the waters of the river Jordan so that he and his companions passed over on dry land (Ch. 2:8); And how he was taken up to heaven alive in a chariot of fire. (Ch. 2:11). And how Aaron, the priest, cast a lot of gold rings and other bits of jewelry into the fire, "And there came out this calf" (Exodus 32:24). How Jonah lived three days and three nights in the belly of a whale; and how the whale obedient to God's command, then "spewed him up *on dry land!*" (Jonah. 2:10).

It would not seem that it should be difficult for a people, Jews and pagans, who were accustomed to regard such tales as truth, vouched for by Jehovah, to accept also the doctrine of Christ's divinity—his miraculous conception—his incarnation, God himself taking on the form of man and dwelling here on earth among men to accomplish a purpose—his resurrection and ascension to heaven, where he took his seat at the right hand of the Father. (The record fails to inform us how this fact was ascertained). None of

these things were entirely new. There had previously been several instances of miraculous conception—all the deities of the Greeks and Romans were but incarnated gods—the raising of the dead to life had been lately performed by Jesus and others; the belief in the resurrection of the body had become an accepted doctrine with the pharisees, and was, of course, familiar to the minds of the people in general; and ascension had been made familiar to the pagan mind by the case of Romulus and others; while the Jews had the instances of Enoch and Elijah already cited. Add to all these considerations the fact that the followers of Jesus loved him with all their hearts and most deeply deplored his death. And again add, that the disciples intensely desired to know that their great leader still lived, and we will have all the conditions necessary in that age of unbounded credulity to insure the acceptance and so-called belief in all these incredible doctrines.

So far this is but a sketch of what actually occurred—that the Jews actually crucified the

Savior—that his friends believed he had risen from the grave and ascended to heaven—that the age is uncritical and credulous enough to believe anything however absurd, improbable, unreasonable or impossible. Out of these facts and conditions has been constructed a system of so-called Christian theology, which has in effect, if not in terms, completely set aside and annulled the way of salvation clearly taught by the Savior. We shall not go into any lengthy arguments to prove what everybody knows.

Let us see as briefly as possible, how this great change has been wrought—how Salvation by Grace and Faith has been substituted for Salvation as the reward of obedience to the law.

PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES.

It is Paul the converted Jew, the learned, acute and zealous apostle to the gentiles who is chiefly to be credited with the authorship of the new way of salvation. Paul was a learned Jew recently converted to Christianity. He tells us that: "After the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a pharisee." (Acts 26:5).

He had spent much of his life in Jerusalem and had been "taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers at the feet of Gamaliel," the renowned doctor of the Jewish law in that period. (Acts 22: 3). We may reasonably suppose that a man whose mind was so fully and deeply impressed with the doctrines of the Jewish religion and customs, could not at once throw them all off and become a complete Christian in a day. Some remnants of his Jewish faith would naturally survive the conversion. And we are not without proof of this. For instance he performed the rite of circumcision on Timotheus. (Acts 16: 3). And his remarks on circumcision in his epistles, show that he considered the doctrine not without favor.

Paul's God, still retaining some traces of the characteristics of Moses' God, is quite unlike Jesus' Heavenly Father.

The most pronounced of these survivals of Paul's former religious faith, is his retention of the doctrine of sacrifice as the means of atoning for the sins of the people.

Jesus had said to the scribes: "To love God with all the heart . . . and to love one's neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices." (Mark 12: 33). Jesus had in fact, practically, though not in express terms, abolished by disuse the Mosaic law of sacrifice and had substituted for it the law of Love, Repentance and Forgiveness.

Paul, on the contrary, teaches that the sacrifices of the Mosaic law were types of better things to come. He reminds the Jews, to whom he is speaking, that: "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and, without shedding of blood, is no remission." (Hebrews 9:22).

Having discovered the doctrine of original sin, and seeing the whole world of mankind groaning under the helpless condemnation of that sin, Paul feels the necessity of finding an antidote for that great and terrible calamity. In such an exigency his thoughts naturally—we might almost say necessarily—recur to the Mosaic law of which he was a master. One error begets another. He had found original sin in the Mosaic writings; he looks to the

same source for the remedy. Sins are atoned for and God's anger appeased by offerings and sacrifices. These offerings and sacrifices must needs be commensurate with the magnitude of the offense. But he found nowhere on the earth an offering adequate to the demand of this occasion. Accordingly the recent fact of the crucifixion of Jesus by the Jews is seized upon and construed into a holy sacrifice. Jesus, says Paul, had been offered by God himself as a sacrifice to take away the sins of the world. Theoretically, transgression of the law is sin, and sin provokes the anger and wrath of God which must be appeased by suitable offerings and sacrifices to be made by or for the transgressors. But in this extraordinary case, God himself initiates the proceeding. And to appease his own anger, God, seeing the utter hopelessness of man under the condemnation of the law, determines, *purely as an act of grace* to send his only begotten Son to die the just for the unjust, and to bear the sins of the whole world and thus to reconcile God again to man. Still

more. It is claimed that Christ the Son, coequal and coeternal with the Father, concurred and consented to this plan, and came voluntarily and offered himself a willing sacrifice to suffer the infamous and painful death of the cross that he might relieve the world of mankind from the effect of that appalling calamity that had fallen upon them by reason of Adam's transgression of the law. Thus the most appalling crime in the whole history of man on the earth is converted into an act of the supremest merit.

If this be true—if it be true that Christ came voluntarily, by the consent and counsel of God the Father, and offered himself a willing sacrifice to suffer and die upon the cross to redeem the human race from the judgment of condemnation resting upon them, and to thus appease God's anger—how utterly inconsistent it was in Jesus in the hour of his agony, to pray to God to "Let this cup pass." (Luke 22: 42). To relieve him from this suffering, which, if God had listened to and granted his prayer, would have wholly

defeated the entire scheme. In a mere man such a prayer would not have seemed unnatural. But, in the belief of the theologians, Christ was a divine being, the son and coequal of God the Father. Does it not incline one to believe that Christ was only a man; and being only a man, he prayed to a higher power?

Jesus also prayed for his persecutors, even for them who were nailing him to the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34). Now, if it were true that Jesus was being voluntarily sacrificed as a propitiation for the sins of the world, and in pursuance of a determinate appointment of the Father and Son, as the foundation of a new scheme of salvation, then these men were simply executing God's will. What need, then, had they to be forgiven? But the fact that Christ prayed God to forgive them, proves that they were participants in a great crime and, therefore, had need to be forgiven.

Jesus, as a fact, was accused, arrested,

tried, condemned and crucified as a malefactor. If, as the orthodox claim, he was voluntarily offered by God's appointment as a holy sacrifice, what reason can be suggested, why he was not offered in due form on the altar by a priest *as a sacrifice*, and not on the cross as a criminal?

These several circumstances, all pointing one way, indicate with great force that God had much less to do with this memorable act than the Jews had.

Jesus, considered as a sacrifice, says Paul, bore away the sins of the world. This, again, is after the similitude of the old Mosaic law, the scape goat.

"And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat and shall send him away by the hand of a fit person to the wilderness; and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited." (Leviticus 16: 21, 22).

For convenience, facility and economy, this plan of relieving a whole people of their sins

by a single performance, can hardly be improved. Its efficiency is quite another matter. But if one smiles gently as he reads this grotesque method of purifying the morals of the people, ought he to be accused of irreverence? A sensible person can only feel a sense of ridicule on reading such nonsense.

But let us hear Paul :

“But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. . . . So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.”
(Hebrews 9:26, 28).

It is the very idea of the goat bearing away the sins of the people. Christ puts away or bears off or away the sins of the people just as the goat did. Is not the absurdity and impossibility in the one case and the other the same? Do we not know that we cannot be rid of our sins in such a way? Does not every man know that he must himself suffer the penalty of his sins and that there is no possibility of avoiding it? I say it with all reverence, but the sacrifice of Christ is the old heathen idea in all its hideousness and full-

ness. Christ undertook to teach the people how to avoid sin and how to be relieved of sin by repentance and forgiveness. He did not pretend to take any man's sins on himself.

But, grant that the death of Christ was a sacrifice and not a murder. What then? What was a sacrifice at best? What were all sacrifices in those times? Only an attempt to win the favor or to placate the anger of an offended deity. All the deities of those times—and especially Moses' God—are formed after the pattern of weak and passionate man. "For I the Lord God am a jealous God," etc. They were, therefore, subject to violent fits of passion and rage. The priests taught the people that the only means of appeasing their anger or of insuring their favor, was to sacrifice a goat, a ram, a bullock or a man as the case might be. This was perhaps the earliest form of religious worship among the heathen nations. This practice was nearly universal. The Egyptians, the Greeks and Romans, Phoenicians, and Canaanites, as well as the Jews, all practiced this form of religion.

They knew of no more rational way of approaching the deity. Moses had specially provided this method as best adapted to the benighted throng which he led in the wilderness. The Canaanites, and so the others occasionally, offered human sacrifice, the most barbarous of all. But whether the victim offered were a goat or a bullock, a man or the Son of God, the sacrifice is in all cases alike, a heathen rite. The great names connected with it do not change the character of the rite itself. The religion of the sacrifice of bulls and goats has for its only basis a total misconception of the true character of God.

Jesus, in his brief but glorious ministry, had taught and revealed to the world: "God is a spirit, and they who worship him, worship him in spirit." (John 4:24). He also taught that "Our Father which art in heaven" is not a God of jealousy, passion and violence, but a God of love, compassion and tender mercy for all his children, desiring the happiness and salvation of all, exacting from them no other worship but the love and filial reverence of

pure hearts which are to him far more acceptable worship than the sacrifice of bulls and goats. He had taught mankind that salvation is the final reward of obedience to the law of righteousness. This is what Christ had taught before Paul came on the stage. It was indeed a new regime—a revelation. And it is not too much to say that Paul never got up to this conception of God. His writings all show that he was never able wholly to cast off Judaism for Christianity. In point of fact, Paul was never converted to *Christianity*. He allied himself with the disciples of Christ, but he never embraced Jesus' doctrines.

The date of Paul's conversion is generally supposed to have been somewhere from five to eight years after the death of Christ. Paul never saw Jesus and never heard his voice. He was zealously employed for a considerable time before his conversion in persecuting the Christians. As none of the doings and teachings of the Savior had been reduced to writing until long after Paul's conversion, Paul's only means

of learning what Christ's religion really was, was by such vague and uncertain oral reports as happened to reach his ears. At the time, then, of his conversion, we may fairly conclude that Paul was thoroughly imbued with all the doctrines and precepts of the Jewish religion, and knew practically nothing of Christianity. His conversion imposed upon him one of the most difficult tasks which ever fall to the lot of man to perform—to change his religion. To discard the old and to adopt the new at the same time, involve a change of habit which can only take place slowly and with great effort and difficulty. Paul's success in accomplishing this was no exception to the general rule. Proof of the fact that he never got rid of his old religious notions is in evidence against him on every page of his writings. Such expressions as "wrath of God"; "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known," etc., (Romans 9:22, 24), show this plainly. Negative evidences abound everywhere. But the most conspicuous and conclusive proof of Paul's tardy transition from

Judaism to Christianity, is in the fact that he makes God sacrifice his own beloved Son to propitiate his wrath against the people on account of their sins, and to thus reconcile God again to the people. It seems incredible that Paul would have done this, if he had been correctly informed of what Christ had taught; and we can only account for his partiality for Jewish practices by supposing him ignorant of the teachings of Christ. No act on his part could more clearly demonstrate that Paul is yet more an Israelite than a Christian; that he has not yet entirely cast off the influence of his Mosaic teachings, and that his mind is still more under the control of Jewish ideas than of the new regime. Paul's God is not the God of Jesus who has no altars of sacrifice and no sacrifices, but the God of Moses still demanding sacrifices to appease his anger. Instead of adopting Jesus' God of love, Paul adopted Moses' God of vengeance who delights in heathen sacrifices.

Paul states his theory in these terms,

“As by one man's disobedience many were made

sinner, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (Rom. 5:19).

Here we have the disease and the antidote. But it should be noted that the remedy, great as it is, is not completely adequate to the disease. Adam's disobedience involved all; while Christ's sacrifice inures only to the benefit of a part of those who believe. (Rom. 3:22). "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, *through faith*, in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past." (Rom. 3: 22, 25 ; see Hebrews, 9:15).

But the sacrifice of Christ is only a part of Paul's scheme of salvation. The sacrifice of itself alone, saved no one. The sacrifice only prepared the conditions for salvation and thus made salvation possible to those who believe. The complementary part of the scheme is

FAITH.

"By grace are ye saved *through faith*; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." (Eph. 2:8).

This faith is of the most extraordinary character. It is not the outcome of knowledge, of evidence, of confidence, and not a mental product in any sense. We will not attempt to describe it. Let Orthodoxy speak for itself in characterizing it.

We quote from a late publication: "Nature and the Supernatural" by Rev. Horace Bushnell, D. D., p. 379-80.

"The doctrine of this salvation makes it a salvation by *Faith*; in which we have another ruling idea of the scheme that coincides with its supernatural facts and character. Christianity" (Paulism) "differs from all philosophies and ethical doctrines of men, in the fact that *it rests all virtue in faith*, exactly as it should, if it be a grace imported into nature from without. . . . Such a salvation *lies not within the premises of natural fact and reason*; it is not therefore a matter of science, or of logical deduction. It makes its address, therefore, *not to reason*, but to *faith*. . . . It cannot be received by reason. . . . The new salvation is by faith because it is a supernatural salvation."

A supernatural religion, conferred by a supernatural means and in a supernatural way; a religion which lies not within the cog-

nizance of Reason and which Reason cannot accept, *because* Reason cannot comprehend it, cannot measure or weigh it; cannot see its excellences nor feel its power. Such a religion propounded to rational men to guide them in the way of truth! This faith is wholly unattainable to man by any act of his own. It is the gift of God and comes in no other way. For aught we know there may be many such gifts lying about us, which we have never been able to appropriate or make available for any useful human purpose.

But this gift of faith is not for all. God bestows it only on whom he will—only on the elect of his grace. (Hebrews ix:15).

“Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.” (Rom. 9:18). “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, *to them who are the called* according to his purpose.” (Rom. 8:28). “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be confirmed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate them he also called, and whom he called them he also justified: and whom he justified them he also glorified.” (Rom. 8:28, 30).

