



PRICE ONE SHILLING

THE

REAL PLACE IN HISTORY

OF

JESUS AND PAUL

BOOK I. - MIRACULOUS HISTORY OF JESUS.  
BOOK II. - JESUS AND PAUL BOTH HONEST VISIONARIES.

BY

EDWIC \* \* \*, C.W., M.L.D.A., &c.

*To be completed in Four One Shilling Parts*

PART I. - BOOK I.

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“TRUTH IS IMMORTAL AND SHALL LIVE, ERROR IS MORTAL AND SHALL DIE.”  
ANDREW JACKSON DAVIS

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MELBOURNE:

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR AND PRINTED BY ROBERT BELL, 97B LITTLE  
COLLINS STREET EAST.

1867

TO BE HAD OF ALL BOOKSELLERS

TO THE RATIONAL CHRISTIAN

OF ALL DENOMINATIONS,

THIS HUMBLE ATTEMPT TO DELINEATE THE REAL  
CHARACTER

OF

JESUS AND PAUL,

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

# PREFACE.

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Some affirm that the New Testament is plenarily inspired -- that the history of Jesus as given in it is, word for word, absolutely true; while others assert that he was an impostor; others again that he was a myth, and that the whole story, pure and simple, is a “cunningly devised fable” - “a scheme,” concocted by a number of designing men to basely impose for their own gain upon the credulity of mankind. We have thought long and earnestly upon the subject, feel firmly convinced that each of these views are wrong, and that *the real place in history of the Jesus and Paul is to be demonstrated for the New Testament read by the light of universal history*. That this view is the right one we shall attempt to show in the following pages.

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# THE REAL PLACE IN HISTORY

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### CHAPTER I.

Difficulty (through the scarcity and unreliability of materials) of correctly estimating the character of Jesus -- Miracles of Jesus improbable -- Unlikely that so many great miracles would have had so little influence upon the Jewish and Roman mind -- Miracles of Jesus, and total darkness at his death, not mentioned by any contemporary writer, Jewish or Gentile -- famous passage in Josephus respecting Jesus undoubtedly spurious -- Religious founders generally asked by unbelievers to work miracles; but either answer evasively, or deny that they possess the power -- Multitudes of miracles ascribed to all religious founders after their death, by their respective followers -- Instances adduced -- Nanak -- Mahomet -- Jesus -- Zoroaster -- Moses -- Buddha.

It is extremely difficult, with the scanty materials existing, to give with certainty a true history of Jesus. The only accounts which we have of his acts, preaching, and general character, are those written by his followers, and contained in the New Testament; for the non-Christian writers of his day do not mention him -- they appear to have entirely ignored or not to have heard of him. The four sketches of his life which we have are contained in the Gospels respectively bearing the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and although they agree in many of the leading particulars of his life, such as coming from Nazareth, teaching through the country, being persecuted, and finally, put to death at Jerusalem, by the order of Pilate, at the instance of the Jews; yet, in many circumstances and minor details, they contradict each other to a very great extent; and he who would attempt to gather from them a probable history of Jesus, must do so with great caution and discrimination. Again, there are a great number of miracles ascribed to Jesus, which we think no reasonable man who has read and thought with any attention, can at all accept as true. It is the dicta of Christian teachers that we should believe these miracles; but to say nothing of the unlikelihood of the miracles in themselves, we hold that it is altogether improbable that these miracles should have been wrought, and not had the slightest influence upon the people amongst whom they were wrought, namely, the Jews and Romans Judea. As represented to us in the Gospel narratives, the miracles of Jesus, wrought in the course of a few months, and more in number than are ascribed in the Old Testament to all the Jewish prophets put together. We repeat, it is altogether improbable, nay more, we can view it as little less than an insult to our reason, to tell us, and demand out unqualified and implicit faith to the statement, that after Jesus had gone throughout the length and breadth of the land, in the presence of great multitudes -- healing all manner of inveterate diseases, making the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, the lame to walk, and even raising the dead to life -- that the Jews should pay not the least attention to these extra ordinary manifestations, but put him to death, as a common impostor. That when at the moment of his death, there was darkness at mid-day over the whole earth for the space of three hours, a thing unknown before in the annals of the world, beside the earth quaking, the rocks rending, and the dead rising to life, and appearing to many in Jerusalem; that still not the least notice is taken, and things go on in Jerusalem and with the Jews, as if nothing had happened. It is said they go to Pilate, and say to him, the disciples of this impostor may steal his body -- give us a guard. That two mornings after his death there was the great earthquake, and an angel came down from heaven, rolled away the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre, and sat upon it --

that his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow, and that for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men, and that Jesus came to life again, and left the sepulchre. That the Roman soldiers who have been specially appointed to guard the body, came and testified to the Jewish priests and council, that an angel had appeared and rolled away the stone, and that Jesus was come to life again: still it surprised them not, nor had the least effect upon them; and they gave them money to say that his disciples came and stole him away, while they slept on their duty; and we are told that these men took the money and told this lie to the people (Matthew 27 – 28.) We say, and saved it advisedly, that neither in the case of the Jews nor the guards, could they dare to have acted in that manner – it is not in the nature of mortal man so to act, for upon the occurrence of such strikingly supernatural manifestations, both Jews and Gentiles would have been so astonished and panic-stricken, as to be rendered incapable of such action. That although these stupendous and multifarious miracles of Jesus were wrought in a Roman province, occupied by thousands of Roman officials and soldiers, yet that not the least notice is taken of them by one of the Roman historians. That this mid-day darkness over the whole earth, which certainly would have been one of the most wonderful phenomena in the world's history, and a kind of phenomena that would have put the then superstitious nations of the earth in a deadly fright, and certainly would not have been omitted in any history of the time: yet, it is not even mentioned in the history of any nation whatever, although men in different parts of the earth – in India, China, and especially Italy, Greece, and Egypt – were living in that day, who were recording the various unusual phenomena of nature, such as comets, eclipses, etc., that happened in their own and before their own time. That Josephus, the greatest historian that the Jewish nation ever produced, who wrote about fifty years after the death of Jesus, and writes of the various occurrences of his nation, before the time, at the time, and after the time of Jesus, does not even once elude either to the miracles of Jesus or the total darkness.\*

[Footnote added:

\*There are two passages respecting Jesus in our present copies of Josephus, but they are undoubtedly spurious, and, although they were long tenaciously held as external evidences of Christianity, are now rejected by many of the most learned Christian commentators. In one passage the name of Jesus is, as it were, incidentally mentioned. The writer relates that Ananus the high-priest “assembled the Sanhedrin of the Judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James.” – *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 20, Chap. 9, Sec. 1.

Respecting this passage, Dr. Lardner in his *Credibility of the Gospel History*, vol 7, p.130, says – “There are many learned men of good judgment who think that the words which we now have in Josephus concerning James are an interpolation ... There is a good deal of reason to believe that they were not originally in Josephus.”

The other is that famous passage which has been repeatedly quoted by writers as an indubitable and triumphant testimony to the historic truth of Christianity, and runs as follows: “Now, there were about this time, Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works – a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was (the) Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these, and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.” Josephus’ *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 18, Chap. 9, Sec. 3.

Our first objection to the genuineness of this passage is, that by its extravagance it bears the impress of falsehood upon its face. Had Josephus spoken in these positive and eulogistic terms of Jesus he would have spoken more of him; in fact, he would have been a Christian; but he himself informs us in his auto-biography prefixed to his works, that he was a Pharisee, and he nowhere in all his writings again refers to the Christians. Again, the passage directly contradicts what Josephus says in another place respecting the Messiah. It has been obscurely predicted by the Jewish prophets that about this time there should rise in Judea, a mighty king, a deliverer, a Messiah, who should obtain the dominion of the whole world. Through the ambiguity of these prophecies, the different sects of Jews variously interpreted them; but Josephus in his account of the Jewish war, Book 6, Chap. 6, Sec. 4, gives it as his own opinion that the prophecy was fulfilled in the person of Vespasian, the Roman emperor, who was first proclaimed as emperor by the legions which he was commanding at the siege of Jerusalem. The words of Josephus are – “But now what did now most elevate them (the Jews) in undertaking this war was an ambiguous oracle that was also found in their sacred writings, how ‘about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth.’ The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular, and



many of the wise men were thereby deceived in their determination. Now, this oracle certainly denoted the government of Vespasian, who was appointed emperor in Judea. ... But these men interpreted some of these signals according to their own pleasure; and some of them they utterly despised, until their madness was demonstrated, both by the taking of their city and their own destruction.” – *Wars of the Jews*, Book 6, Chap. 5, Sec. 4.

