

4. 2/09

A
CHRISTIAN
CATECHISM

BY
ROBERT G. INGERSOLL

PRICE SIXPENCE

LONDON:
THE PIONEER PRESS, 2 NEWCASTLE STREET,
1903 E.C.

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PRINTED BY THE PIONEER PRESS
AT
2 NEWCASTLE-STREET, FARRINGDON-STREET, LONDON, E.C.

INTRODUCTION.

MANY of the late Colonel Ingersoll's productions have been published in England during the past twenty years, but this Catechism has been overlooked, although it is one of the most brilliant and useful things he ever did. It originated in this way. Twenty years ago, when Ingersoll was at the top of his powers, he was replied to in six sermons by the famous Dr. Talmage. The Presbyterian preacher was not worth troubling about except for his position in the religious world, and Ingersoll's friends advised him to treat the "great divine" with silent contempt. But the "great infidel" saw an opportunity of doing a good turn to Freethought. Talmage was strictly orthodox, and his view of the Bible was old-fashioned. He gave himself away on every side. To answer him was easy. Ingersoll, however, did more than that; he broke Talmage to pieces and ground him to dust, dialectically, and left him, personally, a laughing-stock to American readers. This was done in "Six Interviews" stenographically reported by I. Newton Baker and published by C. P. Farrell. At the end of these Interviews there was printed "The Talmagean Catechism," written with Ingersoll's own hand. It was facetiously intended for "the young" and for "use in Sunday-schools," and to set forth the pith and marrow of what Talmage had been pleased to say, in the form of a Shorter Catechism. Now I have ventured to have this exquisite document reprinted as "A Christian Catechism." Talmage was only the occasion of the moment, and he may be dropped now. The Catechism is of far broader scope and application; and, to make it obviously so, only two strokes of the pen were necessary. The first *Answer* read "Jehovah, the original Presbyterian." I have let it read simply "Jehovah." I have also substituted "Christian" for "Presbyterian" before the word "God" at the bottom of page 39. These are the only alterations I have made; and they leave the Catechism a splendid undenominational exposure of Christianity, in a form at once instructive and entertaining. In this form I trust it will enjoy a wide circulation in England; and, to that end, I beg all Freethinkers into whose hands it may come to pass it (or other copies) into the hands of their friends and acquaintances, and especially to bring it to the attention of young enquiring minds.

G. W. FOOTE.

October, 1903.

A CHRISTIAN CATECHISM

As Mr. Talmage delivered the series of sermons referred to in these interviews for the purpose of furnishing arguments to the young, so that they might not be misled by the sophistry of modern infidelity, I have thought it best to set forth, for use in Sunday-schools, the pith and marrow of what he has been pleased to say in the form of a Shorter Catechism.

Question. Who made you ?

Answer. Jehovah.

Question. What else did he make ?

Answer. He made the world and all things.

Question. Did he make the world out of nothing ?

Answer. No.

Question. What did he make it out of ?

Answer. Out of his "omnipotence." Many infidels have pretended that if God made the universe, and if there was nothing until he did make it, he had nothing to make it out of. Of course this is perfectly absurd when we remember that he always had his "omnipotence"; and that is, undoubtedly, the material used.

Question. Did he create his own "omnipotence" ?

Answer. Certainly not, he was always omnipotent.

Question. Then if he always had "omnipotence," he did not "create" the material of which the universe is made; he simply took a portion of his "omnipotence" and changed it to "universe" ?

Answer. Certainly, that is the way I understand it.

Question. Is he still omnipotent, and has he as much "omnipotence" now as he ever had ?

Answer. Well, I suppose he has.

Question. How long did it take God to make the universe?

Answer. Six "good-whiles."

Question. How long is a "good-while"?

Answer. That will depend upon the future discoveries of geologists. "Good-whiles" are of such a nature that they can be pulled out, or pushed up; and it is utterly impossible for any infidel, or scientific geologist, to make any period that a "good-while" won't fit.

Question. What do you understand by "the morning and evening" of a "good while"?

Answer. Of course the words "morning and evening" are used figuratively, and mean simply the beginning and the ending of each "good-while."

Question. On what day did God make vegetation?

Answer. On the third day.

Question. Was that before the sun was made?

Answer. Yes; a "good while" before.

Question. How did vegetation grow without sunlight?

Answer. My own opinion is that it was either "nourished by the glare of volcanoes in the moon"; or "it may have gotten sufficient light from rivers of molten granite"; or "sufficient light might have been emitted by the crystallisation of rocks." It has been suggested that light might have been furnished by fireflies and phosphorescent bugs and worms, but this I regard as going too far.

Question. Do you think that light emitted by rocks would be sufficient to produce trees?

Answer. Yes, with the assistance of the "Aurora Borealis, or even the Aurora Australis"; but with both, most assuredly.

Question. If the light of which you speak was sufficient, why was the sun made?

Answer. To keep time with.

Question. What did God make man of?

Answer. He made man of dust and "omnipotence."

Question. Did he make a woman at the same time that he made a man?

Answer. No; he thought at one time to avoid the necessity of making a woman, and he caused all the animals to pass before Adam, to see what he would call them, and to see whether a fit companion could be found for him. Among them all, not one suited Adam, and

Jehovah immediately saw that he would have to make a help-meet on purpose.

Question. What was woman made of?

Answer. She was made out of "man's side, out of his right side," and some more "omnipotence." Infidels say that she was made out of a rib, or a bone, but that is because they do not understand Hebrew.

Question. What was the object of making woman out of man's side?

Answer. So that a young man would think more of a neighbor's girl than of his own uncle or grandfather.

Question. What did God do with Adam and Eve after he got them done?

Answer. He put them in a garden to see what they would do.

Question. Do we know where the Garden of Eden was, and have we ever found any place where a "river parted and became into four heads?"

Answer. We are not certain where this garden was, and the river that parted into four heads cannot at present be found. Infidels have had a great deal to say about these four rivers, but they will wish they had even one, one of these days.

Question. What happened to Adam and Eve in the garden?

Answer. They were tempted by a snake who was an exceedingly good talker, and who probably came in walking on the end of his tail. This supposition is based upon the fact that, as a punishment, he was condemned to crawl on his belly. Before that time, of course, he walked upright.

Question. What happened then?

Answer. Our first parents gave way, ate of the forbidden fruit, and, in consequence, disease and death entered the world. Had it not been for this, there would have been no death and no disease. Suicide would have been impossible, and a man could have been blown into a thousand atoms by dynamite, and the pieces would immediately have come together again. Fire would have refused to burn, and water to drown; there could have been no hunger, no thirst; all things would have been equally healthy.

Question. Do you mean to say that there would have

been no death in the world, either of animals, insects, or persons ?

Answer. Of course.

Question. Do you also think that all briars and thorns sprang from the same source, and that, had the apple not been eaten, no bush in the world would have had a thorn, and brambles and thistles would have been unknown ?

Answer. Certainly.

Question. Would there have been no poisonous plants, no poisonous reptiles ?

Answer. No, sir ; there would have been none ; there would have been no evil in the world if Adam and Eve had not partaken of the forbidden fruit.

Question. Was the snake, who tempted them to eat, evil ?

Answer. Certainly.

Question. Was he in the world before the forbidden fruit was eaten ?

Answer. Of course he was ; he tempted them to eat it.

Question. How, then, do you account for the fact that, before the forbidden fruit was eaten, an evil serpent was in the world ?

Answer. Perhaps apples had been eaten in other worlds.

Question. Is it not wonderful that such awful consequences flowed from so small an act ?

Answer. It is not for you to reason about it ; you should simply remember that God is omnipotent. There is but one way to answer these things, and that is to admit their truth. Nothing so puts the Infinite out of temper as to see a human being impudent enough to rely upon his reason. The moment we rely upon our reason, we abandon God, and try to take care of ourselves. Whoever relies entirely upon God, has no need of reason, and reason has no need of him.

Question. Were our first parents under the immediate protection of an infinite God ?

Answer. They were.

Question. Why did he not protect them ? Why did he not warn them of this snake ? Why did he not put them on their guard ? Why did he not make them so

sharp, intellectually, that they could not be deceived? Why did he not destroy that snake; or how did he come to make him; what did he make him for?

Answer. You must remember that, although God made Adam and Eve perfectly good, still he was very anxious to test them. He also gave them the power of choice, knowing at the same time exactly what they would choose, and knowing that he had made them so that they must choose in a certain way. A being of infinite wisdom tries experiments. Knowing exactly what will happen, he wishes to see if it will.

Question. What punishment did God inflict upon Adam and Eve for the sin of having eaten the forbidden fruit?

Answer. He pronounced a curse upon the woman, saying that in sorrow she should bring forth children, and that her husband should rule over her; that she, having tempted her husband, was made his slave; and through her, all married women have been deprived of their natural liberty. On account of the sin of Adam and Eve, God cursed the ground, saying that it should bring forth thorns and thistles, and that man should eat his bread in sorrow, and that he should eat the herb of the field.