We quote again from the work of Bushnell page 237.

"Do we then affirm, it will be asked, the absolute inability of a man to do and become what is right before God? That is the Christian doctrine, and there is none more obviously true."

Paul says: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." (Rom. 3:28).

Paul also concludes that "No flesh can be justified by the deeds of the law." (Galatians 2:16).

How this plan works.

"Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Rom. 4:4,5).

Thus is man completely prostrated, and every incentive to relieve himself by appealing to God for help is taken away. His final destiny has been predetermined thousands of years before he was born; and nothing he can do can change it. He can only await the destiny which an arbitrary Diety has decreed.

We have said above that Paul's plan of sal-

vation is radically different from Jesus' way to the kingdom of heaven. This will become more obvious, perhaps, by contrasting the two plans, the one with the other, at a few points.

(1) Jesus taught that the way to eternal life is by *obedience to the law*, by *doing* the will of God, by good works, deeds of benevolence and kindness one to another among men.

Paul says No: Salvation is "Not of works lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8).

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Rom. 3:20).

(2) Jesus taught that the way to be rid of our sins, is to *repent* of our evil deeds and seek God's forgiveness. Repentance true and heartfelt is of the very first importance. There can be no pardon without repentance.

Paul says No: "The gifts and callings of God are *without repentance*." (Rom. 11:29).

"By grace are ye saved, through faith and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." (Ephesians 2:8).

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” (Rom. 3:28).

(3) Jesus teaches us: That God neither desires nor requires of us any other than spiritual worship. To love God and one’s neighbor is better than sacrifices. He virtually repudiates sacrifices of any kind, and especially human sacrifices. (Mark 12:33).

Paul on the contrary, sacrifices Jesus himself to propitiate God’s anger. (Rom. 3:25); and even makes God sanction this sacrifice as his own act. “Without shedding of blood is no remission.” (Hebrews 9:22).

(4) Jesus’ way of salvation is equally open and free to all alike. The most sinful, by true repentance, may find pardon.

Paul teaches us that none can be saved but those whom God has preordained to eternal life from the foundation of the world; and to whom he gives the special grace of faith. (Hebrews 9: 15).

(5) Jesus’ plan of salvation in all its parts, is natural, simple and comprehensible to the

human understanding. It places man in complete harmony with his Creator and with his fellow-beings, puts him on the line of moral and intellectual growth and advance, surrounds him with conditions stimulating him to deeds of virtue and holds out to him the highest possible incentive to exert all his faculties and to improve all his opportunities to lift himself to a higher plane and thus get nearer to God.

Paul's plan on the contrary, is in all its parts supernatural and, as it appears to me, purely artificial. Examine as we may all the chief features, singly or collectively, we will find nothing that tends to harmonize man's relation with his Creator, nor with his fellow-beings. Nor is there in it all anything to stimulate man's moral virtues and cause him to aspire and strive for a higher plane of spiritual life. It offers man no incentive to be good or to do good. It teaches no morals, nor is it founded on any recognized moral principle that can today be accepted as such. Whoever looks into it and examines its cardinal features one by one, original sin, the election of God's grace, the

sacrifice of Christ as an offering to appease God's displeasure, faith as the gift of God regardless of the merits of the recipient, the doctrine of imputed righteousness—the merits of Jesus' sacrifice imputed to the salvation of unrepentant sinners—I say whoever looks into these doctrines, will find only an artificial and arbitrary, or mechanical sort of contrivance for saving a portion of the human family without the slightest reference to their deserts, while it leaves the remainder in hopeless condemnation to suffer eternally the penalty of an offense for which they are in no possible sense responsible. A faith wholly unattainable by any efforts man may make for himself, and wholly beyond the cognizance of the human understanding, is neither an element of spiritual growth nor of progress in the ways of civilization. Nor can such a faith subserve any interest of man in his present state of being.

Such is an outline of Paul's plan of salvation, which has been accepted and preached by the orthodox churches of all Christendom for eighteen centuries. All this time they have called

it and still call it Christianity. But is it not time to remove this mask? No intelligent person should be longer deceived by a trick so transparent. Paul's way of salvation is as widely different from that of Jesus as it is from Hinduism.

Paul's way of salvation is wholly outside of the law and beyond the scope of reason. It rests for its sole foundation on the dogma of original sin. Jesus destroyed that foundation, (if such a doctrine ever existed outside of Paul's brain) when he said: "Suffer little children to come unto me . . . for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Surely if little children are fit subjects for the kingdom of heaven, then they are not born under condemnation for Adam's sin. But this doctrine of original sin which never had any substantial foundation, being now disclaimed and rejected as it generally is even by the clergy themselves, the *raison d' être* of Paul's system is totally wanting and the whole structure falls to the ground.

The doctrine of Salvation by Grace is nowhere mooted, mentioned or alluded to in any of the four Gospels. That doctrine was developed by others who came after Christ. The word Grace, even, is nowhere used in the first three Gospels, and in the fourth only in the author's preface, as the language of the author and not of the Savior. Both these doctrines—Original Sin and Salvation by Grace are apparently wholly foreign to the religion which Christ taught to his disciples, and were manifestly unknown to him.

A single text deserves to be noticed in this connection. By way of an illustration and incidentally Christ says: "He came to give his life a ransom for many."

This expression has been forced into service as evidence that the Savior himself recognized as a fact that he was a chief factor in the scheme of Salvation by Grace, and that he thus sanctioned the correctness and truth of that doctrine. The language used, when properly interpreted, will not bear the construction thus placed upon it.

(1) The fundamental rule for the interpretation and construction of language is to refer it to the subject matter in reference to which it was uttered. We may fairly assume that the language made use of by a speaker has reference to the subject under consideration, and that the significance and purport of the language used is limited to that subject. The one explains and defines the other. What was the subject on which the language in question was uttered? Two of the disciples, the two sons of Zebidee, aided by their mother, had privately attempted to get from the Master a pledge of unfair preference over their fellow disciples when they should come into the kingdom of heaven. "And when the ten heard it they were moved with indignation against the two brethren." It may be easily imagined that such an eruption breaking out among the Twelve, would at once command the attention of the Master. "Jesus called them unto him." He sees that they—even his chosen Twelve—have signally failed to comprehend the spirit of his teaching,

and makes the incident the occasion of an additional, special lecture on humility—a special effort to disabuse their minds of false preconceptions and to enlighten their understanding as to the true conditions of the kingdom of heaven. Calling their attention to the well known fact that among the Gentiles, the Princes, the great, exercise dominion over their fellows, he tells them, by way of contrast, “It shall not be so among you.” Among you—that is to say in the kingdom of heaven of which you constitute the nucleus—there will be no priority of rank, no grades of merit, but all will be on an equal footing. The vain honors so much coveted and so eagerly sought after here in this world will have no place there. There will be no desire to rule one over another. The best and the greatest, if there be any such, will be servants to the poorest and least. Each will be the willing servant of all. The Savior was lecturing the disciples specially on the subject of humility and tells them in terms that the greatest should be willing to serve the least;

and to emphasize his teaching, he cites his own example to illustrate in what manner and to what extent we should be willing to serve each other: "Even as the Son came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:28). The theme, the one thought which was wholly occupying his mind, was that of Christian love, fellowship and duty which mutually unite all in his kingdom. Nothing could be more apposite than his own example to illustrate the character of the kingdom of heaven and the plainest rules of construction limit the meaning of the language quoted to the case then in hand.


(2) The expression under consideration was used only incidentally and subordinately as an illustration of the doctrine or thought which the speaker was laboring to impress upon his disciples, and not as a declarative statement of fact. It has not, therefore, the dignity or authority of an unqualified, independent declaration; and without violence cannot be enlarged or distorted to embrace a

meaning wholly outside of the subject in reference to which the language was uttered.

(3) The declared mission of Christ was to "fulfill the law"—that is, to revive and reestablish the law, which had fallen into utter disuse among the Jews. He found the Jewish people in a state of profound sinfulness, practicing a multitude of superstitious rites and ceremonies, and, by their traditions, "making the law of none effect." To use the strongly figurative language of the times Jesus found the Jewish people in the bonds of iniquity—the enslaved captives of sin. It is in the line of his chosen work to rescue them from their bondage by teaching them to know what the law of righteousness is and how to obey it, and that true and faithful obedience thereto is the only way to the kingdom of heaven. To teach them to forsake their sinful practices and to render cheerful obedience to the law, is, in the figurative sense of the text, to *ransom* them. To this work of reform Jesus (figuratively) gave his life—that is, the labor, effort, opportunities

and years of his life—life, by metonymy, for the work of his life. In this sense, truly, he gave his life a ransom for many—just as we say now-a-days, that a doctor gives his life to healing the sick; or a Christian minister gives his life to the work of saving souls. It is obviously in this figurative sense that the expression “to give his life a ransom for many,” is to be interpreted. In this sense the illustration is strictly pertinent to the case in hand and seems to bear no other meaning.

But, if it be said, that Christ literally gave his life a ransom for others, as the event afterwards proved, that fact proves nothing but the fact itself, and does not alter the case. It throws no light on the subject as to the motive of the sacrifice, in addition to what is reflected by the surroundings, and by that light we can only see that Christ having undertaken to reform the Jewish religion, had encountered in the Jewish rulers a current of opposition too strong to be controlled by him and to which he fell a sacrifice.



Is it not therefore obvious that the text above quoted, cannot serve as a foundation for the doctrines that Jesus was sent into the world expressly to be crucified as an atonement for the sin of Adam; or that he knew or believed himself sent for such purpose?

Are we not justified in asserting broadly that Jesus was sacrificed not as an atonement for the sins of Adam—not to satisfy the demands of the violated law—not to appease the *wrath of the God of love*—but simply as the victim of Jewish hate against one whom they regarded as an apostate? This may sound harsh and irreverent, but it seems to me so plain that I cannot forbear to write it.

For a secondary basis, Paul, without the semblance of fact to justify such an assumption, but in the very teeth of numerous facts to the contrary, seizes upon that great crime—the crucifixion of Christ, and converts it into a holy sacrifice after the pattern of the Mosaic law. And, affecting to know all the counsels and the purposes of God, and, to clothe his doctrines with necessary religious sanctions, Paul

makes God himself legitimate the whole scheme by ordering and decreeing the sacrifice of his beloved Son to appease his own anger, and thus to restore fallen man to his favor: all as a foundation for a new covenant, a new plan of salvation by grace and faith. On this foundation Paul builds up a system of his own with small reference to anything Christ has said or done. Paul puts forth his theories and assumptions with commanding ability and with unflinching boldness and confidence. His eloquence, learning and zeal burned them into the conscience of a credulous age.

But we should know that Paul's religion and Christ's religion are not one. These two systems, or plans of salvation are as widely asunder as the poles. They have no single element in common. Paul's religion directly negates, in fact theoretically abolishes, Christ's plan of salvation. But it fell out that Paul's plan was adopted and practiced, and that Christ's plan has remained in abeyance. The Pauline plan—involving as it does the fundamental doctrines of original sin and atoning

sacrifice of Jesus—both survivals of the heathen rites and notions of the Mosaic age—the divinity of Christ's nature, his co-eternity with the Father, his voluntary incarnation, miraculous birth, crucifixion and resurrection, vicarious atonement, imputed righteousness and salvation by faith—has involved the Christian world in a turmoil of angry passions that lasted through 18 centuries. That system of theology has been an absolute barrier to anything like Christian unity. The impossibility of believing doctrines so extraordinary has divided the Christian world into hostile factions warring one on another, and often throwing whole communities into bloody disorder and even states and nations into war. Thousands of volumes have been written to rationalize these doctrines, and yet they are as much disputed as ever; nor are factious divisions among Christians diminished.

The Pauline or orthodox scheme of salvation has the prescription of time in its favor. It stands before the world apparently clothed in the majesty and armed with the sanction of God and the Eternal Son. It places the world of

sinful mortals prostrate at its feet, condemned and helpless. It is also fortified in many times ten thousand costly temples erected and dedicated to the worship of the most high God; and is supported by the prayers, devotions and oblations of millions of devout worshipers who bow in awe at its altars. From this intrenched fortress the orthodox clergy of today are still fulminating the terrors of hell and eternal perdition, as they did a thousand years ago, against all who refuse to accept and believe (or pretend to believe) their impossible doctrines. And with all, the cause of religion progresses but little.

The trouble is not that men in general, are less godly or religious than they were in the earlier times of the Christian era, but are more intelligent and, therefore, less credulous and superstitious. The theologians of those early days of our era made a mistake. From accident or design, they preferred Paul's plan of salvation to that of Christ. The intelligence of the nineteenth century has outgrown Paul's system of salvation by faith, election and

imputed righteousness. That scheme requires one to believe too many things which are utterly incomprehensible and apparently impossible to believe or accept as true. We need less of dogma and theology and more religion. Would it not be better to drop Paulism and try Christianity?



CHAPTER III.

CONSTANTINE AND THE CHURCH—THE REIGN
OF FAITH WITHOUT REASON—DEMORALIZA-
TION AND DEGENERACY OF THE CHURCH.

It was in the forests of Britain, in the year of our Lord 306, that the Roman legions proclaimed Constantine emperor of Rome. Constantine was at that time about 33 years of age. He had been born and bred in the military service and knew but little else. But in this he had already displayed his great ability as a commander in many bloody wars, and had won for himself a great name. He had need of all his military genius to make good the choice of his troops and to hold the rank their partiality had assigned to him. The empire was in the throes of dissolution. It had long been divided into the Eastern Empire and the Western. Galienus, an active and able leader, was the ruler of the Eastern Empire and was the declared foe of Constantine whom he undertook

to supplant by appointing a favorite of his own to rule in the West. In all, Constantine's competitors for the throne of the Western Empire embracing Britain, Gaul, Spain and Italy, were not less than four or five. Amid such dangers and difficulties, he felt that, if he would live, he must reign. Force was the only law known to princes in those times. At the end of eighteen years of bloody civil wars, his competitors and opponents, one by one, had all been overcome, vanquished or destroyed, and Constantine was sole emperor of the united Empire. In this mighty struggle he had endured great labor, incurred many and great dangers, and had committed great crimes. He had reached the goal of his ambition—an ambition not unworthy of the greatest and best of men when worthily pursued. How Constantine won this proud station may be told in a few words. Says a writer in the American Cyclopaedia, Vol. V, page 271:

“It is in vain that zealous writers have tried to relieve Constantine's reputation from the crimes committed to satisfy his ambition. His father-in-law,

Maximian, formerly emperor of the West, his brother-in-law, Licinius; his own son Crispus; his nephew, a son of Licinius a boy of only eleven years; and lastly his wife Fausta, were his victims."