Another unanswerable objection against the genuineness of the passage is, that in all the writings of the early Christian fathers and the apologists and defenders of the faith, in which they have laboured to prove the truth of the miraculous history of Jesus, and for that purpose have collected together every evidence they could find in the writings of the non-Christians, yet this most important passage was never adduced or referred to, until the fourth century, when it was first quoted by using Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, the ecclesiastical historian; and further than this, we have direct statements of Christian writers of the first centuries affirming that Josephus did not acknowledge Jesus. But no sooner did use Eusebius once find this passage, than it was quoted by a writer after writer on the external evidences of Christianity. Whiston, in arguing for the genuineness of the passage, gives the name of seventeen ecclesiastical writers who mentioned or quoted it, but every one of them wrote after the time of Eusebius, and, of course, cannot prove its antiquity or authenticity. – See Dissertation 1, appended to Whiston’s *Josephus*.

We can see clearly how the passage originated. It was a standing objection of the non-Christians of the first centuries of Christianity, as now, that none of the Greek, Roman, or Jewish writers who were contemporary with Jesus, or lived in the first century of the Christian era, ever mentioned him or any of the miracles he is said to have wrought; and this objection was more particularly forcible, with respect to Josephus, the great Jewish historian, who had lived in the country and wrote of the time of Jesus – who had enumerated and discoursed on the various Jewish sects, and yet never mentioned the Christians, Jesus, or his miracles. The sceptic argued: – It is evident that what you say of the universal renown acquired and the great miracles wrought by Jesus are not facts, or certainly Josephus would have referred to them. The Christian disputants saw that here was a tangible stumbling block to the reasoner, and some unprincipled person or persons, or some who believed in the principle of expediency – that it was a justifiable and even meritorious act to gain proselytes to Christianity even by guile – that the end justified the means, supplied the omission by an interpolation (and an interpolation so strongly worded that the most fastidious objector could not mistake its meaning); that such impositions or pious frauds were employed to a large extent in the manufacture of “Christian Evidences” in the early ages of Christianity, we shall presently demonstrate by testimony of the most convincing kind.

Among others are the following eminent men who have rejected this passage as spurious: Dr. Lardner, Ittigius, Blondell, Le Clerc, Vandale, Bishop Warburton, and Tanaquil Faber. Dr Lardner’s arguments against the passage in his own words are these:

1. “I do not perceive that we at all want of the suspected testimony to Jesus, which was never quoted by any of our Christian ancestors before Eusebius.
2. “Nor do I recollect that Josephus has anywhere mentioned the name or word of Christ in any of his works, except the testimony above mentioned and the passage concerning James, a Lord’s brother.
3. “It interrupts the narrative.
4. “The language is quite Christian.
5. “It was not quoted Chrysostom, though he often refers to Josephus, and could not have omitted quoting it, had it been in the text.
6. “It is not quoted by Photius, though he has three articles concerning Josephus.
7. “Under the article ‘Justus of Tiberius,’ this author (Photius) expressly states that this historian (Josephus) being a Jew, has not taken the least notice of Christ.
8. “Neither Justin in his Dialogue with Typho the Jew, nor Clemens Alexandrinus, who made so many extracts from ancient authors, nor Origen against Celsus, have ever mentioned this testimony.
9. “But, on the contrary, in chapter 35 of the first book of that work, Origen openly affirms that Josephus, who had mentioned John the Baptist, did not acknowledge Christ.”

In consideration of these and other reasons against the genuineness of the passage, the Doctor says, “It ought therefore to be forever discarded from any place among the evidences of Christianity.”

(See *Taylor’s Diegesis*, p. 387 - 389.)

Taylor, in discoursing on the subject, after speaking of the number and respectability of those who totally reject the passage in question, refers in the following rather homely but strictly pertinent terms, to those who, in spite of opposing testimony, are determined to hang to it to the very last as one of the legitimate Christian evidences: "It is curious to see how, even after the definitive judgment of such high and confessedly orthodox authorities, we are still occasionally pestered with puerile or petulant last-dying struggles, to rescue this holy cheat from the sentence passed upon it,

'For faith, fanatic fate, once weeded fast  
To some dear falsehood, hugs it to the last.'

"We are required to give a wholly different reading to the passage; to introduce imaginary parentheses; to make arbitrary omissions, or egregiously to mistranslate it; and thus, forsooth, to chisel it into a supposable possibility that Josephus might have written it."

The whole evidence seems to us to point to the following conclusions:

That the Christian sect in the time of Josephus was too obscure to attract his notice.

That the famous passage affirming the extraordinary miracles and resurrection of Jesus was either interpolated about the time of Eusebius, or, as has been frequently suggested, by Eusebius himself, who first quotes it.

And that in the other passage, the words "brother of Jesus who was call Christ," were put into the text of Josephus by a Christian hand at probably a somewhat earlier period.]

That Justus of Tiberius, another Jewish historian, who lived at, and wrote of the times of Jesus, neither alludes to the miracles or the total darkness. And that the Apostle Paul, the natural head of the Christian Church (2 Cor. xi, 28), who had lived and conversed with the immediate disciples of Jesus, never in all his writings, in all his reasonings for the divinity of Jesus, refers to one of his miracles or the total darkness. Nor is there a reference made to them in the epistlers of James, or Peter, or John, the personal disciples of Jesus. We repeat that we cannot possibly believe these things, simply because they are written in one book, and that of unknown authorship, in the face of such negative evidence as this; but, at the same time, that it is exceedingly difficult for us to believe in the truth of that miracles ascribed to Jesus, it is less difficult to believe the way in which the accounts of them have originated. A study of history shews us that religious founders do not themselves generally profess to work miracles. In the nature of things, these founders are generally placed in a position which compels them to make a distinct declaration that they do not work miracles. They firmly believe that their mission is from heaven, and they teach the same: the believing and reflecting world seeing one of themselves put forward such pretentions, very naturally say, you profess to be divinely commissioned to teach us: work some miracle, or give us some sign, as an evidence of the validity of your pretensions. This immediately brings them to the point -- whether they can work at miracle or no. The great man generally indignantly remonstrates, makes some explanations, refers to the purity of his doctrine, as an evidence of his divine appointment, and affirms that he cannot work a miracle; and yet, in spite of these statements, after the death of these founders, numbers of stupendous miracles are ascribed to them by their respective followers. Take, as an instance, Nanak the founder of the Sikh faith. He is required by some unbelievers to work a miracle: the answers, "I have nothing to exhibit worthy of your regard. A holy teacher has no defence but the purity of his doctrine. The world may change, but the Creator is unchangeable;" -- quoted in MacGregor's *History of the Sikhs*, vol. 1, p. 42. At another time, when challenged to work at miracle, he says: --

"Dwell thou in flames uninjured,  
Remain unharmed amid ice eternal,  
Make blocks of stone thy daily food,  
Spurn the earth before thee with thy foot,  
Weigh the heavens in a balance,  
And then ask of me to perform miracles."

Quoted in Cunningham's *History of Sikhs*, p. 380. Such are the words of Nanak respecting miracles, and yet his followers of the present day ascribe a vast number of miracles to him. A writer in the *Calcutta Review* referring to this feature in the Sikh faith says, "a lying spirit has beguiled men, otherwise sensible and shrewd, to believe that Nanak raised the dead to life, healed the sick, flew through the air, walked

the sea, blessed and cursed, and had power over the elements; not that they saw it themselves, but they had tradition handed down orally and in Scripture, collected by his immediate followers from those who accompanied him in his travels – men poor and illiterate, with no object to lie, and no claim to power. We turn away with a sickening feeling, for these things are believed of millions; they were not done in a corner. This is a portion of that divine gift of faith, which forms the basis of all religions: these fables, though of modern date, have unhappily gained such credence, that the Sikhs believe them dogmatically and will die for their truth.” – *Calcutta Review*, vol. 33, page 87.