Question. Did he turn them out of the garden because of their sin?

Answer. No. The reason God gave for turning them out of the garden was: "Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take of the tree of life and eat and live forever, therefore, the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken."

Question. If the man had eaten of the tree of life, would he have lived forever?

Answer. Certainly.

Question. Was he turned out to prevent his eating?

Answer. He was.

Question. Then the Old Testament tells us how we lost immortality, not that we are immortal, does it?

Answer. Yes; it tells us how we lost it.

Question. Was God afraid that Adam and Eve might get back into the garden, and eat of the fruit of the tree of life?

Answer. I suppose he was, as he placed "cherubims and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to guard the tree of life."

Question. Has anyone ever seen any of these cherubims?

Answer. Not that I know of.

Question. Where is the flaming sword now?

Answer. Some angel has it in heaven.

Question. Do you understand that God made coats of skins, and clothed Adam and Eve when he turned them out of the garden?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. Do you really believe that the infinite God killed some animals, took their skins from them, cut out and sewed up clothes for Adam and Eve?

Answer. The Bible says so; we know that he had patterns for clothes, because he showed some to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Question. About how long did God continue to pay particular attention to his children in this world?

Answer. For about fifteen hundred years; and some of the people lived to be nearly a thousand years of age.

Question. Did this God establish any schools or institutions of learning? Did he establish any church? Did he ordain any ministers, or did he have any revivals?

Answer. No; he allowed the world to go on pretty much in its own way. He did not even keep his own boys at home. They came down and made love to the daughters of men, and finally the world got exceedingly bad.

Question. What did God do then?

Answer. He made up his mind that he would drown them all. You see, they were all totally depraved—in every joint and sinew of their bodies, in every drop of their blood, and in every thought of their brains.

Question. Did he drown them all?

Answer. No, he saved eight, to start with again.

Question. Were these eight persons totally depraved?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Why did he not kill them, and start over again with a perfect pair? Would it not have been better to have had his flood at first, before he made anybody, and drowned the snake?

Answer. "God's ways are not our ways"; and besides, you must remember that "a thousand years are as one day" with God.

Question. How did God destroy the people?

Answer. By water; it rained forty days and forty nights, and "the fountains of the great deep were broken up."

Question. How deep was the water?

Answer. About five miles.

Question. How much did it rain each day?

Answer. About eight hundred feet; though the better opinion now is that it was a local flood. Infidels have raised objections and pressed them to that degree that most orthodox people admit that the flood was rather local.

Question. If it was a local flood, why did they put birds of the air into the ark? Certainly, birds could have avoided a local flood?

Answer. If you take this away from us, what do you propose to give us in its place? Some of the best people of the world have believed this story. Kind husbands, loving mothers, and earnest patriots have believed it, and that is sufficient.

Question. At the time God made these people did he know that he would have to drown them all?

Answer. Of course he did.

Question. Did he know when he made them that they would all be failures?

Answer. Of course.

Question. Why, then, did he make them?

Answer. He made them for his own glory, and no man should disgrace his parents by denying it.

Question. Were the people after the flood just as bad as they were before?

Answer. About the same.

Question. Did they try to circumvent God?

Answer. They did.

Question. How?

Answer. They got together for the purpose of building a tower, the top of which should reach to heaven, so that they could laugh at any future floods, and go to heaven at any time they desired.

Question. Did God hear about this?

Answer. He did.

Question. What did he say?

Answer. He said: "Go to; let us go down," and see what the people are doing; I am satisfied they will succeed.

Question. How were the people prevented from succeeding?

Answer. God confounded their language, so that the mason on top could not cry "mort!" to the hod-carrier below; he could not think of the word to use, to save his life, and the building stopped.

Question. If it had not been for the confusion of tongues at Babel, do you really think that all the people in the world would have spoken just the same language, and would have pronounced every word precisely the same?

Answer. Of course.

Question. If it had not been, then, for the confusion of languages, spelling books, grammars, and dictionaries, would have been useless?

Answer. I suppose so.

Question. Do any two people in the whole world speak the same language now?

Answer. Of course they don't, and this is one of the great evidences that God introduced confusion into the languages. Every error in grammar, every mistake in spelling, every blunder in pronunciation, proves the truth of the Babel story.

Question. This being so, this miracle is the best attested of all?

Answer. I suppose it is.

Question. Do you not think that a confusion of tongues would bring men together instead of separating them? Would not a man unable to converse with his fellow feel weak instead of strong; and would not people whose language had been confounded cling together for mutual support?

Answer. According to nature, yes; according to theology, no; and these questions must be answered according to theology. And right here, it may be well enough to state, that in theology the unnatural is the probable, and the impossible is what has always happened. If theology were simply natural, anybody could be a theologian.

Question. Did God ever make any other special efforts to convert the people, or to reform the world?

Answer. Yes, he destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah with a storm of fire and brimstone.

Question. Do you suppose it was really brimstone?

Answer. Undoubtedly.

Question. Do you think this brimstone came from the clouds?

Answer. Let me tell you that you have no right to examine the Bible in the light of what people are pleased to call "science." The natural has nothing to do with the supernatural. Naturally there would be no brimstone in the clouds, but supernaturally there might be. God could make brimstone out of his "omnipotence." We do not know really what brimstone is, and nobody knows exactly how brimstone is made. As a matter of fact, all the brimstone in the world might have fallen at that time.

Question. Do you think that Lot's wife was changed into salt?

Answer. Of course she was. A miracle was performed. A few centuries ago, the statue of salt made by changing Lot's wife into that article, was standing. Christian travellers have seen it.

Question. Why do you think she was changed into salt?

Answer. For the purpose of keeping the event fresh in the minds of men.

Question. God having failed to keep people innocent in a garden; having failed to govern them outside of a garden; having failed to reform them by water; having failed to produce any good result by a confusion of tongues; having failed to reform them with fire and brimstone, what did he then do?

Answer. He concluded that he had no time to waste on them all, but that he would have to select one tribe, and turn his attention to just a few folks.

Question. Whom did he select?

Answer. A man by the name of Abram.

Question. What kind of man was Abram?

Answer. If you wish to know, read the twelfth chapter of Genesis; and if you still have any doubts as to his character, read the twentieth chapter of the same book, and you will see that he was a man who made merchan-

dise of his wife's body. He had had such good fortune in Egypt, that he tried the experiment again on Abimelech.

Question. Did Abraham show any gratitude ?

Answer. Yes ; he offered to sacrifice his son, to show his confidence in Jehovah.

Question. What became of Abraham and his people ?

Answer. God took such care of them, that in about two hundred and fifteen years they were all slaves in the land of Egypt.

Question. How long did they remain in slavery ?

Answer. Two hundred and fifteen years.

Question. Were they the same people that God had promised to take care of ?

Answer. They were.

Question. Was God, at that time, in favor of slavery ?

Answer. Not at that time. He was angry at the Egyptians for enslaving the Jews, but he afterwards authorised the Jews to enslave other people.

Question. What means did he take to liberate the Jews ?

Answer. He sent his agents to Pharaoh, and demanded their freedom ; and, upon Pharaoh's refusing, he afflicted the people, who had nothing to do with it, with various plagues—killed children, and tormented and tortured beasts.

Question. Was such conduct Godlike ?

Answer. Certainly. If you have anything against your neighbor, it is perfectly proper to torture his horse, or torment his dog. Nothing can be nobler than this. You see it is much better to injure his animals than to injure him. To punish animals for the sins of their owners must be just, or God would not have done it. Pharaoh insisted on keeping the people in slavery, and therefore God covered the bodies of oxen and cows with boils. He also bruised them to death with hailstones. From this we infer that "the loving kindness of God is over all his works."

Question. Do you consider such treatment of animals consistent with divine mercy ?

Answer. Certainly. You know that under the Mosaic dispensation, when a man did a wrong, he could settle with God by killing an ox, or a sheep, or some doves. If the man failed to kill them, of course God would kill them. It was upon this principle that he destroyed the

animals of the Egyptians. They had sinned, and he merely took his pay.

Question. How was it possible, under the old dispensation, to please a being of infinite kindness?

Answer. All you had to do was to take an innocent animal, bring it to the altar, cut its throat, and sprinkle the altar with its blood. Certain parts of it were to be given to the butcher as his share, and the rest was to be burnt on the altar. When God saw an animal thus butchered, and smelt the warm blood mingled with the odor of burning flesh, he was pacified, and the smile of forgiveness shed its light upon his face. Of course, infidels laugh at these things; but what can you expect of men who have not been "born again?" "The carnal mind is enmity with God."

Question. What else did God do in order to induce Pharaoh to liberate the Jews?