During the preceding centuries since Jesus ended his ministry the Christian Church, though under the frown of public authority, in its orderly though not wholly unpretentious way, had been increasing its numbers, expanding its power, perfecting its organization and extending its dominion from year to year in spite of persecutions and minor oppositions, till it was known in every city all around the Mediterranean, in Asia Minor and in all of southern Europe. Constantine was not only a great soldier, he was also a consummate politician and statesman. Having vanquished his competitors and won his title and possession of the throne, he felt the importance of consolidating and insuring his power for the future. In this view he saw nothing else so promising as the adoption of the Christian Church. Paganism had, up to that time, been the religion of the Roman people. But Paganism had from the

beginning been without any principle of vitality, and was now become effete and was no longer of service as an element of strength to the civil government. On the other hand he saw that the Christian Church was an active, strongly organized, vital force, animated by an unconquerable principle of aggression, which it was far better to have as an ally than as a foe. He therefore threw his protecting shield over the church as a whole, and thus uniting Church and state, he took the Church into the partnership as a branch of civil government. Leaving out the supernatural concomitants, this is what has been called the *conversion* of Constantine. His action in the whole affair was obviously dictated by his political policy. Constantine *was converted* to the belief, that the orthodox Church was a more active and a far stronger national element than Paganism could ever be, and that it was true statesmanship on his part, to swap off the one for the other. That this was the true character and extent of his conversion is obvious from his continued indulgence to the Pagans, his unscrupulous

character and especially from the fact that he was not baptized and received into the communion of the Church until the last hour of his life. Constantine adopted the Church not to protect the Christians but to secure the aid of the Christians to protect himself, not to promote Christianity as a great religious institution, but, to subserve the purposes of his ambition.

The entire Church, East and West, having embraced the teachings of Paul concerning the nature and character of Christ—his divinity, his co-eternity and co-equality with God the Father, his incarnation and sacrifice to atone for the sins of the whole world, his resurrection and ascension, and particularly the dogma of original sin imputed to the entire human race, and that salvation is by God's grace and by the gift of Faith only, together with the trinity of the God-head—the Church having adopted all these as fundamental doctrines, as might naturally be expected, many fierce disputes, jarring discords, quarrels, contentions and schisms arose in the bosom of the Church

itself. Indeed so numerous and so violent have been these disturbances all the way along its course from the days of Paul until this time, that a complete account of them all would constitute a complete history of the Church. We will briefly give a sample or two to illustrate the character of these quarrels. As an instance of reasonable teaching in opposition to the orthodox doctrines of the Church, we cite the case of Pelagius. We give it in the language of a highly approved author John William Draper, in his "Intellectual Development of Europe," page 217.

"Pelagius was a British monk, who, about the year 400 A. D. passed through Western Europe and Northern Africa, teaching the doctrines that Adam was by nature mortal, and that, if he had not sinned, he nevertheless would have died; that the consequences of his sin were confined to himself, and did not affect his posterity; that new born infants are in the same condition as Adam before his fall; that we are at birth as pure as he was; that we sin by our own free will, and in the same manner may reform, and thereby work out our own salvation; that the grace of God is given according to our merits. He was repelled from

Africa by the influence of St. Augustine, and denounced in Palestine from the cell of Jerome. He specially insisted on this, that it is not the mere act of baptizing by water that washes away sin, but that it can only be removed by good works. Infants are baptized before it is possible that they could have sinned. On the contrary, Augustine resisted these doctrines, resting himself on the words of Scripture that baptism is for the remission of sins. The case of children compelled that father to introduce the doctrine of original sin as derived from Adam, notwithstanding the dreadful consequences if they die unbaptized. In like manner also followed the doctrines of predestination, grace, atonement.

“Summoned before a synod at Diospolis Pelagius was unexpectedly acquitted of heresy, an extraordinary decision, which brought Africa and the East into conflict. Under these circumstances, perhaps without a clear foresight of the issue, the matter was referred to Rome as an arbiter or judge.


“In his decision, Innocent I, magnifying the dignity of the Roman see and the advantage of such a supreme tribunal, determined in favor of the African bishops. But scarcely had he done this when he died and his successor, Zosimus, annulled his judgment, and declared the opinions of Pelagius to be orthodox. Carthage now put herself in an attitude of resistance. There was danger of a metaphysical or theological

Punic war. Meantime the wily Africans quietly procured from the emperor an edict denouncing Pelagius as a heretic. Through the influence of Count Valerius the faith of Europe was settled; the heresiarchs and their accomplices were condemned to exile and forfeiture of their estates; the contested doctrine that Adam was created without any liability to death was established by law: to deny it was a state crime."

This was apparently an honest effort, by a capable man, to reform and rationalize the doctrines of the Church and to make them more comprehensible and acceptable to the ordinary understanding. But that was precisely what the clergy did not want. When Moses went up into the Mount to commune with God and to receive the law from him, he took great pains to make sure that none should follow him. He would have no witness of what he did to dispute the truth of his assertions. So the priesthood of the early centuries of our era assumed a lofty eminence, very near to God, immeasurably above the ignorant, common horde, nor do they ever relax their watchful care to preserve intact and

undiminished the space which separates them from the rabble at the base. From this imperial eminence they look down on the degraded masses and say to them: We are God's chosen and anointed priests, appointed by him expressly to communicate, interpret and execute his will among men. We live in constant communion with God and know intimately his will and all his purposes towards mankind. We are the only intermediary between you and God. You are all sinners. You were all born already condemned to eternal woe by reason of Adam's transgression.

Paul tells you: "Great is the mystery of godliness." (Timothy 3: 16). God, in his mysterious providence and as an act of grace has provided a way for your escape from that terrible punishment, if you will only do what I tell you. It is only to God's chosen priests that these great mysteries are revealed. You cannot know them. They are beyond your comprehension; and you are not expected or required to know them. You only need to know what the priest tells you. He will im-



part to you all that you need to know for your salvation. It is only by and through the Church—through the intermediation of God's chosen and anointed priests—that you can obtain the benefits of this great mercy. Come into the Church and obey the priest's instructions and you will be saved.

That one of the many quarrels which most divided and disturbed the peace of the Church during the reign of Constantine, was what has been and is still known as Arianism. Arius denied the co-eternity of Christ as well as his co-equality with the Father, and claimed for Christ a personality distinct from that of the Father. Such doctrines were destructive of the equality of the persons composing the Trinity, and raised at once the most violent opposition. Riots, murders and other outrages ensued. To quell the storm and to fix determinately the faith of the Church, Constantine called a great council of the Church to meet at Nicea in Asia Minor, in the year A. D. 325. That council was composed of three hundred and eighteen bishops, which

number gives no mean idea of the magnitude of that mighty organization at that time. The grand deliverance of this council, presided over by the emperor in person, was what has ever since been known as the "Nicene Creed." We here copy this celebrated document in its original form as given in a recent publication, (*The Footprints of a Soul*, by Reverend Henry Truro Bray, M. A., B. D., L. L. D.)

THE NICENE CREED.

I believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible : and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father ; by whom all things were made, who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and

Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one Catholic and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

Let us hear Dr. Bray's criticisms as to the manner of procuring this result of that celebrated council. We quote from the work mentioned, page 399.

"When we come to the examination of the Nicene Creed, the great symbol of orthodoxy, we find that only the first clause, which refers exclusively to God the Father, has ever received, or does receive universal assent. It will be admitted that if the balance of this creed be believed at all, it must be by Christians exclusively. A slight examination of the origin and growth of this creed, will better enable us to understand its value as a symbol of faith.

"The original Nicene Creed was formulated at Nice, A. D. 325, by three hundred and eighteen bishops convened at the summons of the Emperor Constantine. In this council there were not less than three antagonistic parties—the homoousian, the homoiou-sian, and the Origenian. The homoousian, which today represents the orthodox party, in this council

was in a decided minority. The majority of the bishops headed by Eusebius of Caesarea, followed the lead of Origen who represented the liberal party, while not a few were homoiousians, or followers of Arius, who represented the more radical party. The result of this council was a victory for the homoousians. This victory was brought about through the influence of the presiding emperor, the oratory of Athanasius, and the fear, on the part of many, of deposition, or of giving offence to the emperor. Only three were brave enough to refuse subscription to this creed of Nice—Arius, Theonas, and Secundus; and these, for their refusal, were exiled into Illyria.

“Thus the Nicene Creed is a child of force, political influence, and oratorical persuasion.”

Draper, quoted above, on page 222 has some remarks touching the value (or worthlessness) of councils as a means of ascertaining truth.

“In these contests of Rome, Constantinople, and Alexandria for supremacy—for, after all, they were nothing more than the rivalries of ambitious place-men for power—the Roman bishop uniformly came forth the gainer. And it is to be remarked that he deserved to be so: his course was always dignified, often noble; theirs exhibited a reckless scramble for influence, an unscrupulous resort to bribery, court intrigue, murder.”

“Notwithstanding the contradictions and opposition they (the councils) frequently exhibit, there may be discerned in the decisions of these bodies the traces of an affiliation indicating the continuous progression of thought. Thus, of the four oecumenical councils that were concerned with the facts spoken of in the preceding pages, that of Nicea determined the Son to be of the same substance with the Father; that of Constantinople, that the Son and Holy Spirit are equal to the Father; that of Ephesus, that the two natures of Christ make but one person; and that of Chalcedon, that these natures remain two, notwithstanding their personal union. But that they failed of their object in constituting a criterion of truth is plainly demonstrated by such simple facts as that, in the fourth century alone, there were thirteen councils adverse to Arius, fifteen in his favor, and seventeen for the semi-Arians—in all, forty-five. From such a confusion, it was necessary that the councils themselves must be subordinate to a higher authority—a higher criterion able to give to them or refuse to them authenticity. That the source of power, both for the council in the East and the papacy in the West, was altogether political, is proved by almost every transaction in which they were concerned.”

From this it appears that Constantine personally had much to do in securing the adop-

tion of the Nicene Creed, which was a triumph for the Pauline system of salvation in the place and stead of Christ's plan.

Whatever may be said of the councils, of the reckless and dissolute character of many of their constituents, of the base intrigues and low tricks often employed to influence their action and to secure a partisan result, of their errors of judgment and of the obvious unreliability and worthlessness of their decrees as criteria of truth—we pass all these to notice only that the creed is the embodiment of Paul's teachings and plan of salvation pure and simple. That plan of salvation as interpreted and preached by all the orthodox clergy from the time of Paul to this day is essentially this: Every human being is born into the world already condemned to eternal woe by reason of Adam's transgression, which is imputed to all his race. To relieve mankind from a doom so terrible and so universal, a tremendous sacrifice was demanded to appease God's anger and to place him at one again with the human family and thus make it possible for some of

them to be saved. To meet the demands of so great an exigency, God purely as an act of grace on his part, takes the matter into his own hands and sends his own beloved and only son into the world expressly to be sacrificed for the sins of the people and thus provide a means or way of salvation for all such as believe on the truth and efficacy of this plan. It is only by and through the merits of this sacrifice (imputed to only such as shall be saved) that any can be saved. And only those can be saved even by this sacrifice, on whom, as an additional act of grace, God *specially bestows* the miraculous gift of Faith,—which no man can acquire for himself by any means in his power. It is bestowed only on the elect.

These are the fundamentals. Other doctrines—the trinity of the God-Head, the immaculate conception, papal infallibility, the Resurrection, transubstantiation, purgatory and others were added at one time or another as the occasion seemed to suggest.

And this is what has passed all these centuries as Christianity, or the Christian

religion. But to call this Christianity is a hideous misnomer. It is not Christ's plan of salvation, or the religion which Christ taught, but is as unlike it as any two plans can well be. There is not a single element or feature in common between Christianity and Paulism. Christianity is natural, simple, reasonable and in the highest degree satisfying to the human soul. Paulism, which has become the creed of the orthodox church, is from first to last a system of incomprehensible mysteries. The more we attempt to comprehend and analyze the more the mysteries multiply and the difficulties increase. The acutest inspection of that system will fail to discover in it a single element in itself calculated to comfort the soul of man or to promote his intellectual well-being. Christianity is the confident repose of the soul on God's loving kindness and tender mercies *toward all His creatures* and on His willingness and ever readiness to freely pardon the sins of all who sincerely repent. On the other hand Paulism, at best, has nothing better to offer man than a questionable hope alter-

nating with a lurking fear lest, at last, he may not be one of the elect,—of which he can never be certain till death reveals his lot.

The influence of Constantine's action in adopting the Christian Church made itself felt quite as extensively in other respects, as it did in the adoption of a creed. The result of this celebrated act so benevolent in external appearance, and so selfish and baneful in fact, was the weakening, disintegration and pollution of the church itself. Sheltered by the protecting care of the civil power, the Christians no longer felt the necessity for that sharp and constant circumspection in their daily walk and conversation, which had so preeminently distinguished them in the apostolic times and had so greatly won upon the admiration and esteem of the Pagan tribes around them. They felt that, in so far as this world is concerned, the battle was over,—their cause was won and that they might lay off their armor. Their exertions relaxed, their zeal cooled. The alliance of the Christians with the state weakened the spirituality of the church and corrupted its

members by contact with political elements. The adoption of the church as the religion of the state practically superseded paganism. But Constantine did not wholly withdraw his protecting care from the pagans; who were permitted to still continue the practice of their worship more or less openly and publicly. It was not till the time of Theodosius, some fifty or more years after Constantine, that paganism was finally destroyed. The conversion of the emperor, while, in the loose ideas of those times it did not change the religion of the pagans, nevertheless had the effect indirectly to place them under the care of the church. This vast mass of pagan idolators, thus brought under the care of the church at one time, was far in excess of the true believers and was far too great to be absorbed by the Christian element. The consequence of this was the paganization of Christianity. The alliance arrested the otherwise onward march of Christianity, adulterated and absorbed it for the time being. This result, of course, did not take place all at once. But the process began at once and

continued progressively until there was little left in the church to remind one of the purity of former times.