As another instance, take Mahomet. We learn by the Koran that Mahomet was again and again requested by the unbelieving to work miracles, as an evidence of his divine appointment. The request is evidently unwelcome; he charges them with stubborn infidelity; points to the Koran as a miracle in itself; threatens the unbelievers with eternal punishment, etc.; but admits that he is only a teacher, and not a miracle worker. He says in one place, “Say, verily, if men and genii were purposely assembled, that they might produce a book like this Koran, they could not produce one like unto it, though the one of them assisted the other. And we have variously propounded unto men in this Koran every kind of figurative argument; but the greater part of men refuse to receive it, merely out of infidelity. And they say, We will by no means believe on thee, until thou cause a spring of water to gush forth to us out of the earth; or thou have a garden of palm-trees and vines, and thou cause rivers to spring forth from the midst thereof in abundance; or thou cause the heaven to fall down upon us, as thou hast given out, in pieces; or thou bring down God and the Angels to vouch for thee; or thou have a house of gold; or thou ascend by a ladder to heaven... Answer: my Lord be praised! Am I other than a man, sent as an apostle? And nothing hindereth men from believing, when a direction is come unto them, except that they say, Hath God sent a man for this Apostle? Answer: If the angels had walked on the earth as familiar inhabitants thereof, we had surely sent down unto them from heaven an angel for our apostle. Say, God is a sufficient witness between me and you: for he knoweth and regardeth his servants; and whom he shall cause to err, thou shalt find none to assist, besides him. And he will gather them together on the day, of resurrection, creeping on their faces, blind, and dumb, and deaf; and their abode shall be hell; so often as the fire thereof shall be extinguished, we will rekindle a burning flame to torment them.” – Koran, Chap. 17.

Gibbon, speaking on this demand on Mahomet for miracles, says: “As soon as he is pressed by the demands of the Korish, he involves himself in the obscure boast of vision and prophecy, appeals to the internal proofs of his doctrine, and shields himself behind the providence of God, who refuses those signs and wonders that would depreciate the merit of faith, and aggravate the guilt of infidelity. But the modest or angry tone of his apologies betray his weakness and vexation; the votaries of Mahomet are more assured than himself of his miraculous gifts, and their confidence and credulity increase as they farther removed from the time and place of his spiritual exploits. They believe, or affirm, that trees went forth to meet him; that he was saluted by stones; that water gushed from his fingers; that he fed the hungry, cured the sick, and raised the dead; that a beam groaned to him; that a camel complained to him; that a shoulder of mutton informed him of its being poisoned; and that both animate and inanimate nature were equally subject to the Apostle of God.” – *Gibbon’s Fall and Decline*. vol. 6, p. 314.

The Koran, written by Mahomet himself, if we except his journey to heaven, which probably was merely a vision, contains no miracles. This book, contrary to the general rule, has not even been interpolated with them, and we have seen that Mahomet professed to work none; yet, shortly after his death, great numbers of miracles were ascribed to him by his followers, and at the end of two hundred years, the sum total of these miracles contained in traditional tales, was something enormous. To quote one authority, Taylor, in his *History of Mahometism*, p. 140, says: “The traditions ascribe to him an infinite number of miracles.” Another quotation will give the reader some idea of the extent of these traditions, and he can suppose to himself the amount of miracles that would naturally be in them, originating as they did amongst a simple and a half-civilised population. Dr. Weil says – “The nature of these so-called traditions, and the manner in which the name of Mahomet was abused to support all possible lies and absurdities, may be gathered and most clearly from the following fact: that Bokhari, who travelled from land to land, to gather from the learned the traditions they had received, found after many years sifting, that out of 600,000 traditions at that time current (about 230 or 240 years after

Mahomet's death), only 4000 were authentic! and of this selected number, the European critic is compelled without hesitation to reject at least one-half! – *Calcutta Review*, vol .19, p. 33.

We now come to Christianity; and we find exactly the same law ruling here. The Jews demand of Jesus a sign as an evidence of his divine appointment; and according to Matthew xvi, 2, he answers them as follows: "When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed." Luke xi. 16, 29, 30, 32, says – "And others tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven ...And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of the Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the son of man be to this generation ... The men of Ninevah shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here." Jesus said distinctly that no sign that should be given unto that generation but the wonder or sign of himself as a great preacher who came to warn them, as Jonas went to warn the Ninevites. We should have expected that, under the circumstances in which Jesus was placed with respect to the Jews, that a demand would be made for a sign or miracle, and that an answer something like the above would be given by him; but in the account, which is probably one of the most authentic passages in the Gospels, he denies the working of miracles.

Yet we see that after the death of Jesus, an enormous number of miracles were ascribed to him. The four Canonical Gospels contain but a very small portion of them. The books which we have were selected from a great number of other writings: Jerome says that there were upwards of one hundred Gospels. The following Gospels, besides Acts, Epistles, Books, Revelations, Visions, etc., were mentioned by name by writers in the first four centuries of the Christian era, but are now not extant – The

Gospel of Andrew  
Gospel of Appellas  
Gospel of the Twelve Apostles  
Gospel of Barnabas  
Gospel of Bartholomew  
Gospel of Basilides  
Gospel of Cerinthus  
Gospel of the Egyptians  
Gospel of the Ebonites  
Gospel of Encratites  
Gospel of Eve  
Gospel of the Hebrews  
The False Gospels of Hesychius  
Gospel of Truth  
Gospel of Jude  
Gospel of Judas Iscariot  
The False Gospels of Lucianus  
Gospel of Marcion  
Gospel of Mathias  
Gospel of the Nazarenes  
Gospel of Perfection  
Gospel of Peter  
Gospel of Phillip  
Gospel of Scythianthus  
Gospel of Titan  
Gospel of Thaddeus

See Appendix to *Hone's Apocryphal New Testament*.

And we still have also four or five still extant, namely, the

Gospel of May [*Errata at the end of book amends this to "Mary."*]

Gospel of the Infancy

Gospel of Protovangelion

Gospel of Nicodemus, etc.

Now, we may reasonably conclude, that the miracles ascribed to Jesus in these and other early Christian writings, were something enormous in number, and that probably our canonical Gospels are some of the soberest. And it is not only in Sikhism, Mahometanism, and Christianity, in which miracles are to be found; multitudes of them are ascribed without exception to the founders of all religious systems. We are informed by the Parsees, that Zoroaster, their great legislator and founder, among other astonishing miracles, walked for a month on the sea, passed through a mountain of flaming fire unhurt, had vast quantities of melted brass poured on his breast, and yet "not a hair on his body was lost, nor his delicate body injured." Accompanied an angel to Heaven, and conversed face to face with the deity. Fought with a host of devils and magicians, discomfited them, and killed some, simply by the sound of his voice. From the *Zartusht Nanah; or Parsee Life of Zoroaster*. Translated by Lieut. Eastwick.

For a further enumeration of the miracles of Zoroaster, see Introduction to *Duperon's Translation of the Zend-Avesta*.

We are informed by the Jews that Moses, their great legislator and founder, wrought the most astonishing miracles; that he turned the whole of the water throughout the land of Egypt into blood – Exodus vii. 20, 21. Brought up such an abundance of frogs upon the land of Egypt that the ground could nowhere be seen – Exodus vii. 6. Turned the whole of the dust throughout the land of Egypt into lice – Exodus viii. 17. Sprinkled ashes in the air, and brought boils breaking forth upon man and beast throughout the land of Egypt – Exodus ix. 10. Brought immense swarms of locusts, which darkened the air, covered the land, and ate up every green thing throughout the land of Egypt – Exodus x. 13, 18. Caused a total darkness to overspread the land of Egypt for three days; a darkness so thick that it could be felt – Exodus x. 21, 22. Brought water out of a rock in a waterless desert in sufficient quantities to supply the wants of two million people, their flocks and herds – Exodus xvii. 6. Divided the Red Sea by stretching out his rod or walking-stick over it, etc., etc. The account says that Aaron, the brother of Moses, was appointed by God to act as the spokesman of Moses; and also that under the instruction of Moses he assisted with his magic rod to work the miracles. That at one time threw down his rod before the king of Egypt and it became a serpent; that the magicians of Egypt threw down their rods and they also became serpents; but Aaron's serpent swallowed up all the rest – Exodus vii. 10, 12. That at another time, as a sign, Aaron's rod in the course of one night, budded, blossomed, and bore almonds – Numbers xvii. 18. The miracles of Moses above enumerated are enlarged upon, and many others related, in the Talamudical and Rabbinical writings of the Jews.