Answer. He had his agents throw down a cane in the presence of Pharaoh and thereupon Jehovah changed this cane into a serpent.

Question. Did this convince Pharaoh?

Answer. No; he sent for his own magicians.

Question. What did they do?

Answer. They threw down some canes, and they also were changed into serpents.

Question. Did Jehovah change the canes of the Egyptian magicians into snakes?

Answer. I suppose he did, as he is the only one capable of performing such a miracle.

Question. If the rod of Aaron was changed into a serpent in order to convince Pharaoh that God had sent Aaron and Moses, why did God change the sticks of the Egyptian magicians into serpents—why did he discredit his own agents, and render worthless their only credentials?

Answer. Well, we cannot explain the conduct of Jehovah; we are perfectly satisfied that it was for the best. Even in this age of the world God allows infidels to overwhelm his chosen people with arguments; he allows them to discover facts that his ministers cannot answer, and yet we are satisfied that in the end God will give the victory to us. All these things are tests of faith. It is upon this principle that God allows geology

to laugh at Genesis, that he permits astronomy apparently to contradict his holy word.

Question. What did God do with these people after Pharaoh allowed them to go ?

Answer. Finding that they were not fit to settle a new country, owing to the fact that when hungry they longed for food, and sometimes when their lips were cracked with thirst insisted on having water, God in his infinite mercy had them marched round and round, back and forth, through a barren wilderness, until all, with the exception of two persons, died.

Question. Why did he do this ?

Answer. Because he had promised these people that he would take them "to a land flowing with milk and honey."

Question. Was God always patient and kind and merciful toward his children while they were in the wilderness ?

Answer. Yes, he always was merciful and kind and patient. Infidels have taken the ground that he visited them with plagues and disease and famine ; that he had them bitten by serpents, and now and then allowed the ground to swallow a few thousands of them, and in other ways saw to it that they were kept as comfortable and happy as was consistent with good government ; but all these things were for their good ; and the fact is, infidels have no real sense of justice.

Question. How did God happen to treat the Israelites in this way, when he had promised Abraham that he would take care of his progeny, and when he had promised the same to the poor wretches while they were slaves in Egypt ?

Answer. Because God is unchangeable in his nature, and wished to convince them that every being should be perfectly faithful to his promise.

Question. Was God driven to madness by the conduct of his chosen people ?

Answer. Almost.

Question. Did he know exactly what they would do when he chose them ?

Answer. Exactly.

Question. Were the Jews guilty of idolatry ?

Answer. They were. They worshipped other gods—gods made of wood and stone.

Question. Is it not wonderful that they were not convinced of the power of God by the many miracles wrought in Egypt and in the wilderness?

Answer. Yes, it is very wonderful; but the Jews, who must have seen bread rained down from heaven; who saw water gush from the rocks and follow them up hill and down; who noticed that their clothes did not wear out, and did not even get shiny at the knees, while the elbows defied the ravages of time, and their shoes remained perfect for forty years; it is wonderful that when they saw the ground open and swallow their comrades; when they saw God talking face to face with Moses as a man talks with his friend; after they saw the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night—it is absolutely astonishing that they had more faith in a golden calf that they made themselves, than in Jehovah.

Question. How is it that the Jews had no confidence in these miracles?

Answer. Because they were there and saw them.

Question. Do you think that it is necessary for us to believe all the miracles of the Old Testament in order to be saved?

Answer. The Old Testament is the foundation of the New. If the Old Testament is not inspired, then the New is of no value. If the Old Testament is inspired, all the miracles are true; and we cannot believe that God would allow any errors, or false statements, to creep into an inspired volume, and to be perpetuated through all these years.

Question. Should we believe the miracles, whether they are reasonable or not?

Answer. Certainly. If they were reasonable, they would not be miracles. It is their unreasonableness that appeals to our credulity and our faith. It is impossible to have theological faith in anything that can be demonstrated. It is the office of faith to believe, not only without evidence, but in spite of evidence. It is impossible for the carnal mind to believe that Samson's muscle depended upon the length of his hair. "God has made the wisdom of this world foolishness." Neither can the unconverted believe that Elijah stopped at a hotel kept by ravens. Neither can they believe that a barrel would in and of itself produce meal, or that

an earthen pot could create oil. But to a Christian, in order that a widow might feed a preacher, the truth of these stories is perfectly apparent.

Question. How should we regard the wonderful stories of the Old Testament?

Answer. They should be looked upon as "types" and "symbols." They all have a spiritual significance. The reason I believe the story of Jonah is, that Jonah is a type of Christ.

Question. Do you believe the story of Jonah to be a true account of a literal fact?

Answer. Certainly. You must remember that Jonah was not swallowed by a whale. God "prepared a great fish" for that occasion. Neither is it by any means certain that Jonah was in the belly of this whale. "He probably stayed in his mouth." Even if he was in his stomach, it was very easy for him to defy the ordinary action of gastric juice by rapidly walking up and down.

Question. Do you think that Jonah was really in the whale's stomach?

Answer. My own opinion is that he stayed in his mouth. The only objection to this theory is that it is more reasonable than the other and requires less faith. Nothing could be easier than for God to make a fish large enough to furnish ample room for one passenger in his mouth. I throw out this suggestion simply that you may be able to answer the objections of infidels who are always laughing at this story.

Question. Do you really believe that Elijah went to heaven in a chariot of fire, drawn by horses of fire?

Answer. Of course he did.

Question. What was this miracle performed for?

Answer. To convince the people of the power of God.

Question. Who saw the miracle?

Answer. Nobody but Elisha.

Question. Was he convinced before that time?

Answer. Oh, yes; he was one of God's prophets.

Question. Suppose that in these days two men should leave a town together, and after a while one of them should come back having on the clothes of the other, and should account for the fact that he had his friend's clothes by saying that while they were going along the

road together a chariot of fire came down from heaven drawn by fiery steeds, and thereupon his friend got into the carriage, threw him his clothes, and departed—would you believe it?

Answer. Of course things like that don't happen in these days; God does not have to rely on wonders now.

Question. Do you mean that he performs no miracles at the present day?

Answer. We cannot say that he does not perform miracles now, but we are not in position to call attention to any particular one. Of course he supervises the affairs of nations and men, and does whatever in his judgment is necessary.

Question. Do you think that Samson's strength depended on the length of his hair?

Answer. The Bible so states, and the Bible is true. A physiologist might say that a man could not use the muscle in his hair for lifting purposes, but these same physiologists could not tell you how you move a finger, nor how you lift a feather; still, actuated by the pride of intellect, they insist that the length of a man's hair could not determine his strength. God says it did; the physiologist says that it did not; we cannot hesitate whom to believe. For the purpose of avoiding eternal agony I am willing to believe anything: I am willing to say that strength depends upon the length of hair, or faith upon the length of ears. I am perfectly willing to believe that a man caught three hundred foxes, and put fire brands between their tails; that he slew thousands with a bone, and that he made a bee hive out of a lion. I will believe, if necessary, that when this man's hair was short he hardly had strength enough to stand, and that when it was long, he could carry away the gates of a city, or overthrow a temple filled with people. If the infidel is right, I will lose nothing by believing, but if he is wrong, I shall gain an eternity of joy. If God did not intend that we should believe these stories, he never would have told them, and why should a man put his soul in peril by trying to disprove one of the statements of the Lord?

Question. Suppose it should turn out that some of these miracles depend upon mistranslations of the original Hebrew, should we still believe them?

Answer. The safe side is the best side. It is far better to err on the side of belief, than on the side of infidelity. God does not threaten anybody with eternal punishment for believing too much. Danger lies on the side of investigation, on the side of thought. The perfectly idiotic are absolutely safe. As they diverge from that point—as they rise in the intellectual scale, as the brain develops, as the faculties enlarge, the danger increases. I know that some Biblical students now take the ground that Samson caught no foxes—that he only took sheaves of wheat that had been already cut and bound, set them on fire, and threw them into the grain still standing. If this is what he did, of course there is nothing miraculous about it, and the value of the story is lost. So, others contend that Elijah was not fed by the ravens, but by the Arabs. They tell us that the Hebrew word standing for “Arab” also stands for “bird,” and that the word really means “migratory—going from place to place—homeless.” But I prefer the old version. It certainly will do no harm to believe that ravens brought bread and flesh to a prophet of God. Where they got their bread and flesh is none of my business; how they knew where the prophet was, and recognised him; or how God talks to ravens, or how he gave them directions. I have no right to inquire. I leave these questions to the scientists, the blasphemers, and thinkers. There are many people in the Church anxious to get the miracles out of the Bible, and thousands, I have no doubt, would be greatly gratified to learn that there is, in fact, nothing miraculous in Scripture; but when you take away the miraculous, you take away the supernatural; when you take away the supernatural, you destroy the ministry; and when you take away the ministry, hundreds of thousands of men will be left without employment.