How this great calamity came about, the pages of history fully instruct us. The great Roman Empire, that had so long dominated the European world, was already in a state of visible decay and dissolution. Its organic force was wasted and there remained to it only the weakness and helplessness of a lingering old age. Paganism, too, which had never been anything but a nominal system of forms and ceremonies invented and supported by the State to divert and amuse the rabble, and which had long ceased to command the respect of any but the ignorant multitude, had become effete and had practically ceased to be either a religion, an entertainment for the multitude, or an efficient element in politics. When the aid of the political power was withdrawn from its support, paganism was simply an unorganized mass of idolaters. The Church, on the other hand, was young and fresh, mighty in numbers and talent, but recently organized

and full of vigor and daring, and, above all, animated and impelled, nominally at least, by the loftiest and mightiest motive that can actuate the human soul.

The prelates of the church saw their opportunity and showed neither tardiness nor reluctance to embrace it. In his action respecting the church, it had been the aim of Constantine to make theology a branch of politics. It now became the ambition of the clergy to make politics a branch of theology. Their scheme from the first, as we may judge from their acts and from subsequent developments was to found, on the basis of ignorance and fear, a universal empire, to absorb into the church all authority spiritual and political. They had well defined ideas of what they would do; and no set of men ever more wisely adapted means to an end.

The priests ostentatiously and unblushingly announced themselves to be the vicegerents of God to do his will among men on the earth; to deliver, interpret and execute the mandates of the Almighty to and among men. God's

anointed priests are the only intermediates between Him and his fallen people. They are the instruments and only interpreters of God's will toward mankind; and that what they communicate to the people as the will and word of God must, at the peril of their soul's salvation, be accepted and believed by them, revered, honored and obeyed without the slightest mental qualification, reservation or doubt, as the word and will of the Almighty himself. In short the pope and his bishops assumed very liberally of the divine character and attributes and took exclusive control of all religious matters for every soul in all Christendom. They not only speak and teach authoritatively in the name of God; they also perform miracles in his name. They heal the sick, cast out devils and do many other wonderful works. Miracles in those times abounded on all hands. The profound ignorance of the masses and their wonder-loving afforded a rich soil for that kind of product. Nothing was too extravagant, improbable, or absurd for their appetites; which the priests

never failed to feed even to gluttony. The pagans had been accustomed to obey leaders who claimed their descent from the gods. They were, therefore, not wholly unprepared to hear and accept such pretensions.

The first active step of the church in the execution of their plan, was the suppression of profane literature in which the Emperor co-operated. The circumstances of the times greatly favored the clergy. Their purpose, as we have already stated, was to build a great empire on the basis of ignorance, superstition and fear. Their conduct corresponded to their motives. The general ignorance prevailing throughout the Roman Empire, in the fourth century of our era, was abundantly sufficient even to satisfy the requirements of the Romish Church. The masses were ignorant and credulous enough to believe all that the priests told them however improbable and absurd it might be. It was therefore only necessary to keep them in that compliant condition. Knowing that it was easier to delude the ignorant than to convince the wise, they pro-

ceeded to proscribe all profane literature then extant, and to destroy it. This was probably not difficult to accomplish. The clergy were already themselves the custodians of nearly all the books extant. It was a rare thing to find a layman that could write or read. In that age when books could only be multiplied by the slow process of the pen, literature was scant and books necessarily expensive and very scarce. The possession of a book by a man not in the ranks of the clergy, would be a thing of great notoriety.

And so the work proceeds. The priests tell the people that the Bible and the Fathers contain all that they need to know and that all else is heretical and destructive of man's spiritual welfare and must be suppressed and destroyed. All works of secular learning were diligently sought out and committed to the flames. The great library at Alexandria, no doubt the largest and richest treasure then in the world, went up in smoke and flame. And so the destruction continued until the lights that had been kindled by previous generations

are all extinguished, and intellectual night settled upon all the Christian world to last for a thousand years, to last till the light of science should again be kindled to expel the darkness of ecclesiasticism and bring a new day. The church was triumphant. Medieval faith was enthroned as the cardinal principle of religion. Intellectual freedom was suppressed, blotted out. The religion of faith had begun its reign.

In connection with the suppression of profane learning, it is important to notice one historical fact which seems to be of the very highest importance as affecting the integrity of the scriptures of the New Testament. I refer to the fact that no original manuscript of the New Testament, nor any copy of an earlier date than that age of Constantine, has been known to exist since that period.

Many of these, no doubt, perished in the Decian persecution. But it had been full seventy-five years since then to the crusade against profane literature in the reign of Constantine. Nothing in this interval accounts for the destruction of scriptures remaining after

that persecution. Presumably some of the originals survived that persecution to serve as the basis for new copies. If some of these originals did survive from which the copies of the age of Constantine may have been made, what became of them—the church being then fully organized and in a situation to know and appreciate their priceless value and to preserve them? If the copies taken in the time of Constantine were *true* copies from originals then in possession, what motive could there have been for destroying those originals, or for suffering them to perish? None whatever. But on the contrary, the strongest motive to preserve them in order to verify the copies in time of need,—a necessity of the utmost importance, which had already occurred in reference to other copies, and, in the nature of things, was sure to occur again. But the fact remains that no original remained or is known to have existed since the time of Constantine. What motive could there have been on the part of the clergy to destroy those originals or to neglect their

preservation and thus connive at their loss? Only one:—to prevent any comparison of the copy then taken with the original, and thus to make an unverified copy, however erroneous and fraudulent it might be, the only extant evidence of the word of God.


This conclusion may seem a trifle uncharitable. But the fact that all earlier copies, of which there must have been many, at that time also disappeared, lends much support to our conclusion; and the moral character of the clergy of those times justifies it.

But there is no positive certainty that any of the manuscripts of the New Testament survived to the time of Constantine, and it is possible that only copies were in existence at that time. In the latter case the copies taken in the time of Constantine—the earliest or most ancient we now have,—were copies of copies previously made; and were therefore evidence of nothing at all.

In the face of these facts what becomes of the claim of divine inspiration for the scriptures of the New Testament?

The supremacy of the church in spiritual matters was practically undisputed and complete from the first. But spiritual supremacy was only a part of their scheme. The ambition of the primates who dominated the affairs of the church aspired higher. They saw other powers organizing around them, which excited their jealousy and fear of rivalry. The new governments that were springing up here and there out of the ruins of the fallen empire, were weak, imperfectly organized and imperfectly administered and were but little capable of resisting opposition from any quarter. The church everywhere present by its members and higher clergy, watched every movement of the civil authorities with the closest circumspection. No important act of state must take place without the authorization and sanction of the clergy. Kings and emperors ruled only by authority of the church. No king was entitled to reign until he had been duly crowned and anointed by the pope or by one of his subordinates by the pope's permit. Not this only. The pope was not only the sole author-

ity for conferring crowns; he also claimed the authority and sometimes efficiently exercised it, to uncrown and dethrone sovereigns. It was by his divine commission to absolve subjects from their oaths that the pope's interference in political affairs was most potential and mischievous. No oath between the sovereign and his subjects could be so solemn or so binding that the pope might not dissolve it by a mere stroke of the pen. An entire people was more than once absolved by the pope from their allegiance to their sovereign lord. As a sample of the influence and power which the clergy in those days exerted in civil matters, we cite a single instance. The king of England to escape worse consequences, was compelled to surrender his crown and his kingdom to the pope; and afterwards received them back as a vassal of the holy church and did homage to the pope on his knees for his kingdom as a fief of the papacy. No appointment could be made to any ecclesiastical benefice but by consent of the pope. Many fierce and bloody contests were waged in support of



the claim of exclusive right to confer ecclesiastical investitures, notwithstanding the fact that the higher order of ecclesiastics were, ex-officio, members of the civil government. When it was the question of electing a bishop, the pope notified the electors, under pain of excommunication, whom to elect. Such suggestions rarely failed to be equivalent to a choice.

The pages of history from the fourth to the sixteenth century are filled with the recital of the bloody contentions and wars that arose out of such interferences, quarrels and contentions. The establishment of civil governments and the progress of civilization were greatly impeded and were sometimes wholly defeated by them. The one condition of this tremendous power of the pope to interfere so disastrously lay in the profound ignorance of the masses. The clergy had their way because the people did not know how to assert their rights. The pope represented the Almighty whom they dare not disobey. The most potent sovereigns were at times driven

to their last resource to find a way of escape from the dreadful effect of papal wrath—excommunication, interdicts and absolution of their subjects from their oaths of allegiance. The kings and rulers of Europe were for centuries on their knees before the pope.

But papal interference did not stop with the attempt to control political matters. There was still another field to be occupied—the domestic life of the people. No baptism and no marriage, or divorce, was valid unless celebrated by the priest. All others were of the devil. Nor could the soul of the dead rest in peace unless he had been buried in consecrated ground and his funeral services performed by a priest.

But still more the confessional, whereby the priests sought to obtain, and often did obtain from the penitents the innermost secrets of their heart—a precise and intimate knowledge of the most secret thoughts and acts in the daily lives of the people. This was one of the most successful methods of

obtaining information of conspiracies and state secrets.

The clergy declined the jurisdiction of the civil power in criminal matters and for many centuries successfully asserted their liability to be tried only in the ecclesiastical courts, which meant simply that they would not be tried at all. Hundreds of the most notorious criminals annually went scot free without the semblance of a trial.

The avarice of the clergy was insatiable. Their resources were large but their demands were ever larger. They knew the power of wealth and ostentation. They needed vast sums to support their luxurious indolence, to build costly temples of worship to impress and awe the imagination of the vulgar, and to aid their intrigues against the civil power. Besides it was quite as needful to the spiritual welfare of the people that they should be poor and remain poor, as it was that the church should be rich. Hence the invention of purgatory, that intermediate place of torture into which every departing soul was sure to fall on its

gloomy route to a future world, and from which no power in heaven or in earth, save that of the priest, could rescue him. As a financial scheme this was a marvelous success. It brought into the coffers of the church more gold than all the mines of America have yielded. Hence, too, later on, the sale of indulgences.

How all these pretensions and practices served to extend and complete the power of the priest over the will of ignorant dupes it is not difficult to see.

It is scarcely necessary to speak of the moral character of the men who in those ages composed the priesthood of the Christian Church. Their acts were sufficient to condemn them to the depths of degradation. Vile as a priest, became a by-word of the nations. Their aptitude for falsehood was simply immeasurable. Their licentiousness, their debaucheries, their villainies are the blackest and most debasing that defile the pages of history. Their rivalries for the honors of the church were characterized by the grossest scandals. Unrestrained violence and crime often lent their

140 CHRISTIANITY VERSUS ORTHODOX THEOLOGY.

aid to promote the worst of men to the honors of the church. Chicanery, violence and intrigues of the lowest type were freely employed to determine who should administer the sacraments of the church, or who should be the successor of St. Peter.

CONVERSION OF THE PAGANS.

Though nominally under the care of the church, the bulk of the pagan population was not strictly in the church. The interest and plans of the clergy required a closer union. Assuming that they were themselves the sole depositaries of all spiritual knowledge, and having, as far as possible, repressed all tendency to independent thought and inquiry, the clergy boldly announced themselves to be the only authorized interpreters of God's revelations to man, the only spiritual guide without whose aid he must perish. They tell the ignorant pagans: You are all of you already condemned to eternal woe by reason of Adam's sin, and your only escape from that terrible punishment is to come into the church and

submit yourselves to our teaching. It is, the religious duty as well as the interest of every son and daughter of Adam's race to accept with absolute, unfaltering, unqualified and unquestioning belief, all that the priests tell you. There must be no questioning, no doubting. To err, to doubt even, however honestly, is a damnable sin. There is no possible way of salvation outside of the church. The only way is by and through the holy church. Come into the church or go to hell.

To allure the ignorant masses into the church and thus to strengthen and complete their hold upon them, the priests, to make their doctrines and style of worship more attractive to the tastes of the pagans set up idols of their own to worship, the Virgin, the Saints and the Cross. Christianity was thus deliberately degraded and adulterated to render it more palatable to pagan idolaters. Of course, miracles were not wanting. The sick were healed by the intercession of the priest at the shrine of a saint, by a prayer, by the laying on of hands or by rubbing the affected part with the

bone of a saint. The bone of a saint was often carried on the person as a talisman to ward off the assaults of the evil spirits and other dangers, and was esteemed an object of profound veneration. Miracles abounded everywhere and were everywhere implicitly believed. These and a thousand other debasing superstitions were in vogue during those centuries of ecclesiastical domination, and nothing seemed too absurd for the credulity of the people.

For those who could not be thus attracted to the church other means must be found out. Those among them who refused to be persuaded, must be terrorized. Satan was invented—or if not actually invented, reconstructed and enlarged—a being of power and attributes inferior only to the Almighty himself, whose special mission it was to seduce man from his allegiance to God and to make him his subject to dwell with him forever in a hell of fire and brimstone. The world was filled with countless myriads of evil spirits, obedient messengers of the arch fiend, every-

where present to do his bidding. Every soul of man outside of the communion of the church was in a state of siege. He was surrounded on all sides and at all times by multitudes of these emissaries of the devil watching the favorable opportunity to wrest his soul to destruction. This feature of mediaeval theology was elaborated and expanded to the last degree; and thousands of monks exhausted their eloquence in ambitious attempts to fitly describe the agonies of the damned—the sure portion of all who died outside of the communion of the church.

Persecution remained for all those who could be neither coaxed nor frightened into the church. All those who neglected and refused to accept the supremacy and guidance of the church, were denounced as sorcerers, magicians and children of the devil—the enemies of the church and, therefore, of God, and *therefore* heretics and worthy of death. The Inquisition was invented especially to hunt out all such and consign them to the flames. Many thousands of the brightest and best were thus

sacrificed. But the church was thereby purified and the pope's supremacy rendered stronger and safer. It was currently believed that many had made a special compact with the devil to sell their souls to him and to be his subjects for the consideration of his aid and assistance in this life. This was the natural fruit of the belief in a personal devil. The witch delusion, always favored by the priests, lasted on almost to our day and sent hundreds of thousands of innocent victims to the flames. The witch delusion was only one of the many engendered by the false teachings of the church.