We are informed by the Buddhists, that Buddha, their founder, leaped his horse over the river Ganges, in a place where it was a quarter of a mile wide; walked 360 miles in one day; in a moment of time crossed the river Ganges with all his disciples; flew through the air; caused a golden cup to float against the stream with the velocity of a swift horse; split a tough stick into 500 pieces with one stroke of an axe; instantly turned muddy water as clear as crystal; commanded a date stone to be planted, which immediately, through his miraculous power, sprung into a tree fifty cubits high, blossomed and bore fruit, so that his disciples at once were enabled to satisfy their hunger; made the lame to walk, and the blind to see: "At one time restored sight to 500 blind men, whose eyes had been torn out;" banished a pestilence and famine; when his righteousness was called into question by some evil-disposed persons, struck the ground with his hand, and brought up a being who proclaimed aloud his pre-eminent virtue; fought with the Prince of Devils and an immense army of satellites, and conquered them; conversed with multitudes of angels; fasted forty-nine days at another time; preached for three months without cessation and without food; at one time converted 110,000 persons, and caused it to rain on the others who stood around unconverted, while the converted ones remained dry; at another time converted 12,000 snakes to the true faith; at a time of flood, drove the water back, and walked on the dusty ground; at another time caused it to rain dust; at another time caused fire to issue out of the earth; at another time, as a sign,

caused a great fire to ascend from his head, and a stream of water from his feet; at another time he produced a thick darkness throughout the earth, etc., etc., – *Asiatic Journal*, vol. 22, p. 642.

*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, art. Gotama Buddha.

*Westminster Review*, Jan. 1830, art. Hist. and Doc. Of Buddhism.

*Journal of Oriental Soc.*, vol. 3 art. 1.

*British Quarterly Review*, July-Oct. 1859, p. 417.

*Upham's Sacred and Historical Books of Ceylon*, vols. 2-3.

The miracles we have noticed are but a very small portion of those ascribed to him by his followers. One authority informs us that “The history of Gotama Buddha is most voluminous; the Cingalese asserting that ten hundred thick books have been written, and they do not contain the whole history of his life.” (*Sirr's Ceylon and the Cingalese*, vol. ii, p. 62.) And we have it from general authority, that these books contain relations of an immense number of miracles, said to have been wrought by Buddha. Another writer referring to the miraculous character ascribed to Buddha by his followers, says – “His miracles were on a vast scale: lest, however, the record of their character and number should to heavily tax the confidence even of the faithful, we are told, that in his time, the possession of miraculous powers was common to his disciples; thousands of whom could with the greatest ease, overturn the earth, or stop the course of the sun!” – *London Quarterly Review*, vol. 10, p. 516.

We need not further particularize, but read the lives of the founders of all the great religious systems of the world extant, and you will find in each life numbers of astonishing miracles ascribed, and the books in which these miracles are related are held most sacred, generally written in a dead language, and the miracles themselves believed with undoubting faith by the respective votaries of each religious system.

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## CHAPTER II.

### Catholic Miracles.

And it is not only the founders of the various systems and their immediate disciples that have wrought miracles, but from the time that they lived down to the present, according to the respective authorities, numbers of Buddhist, Christian, Mahometan, and other saints, have wrought miracles also; in fact, so numerous are the miracles ascribed to the saints of the various religious creeds throughout the world, that were they collected together into one work, it would certainly extend to many hundred volumes. For instance, to speak of the Catholic section of the Christian Church alone, it is calculated that the authorised lives of the Catholic saints, now in a forward state of compilation, when completed will contain the lives of 30,000 saints, who have already lived and died; and the greater portion of these saints, it is asserted and believed by a great part of Christendom, wrought many miracles; and if we reckon only four miracles to each saint, the miracles of the Catholic Church alone would amount to 120,000. For the further illustration of our subject, and for the edification of those who are unread in this direction, we shall enumerate a few of these miracles as given in *Butler's Lives of the principal Catholic Saints*, a work re-published in 1836, by the authority of the Catholic Church, as *An Historical Supplement to the Old and New Testament*. – *North British Review*, vol. iv. p. 460.

In his introductory chapter, Butler informs us that it not being his design to enumerate all the miracles of the saints, though ever so authentically attested, he shall give only a few in detail, and refer the reader to the original records for the rest. Consequently, instead of giving in detail many thousands, he only gives a few hundreds and a number of general summaries, of which the following are a portion.

It may not be improper in this place to warn the reader that the remainder of this chapter being simply a collection of a number of similar evidences respecting miracles, reads somewhat monotonously; therefore, he can just glance over it, or plod through it as best suits his humor.

Vol. i p. 95 – St. Melanius raised one that was dead to life, and performed many other miracles.

P. 113 – St. Severinus wrought many miracles. At one time in Germany, “by his prayers he chased away the locusts, which by their swarms, had threatened with devastation the whole produce of the year.”

P. 137 – St. Theodorus wrought many miracles. “He erected also several buildings for the reception of strangers, in which he exercised an unbounded hospitality, entertaining all that came, for those use there was one day above one hundred tables served with provisions; these when insufficient for the number of guests, were more than once miraculously multiplied by his prayers.”

P. 184 – St. Paul, the hermit, lived for 21 years on the fruit of the tree, which grew at the mouth of his cave; after which, for 69 years he was fed by a raven, who brought him half a loaf of bread each day; on one occasion a friend came to see him, and on that day the raven brought a whole loaf to suffice for both. Upon the death of the saint, a couple of lions dug a grave for him.

P. 188 – St. Maurus was favored with the power to work miracles, and at one time walked upon the water.

P. 215 – St. Antony wrought many miracles, and cast out many devils, and at one time an Egyptian general miserably perished, struck by God, because he contemptuously tore a letter which the saint had sent to him.

P. 244 – St. Euthymius wrought many miracles. Once in a time of great drought, he went into the chapel and prayed for rain, “the sky grew dark on a sudden, rain fell in abundance, and the year proved remarkably fruitful.”

P. 350 – St. Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, was banished by the emperor from his see, and “the next night the city was shook by an earthquake;” he was re-called, and upon being banished again, a fire broke out and destroy the principal buildings of the city.

Vol ii p. 17 – St. Bridget; “her five modern lives mention little else but wonderful miracles.”

P. 58 - "The torrent of burning sulphur and stones which issue from Mount Etna, in great eruptions, was several times averted from the walls of Catana by the veil of St. Agatha, which was carried in procession."

P. 73 - St. Vedast wrought many miracles. At one time, by prayer and the sign of the cross, he restored a blind man to sight, at another time he "restored sight to a blind man, and cured one that was lame."

P. 75 - St. Amandus raised a dead man to life.

P. 112 - St. Scholastica. In answer to her prayer, there came a great storm of rain, thunder, and lightning.

P. 123 - St. Severinus wrought many miracles. Just before his death, "Clovis, the first Christian king of France, lying ill of a fever, which his physicians had for two years ineffectually endeavoured to remove, sent his chamberlain to conduct him to court, for he heard how the sick from all parts recovered their health by his prayers. St. Severinus took leave of his monks, telling them that he should never see them more in this world. On his journey, he healed Eulalius, bishop of Nevers, who had been for some time deaf and dumb; also a leper at the gates of Paris; and coming to the palace, he immediately restored the king to perfect health, by putting on him his own cloak."

Vol. iii p. 152 - St. Euphrasia. "She was favored with miracles both before and after her death."

P. 181 - St. Patrick restored "sight to many blind, help to the sick, and raised nine dead persons to life."

P. 235 - St. Benedict was "endued by God with an extraordinary power, commanding all nature; and, like the ancient prophets, foreseeing future events, you often raised the sinking courage of his monks, and baffled the various artifices of the devil with the sign of the cross, rendered the heaviest stone light in building his monastery, by a short prayer, and in presence of a multitude of people, raised to life a novice who had been crushed by the fall of a wall, etc., etc."