Question. Is it not wonderful that the Egyptians were not converted by the miracles wrought in their country?

Answer. Yes, they all would have been, if God had not purposely hardened their hearts to prevent it. Jehovah always took great delight in furnishing the evidence, and then hardening the man's heart so that he would not believe it. After all the miracles that had been performed in Egypt—the most wonderful that were ever

done in any country—the Egyptians were as unbelieving as at first; they pursued the Israelites, knowing that they were protected by an infinite God, and, failing to overwhelm them, came back and worshipped their own false gods just as firmly as before. All of which shows the unreasonableness of a Pagan, and the natural depravity of human nature.

Question. How did it happen that the Canaanites were never convinced that the Jews were assisted by Jehovah?

Answer. They must have been an exceedingly brave people to contend so many years with the chosen people of God. Notwithstanding all their cities were burned time and again; notwithstanding all the men, women, and children were put to the edge of the sword; notwithstanding the taking of all their cattle and sheep, they went right on fighting just as valiantly and desperately as ever. Each one lost his life many times, and was just as ready for the next conflict. My own opinion is that God kept them alive by raising them from the dead after each battle, for the purpose of punishing the Jews. God used his enemies as instruments for the civilisation of the Jewish people. He did not wish to convert them, because they would give him much more trouble as Jews than they did as Canaanites. He had all the Jews he could conveniently take care of. He found it much easier to kill a thousand Canaanites than to civilise one Jew.

Question. How do you account for the fact that the heathen were not surprised at the stopping of the sun and moon?

Answer. They were so ignorant that they had not the slightest conception of the real cause of the phenomenon. Had they known the size of the earth, and the relation it sustained to the other heavenly bodies; had they known the magnitude of the sun, and the motion of the moon, they would, in all probability, have been as greatly astonished as the Jews were; but being densely ignorant of astronomy, it must have produced upon them not the slightest impression. But we must remember that the sun and moon were not stopped for the purpose of converting these people, but to give Joshua more time to kill them. As soon as we see clearly the purpose of Jehovah, we instantly perceive how admirable were the means adopted.

Question. Do you not consider the treatment of the Canaanites to have been cruel and ferocious?

Answer. To a totally depraved man, it does look cruel; to a being without any good in him—to one who has inherited the rascality of many generations, the murder of innocent women and little children does seem horrible; to one who is “contaminated in all his parts,” by original sin—who was “conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity,” the assassination of men, and the violation of captive maidens, do not seem consistent with infinite goodness. But when one has been “born again,” when “the love of God has been shed abroad in his heart,” when he loves all mankind, when he “overcomes evil with good,” when he “prays for those who despitefully use him and persecute him”—to such a man the extermination of the Canaanites, the violation of women, the slaughter of babes, and the destruction of countless thousands, is the highest evidence of the goodness, the mercy, and the long-suffering of God. When a man has been “born again,” all the passages of the Old Testament that appear so horrible and so unjust to one in his natural state, become the dearest, the most consoling, and the most beautiful of truths. The real Christian reads the accounts of these ancient battles with the greatest possible satisfaction. To one who really loves his enemies, the groans of men, the shrieks of women, and the cries of babes, make music sweeter than the zephyr’s breath.

Question. In your judgment, why did God destroy the Canaanites?

Answer. To prevent their contaminating the chosen people. He knew that if the Jews were allowed to live with such neighbors, they would finally become as bad as the Canaanites themselves. He wished to civilise his chosen people, and it was therefore necessary for him to destroy the heathen.

Question. Did God succeed in civilising the Jews after he had “removed” the Canaanites?

Answer. Well, not entirely. He had to allow the heathen he had not destroyed to overrun the whole land and make captives of the Jews. This was done for the good of his chosen people.

Question. Did he then succeed in civilising them?

Answer. Not quite.

Question. Did he *ever* quite succeed in civilising them?

Answer. Well, we must admit that the experiment never was a conspicuous success. The Jews were chosen by the Almighty 430 years before he appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai. He was their direct Governor. He attended personally to their religion and politics, and gave up a great part of his valuable time for about two thousand years to the management of their affairs; and yet, such was the condition of the Jewish people, after they had had all these advantages, that when there arose among them a perfectly kind, just, generous, and honest man, these people, with whom God had been laboring for so many centuries, deliberately put to death that good and loving man.

Question. Do you think that God really endeavored to civilise the Jews?

Answer. This is an exceedingly hard question. If he had really tried to do it, of course he could have done it. We must not think of limiting the power of the infinite. But you must remember that if he had succeeded in civilising the Jews, if he had educated them up to the plane of intellectual liberty, and made them just and kind and merciful, like himself, they would not have crucified Christ, and you can see at once the awful condition in which we would all be to-day. No atonement could have been made; and if no atonement had been made, then, according to the Christian system, the whole world would have been lost. We must admit that there was no time in the history of the Jews from Sinai to Jerusalem, that they would not have put a man like Christ to death.

Question. So you think that, after all, it was not God's intention that the Jews should become civilised?

Answer. We do not know. We can only say that "God's ways are not our ways." It may be that God took them in his special charge, for the purpose of keeping them bad enough to make the necessary sacrifice. That may have been the divine plan. In any event, it is safer to believe the explanation that is the most unreasonable.

Question. Do you think that Christ knew the Jews would crucify him?

Answer. Certainly.

Question. Do you think that when he chose Judas he knew that he would betray him?

Answer. Certainly.

Question. Did he know when Judas went to the chief priest and made the bargain for the delivery of Christ?

Answer. Certainly.

Question. Why did he allow himself to be betrayed, if he knew the plot?

Answer. Infidelity is a very good doctrine to live by, but you should read the last words of Paine and Voltaire.

Question. If Christ knew that Judas would betray him, why did he choose him?

Answer. Nothing can exceed the atrocities of the French Revolution—when they carried a woman through the streets and worshipped her as the Goddess of Reason.

Question. Would not the mission of Christ have been a failure had no one betrayed him?

Answer. Thomas Paine was a drunkard, and recanted on his death-bed, and died a blaspheming infidel besides.

Question. Is it not clear that an atonement was necessary; and is it not equally clear that the atonement could not have been made unless somebody had betrayed Christ; and unless the Jews had been wicked and orthodox enough to crucify him?

Answer. Of course the atonement had to be made. It was a part of the "divine plan" that Christ should be betrayed, and that the Jews should be wicked enough to kill him. Otherwise, the world would have been lost.

Question. Suppose Judas had understood the divine plan, what ought he to have done? Should he have betrayed Christ, or let somebody else do it; or should he have allowed the world to perish, including his own soul?

Answer. If you take the Bible away from the world, "how would it be possible to have witnesses sworn in courts;" how would it be possible to administer justice?

Question. If Christ had not been betrayed and crucified, is it true that his own mother would be in perdition to-day?

Answer. Most assuredly. There was but one way by which she could be saved, and that was by the death of

her son—through the blood of the atonement. She was totally depraved through the sin of Adam, and deserved eternal death. Even her love for the infant Christ was, in the sight of God—that is to say, of her babe—wickedness. It cannot be repeated too often that there is only one way to be saved, and that is, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Question. Could Christ have prevented the Jews from crucifying him ?

Answer. He could.

Question. If he could have saved his life, and did not, was he not guilty of suicide ?

Answer. No one can understand these questions who has not read the prophecies of Daniel, and has not a clear conception of what is meant by “the fullness of time.”

Question. What became of all the Canaanites, the Egyptians, the Hindus, the Greeks and Romans and Chinese ? What became of the billions who died before the promise was made to Abraham ; of the billions who never heard of the Bible, who never heard the name, even, of Jesus Christ—never knew of “the scheme of salvation” ? What became of the millions and billions who lived in this hemisphere, and of whose existence Jehovah himself seemed perfectly ignorant ?

Answer. They were undoubtedly lost. God, having made them, had a right to do with them as he pleased. They are probably all in hell to-day, and the fact that they are damned only adds to the joy of the redeemed. It is by contrast that we are able to perceive the infinite kindness with which God has treated us.

Question. Is it not possible that something can be done for a human soul in another world as well as in this ?

Answer. No ; this is the only world in which God even attempts to reform anybody. In the other world, nothing is done for the purpose of making anybody better. Here in this world, where man lives but a few days, is the only opportunity for moral improvement. A minister can do a thousand times more for a soul than its creator ; and this country is much better adapted to moral growth than heaven itself. A person who lived on this earth a few years, and died without having been

converted, has no hope in another world. The moment he arrives at the judgment seat, nothing remains but to damn him. Neither God, nor the Holy Ghost, nor Jesus Christ, can have the least possible influence with him there.

Question. When God created each human being, did he know exactly what would be his eternal fate?

Answer. Most assuredly he did.

Question. Did he know that hundreds and millions and billions would suffer eternal pain?