The masses, enslaved by their ignorance and fears, being thus subjected to the domination of the clergy, it is not difficult to gather from the history of those times, by what means and methods the princes and potentates of Christendom were rendered subservient to the dictation of the clergy.

In such an age, the pope, at the head of that vast hierarchy of prelates and priests everywhere present in every city, village and hamlet

of Christendom, skillfully and thoroughly trained to execute the mandates of their chief, armed with the omnipotence and wisdom of the Almighty, with power to forgive sins, to absolve from oaths and obligations the most sacred, to rescue souls from purgatory, to heal the sick and to cast out devils, and to perform miracles of any and all kinds as the occasion might require, was a personage and a power whom the mightiest monarchs could not ignore and dared not despise.

The greatest fear that obtruded itself into the pope's visions of future empire, was, that the civil powers springing up around him might grow great enough and become strong enough to brave his spiritual thunders and thus expose their emptiness. Hence the policy of the church to keep the rulers of the different peoples at war among themselves that they might thus weaken, waste and destroy each other. It matters but little to the clergy what may be the result of the conflict waged by one nation against another. The conflict itself is the end in view. While the belliger-

ents are fiercely struggling to destroy each the other, the clergy, intact and sure of their footing, look serenely on and prepare to reap the benefits of the struggle. Whatever else may result to the contestants, they have both exhausted their resources and wasted their strength ; whereby the church is relatively strengthened if not positively benefitted. The contestants see, probably when too late, that they are both the dupes and victims of the priests, who, finally sharing, if he does not monopolize all the advantages gained by the contest, interposes to dictate the terms of peace, arbitrarily bestowing a crown on one and a province on another as the case may be. The pope might wring his hands in glee at the sight of a million of his subjects, led by the most renowned monarchs and princes of Europe going on a crusade to the Holy Land. These crusades continued from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, from which few of the leaders ever returned to serve their country or to dispute the supremacy of the pope. It is safe to say that these crusades together

with so-called holy wars in Europe, all of which were instigated and pushed forward chiefly by the clergy, retarded the civilization of Europe several centuries, and caused more misery and real disaster to the people and did less good than any other one cause mentioned in history.

Another source of the weakness of princes was the ignorance of the people. The masses below were so besotted, so saturated with superstitions and with superstitious fears, that they scarcely knew of any other authority but that of the pope. They were so trained and drilled and awed that the voice of the pope is to them the voice of God. In this lay the power of the clergy and the weakness of sovereigns. Their allegiance to the pope was so firmly established that civil rulers were rarely able to successfully challenge it ; while the pope successfully employed it more than once to dethrone a monarch or to achieve a subordinate purpose. It goes without saying that the policy of civil rulers must be to court the favor of his holiness and thus avoid the

inflictions of his wrath. This, in fact, for many centuries made the sovereigns and princes of Christendom almost as subservient to the will of the clergy as were the masses themselves. And thus the clergy made good their assumption that kings rule only by authority of the church. They must therefore needs adjust their conduct to the dictates of the pope.

Finally, by such means and methods, all power ecclesiastical and civil was practically centered in the church ; and the church was the *heirarchy of priests*, ignorant, cunning, ambitious, covetous of authority and covetous of wealth, arrogant, unscrupulous and corrupt. Christianity, neglected and dishonored, was for the time dethroned from the hearts of men. The church had taken the place of Christianity and had built itself on its ruins. This colossal monster which made and unmade the kings and rulers of the earth at will, excommunicated and banished them from their realms and dissolved the allegiance of their subjects, had not only dethroned Chris-

tianity to make room for itself, it had also sacrificed to its soaring ambition the only principle of human progress—free thought. The shadow had, indeed, gone back on the dial not ten degrees only, but a hundred. Humanity ceased to progress and stood still in darkness and in mental and spiritual terror for ten centuries. The church paralyzed every principle of progress and had dried up every fountain of joy in the human heart.

Read what Draper says of the church at the time of the Mohammedan conquest, about four centuries after Constantine. We quote from the work already cited, pp. 245, 246.

“From its most glorious seats Christianity was forever expelled; from Palestine, the scene of its most sacred recollections; from Asia Minor, that of its first churches; from Egypt, whence issued the great doctrine of Trinitarian orthodoxy; from Carthage, who imposed her belief on Europe.” . . .

“The explanation of this political phenomenon is to be found in the social condition of the conquered countries. The influences of religion in them had long ago ceased; it had become supplanted by theology—a theology so incomprehensible that even the

wonderful capabilities of the Greek language were scarcely enough to meet its subtle demands ; the Latin and the barbarian dialects were out of the question. How was it possible that unlettered men, who with difficulty can be made to apprehend obvious things, should understand such mysteries ? Yet they were taught that on those doctrines the salvation or damnation of the human race depended. They saw that the clergy had abandoned the guidance of the individual life of their flocks ; that personal virtue or vice were no longer considered ; that sin was not measured by evil works, but by the degrees of heresy. They saw that the ecclesiastical chiefs of Rome, Constantinople, and Alexandria were engaged in a desperate struggle for supremacy, carrying out their purposes by weapons and in ways revolting to the conscience of man. What an example when bishops are concerned in assassinations, poisonings, adulteries, blindings, riots, treasons, civil war ; when patriarchs and primates are excommunicating and anathematizing one another in their rivalries for earthly power, bribing eunuchs with gold, and courtesans and royal females with concessions of episcopal love, and influencing the decisions of councils asserted to speak with the voice of God by those base intrigues and sharp practices resorted to by demagogues in their packed assemblies ! Among legions of monks, who carried terror into the imperial armies and riot into the great cities, arose hideous

clamors for theological dogmas, but never a voice for intellectual liberty or the outraged rights of man. In such a state of things, what else could be the result than disgust or indifferentism? Certainly men could not be expected, if a time of necessity arose, to give help to a system that had lost all hold on their hearts."

Such is the church at the end of only four centuries from Constantine. But these were centuries of free, unrestrained ecclesiasticism under the inspiration and guidance of *faith without reason*. If there had been in their religious system anything good, anything in any way calculated to promote the well-being of mankind, here was ample opportunity for it to develop and bear fruit. But, in fact, the results are as barren as those of paganism itself. From the beginning the church had represented only Paulism and not Christianity. When Arius, Pelagius and others from time to time attempted to Christianize some of the doctrines of the church, by way of rationalizing them and adapting them to the comprehension of reasonable beings, we have seen what was their fate. The hierarchy, especially after the coming of Constantine, when their ascendancy

was completely established, did not propose to adopt and practice the pure religion of Christ. A system of incomprehensible mysteries which they found in Paul's writings, suited their purposes far better. What could sound reason expect from a mere system of mysteries,—the Holy Trinity, whereas the fundamental idea of Judaism had always been: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." How repugnant to such a belief that God himself should beget a Son to occupy a station equal to himself!—the incarnation of the Son to effect the redemption of the whole world of mankind from the fabulous sin of Adam's fall; his consent in conference with the Father to come into the world and be sacrificed on the cross as an atonement to appease the wrath of the Father and to reconcile him again to the world; and above all the mysterious, incomprehensible faith through which alone man may be saved, but which no man can acquire, which no man can do anything towards acquiring,—God gives it to whom he will—only to the elect of his grace! What could reason expect from such a system?

No opportunity whatever can develop any useful results from such a system. What element of religious comfort, what element of intellectual advancement can the human mind find in such a system of religion at its best? But withal was not the medieval church, bad as it was, simply the product of the times and conditions in which it had its origin and growth? The same law that guides and directs the development of a state also guides and determines the growth and development of the church. The growth and development of the medieval church was as natural as the growth of a tree in a rich soil, or as the growth of the British constitution. I believe none the less that the initial step in this downward course—the alliance of the church with the state—was a deliberate fraud on religion, inspired by no other than a selfish motive. This begat its like as always happens. It opened the door of the church and invited the competition of ambitious men of all classes to seek its preferments. The clean and the unclean alike immediately entered the lists. It was then a

question, not of the best, but of the strongest—of who could wield most influence at court and camp. And not unfrequently, as too often happens, the worst prevailed. Unrestrained violence and crime often lent their aid to promote the worst of men to the honors of the church. In short the church of the Middle Ages with all its inconsistencies and absurdities, was the product of the times. It was born of the conditions of life then existing in Europe—ignorance, superstition, civil disorder and the want of authority to preserve public order. It was a transitional period, when the old systems, civil and religious, were breaking up and passing away, and a new order of things was organizing itself. The ignorance and disorder of the times and the need of a governing power invited the church to take the helm and guide humanity in the darkness as well as it might. It arrogated to itself all authority spiritual and temporal, multiplying and magnifying its powers as the occasion seemed to require. And, by appealing alternately to the prejudices, superstitions

or fears of the masses, it rendered a vast service to human society by preserving a degree of order in those chaotic times. It was the need of a paramount authority to tide society through this transitional period, that gave to the church its opportunity, its growth and power and its sole usefulness in the cause of civilization. When that service had been completed, all cause for the existence of that organization ceased. When its useful work was done the mighty organization could not dissolve but survived only to vex, harass and retard the progress of humanity.

The old Greeks had their sacred *mysteries* which were guarded with the most jealous care by a chosen priesthood. To these alone was it permitted to know the pregnant import of those mysteries, and to celebrate them by appropriate symbolical acts, spectacles, ceremonies and liturgies. The Hindus long before our era, had their trinity, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. For thirty centuries the Egyptians had been familiar with the idea of a triune God—Osiris, Isis and Horus. And

what is remarkable, Osiris consented to become *incarnated* for the salvation of men. He fell a sacrifice to the evil principle, and after his death and *resurrection* he was appointed to *judge the dead*. Ahriman, the Prince of Darkness, the archetype of the Christian Satan was familiar to the Persians many centuries before our era. The idea of the immaculate conception of the Virgin was not a new thing in the early part of our era. There had previously been several similar instances.

We need not, therefore, be at a loss to comprehend whence the fathers of the church drew the material for their theological system. The central figure around which all the other parts combined, is the sacrifice on the Cross; and is undeniably Hebraic and of the most ancient and heathenish type. This sacrifice carries in the dim, shadowy outline of its surroundings the figure of an angry God demanding the sacrifice.

The doctrines of the Trinity were the contribution of Egypt to this grand piece. Range around the great central sacrifice and the

Cross, three deities, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, all coeternal and all equal in power, majesty and glory; but all composing only one triune God. The church persecuted Arius as long as he lived, banished him often and finally killed him for maintaining that the Son must be younger than his Father. The old rhymes which have served to express the unbelief and gentle raillery of many generations, are still apropos :

“That three are one and one is three,
Is an idea that puzzles me.
By many a learned sage, 'tis said,
That there are three in the Godhead.
The Father, Son and Holy Ghost
Are three at least and one at most.”

Add to these the Persian conception of a personal devil, a being dangerously near to the Almighty in wisdom and power : “Whose care was with the Eternal to be deemed equal in strength ; and rather than be less cared not to be at all.”

This arch demon with his innumerable cohorts is ever active in causing enmity between God and man. Add too, a flaming

hell of fire and brimstone, as a place of punishment for the damned whom God's partiality has left among the non-elect. These constitute the main features of the frame work. Add to these the minor parts—Christ's incarnation, his divinity, his resurrection, his ascension and the marvelous efficacy of his sacrifice to relieve mankind of their sins—the way of salvation by grace and faith; add all these and we shall have a system of oriental mysteries in sight of which the Eleusinian would hide their diminished heads in shame.

Interfuse and vitalize this frame with the spirit of Original Sin—the willingness of an angry God to damn the whole human race for the sin of one man. Thus framed and thus vitalized, and with ambitious and unscrupulous place-hunters as its organs of intellect and activity, it fed on the want, weakness and ignorance of the people, devoured their substance, repressed their growth and grew and waxed fat by what it fed on, till it became the vilest mass of false doctrines, hypocrisies and superstitions, and the most colossal tyr-

rany that ever afflicted mankind. Such was the Church of the Fathers in its full and free development. There is nowhere to be found in all this a trace of Christianity. It was the reign of *Faith without reason*. Christianity was in abeyance. It was Paulism in its normal development.

It must not, however, be supposed that all these claims, pretensions and practices of the church went wholly unchallenged. No tyranny can wholly suppress the activities of the human intellect. All along, at intervals, sometimes wide intervals, there arose certain exalted spirits courageous enough to brave persecution and even death, for the right to express their opinions, men who, in spite of the power and tyranny of the priesthood, dared to arraign the bishops for their false doctrines and falser conduct. We have already mentioned two such, Arius and Pelagius. Another such was Gotschalk, a German monk of the ninth century, who controverted the doctrine of predestination; and John Eri-gena, about the same time, attacked with

great force the doctrines of transubstantiation and many others. Gerbert and Berenger of Tours, in the eleventh century, following the example of those mentioned, boldly proclaimed that reason was man's only guide in religious matters as in others. Peter Abelard a man of great natural ability, adorned with all the learning of his age, in the twelfth century attacked the dogmas of the church on many points—original sin, faith, the trinity, transubstantiation, etc.,—with tremendous force. And Wickliff in England, in the fourteenth century opposed the doctrine of transubstantiation. It was this stout-hearted old Anglo Saxon who declared that "God requireth not of any man to believe what he cannot understand." John Huss and Jerome of Prague, those two great Bohemians, were burnt at the stake in the fifteenth century for disseminating the doctrines of Wickliff—two great men of great learning and zeal for the cause of truth, sacrificed to the bigotry and intolerance of the church.

These men were all fiercely persecuted,

their doctrines denounced and anathematized as heretical, their books were burnt and the authors themselves exiled, imprisoned or burnt at the stake. These men were the real heroes of their age—the precursors of better times. Whatever may have been their errors they believed what they taught and were, each in his age, the representative of free thought and of true Christianity. Their example and their sacrifices served at once to keep alive the love of liberty natural to all, and as indices of the bigotry and intolerance of the orthodox church. These attempts were all in the way of rationalizing the doctrines of the church.