P. 260 - St. Turibius. "His historian and the acts of the canonization mention many sick restored to their health, and a girl raised to life by him while he was living; also many miracles wrought through his intercession after his death."

St. Gontran, the king of Orleans and Burgundy, was endowed with the gift of miracles; "St. Gregory of Tours relates many miracles performed by him, both before and after his death, to some of which he was an eye-witness."

Vol. iv p. 14 - 19 - St. Francis of Paula wrought miracles. At one time he held burning coals in his hand; at another time he raised a man to life, and after death his body remained uncorrupted for 55 years.

P. 51 - St. Vincent Ferrer at one time multiplied loaves; "he cured innumerable sick everywhere, and at Valentia made a dumb woman speak;" at another time he raised a murdered man to life also; "he restored to health on the spot one that had been bed-ridden eighteen years, in the presence of a great multitude, and wrought innumerable other miracles, amongst which we may reckon as the greatest, the conversion of an incredible number of souls: Joan of France, daughter of King Charles VI, Duchess of Brittany, washed his corpse with her own hand. God shewed innumerable miracles by that water and by the saint's habit, girdle, instruments of penance, and other relics, of which the details may be read in the Bollandists."

P. 93 - St. Mary of Egypt walked on the water in the river Jordan; and a lion assisted a certain saint to dig her grave.

P. 151 - St. Peter Gonzales wrought miracles. At one time, as a sign, he threw himself on a fire of burning coal, and miraculously remained unhurt.

P. 260 - St. James of Slavonia wrought many miracles; and his flesh remained incorrupt 300 years after death.



P. 234 - St. Epipodus and St. Alexander suffered martyrdom, and were buried at Lyons. Great miracles were wrought by their relics. The author who compiled their acts "attests several of these miracles as an eye-witness. He relates that the city of Lyons being visited by a pestilence, a young man of quality, who was seized with it, recovered his health by a draught, to which a devout poor widow had given a benediction, with the martyr's shoe; upon the report of which miracle, innumerable other persons were cured by the like means, and many brought to the light of faith. At their tomb the devils were cast out, and the sick restored to their health, in so evident and miraculous a manner, that incredulity itself could not refuse its assent, as the author of these acts moreover testifies."

P. 235 - St. Siceon, "by his prayers, obtained rain from heaven in a great drought in Palestine."

P. 305 - St. Patricius was, by the command of the Proconsul of Bithynia, thrown into scalding water, but it did him no harm.

Vol. v. p. 99 - St. Eadbert "wrought many illustrious miracles;" and eleven years after his death, when some persons went to exhume his relics, "to their great surprise they found the body as entire, and the joints all as pliable as if it had been living; all the vestments and cloths in which it was laid were also sound, and wonderfully fresh and bright."

P. 103 - 104 - St. Stanislas being at one time accused of not having paid a sum of money which he really had paid; by three days fasting and prayer, brought a dead man out of his grave into court, to give the necessary evidence. The relics of the same wrought "innumerable miracles."

P. 109 - The relics of St. John of Beverly, which were discovered by their sweet smell, wrought many miracles. One authority says, "Henschenius, the Bollandist, in the second tome of May, has published four books of the miracles wrought at the relics of St. John of Beverly, written by eye-witnesses."

P. 121 - 123 - St. Peter, Archbishop of Tarentaise, "wrought many miracles in several places; chiefly in curing the sick, and multiplying provisions for the poor in times of great distress. ...The man of God restored the use of sight to one blind, in the presence of the Count of Flanders and many other noblemen, who were at that time with the King of France, who being also himself an eye-witness, examined carefully all the circumstances, and declared the miracle to be evident and incontestable."

Page 158 - St. Antonius. "His hair-shirt and other relics were the instruments of many miracles." His body when exhumed was "perfectly free from corruption 130 years after it had been buried."

P. 163 - St. Isidore. "His death was glorified by miracles;" and his body "during these 500 years remains entire and fresh, being honored by a succession of frequent miracles down to this time."

P. 174 - St. Pancras. In speaking of this saint, "St. Gregory of Tours calls him the 'Avenger of Perjuries,' and says that God, by a perpetual miracle, visibly punished false oaths made before his relics."

P. 192 - St. Boniface the martyr. "The judge commanded him to be cast into a cauldron of boiling pitch, and he came out without receiving any hurt."

P. 199 - St. Pachomius. "Among many miracles wrought by him, the author of his life assures us, that though he had never learned the Greek or Latin tongues, he sometimes miraculously spoke them: he cured the sick, and persons possessed by devils, with blest oil."

P. 217 - St. John Nepomucen. "The tomb of the saint continued illustrious for frequent miracles;" at one time a number of men were struck dead who attempted to demolish it; and "in 1719, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April, the saint's tomb was opened, where the body had lain 330 years. ... His tongue alone was found fresh and free from corruption, as if the saint had just expired."

P. 276 - St. Bernardin. "Besides several predictions and miraculous cures of many lepers and other sick persons, the saint is recorded to have raised four dead to life. ... His tomb was rendered illustrious by many miracles."

P. 299 - St. Germanus wrought many miracles; and at his tomb the dumb spoke, the blind received their sight, etc.

Vol. iv. p. 157 – St. Henry of Treviso. “He died on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June, 1315. An incredible concourse of people resorted to the little chamber in which his body lay exposed, and three votaries, appointed by the magistrates to take in writing an account of the miracles wrought by God at his relics, compiled in a few days before his burial a relation of 276.”

P. 182 – St. Antony of Padua. “Innumerable miracles testified his sanctity;” and 32 years after his death, his tongue was found as fresh as when living.

P. 218 – St. Gregory. “A sudden and entire cure of a formed gangrene and other distempers, which the symptoms had declared mortal, and other miracles performed through his intercession, were duly proved.”

P. 230 - 242 – St. John Francis Regis wrought many miracles. “A woman who would take his tattered cloak to mend, keeping two rags as relics, by applying them to two of her children, cured one of a fever, the other of a dropsy. ... In times of need, God miraculously multiplied the corn he had stored up, three several times; of which verbal processes were drawn up, and judicial informations taken before ecclesiastical and secular judges; and these miracles were confirmed before fourteen credible witnesses in the acts of his canonization.” His relics also wrought a great number of miracles. Our authority continues – “Twenty-two archbishops and bishops of Languedoc, wrote to Pope Clement II in these words: ‘We are witnesses that before the tomb of St. John Francis Regis, the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the dumb speak. ... Fourteen eye-witnesses attested upon oath the miraculous and sudden recovery of Magdalen Arnould, a nun of Puy, sick of a dropsy and palsy, and in her agony, the physicians declaring that she could not live half an hour. ... A burgher of Puy was healed of a great rupture formed in three places; his cure was sudden and entire, as physicians, surgeons, and many other witnesses attest: no less sudden were the cures of two blind women, of a young man of the king’s evil, of many paralytic and crooked children, and others under all sorts of distempers, ... the facts being all attested by many witnesses, and by the persons themselves. The holy see requires incontestable proofs of miracles to which it gives a sanction, and so strict is this enquiry, that F. Daubenton informs us that an English Protestant gentleman being at Rome, and seeing the process of several miracles, said they were incontestable, if the Church of Rome approved of none but such; but was much surprised at the scrupulosity of this scrutiny when told that not one of those had been allowed by the congregation of Rites to have been sufficiently proved.’”

P. 343 – St. Maxentius wrought many miracles. “A barbarous army was stopped by the saint’s presence from plundering the monastery; and a soldier, who attempted to strike him, was seized with a numbness, which continued till he was cured by the saint. Nature on many occasions obeyed his voice, as St. Gregory of Tours relates.”

Vol. vii. p. 51 – St. Peter, bishop of Luxemburg, wrought many miracles. Also, the history of the miracles which have been wrought at his tomb fills whole volumes. A famous one in 1432 moved the city of Avignon to choose him for its patron. It is related as follows: “A child, about twelve years old, fell from a high tower in the palace of Avignon upon a sharp rock, by which fall his skull was split, his brains dashed out, and his body terribly bruised. The father of the child, almost distracted at this accident, ran to the place, and falling on his knees, with many tears, implored the intercession of St. Peter. Then gathering up the scattered bloody pieces of the child’s skull, he carried them with the body in a sack, and laid them on the saint’s tomb. The people and the Celestine monks joined their earnest prayers, and after some time the child returned to life.”