Answer. Certainly. But he gave them freedom of choice between good and evil.

Question. Did he know exactly how they would use that freedom?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Did he know that billions would use it wrong?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Was it optional with him whether he should make such people or not?

Answer. Certainly.

Question. Had these people any option as to whether they would be made or not?

Answer. No.

Question. Would it not have been far better to leave them unconscious dust?

Answer. These questions show how foolish it is to judge God according to a human standard. What to us seems just and merciful, God may regard in an exactly opposite light; and we may hereafter be developed to such a degree that we will regard the agonies of the damned as the highest possible evidence of the goodness and mercy of God.

Question. How do you account for the fact that God did not make himself known except to Abraham and his descendants? Why did he fail to reveal himself to the other nations—nations that, compared with the Jews, were learned, cultivated, and powerful? Would you regard a revelation now made to the Esquimaux as intended for us; and would it be a revelation of which we would be obliged to take notice?

Answer. Of course, God could have revealed himself, not only to all the great nations, but to each individual,

He could have had the Ten Commandments engraved on every heart and brain; or he could have raised up prophets in every land; but he chose, rather, to allow countless millions of his children to wander in the darkness and blackness of Nature; chose, rather, that they should redden their hands in each other's blood; chose, rather, that they should live without light, and die without hope; chose, rather, that they should suffer, not only in this world, but forever in the next. Of course we have no right to find fault with the choice of God.

Question. Now you can tell a sinner to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ;" what could a sinner have been told in Egypt, three thousand years ago; and in what language would you have addressed a Hindu in the days of Buddha—the "divine scheme" at that time being a secret in the divine breast?

Answer. It is not for us to think upon these questions. The moment we examine the Christian system, we begin to doubt. In a little while, we will be infidels, and will lose the respect of those who refuse to think. It is better to go with the majority. These doctrines are too sacred to be touched. You should be satisfied with the religion of your father and your mother. "You want some book on the centre-table," in the parlour; it is extremely handy to have a Family Record; and what book, other than the Bible, could a mother give a son as he leaves the old homestead?

Question. Is it not wonderful that all the writers of the four Gospels do not give an account of the ascension of Jesus Christ?

Answer. This question has been answered long ago, time and time again.

Question. Perhaps it has, but would it not be well enough to answer it once more? Some may not have seen the answer?

Answer. Show me the hospitals that infidels have built; show me the asylums that infidels have founded.

Question. I know you have given the usual answer; but after all, is it not singular that a miracle so wonderful as the bodily ascension of a man should not have been mentioned by all the writers of that man's life? Is it not wonderful that some of them said that he did

ascend, and others that he agreed to stay with his disciples always?

Answer. People acquainted with the Hebrew can have no conception of these things. A story in plain English, does not sound as it does in Hebrew. Miracles seem altogether more credible, when told in a dead language.

Question. What, in your judgment, became of the dead who were raised by Christ? Is it not singular that they were never mentioned afterward? Would not a man who had been raised from the dead naturally be an object of considerable interest, especially to his friends and acquaintances? And is it not also wonderful that Christ, after having wrought so many miracles, cured so many lame and halt and blind, fed so many thousands miraculously, and after having entered Jerusalem in triumph as a conqueror and king, had to be pointed out by one of his own disciples who was bribed for the purpose?

Answer. Of course, all these things are exceedingly wonderful, and if found in any other book would be absolutely incredible; but we have no right to apply the same kind of reasoning to the Bible that we apply to the Koran or to the sacred books of the Hindus. For the ordinary affairs of this world God has given us reason, but in the examination of religious questions we should depend upon credulity and faith.

Question. If Christ came to offer himself a sacrifice, for the purpose of making atonement for the sins of such as might believe on him, why did he not make this fact known to all of his disciples?

Answer. He did. This was, and is, the Gospel.

Question. How is it that Matthew says nothing about "salvation by faith," but simply says that God will be merciful to the merciful, that he will forgive the forgiving, and says not one word about the necessity of believing anything?

Answer. But you will remember that Mark says in the last chapter of his Gospel that "whoso believeth not shall be damned."

Question. Do you admit that Matthew says nothing on the subject?

Answer. Yes, I suppose I must.

Question. Is not that passage in Mark generally admitted to be an interpolation?

Answer. Some Biblical scholars say that it is.

Question. Is that portion of the last chapter of Mark found in the Syriac version of the Bible?

Answer. It is not.

Question. If it was necessary to believe on Jesus Christ, in order to be saved, how is it that Matthew failed to say so?

Answer. "There are more copies of the Bible printed to-day than of any other book in the world, and it is printed in more languages than any other book."

Question. Do you consider it necessary to be "regenerated"—to be "born again"—in order to be saved?

Answer. Certainly.

Question. Did Matthew say anything on the subject of "regeneration"?

Answer. No.

Question. Did Mark?

Answer. No.

Question. Did Luke?

Answer. No.

Question. Is Saint John the only one who speaks of the necessity of being "born again"?

Answer. He is.

Question. Do you think that Matthew, Mark, and Luke knew anything about the necessity of "regeneration"?

Answer. Of course they did.

Question. Why did they fail to speak of it?

Answer. There is no civilisation without the Bible. The moment you throw away the sacred Scriptures you are all at sea—you are without an anchor and without a compass.

Question. You will remember that, according to Mark, Christ said to his disciples: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." Did he refer to the Gospel set forth by Mark?

Answer. Of course he did.

Question. Well, in the Gospel set forth by Mark there is not a word about "regeneration," and no word about the necessity of believing anything—except in an interpolated passage. Would it not seem from this that

“regeneration” and a “belief in the Lord Jesus Christ” are no part of the Gospel?

Answer. Nothing can exceed in horror the last moments of the infidel; nothing can be more terrible than the death of the doubter. When the glories of this world fade from the vision; when ambition becomes an empty name; when wealth turns to dust in the palsied hand of death, of what use is philosophy then? Who cares then for the pride of intellect? In that dread moment man needs something to rely on, whether it is true or not.

Question. Would it not have been more convincing if Christ, after his resurrection, had shown himself to his enemies as well as to his friends? Would it not have greatly strengthened the evidence in the case if he had visited Pilate; had presented himself before Caiaphas, the high priest; if he had again entered the temple, and again walked the streets of Jerusalem?

Answer. If the evidence had been complete and overwhelming there would have been no praiseworthiness in belief; even publicans and sinners would have believed if the evidence had been sufficient. The amount of evidence required is the test of the true Christian spirit.

Question. Would it not also have been better had the ascension taken place in the presence of unbelieving thousands? It seems such a pity to have wasted such a demonstration upon those already convinced.

Answer. These questions are the natural fruit of the carnal mind, and can be accounted for only by the doctrine of total depravity. Nothing has given the Church more trouble than just such questions. Unholy curiosity, a disposition to pry into the divine mysteries, a desire to know, to investigate, to explain—in short, to understand, are all evidences of a reprobate mind.

Question. How can we account for the fact that Matthew alone speaks of the wise men of the East coming with gifts to the infant Christ; that he alone speaks of the little babes being killed by Herod? Is it possible that the other writers never heard of these things?

Answer. Nobody can get any good out of the Bible by reading it in a critical spirit. The contradictions and discrepancies are only apparent, and melt away before the light of faith. That which in other books would be absolute and palpable contradiction, is, in the

Bible, when spiritually discerned, a perfect and beautiful harmony. My own opinion is, that seeming contradictions are in the Bible for the purpose of testing and strengthening the faith of Christians, and for the further purpose of ensnaring infidels, "that they might believe a lie and be damned."

Question. Is it possible that a good God would take pains to deceive his children?

Answer. The Bible is filled with instances of that kind, and all orthodox ministers now know that fossil animals—that is, representations of animals in stone, were placed in the rocks on purpose to mislead men like Darwin and Humboldt, Huxley and Tyndall. It is also now known that God, for the purpose of misleading the so-called men of science, had hairy elephants preserved in ice, made stomachs for them, and allowed twigs of trees to be found in these stomachs, when, as a matter of fact, no such elephants ever lived or ever died. These men who are endeavoring to overturn the Scriptures with the lever of science will find that they have been deceived. Through all eternity they will regret their philosophy. They will wish, in the next world, that they had thrown away geology and physiology and all other "ologies" except theology. The time is coming when Jehovah will "mock at their fears and laugh at their calamity."

Question. If Joseph was not the father of Christ, why was his genealogy given to show that Christ was of the blood of David; why would not the genealogy of any other Jew have done as well?

Answer. That objection was raised and answered hundreds of years ago.

Question. If they wanted to show that Christ was of the blood of David, why did they not give the genealogy of his mother if Joseph was not his father?

Answer. That objection was answered hundreds of years ago.

Question. How was it answered?

Answer. When Voltaire was dying, he sent for a priest.

Question. How does it happen that the two genealogies given do not agree?