The Emperor, Otho the Third, about the close of the tenth century, made a vigorous attempt by force of arms to reform the abuses of the clergy. But though assisted by the valuable aid of that renowned ecclesiastic, Gerbert, he wholly failed in his design. Again, in the first part of the thirteenth century, the Emperor, Frederick II, a man of courage and capacity, openly denounced the pope for his crimes and invoked the aid of the

people to assist him in correcting abuses which had become too scandalous to be borne. But all in vain. The grasp of the hierarchy on the Intellect of the age was too firm to be disseized. Many men here and there were privately thinking for themselves, but the masses were wholly captivated and spellbound by the delusions of the church.

From the time when the Emperor, Frederick II, vainly invoked the aid of Christian Europe to curtail the pretensions of the priesthood and to correct their scandalous lives, to the time of Martin Luther, was an interval of about two hundred and sixty years during which several great events occurred which greatly facilitated the intellectual development of all Europe. The first of these was the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453. Already Christendom had lost from her former domain, Africa, Egypt, Palestine, Asia Minor and Spain. And now to lose this famed Capitol with its adjacent territories and population to their despised competitor, was indeed an event to move the thoughts and

sensibilities of even Monks. The Moslems were now pressing on Christendom on two sides in Europe instead of one. But in a subordinate way this event favored the growth of civilization in Europe. Constantinople was a Greek city, and when it fell, to escape the tyranny of their new masters, thousands of their best citizens at once exiled themselves fleeing to Italy and other European countries. These carried with them an ample store of ancient Greek literature and philosophy, and becoming teachers and professors of Greek literature and learning in the schools and colleges, contributed greatly to the revival of learning, especially in southern Europe.

The Mohammedans who had conquered Spain in the eighth century had long since established there a civilization far in advance of anything hitherto known in Christian Europe. Zealous patrons of all kinds of learning they had established schools of the highest grade which had attracted the attention and attendance of students and scholars from all parts of Europe. The effect of these

schools so close on the borders of Christendom, together with the teaching of the Greek classics in Italy and elsewhere, was to keep alive and diffuse the light of knowledge over benighted Europe.

Another event of transcendent importance came just about the same time as the fall of Constantinople—the discovery of the art of printing. It is easy to understand how this most useful discovery served to advance the intellectual development by recording and preserving in a tangible and readable form the thoughts of the wise and the learned to be diffused, known, and read of all. It furnished the means through which knowledge was conveyed to the poor to be read and pondered in their moments of leisure and thus entertained, exercised and developed the intellectual faculties. It is stated that in the year 1500, when Luther was a youth of seventeen years, there were two hundred printing presses in Europe; and many books had been printed, notably the Bible. Of course we cannot estimate with precision the effect of all this, but it is safe to


assert that on the torpid, ignorant populations of Europe as they were in those times, the effect must have been prodigious in the direction of provoking inquiry, learning to read, etc.

But still another great discovery occurring near the close of the fifteenth century was perhaps more adapted to arouse the priest-ridden population of Europe than either of those already mentioned—the discovery of America. What could have astonished the denizens of Europe so much as to learn that just across the western ocean, only a few days distant, there was a continent nearly as large and quite as beautiful as that east of that sea. The effect of this discovery was prodigious on all classes. It aroused their imaginations and set them to thinking that there are more things in the world than the priests had ever told them of. Many sought and obtained the opportunity to make the voyage to the new world. They came back as oracles, to spread the news of what they had seen. It was an era in the intellectual development of Europe.

The world had been for a long time waiting for a change. But changes come only in their own time and way. The time was not yet, but was near. The conditions were preparing and when they are ready the change will supervene. The aggregate intelligence of mankind was greatly enlarged by causes wholly beyond the control of pope and priests. If St. Augustine could have lived to read the report of Columbus's voyages and discoveries, which were undertaken and prosecuted under the heretical conception that the earth is a globe revolving in space around the sun; and if he could have read the report of Magellan's actual circumnavigation of the globe, a demonstration which even the bigotry of the church could not gainsay, he would, no doubt, have revised and corrected his astronomical theory and probably his theological theory. There is much reason to believe that he was as far wrong when he has the universe created for man—God's greatest and best, etc.—as he was when he made the earth the center of the solar system.

In this age of free thought and of free inquiry, when all the accumulated stores of knowledge and science of the past are open and free to the inspection of all, it is extremely difficult to picture to ourselves any adequate conception of the degradation of the masses of Europe in the fifteenth century—the close of the regime of faith. For more than a thousand years dating from the era of Constantine, the clergy had practically monopolized the little learning then extant, and had controlled the cause of education in general. It is no violence to assume that a body of men who inspired the thought of destroying all secular learning as rubbish in the way of building the power of ecclesiasticism, and had enthusiastically united their efforts with those of the Emperor to thoroughly accomplish that purpose, would employ the means in their control to perpetuate the same policy. Ignorance of the masses was the foundation on which the superstructure of the church had been erected. And on this alone could it continue to stand. Some schools were estab-

lished, certainly, here and there where the little learning of those times was taught ; but these were only for the few rich and noble. There were no schools for the instruction of the masses, save such as the priests themselves conducted for the special purposes of the church. The masses of the people were extremely illiterate, densely ignorant, and as superstitious as they were ignorant. The intellect of the age had been systematically starved and dwarfed all these ages to conform it to the standard of the church—to the belief in miracles, the infallibility of the pope, his power to forgive sin and a thousand other delusions. Here and there was one outside of the church who was secretly doing his own thinking, but ninety-nine hundredths of the whole were hopeless slaves to ignorance and superstition. It is extremely difficult, I say, for people of the present time to realize the degradation, poverty and distress which the multitude, in that long series of centuries, suffered from the domination of the church. They felt that they were oppressed, but they



and not possess knowledge enough to comprehend what was oppressing them. They felt, without knowing, that there was need of a change. But they had no conception of what change was needed. In the lap of "Mother Church" they had been lulled into a stupor that was almost death itself.

Already before the close of the fifteenth century the influence of the Arabic schools was beginning to be felt. A love of classical learning had been kindled, which, aided by the inventions and discoveries before mentioned, was already shedding light enough to make the darkness of the times visible. Daylight was dawning. The people began to see the portentous shadow that had so long darkened their lives. That prolonged night that had succeeded the brilliant day of Greece and Rome, was about to end in the dawning of another day of light and beauty for humanity. The greatest step ever taken in the evolution of humanity was about to fall—the great religious Reformation of the Sixteenth Century.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RELIGIOUS REFORMATION OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY — RESUME.

To afford the reader another proof of the extreme degradation to which the church descended under the regime of Faith without Reason, and at the same time a graphic description of the circumstances in which the great Reformation had its origin, I quote again from D'Aubigne's History, vol. 1, p. 209. The time is 1517.

A great agitation reigned, at that time, among the people of Germany. The Church had opened a vast market on the earth. Judging from the crowd of buyers, and the noise and jests of the dealers, we might call it a fair, but a fair held by monks. The merchandise they extolled, offering it at a reduced price, was, said they, the salvation of souls !

The dealers passed through the country in a gay carriage, escorted by three horsemen, in great state, and spending freely. One might have thought it some

dignitary on a royal progress, with his attendants and officers; and not a common dealer, or a begging monk. When the procession approached a town, a messenger waited on the magistrate. "The grace of God, and of the Holy Father, is at your gates!" said the envoy. Instantly everything was in motion in the place. The clergy, the priests, the nuns, the council, the schoolmasters, the trades, with their flags—men and women, young and old—went forth to meet the merchants, with lighted tapers in their hands, advancing to the sound of music, and of all the bells of the place; "so that," says an historian, "they could not have given a grander welcome to God himself." Salutations being exchanged, the whole procession moved toward the church. The pontiff's bull of grace was borne in front, on a velvet cushion, or on a cloth of gold. The chief vendor of indulgences followed, supporting a large red wooden cross; and the whole procession moved in this manner, amidst singing, prayers, and the smoke of incense. The sound of organs, and a concert of instruments, received the monkish dealer and his attendants into the church. The cross he bore with him was erected in front of the altar: on it was hung the pope's arms; and, as long as it remained there, the clergy of the place, the penitentiaries, and the sub-commissioners, with white wands in their hands, came every day after vespers, or before the salutation to do homage

to it. This great bustle excited a lively sensation in the quiet towns of Germany.

One person in particular drew the attention of the spectators in these sales. It was he who bore the great red cross and had the most prominent part assigned to him. He was clothed in the habit of the Dominicans, and his port was lofty. His voice was sonorous, and he seemed yet in the prime of his strength, though he was past his sixty-third year. This man, who was the son of a goldsmith of Leipsic named Diez, bore the name of John Diezel or Tetzl. He had studied in his native town, had taken his bachelor's degree in 1487, and entered two years later into the order of the Dominicans. Numerous honors had been accumulated on him. Bachelor of Theology, Prior of the Dominicans, Apostolical Commissioner, Inquisitor, (heretico pravitatis inquisitor,) he had ever since the year 1502, filled the office of an agent for the sale of indulgences. The experience he had acquired as a subordinate functionary had very early raised him to the station of chief commissioner. He had an allowance of eighty florins per month, all his expenses defrayed, and he was allowed a carriage and three horses; but we may readily imagine that his indirect emoluments far exceeded his allowances. In 1507, he gained in two days at Freyberg 2000 florins. If his occupation resembled that of a mountebank, he had also the morals of one. Convicted at Inspruck of adul-

tery and abominable profligacy, he was near paying the forfeit of his life. The Emperor Maximilian had ordered that he should be put into a sack and thrown into the river. The Elector Frederic of Saxony had interceded for him, and obtained his pardon. But the lesson he had received had not taught him more decency. He carried about with him two of his children. Miltitz, the pope's legate, cites the fact in one of his letters. It would have been hard to find in all the cloisters of Germany a man more adapted to the traffic with which he was charged. To the theology of a monk, and the zeal and spirit of an inquisitor, he united the greatest effrontery. What most helped him in his office was the facility he displayed in the invention of the strange stories with which the taste of the common people is generally pleased. No means came amiss to him to fill his coffers. Lifting up his voice and giving loose to a coarse volubility, he offered his indulgences to all comers, and excelled any salesman at a fair in recommending his merchandise.

As soon as the cross was elevated with the pope's arms suspended upon it, Tetzcl ascended the pulpit and, with a bold tone, began, in the presence of the crowd whom the ceremony had drawn to the sacred spot, to exalt the efficacy of indulgences. The people listened and wondered at the admirable virtues ascribed to them. A Jesuit historian says himself, in speaking of the Dominican friars whom Tetzcl had

associated with him: "Some of these preachers did not fail, as usual, to distort their subject, and so to exaggerate the value of the indulgences as to lead the people to believe that, as soon as they gave their money, they were certain of salvation and of the deliverance of souls from purgatory."

If such were the pupils, we may imagine to what lengths the master went. Let us hear one of these harangues pronounced after the erection of the cross.

"Indulgences," said he, "are the most precious and sublime of God's gifts.

"This cross"—(pointing to the red cross)—"has as much efficacy as the cross of Jesus Christ.

"Draw near, and I will give you letters, duly sealed, by which even the sins you shall hereafter desire to commit shall be all forgiven you.

"I would not exchange my privileges for those of Saint Peter in heaven, for I have saved more souls than he with his sermons.

"There is no sin so great that the indulgence cannot remit it, and even if any one should (which is doubtless impossible) ravish the Holy Virgin Mother of God, let him pay—let him only pay largely, and it shall be forgiven him.

"Even repentance is not indispensable.

"But more than all this: indulgences save not the living alone; they also save the dead.

"Ye priests, ye nobles, ye tradesmen, ye wives, ye



maidens, and ye young men hearken to your departed parents and friends, who cry to you from the bottomless abyss: 'We are enduring horrible torment! A small alms would deliver us; you can give it, and you will not !' "

A shudder ran through his hearers at these words, uttered by the formidable voice of the mountebank monk.

"The very moment," continued Tetzal, "that the money clinks against the bottom of the chest, the soul escapes from purgatory and flies free to heaven.

"O, senseless people, and almost like to beasts, who do not comprehend the grace so richly offered! This day, heaven is on all sides open. Do you now refuse to enter? When, then, do you intend to come in? This day you may redeem many souls. Dull and heedless man, with ten groschen you can deliver your father from purgatory, and you are so ungrateful that you will not rescue him. In the day of judgment, my conscience will be clear; but you will be punished the more severely for neglecting so great a salvation. I protest that though you should have only one coat, you ought to strip it off and sell it to purchase this grace. Our Lord God no longer deals with us as God. He has given all power to the Pope!"

Probably no great event in the history of mankind was more strictly spontaneous than

the Religious Reformation of the Sixteenth Century. That Reformation, from first to last, presents the remarkable phenomenon of a vast revolution beginning and moving steadily and resistlessly forward to its culmination, without a leader. Martin Luther was, no doubt, more conspicuously identified with that great movement than was any other individual. But Luther did not make the Reformation nor was he in any sense the cause of it. It was rather the Reformation that made Luther. Luther had, from the beginning of his career, as a minister and teacher, planted himself squarely on the plain teachings of the New Testament scriptures, as the only infallible guide for Christians; and, from first to last, during the contest, he did no more than to maintain his position, adjusting his action to the demands of the occasion as they arose amid the storm that was beating around him.

As a specimen at once, of the style and substance of his preaching in the early period of the Reformation we make the following quotation from History:

"No one can show from the Scriptures that God's justice requires a penalty or satisfaction from the sinner," said the faithful minister of the word to the people of Wittenberg. "The only duty it imposes on him is a true repentance, a sincere change of heart, a resolution to bear the cross of Christ, and to strive to do good works." (id. 233).

The same author in speaking of Luther's connection with the Reformation, says:

Luther was at this time (after the Reformation was begun) full of respect for the Church and the Pope. He says himself, "I was then a monk—a papist of the maddest—so infatuated and even steeped in the Romish doctrines, that I would willingly have helped to kill any one who had the audacity to refuse the smallest act of obedience to the Pope." . . . He has as yet no thought of reforming the Church and the world. He has seen Rome and its corruption; but he does not erect himself against Rome. He discerns some of the abuses under which Christendom groans, but he has no thought of correcting these abuses. He does not desire to constitute himself a reformer. He has no more plan in his mind for the reform of the church than he had previously had for that which had been wrought in his own soul. God himself designed a Reformation and to make Luther the *instrument* of its accomplishment. (id. 232).