P. 142 – St. Eugenius, the bishop of Carthage, wrought miracles. At one time a blind man begged for his intercession, accordingly the saint “made the sign of the cross on his eyes, and the blind man saw. The whole city was witness to the triumph of the faith.”

P. 256 – St. Vincent, founder of the order of Lazarites. “An account of several predictions of this servant of God, and some miraculous cures performed by him whilst alive, may be read in his life, written by Collet, with a great number of miracles wrought through his intercession after his death at Paris, Angiers, Sens, in Italy, etc. Several cures of fevers, hemorrhages, palsies, dysenteries, and other distempers, were juridically proved,” etc., etc.

P. 346 - St. Anna, mother of the blessed Virgin Mary. "F. Kuper, the Bolandist, has collected a great number of miracles wrought through her intercession."

P. 351 - 355 - St. Germanus, bishop of Auxerre, wrought many miracles; amongst those detailed, the stilling of a furious tempest at sea with some drops of oil; giving sight to one blind; frightening an army by shouting hallelujah; restoring a withered leg, and raising one from the dead, are mentioned.

P. 370 - St. Samson "raised a dead man to life, and wrought many other miracles."

Vol. viii. p. 56 - St. Walthen "twice multiplied bread miraculously," and "cured many sick by his prayers, but studied always to disguise whatever appeared miraculous. ... His body was found incorrupt thirteen, and again forty-eight, years after his death. Several miracles wrought by his relics and intercession are recorded by the authors of his life."

P. 80 - 91 - St. Dominic, founder of the "Friar Preachers," at one time raised a child to life through prayer; he "likewise raised, whole and sound, a mason who had been crushed to death by the fall of a vault." He also, "besides many other miracles, raised a third man to life in this monastery of St. Sixtus (at Rome), in the presence of a great multitude of honorable persons. ... An history of a great number of miracles performed by means of this saint, and attested by eye-witnesses, may be read in the Ballandists."

P. 95 - 98 - St. Hyacinth, at one time when the river Vistula was so rough that it could not be crossed with a boat, walked across it "as if it had been upon firm land, in the sight of a great multitude of people waiting for him on the opposite bank;" at two other times he walked across the river Nieper; at another time he raised a dead man to life, etc., etc.; in fact, our author informs us that "his glory was manifested by a revelation to Pandrotta, the Bishop of Crakow, and attested by innumerable miracles, with the history of which the Bollandists have filled thirty-five pages in folio."

P. 135 - 169 - St. Bernard wrought many miracles. At one time a certain church "was exceedingly haunted by flies, till by the saint's saying he excommunicated them, they all died. ... The first occasion which called for his zeal abroad was a dissension between the Archbishop and citizens of Rheims, whom the saint reconciled, confirming his words by the miraculous cure of a boy that was deaf, blind, and dumb; also, the Pope sent him to Milan to reconcile that city to the holy see. He wrought there many miracles, and wherever he came was received as a man sent from heaven. ... Fleury has inserted in his history a journal of this saint's miracles, attested by ten venerable and faithful vouchers, and Mabillon has proved their incontestable authenticity."

P. 398 - St. Caesarius. "His relics healed a great number of sick people, and he wrought several like miracles while he was living, as the authors of his life testify."

Vol. ix. p. 239 - St. Thomas, archbishop of Valentia. "The relation of many miracles wrought through his intercession, and by his relics, with most authentic attestations, may be seen in the process of his canonization affixed to his works."

P. 250 - The relics of St. Januarius have for many centuries performed a standing miracle by preventing the eruptions of Mount Vesuvius from overwhelming the city of Naples, where they are preserved. Another standing miracle is liquefying and boiling up of two vials of the martyr's blood whenever it is brought near or within sight of his head, which fact is attested by innumerable eye-witnesses of all nations, and religions, many of whom most attentively examined all the circumstances."

Vol. x. p. 282 - 284 - St. Edward the Confessor, king of England, "Cured an Irishman named to Gillemichael, who was entirely a cripple, and was covered with running sores. The King carried him on his back, and set him down sound." Thirty-four years after death, "the body of St. Edward was found entire, the limbs flexible, and cloths fresh. Soon after, a certain Norman, whose name was Ralph, and who was an entire cripple, recovered the use of his limbs by praying at his tomb, and six blind men were restored in like manner to their sight; which miracles, with some others, being duly proved, the saint was canonized by Alexander III.

P. 377 - 378 - St. Theresa, foundress of the Barefooted Carmelites, died in the year 1582. Her body "remains incorrupt to this day. The history of many miracles wrought by her relics and intercession may be seen in Yepez, and in the acts of her canonisation.

P. 446 - 454 - St. Hilary wrought many miracles. "Among other miraculous cures, several persons possessed by devils were delivered by our saint. You also restored sight to a woman who have been blind ten years." At another time he came to a place where there had been no rain for three years, in consequence of which the people were in great misery. "The saint, sensibly affected with their distress, lifted up his hands and eyes to heaven, and immediately obtained a plentiful rain; also, many labourers and herdsmen, who were stung by serpents and venomous beasts, were perfectly cured by anointing their wounds with oil which he had blessed and given them." He also wrought many miracles on the coast of Dalmatia, among which "St. Jerome relates that a serpent of an enormous size devoured both cattle and men, and that the saint, having prayed, commanded this monster to come into the midst of a pile of wood prepared on purpose: then set fire to it, so that this pernicious creature was burnt to ashes. He also tells us that when the most dreadful earthquake mentioned by historians, both ecclesiastical and profane, happened in the year 365, ... the sea of the coast of Dalmatia swelled so high as to overflow the land, and threatened to overwhelm the whole city of Epidaurus. The affrighted inhabitants in a crowd brought Hilarion to the shore, to oppose him as a strong wall against the furious waves. The saint made three crosses in the sand, then stretched forth his arms towards the sea; and to the astonishment of all, its billows stopped, and rising up like a high mountain, returned back," etc., etc.

Vol. xi. p. 273 - 280 - St. Edmund, archbishop of Canterbury, wrought many miracles, amongst which, at one time, "as he was preaching in the open air near the church of Worcester (England), a heavy shower fell all around the place; but the saint having given his blessing, and bade the people not to disperse, not a single drop touched any of them, or fell upon the spot where they stood. Six hundred years after death his body still remained perfect, without the least sign of corruption, and the flesh everywhere white." ... Several miracles wrought through this saint's intercession were authentically approved and attested by many English bishops, as Stephen, a sub-deacon, who had been six years his secretary, assures us; who adds: "Numberless miracles have been performed by his invocation since his deposition, of the truth whereof I am no less certain than if I had seen them with my own eyes."

P. 340 - 342 - St. Elizabeth of Hungary. "Many sick persons were restored to health at her tomb." One instance is given "of a boy blind from his birth, by the mother's invocation of St. Elizabeth at her sepulchre, applying some of the dust to his eyes, upon which, a skin which covered each eye, burst, and he saw, as several witnesses declared upon oath;" another, "of a boy three years old, dead, cold, and stiff, a whole night, raised to life the next morning by a pious grandmother praying to God through the intercession of St. Elizabeth;" another, "of a boy dead and stiff for many hours, just going to be carried to burial raised by the invocation of St. Elizabeth;" another, "of a youth drowned, restored to life by the like prayer;" another, "of a boy drawn out of a well, dead, black, etc., and a child still-born brought to life; others cured of palsies, falling-sickness, fevers, madness, lameness, blindness, the bloody-flux, etc., in the authentic relation."

P. 367 - St. Columban wrought miracles. At one time he took up his residence at a place called Zug, near the lake of Zurich. "The inhabitants were cruel and impious worshippers of idols. St. Columban having begun to preach the true God to them, found them one day ready to make a sacrifice, and a large tub filled with beer being placed in the midst of the people, he asked them what they intended to do with it. they answered it was to offer to their god Wodan: St. Columban blowed upon it, and immediately the vessel burst into splinters, with a great noise, and all the beer was spilt; the barbarians were surprised, and said he had a strong breath."