Answer. Perhaps they were written by different persons.

Question. Were both these persons inspired by the same God?

Answer. Of course.

Question. Why were the miracles, recorded in the New Testament performed?

Answer. The miracles were the evidence relied on to prove the supernatural origin and the divine mission of Jesus Christ.

Question. Aside from the miracles, is there any evidence to show the supernatural origin or character of Jesus Christ?

Answer. Some have considered that his moral precepts are sufficient, of themselves, to show that he was divine.

Question. Had all of his moral precepts been taught before he lived?

Answer. The same things had been said, but they did not have the same meaning.

Question. Does the fact that Buddha taught the same tend to show that he was of divine origin?

Answer. Certainly not. The rules of evidence applicable to the Bible are not applicable to other books. We examine other books in the light of reason; the Bible is the only exception. So we should not judge of Christ as we do of any other man.

Question. Do you think that Christ wrought many of his miracles because he was good, charitable, and filled with pity?

Answer. Certainly.

Question. Has he as much power now as he had when on earth?

Answer. Most assuredly.

Question. Is he as charitable and pitiful now as he was then?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Why does he not now cure the lame and the halt and the blind?

Answer. It is well known that when Julian the Apostate was dying, catching some of his own blood in his hand, and throwing it into the air, he exclaimed: "Galileean, thou hast conquered!"

Question. Do you consider it our duty to love our neighbor?

Answer. Certainly.

Question. Is virtue the same in all worlds ?

Answer. Most assuredly.

Question. Are we under obligation to render good for evil, and to "pray for those who despitefully use us?"

Answer. Yes.

Question. Will Christians in heaven love their neighbors ?

Answer. Yes ; if their neighbors are not in hell.

Question. Do good Christians pity sinners in this world ?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Why ?

Answer. Because they regard them as being in great danger of the eternal wrath of God.

Question. After these sinners have died, and been sent to hell, will the Christians in heaven then pity them ?

Answer. No. Angels have no pity.

Question. If we are under obligation to love our enemies, is not God under obligation to love his ? If we forgive our enemies, ought not God to forgive his ? If we forgive those who injure us, ought not God to forgive those who have not injured him ?

Answer. God made us, and he has therefore the right to do with us as he pleases. Justice demands that he should damn all of us, and the few that he will save will be saved through mercy and without the slightest respect to anything they may have done themselves. Such is the justice of God, and those in hell will have no right to complain, and those in heaven will have no right to be there. Hell is justice, and salvation is charity.

Question. Do you consider it possible for a law to be justly satisfied by the punishment of an innocent person ?

Answer. Such is the scheme of the atonement. As man is held responsible for the sin of Adam, so he will be credited with the virtues of Christ ; and you can readily see that one is exactly as reasonable as the other.

Question. Suppose a man honestly reads the New Testament, and honestly concludes that it is not an inspired book ; suppose he honestly makes up his mind that the miracles are not true ; that the Devil never really carried

Christ to the pinnacle of the temple ; that devils were really never cast out of a man and allowed to take refuge in swine—I say, suppose that he is honestly convinced that these things are not true, what ought he to say ?

Answer. He ought to say nothing.

Question. Suppose that the same man should read the Koran, and come to the conclusion that it is not an inspired book ; what ought he to say ?

Answer. He ought to say that it is not inspired ; his fellow-men are entitled to his honest opinion, and it is his duty to do what he can do to destroy a pernicious superstition.

Question. Suppose, then, that a reader of the Bible, having become convinced that it is not inspired—honestly convinced—says nothing—keeps his conclusion absolutely to himself, and suppose he dies in that belief, can he be saved ?

Answer. Certainly not.

Question. Has the honesty of his belief anything to do with his future condition ?

Answer. Nothing whatever.

Question. Suppose that he tried to believe, that he hated to disagree with his friends and with his parents, but that in spite of himself he was forced to the conclusion that the Bible is not the inspired word of God, would he then deserve eternal punishment ?

Answer. Certainly he would.

Question. Can a man control his belief ?

Answer. He cannot—except as to the Bible.

Question. Do you consider it just in God to create a man who cannot believe the Bible, and then damn him because he does not ?

Answer. Such is my belief.

Question. Is it your candid opinion that a man who does not believe the Bible should keep his belief a secret from his fellow-men ?

Answer. It is.

Question. How do I know that you believe the Bible ? You have told me that if you did not believe it, you would not tell me ?

Answer. There is no way for you to ascertain, except by taking my word for it.

Question. What will be the fate of a man who does not believe it, and yet pretends to believe it?

Answer. He will be damned.

Question. Then hypocrisy will not save him?

Answer. No.

Question. And if he does not believe it, and admits that he does not believe it, then his honesty will not save him?

Answer. No. Honesty on the wrong side is no better than hypocrisy on the right side.

Question. Do we know who wrote the Gospels?

Answer. Yes, we do.

Question. Are we absolutely sure who wrote them?

Answer. Of course; we have the evidence as it has come to us through the Catholic Church.

Question. Can we rely upon the Catholic Church now?

Answer. No; assuredly no! But we have the testimony of Polycarp and Irenæus and Clement, and others of the early fathers, together with that of the Christian historian, Eusebius.

Question. What do we really know about Polycarp?

Answer. We know that he suffered martyrdom under Marcus Aurelius, and that for quite a time the fire refused to burn his body, the flames arching over him, leaving him in a kind of fiery tent; and we also know that from his body came a fragrance like frankincense, and that the Pagans were so exasperated at seeing the miracle, that one of them thrust a sword through the body of Polycarp; that the blood flowed out and extinguished the flames, and that out of the wound flew the soul of the martyr in the form of a dove.

Question. Is that all we know about Polycarp?

Answer. Yes, with the exception of a few more like incidents.

Question. Do we know that Polycarp ever met St. John?

Answer. Yes; Eusebius says so.

Question. Are we absolutely certain that he ever lived?

Answer. Yes, or Eusebius could not have written about him.

Question. Do we know anything of the character of Eusebius?

Answer. Yes; we know that he was untruthful only

when he wished to do good. But God can use even the dishonest. Other books have to be substantiated by truthful men, but such is the power of God, that he can establish the inspiration of the Bible by the most untruthful witnesses. If God's witnesses were honest, anybody could believe, and what becomes of faith, one of the greatest virtues?

Question. Is the New Testament now the same as it was in the days of the early fathers?

Answer. Certainly not. Many books now thrown out, and not esteemed of Divine origin, were esteemed Divine by Polycarp and Irenæus and Clement and many of the early Churches. These books are now called "apocryphal."

Question. Have you not the same witnesses in favor of their authenticity, that you have in favor of the Gospels?

Answer. Precisely the same. Except that they were thrown out.

Question. Why were they thrown out?

Answer. Because the Catholic Church did not esteem them inspired.

Question. Did the Catholics decide for us which are the true Gospels and which are the true Epistles?

Answer. Yes. The Catholic Church was then the only Church, and consequently must have been the true Church.

Question. How did the Catholic Church select the true books?

Answer. Councils were called, and votes were taken, very much as we now pass resolutions in political meetings.

Question. Was the Catholic Church infallible then?

Answer. It was then, but it is not now.

Question. If the Catholic Church at that time had thrown out the Book of Revelation, would it now be our duty to believe that book to have been inspired?

Answer. No, I suppose not.

Question. Is it not true that some of these books were adopted by exceedingly small majorities?

Answer. It is.

Question. If the Epistle to the Hebrews and to the Romans and the Book of Revelation had been thrown

out, could a man now be saved who honestly believes the rest of the books ?

Answer. This is doubtful.

Question. Were the men who picked out the inspired books inspired ?

Answer. We cannot tell, but the probability is that they were.

Question. Do we know that they picked out the right ones ?

Answer. Well, not exactly, but we believe that they did.

Question. Are we certain that some of the books that were thrown out were not inspired ?

Answer. Well, the only way to tell is to read them carefully.

Question. If upon reading these apocryphal books a man concludes that they are not inspired, will he be damned for that reason ?

Answer. No. Certainly not.

Question. If he concludes that some of them are inspired, and believes them, will he then be damned for that belief ?

Answer. Oh, no ! Nobody is ever damned for believing too much.

Question. Does the fact that the books now comprising the New Testament were picked out by the Catholic Church prevent their being examined now by an honest man, as they were examined at the time they were picked out ?

Answer. No ; not if the man comes to the conclusion that they are inspired ?

Question. Does the fact that the Catholic Church picked them out and declared them to be inspired render it a crime to examine them precisely as you would examine the books that the Catholic Church threw out and declared were not inspired ?

Answer. I think it does.

Question. At the time the Council was held in which it was determined which of the books of the New Testament are inspired, a respectable minority voted against some that were finally decided to be inspired. If they were honest in the vote they gave, and died without changing their opinions, are they now in hell ?

Answer. Well, they ought to be.