The author quotes Luther as saying, "I entered on this controversy (the Reformation) without any settled purpose or inclination, and entirely unprepared." (id. 231).

As late as May, 1518, when the Reformation had been in full blast at least one year, Luther addresses to the pope a letter full of submissive sentiment and ending in these words:

"Therefore, most holy Father, I throw myself at the feet of your Holiness, and submit myself to you, with all that I have and all that I am. . . . I will receive your voice as that of Christ himself, who presides and speaks through you." (id. 311).

What fuller or clearer proof could we have that Luther was not a voluntary *agent* moving and directing this vast religious and social upheaval, but, to use the language of the historian, he was a mere *instrument* only, in the hands of powers wholly external to himself, which no man controlled, but which themselves controlled the actions of all men. We are often deceived by appearances. It is not

the trowel that builds the palace wall, but the man that handles the trowel.

As touching the spontaneity of the movement the author referred to very pertinently remarks: "The singular system of theology that had established itself in the church, was fitted powerfully to assist in opening the eyes of the rising generation. Formed for a dark age, as if the darkness were to endure forever, this system was destined to be superseded and scattered to the winds as soon as the age should outgrow it." (id. 63).

The mine was already prepared. The intellect of the age had indeed outgrown its condition and an adjustment must take place. Increased knowledge of the times had filtered down to the lower strata of the social scale, and millions were beginning to see the light and to *think*. A wide-spread and powerful cause was making itself universally felt and all signs portended an explosion. The Germans especially who had been for centuries systematically robbed to build costly temples at Rome and elsewhere and to support dissolute

priests in sumptuous ease and elegance were almost in a state of combustion. Occasion or cause for a thorough reform of religion had existed for ages. The shameless abuses of the church, the immoralities and licentious lives of the clergy, their hypocrisies and false doctrines and the outrageous tyranny which the whole system of the hierarchy imposed on mankind, all these had been cause enough to make men cry out for reform. Even the sale of indulgences was no new thing. A system of superstition built upon the ignorance of the people and patiently acquiesced in for ages, can only be shaken off or reformed when the people have advanced to a higher intelligence. Causes for reform existed on all sides. But a sufficient intellectual development, as the necessary condition of success, was wanting until the beginning of the sixteenth century.

The mine was all ready to fire. The particulars of the manner in which the train was fired may be summarized as follows:

While Tetzels and others were producing

great commotion in the adjacent neighborhood. Luther was quietly performing his duties at Wittenberg as a professor of theology, preacher, pastor and confessor. On one occasion several residents of Wittenberg confessed to him the commission of great offenses. He reproved them and advised them to repent and to correct their course of life. The confessed criminals boldly asserted that they did not intend to abandon their sins. Whereupon Luther refused to absolve them. They produced to him their letters of indulgence from Tetzel. Luther told them that these letters could not avail. They subsequently renew their application for absolution, but Luther was immovable. "You must," said he to them, "cease to do evil and learn to do well, or otherwise no absolution." "Have a care," said he, "how you give ear to the indulgences: you have something better to do than to buy licenses which they offer you for paltry pence." The confessed report to Tetzel that an Augustine monk treated his letters with contempt. Tetzel raved; and the Reformation was begun.

The simple performance of a religious duty such as no conscientious priest could have avoided, was the first direct step in the great Reformation and places Luther in the lead. Luther became the apparent leader of that gigantic movement, *without any intention or motive* of initiating a reform or of assailing the church or the pope. Without the slightest intention of reforming religion or the church, he becomes, by the sheer force of circumstances beyond his control, the reformer of both.

Luther was a man of capacity, learning and courage. Above all he was a sincere man and could only teach what he believed to be true. After telling those who applied for absolution that he could not respect their letters of indulgence, he felt that as professor and pastor his duty to his pupils and to his parishioners, required of him that he should give a reason for his conduct. He therefore published his ninety-five theses, or reasons against the sale of indulgences, which set all Europe aflame.

Where reasons are so obvious and so clearly

adequate to the results, we do not need to attribute the acts of men to human volition. In accounting for man's actions on the stage of life the only guide we have is our reason. We cannot arbitrarily assign to the will of man an act which is naturally and logically accounted for by a cause which reason recognizes as the true cause. The example of Luther very strongly confirms the automatic theory, showing that man is not a free agent, but that even in the great affairs of life, when he seems to be ruling and directing the greatest movements by his own will, he is simply a passive instrument in the hands of a force wholly external to himself and over which he has no control whatever. The forces of the Reformation consisted in the concurrence of the religious and social evils of the times, with a degree of mental development sufficient to comprehend the evils, to cope with them and correct them. The Reformation was Nature's own effort to cleanse and purify the moral atmosphere, as a thunder storm purifies the material atmosphere. The church in a

time of universal ignorance and mental stagnation had grown and magnified itself into a hideous incubus destructive of all mental progress. At last, thanks to the printing press and other causes mentioned, *men began to think*. They soon saw that it was the priesthood which stood in the way of their progress. The power of the church must be curtailed and overthrown to allow humanity to progress. This was the Reformation.

The great Reformation of the sixteenth century was the first successful movement to purify the church and to rationalize its doctrines. The primitive church of the Apostolic times had been overladen with dogma, superstition and priest-craft, until religion, in any proper sense, was completely buried, smothered to death. The Reformation, as all former attempts, was made on the line of rationalizing the doctrines of the church. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the church represented a religion of *Faith regardless of reason*. Secular learning had been destroyed, and intellectual inquiry discouraged and suppressed

in order to give Faith a free course. This plan, as has been shown, eventuated in the most disgusting mockery of sacred things and in the most tyrannous despotism that ever oppressed the soul of man.

Now the emancipation of man from the darkness and terror of the church is about to begin. The great Reformation was the first successful movement in that direction. It accomplished a great deal, but not the half of all that was required. It frightened the old church into a measure of personal decency, and into lopping off many absurd pretensions and superstitious practices. But the great and crowning glory of the Reformation was the establishment for all and for all time of *the Right of Free Thought, Free Inquiry, and of Private Opinion*. This great doctrine has blossomed out and borne fruit in the free political institutions of Europe and America. The Reformation was a great step in the right direction, but it was only the beginning of the great work of restoring Christianity to its pristine simplicity and purity. It did not

destroy the old church nor the old theological system. The old church still survives to vex and hinder the progress of civilization. The seceding new church organizations—while they left behind them much that was objectionable in the old church—took with them and adopted the principal fundamental doctrines of the Medieval Church. Luther was himself a firm believer in the existence of a personal devil of power dangerously near to that of the Almighty. He believed in a material hell of fire and in demonology and witchcraft and many other superstitions. All these he believed and handed on down to his adherents.

By re-enthroning the human intellect as the guiding principle of man's life, the Reformation has made continued progress possible. The progress since that day has been necessarily slow. Beliefs so inveterate cannot be eradicated in a day. Demonology and witchcraft, with all their attendant superstitions and horrors, continued to hold their place among the beliefs of even the Protestant churches for nearly

two centuries after the time of Luther. But these at last fled away as the shades of night flee away before the coming day. The eradication and extinction of these horrid illusions is one of the great triumphs of intellectual growth—of the reign of Reason.

Another one is the expulsion of that hideous bugbear the Devil; and the extinguishment of the flames of Hell. These were very important features in Medieval theology. That system would have been very lame without these. Resting on very slight and, as I think, falsely interpreted authority, these were the inventions of the priests to alarm and frighten the ignorant. Nothing demonstrates the slow progress of the Reformation more conclusively than that these delusions of the dark ages should have continued to hold their place in Protestant theology far into the nineteenth century. But we now rarely hear these terrors denounced from Protestant pulpits. They long since ceased to disturb the repose of sensible people. The clergy have learned that the love of God is a more inviting theme and

far more effective to win souls to Christ. The crudities of that wonderful system of medieval theology—of faith, fiction and falsehood—disappear one after another under the influence of increased intelligence.

The continued progress of the Reformation shows itself very conspicuously in another respect—religious toleration. We have seen with what bitterness the orthodox church during all its existence down to the time of the Reformation, watched and punished the slightest departure from the strict rules of orthodoxy. The logic of their conduct was: you must believe as we do or you are a heretic and deserve to be burnt. This same spirit in all its savageness descended to the Protestant churches, who never failed to persecute each other as the opportunity offered. When the High Church party was in the ascendant, all were required to *conform*, or to suffer fine, imprisonment, the pillory and ruin. When the Independents and Presbyterians had the inns, they played it back on their religious foes after the same style. Archbishop Laud

was executed nominally for high treason, but really for his persecutions against the Independents and Presbyterians. The history of these bloody persecutions is written in many volumes. Slowly this bane of true Christianity has yielded to the increasing light of civilization. Little by little Reason has tempered the bigotry of sects, one towards another. The spirit of Christianity has softened the asperity of their mutual hatreds, until under the restraints of the civil power, if for no other cause, the different denominations dwell together in peace—though not even yet in complete harmony loving each other as they do themselves.

RÉSUMÉ.

Jesus came and taught the people the simplest and purest, the most reasonable and most civilizing religion ever offered to man. He begins by telling them that he is come to call sinners to repentance and to fulfill the law; and tells them what the law is: Love God with all your heart and love your neigh-

bor as yourself. He leaves nothing undone to make plain to them the scope of his meaning and the reasonableness of these commandments. God is your heavenly Father, your Creator and the giver of every blessing you enjoy. He desires that you, his children, should all be happy and that none should perish. He is ever ready to freely pardon the offenses of all who sincerely repent. Pointing to God, the fountain of mercy, truth, justice and love, he tells them: "Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect;" and proceeds to show them how they may at least imitate the moral perfections of God himself as a standard.

Be merciful and kind to everybody and treat all with respect.

Repress your covetousness and selfishness, for, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

Be generous and give to the poor to relieve their wants. But make no ostentation of your alms to be seen of men.

Be content with your lot. Seek no prefer-

ments. For he that is greatest among you shall be your servant; and whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased.

Be honest and just in all your dealings one with another. Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them, *for this is the law.*

Be charitable in your judgments of your fellow men; for your neighbors will judge you as you judge them.

Do no wrong to your neighbor, commit no murder, no adultery, no theft, no lying, no false witness. Cherish no ill will against your neighbor, nor indulge any sentiment of revenge or of retaliation against him on account of any wrong he may have done you. But fully and freely pardon his wrong as you would have God forgive your offenses. Return good for evil. Love all your neighbors as brothers, as children of the same Heavenly Father. Love not only them who love you, but I say unto you, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which

despitefully use and persecute you." Do all these things that ye may be like unto God, "that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."

When the young man made the direct inquiry, "What *good thing shall I do* that I may have eternal life?" Jesus answered: "If thou wouldst enter into life, *keep the commandments.*"

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but *he that doeth the will of my Father* which is in heaven." Salvation is the reward of obedience to the law.

This religion is offered—not to the elect only, not to a chosen few only, but—to all who sincerely repent of their misdeeds.

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

"Blessed are they which do hunger and

thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled."

God does not mock his children by inviting and urging them to do things which he knows they cannot do.

Such is an outline of the religion which Jesus taught to his disciples, as we find it in the four Gospels. There are no priests, no altars, no sacrifices. Nor is there need of any. When God freely pardons the repentant sinner, what need can there be of sacrifices? The love and reverence of pure hearts are better than sacrifices. Nor is any penalty demanded of the unrepentant sinner. It is punishment enough for such that they remain in their sins and fail to see the light. Christianity is the religion of love to God. It is perfectly natural, nor is there anything supernatural about it. It is also love, good fellowship and good works among men whereby they become cemented into a holy brotherhood; all united to the Heavenly Father by the worship of pure hearts.

PAULISM.

Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, began his career as a teacher of Christianity somewhere from six to eight years after the death of Christ. He was a young man of learning, eloquence, talent and unbounded zeal. These qualities seem to have accorded to him a sort of primacy among the apostles. He traveled extensively and founded many churches in Asia Minor, Greece and Rome. It is in his epistles to the various churches which he had established, that Paul develops a plan of salvation *radically different* from that which Jesus had taught to his disciples. The fundamental doctrine of Paul's salvation is Original Sin—a doctrine which he was the first to promulgate. He imputes the sin of Adam to all his descendants, and thus makes every son and daughter of Adam's race born already condemned to eternal woe by reason of Adam's transgression.

In like manner Paul assumes that God, seeing the imperfection of the plan of salvation by good works under the law, and seeing

the terrible consequences of this imperfection—sin entered into the world and abounding everywhere, and the whole human race, born and to be born, already under condemnation to eternal woe—seeing all these terrible results, God, purely and solely as an act of free grace, determined upon a new plan of salvation. To rescue and redeem the fallen race from their hopeless condition under the condemnation of the law, God determined upon a stupendous sacrifice. He sends his only begotten and well-beloved son, Jesus, into the world *expressly to be sacrificed* to appease God's wrath and thus to place Him and man at one again. Jesus thus takes upon himself and bears away the sins of the world and thus relieves mankind of the awful consequences of Adam's fall and places him again in a condition of *possible salvation*. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law."

In Paul's plan of salvation, Jesus gets little credit for what he had done during his ministry. Apparently in Paul's view of the case what Christ had done as a teacher was of little

worth. It is only *by his death*, by the shedding of his blood on the cross, that he benefited mankind.

Jesus taught that the remission of sins comes through repentance and forgiveness.

Paul says: "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." "The gift and calling is without repentance."

Jesus taught that salvation is the reward of obedience to the law,—the reward of obedience to God's will.

Paul says: Knowing that a man *is not justified* by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, *even we* have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law, "for *by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*" And to clinch the matter conclusively and forever Paul says to the Galatians: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." *

Among men of the present day such language would be treated as mere bluster. It

betrays in the speaker the consciousness of a weak cause. A just cause founded in truth solicits no such support.

There is nothing exclusive in Jesus' plan of salvation. 'It is equally open and free to all with an equal chance of success for all who sincerely repent.

On the other hand Paul teaches that it is only the elect that can be saved.