Vol. xii. p. 32 - 54 - St. Francis Xavier wrought many miracles in the East Indies. When commencing his missionary labors on the Coast of Malabar, he raised four dead persons to life. "The first was a catechist, who had been stung by a serpent, of that kind whose stings are always mortal; the second was a child who was drowned in a pit; the third and fourth, a young man and maid, whom a pestilential fever had carried off. ... Whilst he exercised his zeal in Tavancor, God first communicated to him the gift of tongues. ... He spoke very well the language of those barbarians without having learnt it." At one time, with a crucifix in his hand, he vanquished a band of robbers, who had spread terror through the country;

at another time, in order to prevail on the people of Tavancor to receive the Gospel, he bade some of them “open the grave of a man who was buried the day before; ... the body was beginning to putrify with a noisome scent, which he desired of the by-standers to observe; then falling on his knees, after a short prayer, he commanded the dead man in the name of the living God to arise: at these words the dead man arose and appeared, not only living, but vigorous and in perfect health. All those who were present were so struck with this evidence, that throwing themselves at the saint's feet, they demanded baptism. The holy man also raised to life, on the same coast, a young man, who was a Christian, whose corpse he met as it was carried to the grave. ... These miracles made so great impressions on the people, that the whole kingdom of Tavancor were subjected to Christ in a few months, except the king and some of his courtiers;” at another time, when the saint was on board ship, a most dreadful tempest arose; “the ship at last struck against the sands of Ceylon, and the mariners gave themselves up for lost; when Xavier, coming out of his cabin, took the line and plummet, as if it had been to fathom the sea, and letting them down to the bottom of the water, pronounced these words: ‘Great God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, have mercy on us.’ At the same moment the vessel stopped and the winds ceased.” In Japan, “new miracles confirmed his doctrine. By his blessing, a child's body, which was swelled and deformed, was made straight and beautiful; and, by his prayers, a leper was healed, and a Pagan young maid of quality, that had been dead a whole day, was raised to life.” The saint had died in the year 1552, and, to hasten decomposition, was buried in lime. “In 1553 the grave was opened to see if the flesh was consumed, but the lime being taken off the face, it was found ruddy and flesh colored, like that of a man who is in a sweet repose; the body was in like manner whole, and the natural moisture uncorrupted; and the flesh being a little cut in the thigh near the knee, the blood was seen to run from the wound. The sacerdotal habits in which the saint was buried were no way endamaged by the lime, and the holy corpse exhaled an odour so fragrant and delightful, that the most exquisite perfumes came nothing to it. ... By order of King John III a verbal process of the life and miracles of the man of God was made with the utmost accuracy at Goa, and in other parts of the Indies. ... By an order of John V, king of Portugal, the archbishop of Goa, attended by the viceroy, the marquis of Castle Nuovo, in 1744 (192 years after death), performed a visitation of the relics of St. Francis Xavier; at which time the body was found without the least bad smell, and seemed environed with a kind of shining brightness; and the face, hands, breast and feet, had not suffered the least alteration or symptom of corruption,” etc., etc.

P. 91 - 94 - St. Nicholas. “We are told that in his infancy he observed the fasts of Wednesdays and Fridays, refusing to suck the breasts on those days, which were consecrated to fasting by the laws of the church.” After he was chosen archbishop of Myra, he, “in that exalted position, became famous by his extraordinary piety and zeal, *and an incredible number of stupendous miracles.*”

We could go on enumerating miracles in great numbers of the various histories of the saints -- English, Welsh, Abyssinian, Greek, Mahometan, Hindoo, Buddhist, etc., etc.; but probably the reader may be tired of them and we think we have already quoted enough to demonstrate the fact of the universal ascription of miraculous powers to those men who have been looked upon by the masses as holy in the different countries of the world.

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## CHAPTER III.

Common objection and that miracles of Mahometans, Buddhists, Parsees, etc., are more absurd than Christian ones, a fallacy -- Men almost invariably adopt the faith of the country in which they happen to be born -- Miracles of Zoroaster, Buddha, etc., contrasted with the Bible miracles -- Miracles of Catholic and Greek saints not more absurd than the Bible miracles -- Miracles of Bible not less absurd because termed canonical -- Remarks on nature of the early Christian ecclesiastical councils and their mode of fixing the canon of scripture -- People of all religions, Buddhists, Hindoos, Parses, etc., etc., have each had their ecclesiastical councils to fix, and each possess their canonical scriptures -- Canonical scriptures of any creed on the whole preferable to the non-canonical -- Belief in miracles not necessary to man's happiness -- Miracles cannot prove any doctrine true -- Man not required to believe stories which do violence to his reason -- All faith should be the product of human reason alone.

It is a common objection that at the miracles of the Buddhists, Mahometans, Parsees, etc., are monstrously absurd; that in point of probability they will not stand a moment's comparison with those recorded in the Old and New Testament. But we think that this is an error -- that it is the dictum of an unconscious prejudice rather than a clear and sober judgment. The Christian believer is born and brought up in a Christian country; he used to taught to believe these things in his childhood; he sees all, or nearly all around, believe them; ostensibly or really, most of the greatest, and highest, and noblest, and most learned of his country accepts them as truths; he has become familiarized with them, and, probably, has never reflected much on their nature; but when he hears the relations of other miracles, not more extravagant in themselves, but belonging to other religions, his natural untutored and unprejudiced sense prevails, and he sees their absurdity at a glance. But, it is a remarkable and suggestive fact, that the votaries of each religion, with some slight exceptions, look upon the miracles of all other religions but their own as absurd. And there is another fact more emphatically significant still, it is this -- that **a man almost invariably believes according to the belief of the country in which he happens to be born**; he accepts his mother's faith, as he accepts his mother's language; and the greatest, and highest, and noblest, of every country on earth, having been once children are no exception to this rule, they al alike in the inexperience of childhood have accepted their mother's faith, and in matters of faith, the old adage -

"Just as the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined,"

is particularly applicable. Yes, about 18,000,000 are born every year to a belief in the miracles of Buddha; about 15,000,000 to a belief in the miracles of Christ; about 6,000,000 to a belief in the miracles of Mahomet, and the same may be said with respect to all religions without exception. Nineteen-twentieths of the population of the world are born to the belief of one set of miracles or another, and so the matter stands. To us who do not believe in the existence of miracles at all, and we speak without the slightest mental reservation, the miracles of Christianity and Judaism appear as improbable and absurd as those of Buddhism, Mahometanism, Parseism, and the other religions of the world.

We shall attempt to demonstrate the correctness of our opinion by contrasting in parallel columns about a dozen of the most extraordinary miracles taken from the writings of the Buddhists, Mahometans and Parsees, with the same number taken from the Christian and Jewish writings.

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Zoroaster walked for a month on the sea.

Jesus walked three or four miles on the sea. -  
John vi. 19.

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The Zoroaster walked through a mountain of  
flame unhurt

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, remained  
unhurt in a fiery furnace, which was heated so hot  
that its slew the men that put them in. -- Daniel iii.  
21 to 27.

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Buddha at one time fasted 49 days, and at  
another time three months.

Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, each fasted forty days.  
-- Exodus xxiv. 28; I Kings xix. 8; Matt. iv. 2.