Question. If those who voted to leave the book of Revelation out of the canon, and the Gospel of Saint John out of the canon, believed honestly that these were not inspired books, how should they have voted?

Answer. Well, I suppose a man ought to vote as he honestly believes—except in matters of religion.

Question. If the Catholic Church was not infallible, is the question still open as to what books are, and what are not, inspired?

Answer. I suppose the question is still open—but it would be dangerous to decide it.

Question. If, then, I examine all the books again, and come to the conclusion that some that were thrown out were inspired, and some that were accepted were not inspired, ought I to say so?

Answer. Not if it is contrary to the faith of your father, or calculated to interfere with your own political prospects.

Question. Is it as great a sin to admit into the Bible books that are uninspired as to reject those that are inspired?

Answer. Well, it is a crime to reject an inspired book, no matter how unsatisfactory the evidence is for its inspiration, but it is not a crime to receive an uninspired book. God damns nobody for believing too much. An excess of credulity is simply to err in the direction of salvation.

Question. Suppose a man disbelieves in the inspiration of the New Testament—believes it to be entirely the work of uninspired men; and suppose he also believes—but not from any evidence obtained in the New Testament—that Jesus Christ was the son of God, and that he made atonement for his soul, can he then be saved without a belief in the inspiration of the Bible?

Answer. This has not yet been decided by our Church, and I do not wish to venture an opinion.

Question. Suppose a man denies the inspiration of the Scriptures; suppose that he also denies the divinity of Jesus Christ; and suppose, further, that he acts precisely as Christ is said to have acted; suppose he loves his enemies, prays for those who despitefully use him, and does all the good he possibly can, is it your opinion that such a man will be saved?

Answer. No, sir. There is "none other name given under heaven and among men," whereby a sinner can be saved, but the name of Christ.

Question. Then it is your opinion that God would save a murderer who believed in Christ, and would damn another man, exactly like Christ, who failed to believe in him?

Answer. Yes; because we have the blessed promise that, out of Christ, "our God is a consuming fire."

Question. Suppose a man read the Bible carefully and honestly, and was not quite convinced that it was true, and that, while examining the subject, he died; what then?

Answer. I do not believe that God would allow him to examine the matter in another world, or to make up his mind in heaven. Of course, he would eternally perish.

Question. Could Christ now furnish evidence enough to convince every human being of the truth of the Bible?

Answer. Of course he could, because he is infinite.

Question. Are any miracles performed now?

Answer. Oh, no!

Question. Have we any testimony, except human testimony, to substantiate any miracle?

Answer. Only human testimony.

Question. Do all men give the same force to the same evidence?

Answer. By no means.

Question. Have all honest men who have examined the Bible believed it to be inspired?

Answer. Of course they have. Infidels are not honest.

Question. Could any additional evidence have been furnished?

Answer. With perfect ease.

Question. Would God allow a soul to suffer eternal agony rather than furnish evidence of the truth of his Bible?

Answer. God has furnished plenty of evidence, and altogether more than was necessary. We should read the Bible in a believing spirit.

Question. Are all parts of the inspired books equally true?

Answer. Necessarily.

Question. According to Saint Matthew, God promises

to forgive all who will forgive others; not one word is said about believing in Christ, or believing in the miracles, or in any Bible; did Matthew tell the truth?

Answer. The Bible must be taken as a whole; and if other conditions are added somewhere else, then you must comply with those other conditions. Matthew may not have stated all the conditions.

Question. I find in another part of the New Testament that a young man came to Christ and asked him what was necessary for him to do in order that he might inherit eternal life. Christ did not tell him that he must believe the Bible, or that he must believe in him, or that he must keep the Sabbath day; was Christ honest with that young man?

Answer. Well, I suppose he was.

Question. You will also recollect that Zaccheus said to Christ that where he had wronged any man he had made restitution, and further, that half his goods he had given to the poor; and you will remember that Christ said to Zaccheus: "This day hath salvation come to thy house." Why did not Christ tell Zaccheus that he "must be born again"; that he must "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ"?

Answer. Of course there are mysteries in our holy religion that only those who have been "born again" can understand. You must remember that "the carnal mind is at enmity with God."

Question. Is it not strange that Christ, in his Sermon on the Mount, did not speak of "regeneration," or of the "scheme of salvation"?

Answer. Well, it may be.

Question. Can a man be saved now by living exactly in accordance with the Sermon on the Mount?

Answer. He cannot.

Question. Would, then, a man, by following the course of conduct prescribed by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, lose his soul?

Answer. He most certainly would, because there is not one word in the Sermon on the Mount about believing on the Lord Jesus Christ; not one word about believing in the Bible; not one word about the "atonement"; not one word about "regeneration." So that, if the Christian Church is right, it is absolutely certain that a

man might follow the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, and live in accordance with its every word, and yet deserve and receive the eternal condemnation of God. But we must remember that the Sermon on the Mount was preached before Christianity existed. Christ was talking to Jews.

Question. Did Christ write anything himself in the New Testament?

Answer. Not a word.

Question. Did he tell any of his disciples to write any of his words?

Answer. There is no account of it, if he did.

Question. Do we know whether any of the disciples wrote anything?

Answer. Of course they did.

Question. How do you know?

Answer. Because the Gospels bear their names.

Question. Are you satisfied that Christ was absolutely God?

Answer. Of course he was. We believe that Christ and God and the Holy Ghost are all the same, that the three form one, and that each one is three.

Question. Was Christ the God of the universe at the time of his birth?

Answer. He certainly was.

Question. Was he the infinite God, creator, and controller of the entire universe, before he was born?

Answer. Of course he was. This is the mystery of "God manifest in the flesh." The infidels have pretended that he was like any other child, and was, in fact, supported by Nature instead of being the supporter of Nature. They have insisted that, like other children, he had to be cared for by his mother. Of course he *appeared* to be cared for by his mother. It was a part of the plan that in all respects he should *appear* to be like other children.

Question. Did he know just as much before he was born as after?

Answer. If he was God, of course he did.

Question. How do you account for the fact that Saint Luke tells us, in the last verse of the second chapter of his gospel, that "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature"?

Answer. That, I presume, is a figure of speech; because, if he was God, he certainly could not have increased in wisdom. The physical part of him could increase in stature, but the intellectual part must have been infinite all the time.

Question. Do you think that Luke was mistaken?

Answer. No; I believe what Luke said. If it appears untrue, or impossible, then I know that it is figurative or symbolical.

Question. Did I understand you to say that Christ was actually God?

Answer. Of course he was.

Question. Then why did Luke say, in the same verse of the same chapter, that "Jesus increased in favor with God"?

Answer. I dare you to go into a room by yourself and read the fourteenth chapter of Saint John!

Question. Is it necessary to understand the Bible in order to be saved?

Answer. Certainly not; it is only necessary that you believe it.

Question. Is it necessary to believe all the miracles?

Answer. It may not be necessary, but as it is impossible to tell which ones can safely be left out, you had better believe them all.

Question. Then you regard belief as the safe way?

Answer. Of course it is better to be fooled in this world than to be damned in the next.

Question. Do you think there are any cruelties on God's part recorded in the Bible?

Answer. At first flush many things done by God himself, as well as by his prophets, appear to be cruel; but if we examine them closely, we will find them to be exactly the opposite.

Question. How do you explain the story of Elisha and the children—where the two she-bears destroyed forty-two children on account of their impudence?

Answer. This miracle, in my judgment, establishes two things: 1. That children should be polite to ministers; and 2. That God is kind to animals—"giving them their meat in due season." These bears have been great educators—they are the foundation of the respect entertained by the young for theologians.

No child ever sees a minister now without thinking of a bear.

Question. What do you think of the story of Daniel—you no doubt remember it? Some men told the king that Daniel was praying contrary to law, and thereupon Daniel was cast into a den of lions; but the lions could not touch him, their mouths having been shut by angels. The next morning the king, finding that Daniel was intact, had him taken out; and then, for the purpose of gratifying Daniel's God, the king had all the men who had made the complaint against Daniel, and their wives and their little children, brought and cast into the lions' den. According to the account, the lions were so hungry that they caught these wives and children as they dropped, and broke all their bones to pieces before they had even touched the ground. Is it not wonderful that God failed to protect these innocent wives and children?

Answer. These wives and children were heathen; they were totally depraved. And besides, they were used as witnesses. The fact that they were devoured with such quickness shows that the lions were hungry. Had it not been for this, infidels would have accounted for the safety of Daniel by saying that the lions had been fed.

Question. Do you believe that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were cast "into a burning fiery furnace, heated one seven times hotter than it was wont to be heated," and that they had on "their coats, their hosen, and their hats," and that when they came out "not a hair of their heads was singed, nor was the smell of fire upon their garments?"

Answer. The evidence of this miracle is exceedingly satisfactory. It resulted in the conversion of Nebuchadnezzar.