Paul places the whole human family under condemnation to eternal woe to start with; and then proceeds to display his skill in devising a way of rescue for a part of them. He formulates his scheme of salvation in the following terms. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

But this is not all of the scheme. The sacrifice of Christ of itself relieved no one. This sacrifice is coupled with faith and inures only to the benefit of such as shall believe —only to the benefit of the elect of God's grace, only to those whom God preordained to eternal life from the foundation of the

world. It is only to these that God bestows the special grace of faith. There is no salvation but by and through the merit of Christ's sacrifice. And those merits and that sacrifice are available only to those to whom God has given the special gift of faith.

To restate the matter in its simplest form it seems to be this.

God from the beginning had elected and preordained to eternal life, certain ones scattered along through the ages to come. But he now sees these elect ones involved with the rest in the universal catastrophe of Adam's transgression. This unlooked for result of his first plan necessitated a change. Accordingly God adopts a new plan of salvation by Grace and Faith, for the special benefit of the elect. (See Eph. 1:4 to 9; Rom. 8:28 to 30).

But so it fell out that Paul's plan of salvation by Faith and sacrifice was adopted by the primitive church and Christianity was left in the background.

The consequence of this adoption was that ere long schisms, divisions, discords, strifes

and quarrels abounded in the bosom of the church itself. It was probably the cohesive force of the fear of persecutions and other dangers that helped more to hold the church in union during the first three centuries than any other single cause.

Constantine in the beginning of the fourth century, threw over the church the protection of the empire. The direct effect of this action of the emperor was to relieve the hierarchy of any further fears of persecution, to relax their morals, and to launch the church as a whole upon a career of moral degeneracy and degradation which has no parallel in the history of mankind.

The action of Constantine threw open the doors of the church to all comers. The clean and the unclean alike entered. The honors and preferments of the church, which were many and great, were the objects of their ambition. The restraints of morality and religion were cast aside and the leaders contended, one against another like gladiators in the arena for a prize.

The merits of Christ's sacrifice, to be imputed to the salvation of sinners, are vast and even exhaustless. This vast sum of merit was at once placed to the credit of the church and became its principal stock in trade. The prelates and priests immediately proceed to the work of imputing—that is to say, of *selling*—this righteousness—only to *the elect*, of course—but every comer was elect who had money enough to pay for a mass—a pardon for himself or a friend in purgatory, or for an indulgence.

With this exhaustless fund of merit as a financial basis, the career of the church under the regime of Paul's teachings was thus auspiciously inaugurated and had practically a free run from Constantine to Luther—from the fourth to the sixteenth century.

It has already been stated that the object of the hierarchy was to establish in the name of the church a universal empire, spiritual and temporal, that would be able to dominate all rivals. In support of this statement and as an evidence of the success of the hierarchy

in this ambitious undertaking, we quote the Constitution published by Pope Gregory VII about the year 1075 :

“The Roman Pontiff can alone be called universal; he alone has a right to depose Bishops; his legates have a right to preside over all Bishops in a general council; he can depose absent prelates; he alone has a right to use imperial ornaments; princes are bound to kiss his feet, and his only; he has a right to depose Emperors; no synod or council summoned without his commission can be called general; no book can be called canonical without his authority; his sentence can be annulled by none, but that he may annul the decrees of all; the Roman Church has been, is, and will continue to be infallible; whoever dissents from it ceases to be a Catholic Christian; and subjects may be absolved from their allegiance to wicked princes.”

Can the arrogance of unrestrained pride and ambition go farther? In the course of seven or eight centuries from the time of Constantine, the church had grown to these monstrous pretensions. In the guise of a nursery of the true religion she had grown to be the terror of all Christendom. From the days of Constantine the church had been the insidious foe, not alone of Christianity, but of

civilization as a whole. Her shadow overspread the earth—a vast incubus—a hideous nightmare destroying the repose and wasting the lives of the people. In the meanwhile Christianity had been blighted, paralyzed and smothered almost out of existence. It had been so deeply overlaid with the dogmas, rites and superstitions of the church that it was no longer visible in the world as a regenerative force. And still it was more than four hundred years after Gregory flaunted these impudent assumptions in the face of Christendom before any relief came—four hundred years more of uninterrupted ecclesiastical domination, of *the night of Faith without Reason*.

Such was the natural and actual result of uniting politics and religion, on a faulty creed, for which the church called Constantine “the Great,” and made him a *Saint*. It was only those of the hierarchy who had reason to thank Constantine.

It is obvious that such tyranny as is implied in the constitutions of the church above quoted

could not be long endured by any other than a very ignorant people.

From that day to the present the hopes, the tendencies and the efforts of civilization have been in the direction of correcting the effects of that fatal error, of rescuing Christianity and of restoring it to its rightful place as the religion of humanity. Some intrepid spirits here and there all along through the dark hours of that prolonged night had made abortive efforts to keep the spark of true Christianity alive, but to little avail. It was not till the beginning of the sixteenth century that the intellectual development of the people came to the point where they could successfully challenge the pretensions and practices of the church and emancipate themselves from its tyrannous control.

WHAT WAS GAINED BY THE REFORMATION?

The chief advantage gained by the Reformation was that it rescued a large part of Europe from the tyrannous grasp of the hierarchy. It emancipated the human reason and

reinaugurated its reign as the guiding principle of man's life and conduct. It recognized and established man's right to free inquiry, to interpret the scriptures for himself and to form his own opinions in religious matters as in others. It released Christendom from the thralldom of the church and placed it in the line of progress. Hereafter the religious progress of the human family may be looked for only along intellectual lines. The effort will be in the direction of rationalizing the doctrines and practices of the church, of discarding many of its subtle refinements and irrational teachings, of correcting erroneous interpretation, of eliminating all together many of the beliefs and interpretations inherited from the Medieval Church and of adopting and practicing the pure, simple and rational religion of Christ.

It need hardly be said that the determination of moral problems—of what is right and just, or of what is wrong or unjust—is no less a matter of judgment which each individual must determine for himself, than are

matters of dollars and cents. It is often said that Christianity is the fundamental element of our civilization. On the other hand is it not obvious that the Church owes its purification and progress to civilization? When the Protestant Churches seceded from the Medieval Church in the sixteenth century, while they left behind them very much that was objectionable in the old religion, they carried with them many false doctrines and errors borrowed from the old Medieval Church. They took with them the Nicene Creed in its fullness, the belief in demonology and witchcraft, a personal devil, a hell of fire and brimstone. All these the Protestant Churches took with them and zealously taught for at least a century and a half after the Reformation—and are teaching some of them yet. Will any one dispute that in all this time the Protestant Churches were teaching gross errors? And will any one dispute that it was the increased light of learning and science—mental growth—that drove these absurd beliefs out of existence and thus puri-

fied the Church? The Church, which is theoretically pure and ought to keep pure, should have no occasion to purify itself. But we know that the Church has taken on impurities and errors in times past; and it is plain that she does not purify herself through any inherent principle or sentiment peculiar to religion, but only through the media of intellectual causes operating from without. It is increased knowledge, greater intellectual light, a clearer perception of what is right, true and noble, as contrasted with what is wrong, false and debasing, that purifies religion. After all is religion, in its last analysis, any other than a question of right and wrong? And the question of right and wrong is always a question of intellectual determination. And here is the true basis of rational religion. It is the intellect all the time, and not the will or the imaginary moral sense that guides the religious sentiment. When in the seventeenth century, increased enlightenment made it plain, not only to the common people, but even to the clergy them-

selves, that witchcraft and demonology were mere delusions of a superstitious age, these direful scourges at once disappeared. The proof, as it appears to me, is conclusive to the effect that in times past, the Protestant Churches have taught and practiced the grossest of errors and delusions which the light of civilization has enabled them or compelled them to abandon. It is therefore no wrong to the church to infer that it may still be teaching doctrines quite as erroneous as those which have been discarded. Does not the great diversity of opinion that exists in the Christian world concerning the truth and correctness of the doctrines embraced in the Nicene Creed, justify us in the belief that we may look for the disappearance of that creed from the Christian Churches as the other errors and delusions have been expelled ?

If one should go upon an inquiry to know by *what authority* Paul preached and taught his doctrines of salvation, even if he should search as far and as diligently as Ceres sought

for her lost daughter, he would at last return but ill satisfied.

If he interrogates Philosophy, her oracles are mute.

If he consults Reason, she has to say: Paul's faith is not within our cognizance. It lies wholly outside of our jurisdiction. We can give no opinion.

If he addresses his inquiry to the *Common Understanding* of men in general, the only answer will be an incredulous smile, a shrug or perhaps a scoffing word, or, I cannot tell. I don't understand it.

If in his search, he comes to the temple of Truth, and asks the presiding goddess by what authority, she shakes her head and says to him: These doctrines which Paul preaches are not of record here; they are not my offspring. I cannot answer your question.

He comes to the temple of Justice and inquires of the blind goddess holding the scales. She answers: Every man's account here is kept separately by itself. The only way to balance it is to weigh his merits against his

demerits. We know not how to weigh one man's merits against another man's sins. In my jurisdiction there can be no substitute of one to pay the penalty due by another. Every man is credited with his own merits only, and must answer personally for his sins.

If he appeals to Heaven Jesus would no doubt answer: These doctrines are new to me. I never heard of them during all the time I was teaching in Palestine. Our Heavenly Father does not require or desire sacrifices—especially human sacrifices. The only worship acceptable to him is the homage and love of pure hearts. The way of salvation is plain. "If ye would enter into life keep the commandments."

And finally if he consults the universal experience of Christendom for the last eighteen centuries, the answer will come thundering back: It was Discordia alone that sanctioned these doctrines. It is Pandora's Box, full of plagues, over again, thrown into the midst of God's temple. Cast it out. The Church will never be harmonious until Paul-

ism is completely cast out. The Reformation was only begun in the time of Luther. It has been progressing ever since, but is not yet completed. The work begun then will only be completed when Christianity as taught by the Savior to his disciples shall have been fully recognized as the creed of the Christian Church.

Paul taught these doctrines mostly—when not entirely—on his personal authority alone. “Take heed that no man deceive you.” Who was Paul, that he should set up a rival system of religion,—that he should set aside Jesus’ way of eternal life for one of his own? Paul was simply a man, as men are today. He was no nearer to God and knew no more of God than men do today. What is Paul’s way of salvation that we should accept it in preference to that which Christ taught to his followers? Reason, aided and strengthened by such light as may have come to him, is man’s only guide in matters of religion as in other matters of conduct. Every religion, every plan of salvation offered to man, must be examined, judged,

and accepted or rejected by his reasoning faculty as its merits or demerits may appear. Man, organized as he is, can act in no other way. Tried by the standard of reason the doctrine that God condemned the whole human family to eternal perdition on account of Adam's transgression, is not only unreasonable but manifestly unjust. It impeaches God himself of injustice. Reason peremptorily rejects it as a fiction of the brain. And yet this doctrine is the very corner stone of Paul's system. Without this universal condemnation there was no need of a new plan of salvation,—no need of God's grace. The foundation being removed, the whole superstructure falls.

That Jesus was crucified by the Jews, ostensibly as a malefactor, no one doubts; and the scriptures afford full evidence of that fact. But that God himself sent his Son into the world expressly to be offered as a sacrifice on the cross to propitiate God's displeasure and thereby to redeem mankind from the fatal consequences of Adam's transgression, is a doctrine resting solely, I believe, on Paul's naked

dictum. An assumption so extraordinary can only be believed on the most conclusive evidence. Reason opposes to it: (1) That God is a spirit and can only be worshiped spiritually. God does not require or desire to be worshiped by sacrifices; and never did. (2) Reason, observation and experience all teach us that every man must answer for his own sins—that one, however sinless and pure he may be, cannot by his sacrifice justify the ungodly. The imputation of the merits of Christ's sacrifice to the relief of sinners is a delusion. We cannot accept such a doctrine, a doctrine so unnatural in itself, on the naked statement of a single individual.

If our neighbor should voluntarily slay or sacrifice his only and well beloved son on account of the disobedience of his other children, we should require no further proof of his insanity; and would send him to the mad house. If the guilty members of the family, when prosecuted at the law for their criminal misconduct, should plead as their defense that the sacrifice of their innocent brother operated as

pardon for them and justified them before the law, they would only make themselves ridiculous in the eyes of all sensible people.

Paul's system of salvation is, in all its parts and as a whole, supernatural and as it appears to me, purely artificial. It is a survival of orientatism in a highly exaggerated form. It is therefore not adapted to the wants of mankind whose great need is a religion which they can understand and practice. A faith wholly unattainable unto man by any efforts he may make, but which comes only by the grace of God—as a special gift—which is bestowed only on those who have been elected to eternal life, of God's grace, from the foundation of the world, such a faith can manifestly never be or become an element of human happiness or of human progress.

Paul's plan of salvation is neither of the heart nor of the understanding. There is in it nothing to generate that holy sympathy which warms and purifies all hearts towards one another, and unites all in love to the Heavenly Father; and no other subject of human interest

has employed half the attention, labor, ability and learning to elucidate and rationalize its doctrines and to make them appear acceptable to the human understanding. And with all, after a persistent trial of full eighteen centuries, the prospect of their success is far less encouraging than it was a century ago. In fact, that system seems to me now to be in a state of rapid decay. If Paul's plan of salvation were wholly unknown to Christendom until this day and were now presented to it for the first time for its acceptance or rejection on its intrinsic merits as a system of religion, I verily believe it would be peremptorily rejected; and its author pronounced a crank or a lunatic.

The difficulty is that the church of the present day has *inherited* Paul's system of religion. That system has come down to us from a remote past. The church of the nineteenth century did not choose that religion, but it has it—only because it has not the courage to get rid of it. That system of theology was fastened on the church in the beginning and the church has not been able to cast it off. The

progress of human thought is doing what the church of its own action has not been able to do. The nineteenth century has, to my mind, clearly outgrown that system of religion, and has sufficiently revealed its imperfections and faults to insure its elimination in due course. The attempt to longer hold it up to man as the true way of salvation is only to keep a stumbling block in the way of religious progress.

The way of salvation which Jesus taught to his followers, is, I believe, the only true universal and eternal religion of humanity. The Reformation will not be completed until Paulism and all forms of supernaturalism have been completely eliminated; and Christianity in its original purity has been adopted as the creed of the Church.





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