Question. How do you know he was converted?

Answer. Because immediately after the miracle the king issued a decree that "every people, nation, and language that spoke anything amiss against the God of Shadrach and Company should be cut in pieces." This decree shows that he had become a true disciple and worshipper of Jehovah.

Question. If God in those days preserved from the fury of the fire men who were true to him and would not

deny his name, why is it that he has failed to protect thousands of martyrs since that time?

Answer. That is one of the Divine mysteries. God has in many instances allowed his enemies to kill his friends. I suppose this was allowed for the good of his enemies, that the heroism of the martyrs might convert them.

Question. Do you believe all the miracles?

Answer. I believe them all, because I believe the Bible to be inspired.

Question. What makes you think it is inspired?

Answer. I have never seen anybody who knew it was not; besides, my father and mother believed it.

Question. Have you any other reasons for believing it to be inspired?

Answer. Yes; there are more copies of the Bible printed than of any other book; and it is printed in more languages. And besides, it would be impossible to get along without it.

Question. Why could we not get along without it?

Answer. We would have nothing to swear witnesses by; no book in which to keep the family record; nothing for a centre-table, and nothing for a mother to give her son. No nation can be civilised without the Bible.

Question. Did God always know that a Bible was necessary to civilise a country?

Answer. Certainly he did.

Question. Why did he not give a Bible to the Egyptians, the Hindus, the Greeks, and the Romans?

Answer. It is astonishing what perfect fools infidels are.

Question. Why do you call infidels "fools"?

Answer. Because I find in the fifth chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew the following: "Whosoever shall say Thou fool! shall be in danger of hell fire."

Question. Have I the right to read the Bible?

Answer. Yes. You not only have the right, but it is your duty.

Question. In reading the Bible, the words make certain impressions on my mind. These impressions depend upon my brain—upon my intelligence. Is not this true?

Answer. Of course, when you read the Bible, impressions are made upon your mind.

Question. Can I control these impressions?

Answer. I do not think you can, as long as you remain in a sinful state.

Question. How am I to get out of this sinful state?

Answer. You must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you must read the Bible in a prayerful spirit, and with a believing heart.

Question. Suppose that doubts force themselves upon my mind?

Answer. Then you will know that you are a sinner, and that you are depraved.

Question. If I have the right to read the Bible, have I the right to try to understand it?

Answer. Most assuredly.

Question. Do you admit that I have the right to reason about it and to investigate it?

Answer. Yes, I admit that. Of course you cannot help reasoning about what you read.

Question. Does the right to read a book include the right to give your opinion as to the truth of what the book contains?

Answer. Of course—if the book is not inspired. Infidels hate the Bible because it is inspired, and Christians know that it is inspired because infidels say that it is not.

Question. Have I the right to decide for myself whether or not the book is inspired?

Answer. You have no right to deny the truth of God's Holy Word.

Question. Is God the author of all books?

Answer. Certainly not.

Question. Have I the right to say that God did not write the Koran?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Why?

Answer. Because the Koran was written by an impostor.

Question. How do you know?

Answer. My reason tells me so.

Question. Have you the right to be guided by your reason?

Answer. I must be.

Question. Have you the same right to follow your reason after reading the bible?

Answer. No. The Bible is the standard of reason. The Bible is not to be judged or corrected by your reason. Your reason is to be weighed and measured by the Bible. The Bible is different from other books and must not be read in the same critical spirit, nor judged by the same standard.

Question. What did God give us reason for?

Answer. So that we might investigate other religions, and examine other so-called sacred books.

Question. If a man honestly thinks that the Bible is not inspired, what should he say?

Answer. He should admit that he is mistaken.

Question. When he thinks he is right?

Answer. Yes. The Bible is different from other books. It is the master of reason. You read the Bible, not to see if that is wrong, but to see whether your reason is right. It is the only book about which a man has no right to reason. He must believe. The Bible is addressed, not to the reason, but to the ears: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Question. Do you think we have the right to tell what the Bible means—what ideas God intended to convey, or has conveyed to us, through the medium of the Bible?

Answer. Well, I suppose you have that right. Yes, that must be your duty. You certainly ought to tell others what God has said to you.

Question. Do all men get the same ideas from the Bible?

Answer. No.

Question. How do you account for that?

Answer. Because all men are not alike; they differ in intellect, in education, and in experience.

Question. Who has the right to decide as to the real ideas that God intended to convey?

Answer. I am a Protestant, and believe in the right of private judgment. Whoever does not is a Catholic. Each man must be his own judge, but God will hold him responsible.

Question. Does God believe in the right of private judgment?

Answer. Of course he does.

Question. Is he willing that I should exercise my judgment in deciding whether the Bible is inspired or not?

Answer. No. He believes in the exercise of private judgment only in the examination and rejection of other books than the Bible.

Question. Is he a Catholic?

Answer. I cannot answer blasphemy! Let me tell you that God will "laugh at your calamity, and will mock when your fear cometh." You will be accursed.

Question. Why do you curse infidels?

Answer. Because I am a Christian.

Question. Did not Christ say that we ought to "bless those who curse us," and that we should "love our enemies"?

Answer. Yes, but he cursed the Pharisees, and called them "hypocrites" and "vipers."

Question. How do you account for that?

Answer. It simply shows the difference between theory and practice.

Question. What do you consider the best way to answer infidels?

Answer. The old way is the best. You should say that their arguments are ancient, and have been answered over and over again. If this does not satisfy your hearers, then you should attack the character of the infidel—then that of his parents—then that of his children.

Question. Suppose that the infidel is a good man; how will you answer him then?

Answer. But an infidel cannot be a good man. Even if he is, it is better that he should lose his reputation than that thousands should lose their souls. We know that all infidels are vile and infamous. We may not have the evidence, but we know that it exists.

Question. How should infidels be treated? Should Christians try to convert them?

Answer. Christians should have nothing to do with infidels. It is not safe even to converse with them. They are always talking about reason and facts and experience. They are filled with sophistry, and should be avoided.

Question. Should Christians pray for the conversion of infidels?

Answer. Yes; but such prayers should be made in public, and the name of the infidel should be given, and

his vile and hideous heart portrayed, so that the young may be warned.

Question. Whom do you regard as infidels ?

Answer. The scientists—the geologists, the astronomers, the naturalists, the philosophers. No one can overestimate the evil that has been wrought by La Place, Humboldt, Darwin, Huxley, Haeckel, Renan, Emerson, Strauss, Büchner, Tyndall, and their wretched followers. These men pretended to know more than Moses and the prophets. They were “dogs baying at the moon.” They were “wolves” and “fools.” They tried to “assassinate God,” and, worse than all, they actually laughed at the clergy.

Question. Do you think they did, and are doing, great harm ?

Answer. Certainly. Of what use are all the sciences if you lose your own soul ? People in hell will care nothing about education. The rich man said nothing about science, he wanted water. Neither will they care about books and theories in heaven. If a man is perfectly happy, it makes no difference how ignorant he is.

Question. But how can he answer these scientists ?

Answer. Well, my advice is to let their arguments alone. Of course, you will deny all their facts, but the most effective way is to attack their character.

Question. But suppose they are good men—what then ?

Answer. The better they are, the worse they are. We cannot admit that the infidel is really good. He may appear to be good, and it is our duty to strip the mask of appearance from the face of unbelief. If a man is not a Christian, he is totally depraved, and why should we hesitate to make a misstatement about a man whom God is going to make miserable forever ?

Question. Are we not commanded to love our enemies ?

Answer. Yes ; but not the enemies of God.

Question. Do you fear the final triumph of infidelity ?

Answer. No. We have no fear. We believe that the Bible can be revised often enough to agree with anything that may really be necessary to the preservation of the Church. We can always rely upon revision. Let me tell you that the Bible is the most peculiar of books. At the time God inspired his holy prophets to write it, he

knew exactly what the discoveries and demonstrations of the future would be, and he wrote his Bible in such a way that the words could always be interpreted in accordance with the intelligence of each age, and so that the words used are capable of several meanings, so that, no matter what may hereafter be discovered, the Bible will be found to agree with it—for the reason that the knowledge of Hebrew will grow in the exact proportion that discoveries are made in other departments of knowledge. You will therefore see, that all efforts of infidelity to destroy the Bible will simply result in giving a better translation.

Question. What do you consider is the strongest argument in favor of the inspiration of the Scriptures?

Answer. The dying words of Christians.

Question. What do you consider the strongest argument against the truth of infidelity?

Answer. The dying words of infidels. You know how terrible were the death-bed scenes of Hume, Voltaire, Paine, and Hobbes, as described by hundreds of persons who were not present; while all Christians have died with the utmost serenity, and with their last words have testified to the sustaining power of faith in the goodness of God.

Question. What were the last words of Jesus Christ?

Answer. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

THE END.

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