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Buddha, when a hermit in the jungle, was fed

Elijah, when in the wilderness, was fed by

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with figs and honey by an ape, for 6 years.	ravens for a considerable time. – I Kings xvii. 6.
Buddha made fire come out of the earth.	Elijah made fire come down from heaven and consume a hundred men. – 2 Kings i. 10 - 12.
Buddha produced a thick darkness throughout the earth.	Moses produced a thick darkness throughout the land of Egypt, a darkness so thick that it could be felt. – Exodus x. 21 - 23.
Buddha at one time caused it to rain water, at another time dust.	Elijah at the one time prevented it from raining upon the earth for three years and six months. – James v. 18.  Jesus, at one time in a storm at sea, commanded the wind and waves to be still, they obeyed him, and immediately became calm. – Matth. viii. 24 - 26.
Buddha converted 12,000 snakes to his religion.	A serpent persuaded our first parent to commit sin, by eating of the forbidden fruit. – Gen. iii. 1 - 6.
Buddha instantly turned muddy water sweet.	Elisha instantly and permanently turned a spring of bad water good – 2 Kings ii. 19 - 22. Moses instantly turned a vast quantity of bitter water sweet. – Exodus xv. 23 - 25. Jesus instantly turned a quantity of water into wine. – John ii. 1 - 11.
A camel, as he went along the road with the child Mahomet on his back, proclaimed aloud, with an articulate voice, that he carried the prophet of God. – <i>Irving's Life of Mahomet</i> .  A leg of mutton informed Mahomet of its being poisoned.	Balaam's ass spoke and reasoned with him. – Num. xvii. 28 - 30.  The serpent spoke and reasoned with Eve.
Border commanded a date stone to be planted, which immediately sprung up into a tree fifty cubits high, blossomed and bore fruit, so that his disciples at once satisfied their hunger.	Aaron's rod, or walking-stick, being put into a place over-night, by the next morning had budded, blossomed, and borne almonds. Num. xvii. 8.  Jesus miraculously multiplied food, and fed at one time 4,000, at another time 5,000 people, and there was more remaining after they had eaten than there was as their commencing to eat. – Matt. xv. 34 - 38. – Matt. xiv. 17 - 21.
At the command of Mahomet, the moon left its place in the heavens, came down and did obescience to him.*  Many of the disciples of Buddha could with the greatest of ease overturn the earth or stop the sun in its course.	At the command of Joshua, the sun and moon stood still for a space of a whole day. – Joshua x. 12 - 13.
A Mahometan biographer thus refers to the miracles of Mahomet – “To give one hundredth, or even a thousandth part of the notorious miracles performed by the holy prophet: even if	A Christian biographer after giving some of the miracles and events in the life of Jesus, thus speaks of him – “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be

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the waves of the ocean were turned into pens, and the expanse of heaven into one vast scroll, would be utterly impossible.” – <i>Calcutta Review</i> , vol. 17. art. Biographies of Mahomet for India.	written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.” – Last verse of the Gospel of John.
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*[Footnote added:*

\*This, one of Mahomet’s greatest miracles, and is related by Irving in his life of Mahomet, as follows: One Habib, a wise and powerful prince of Arabia, came with a host of twenty thousand men to worship at the temple of Mecca, and also brought with him, with the intention of praying for her at the sacred place, a young daughter, who had been struck dumb, deaf, and blind, and deprived of the use of her limbs. It being represented to this prince by the enemies of Mahomet, that he pretended to be a prophet sent by God, he summoned Mahomet to appear before him, and then demanded that he should work some miracle, as an evidence of his assumed divine mission. The account continues – “The first miracle demanded of Mahomet, was to reveal what Habib had within his tent, and why he had brought it to Mecca?” Mahomet answered – “Oh, Habib! thou hast brought hither thy daughter, Satiha, deaf and dumb, and lame and blind, in the hope of obtaining relief of heaven. Go to thy tent; speak to her and hear her reply, and know that God is all powerful.” The aged prince hastened to his tent, his daughter met him with light step and extended arms, perfect in all her faculties, her eyes beaming with joy, her face clothed with smiles, and were beauteous than the moon in an unclouded night.

The second miracle demanded by Habib was still more difficult: it was, that Mahomet should cover noontide heaven with supernatural darkness, and cause the moon to descend and rest on the top of the Caaba. The prophet performed this miracle as easily as the first. At his summons, a darkness blotted out the whole light of day. The moon was seen straying from her course and wandering about the firmament. By the irresistible force of the prophet, she was drawn from the heavens, and rested on top of the Caaba. She then performed seven circuits about it, after the manner of the pilgrims, and having a profound reverence to Mahomet, stood before him with lambent wavering motion, like a flaming sword, giving him the salutation of peace, and hailing him at a prophet. Not content with this miracle, pursues the legend, Mahomet compelled the obedient luminary to enter via the right sleeve of his mantle, and go out by the left; and then to divide into two parts, one of which went towards the east, and the other towards the west, and meeting in the centre of the firmament, reunited themselves into a round and glorious orb.

It is needless to say, that Habib the Wise was convinced and converted by these miracles, as were also four hundred and seventy of the inhabitants of Mecca.” – Irving’s Life of Mahomet, Chap. 10.]

Now, whatever the reader’s opinion may be, we must submit it as ours, that, as far as a natural or rational probability goes, there is very little difference in the absurdity of the relations contained in these two columns, nor can we think that a person possessed of ordinary intelligence and information could believe either, unless he was born and brought up to such belief.

Again, it is almost universally asserted by Protestant writers and divines, that the accounts of miracles contained in the lives of the Catholic and Greek saints are very absurd and contemptible, and will not for a moment compare with those of the Old and New Testaments. And here again we hold that it is prejudice and not the unbiased judgment that speaks, for we venture to affirm that there is scarcely a miraculous story ascribed to any among the thousands of the Greek and Catholic saints, but a parallel one of equal absurdity can be found in the Bible. Do the saints make the blind to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, cure all manner of inveterate diseases, and even raise the dead to life – Jesus did all this. Do the bones, the garments, and other relics of the saints work astonishing miracles – the bones of Elisha raised a dead man to life – 2 Kings xix. 19 - 21. The garments of Paul wrought many great miracles. Ware told that “From his body were bought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them” – Acts xix. 12. Does a saint walk across a river dry-shod – Joshua, Elijah, and Elisha each divide the river Jordan and walk across dry-shod – Mark vi. 41; Exodus xiv. 21 - 22; Joshua iii. 16; 2 Kings ii. 8 - 14. Does a saint by his prayers banish the flies from a church – Moses not only brings but banishes millions of tons of flies, locusts, lice, frogs, etc., – Exodus viii. 8 - 10. Do two lions dig a grave for the remains of St. Antony – too she bears come out of a wood and kill forty-two little children, consequent upon the prophet Elisha cursing them, because they called him nicknames as he went along the road – 2 Kings ii. 23 - 24.



The Bible relates other stories, which, at least, appear to us to be equally absurd. It informs us that five thousand years ago men lived to be eight or nine hundred years old – Genesis v. That at one time it rained in sufficient quantities to deluge the earth with water fifteen cubits above the tops of the highest mountains; (the quantity of water required would be about eight times the estimated quantity at present contained in all the rivers, lakes, seas, and oceans of the earth). That eight human beings, and two of every species of animal existing upon the earth, came together into a vessel, were hermetically sealed for a year, and then came out again all alive and well, and from them have sprung all that now breathe on earth – Genesis vii - viii. That, some time after, the descendants of the human beings so saved commenced to build a tower that should reach unto heaven; that God came down to see the tower, and discovered that men were all of one language, and then, considering that if they were allowed to remain so that they would become altogether unmanageable, he confounded their language, so that they could not understand one another's speech, and that was the origin of the diverse languages on earth – Genesis xi. 1 - 9. That at one time there fell from heaven every six days out of seven during the space of forty years, a species of food called manna, in sufficient quantities to satisfy the hunger of six hundred thousand men, their wives and families – Exodus xvi. 14 - 35; and that during these forty years their clothes did not become old – Nehemiah ix. 21. That upon an army of men, accompanied by a number of priests carrying a wooden box or chest, marching around a city thirteen times, and then setting up a simultaneous shout, and each of the priests were blowing a ram's horn, that the entire walls of the city fell down flat, and enabled every man round its circuit to walk straight before him into the city – Joshua vi. 1 - 20. That at another time fifty thousand and seventy people were struck dead for looking into the aforesaid box – 1 Samuel vi. 19. That a woman, by the power of witchcraft, brought up a dead man from the grave, who held a conversation with another man that – 1 Samuel xxvii. 7 - 19. That a man that slew a thousand men with the jawbone of an ass; and then, feeling thirsty, got a drink of water out of it – Judges xv. 15 - 19. That at another time, when in a certain city, his enemies attempting to take him by watching through the night at the gate, he arose at midnight, took the gates of the city – posts, bars, and all – and carried them upon his shoulder to the top of a high hill forty miles off – Judges xvi. 2 - 3. That at another time, by one exertion of sheer physical strength, he pulled down a building with three thousand people upon its roof – Judges xvi. 29 - 30. And, lastly, that the whole of this enormous strength lay in his hair, he being no stronger than any ordinary man when his head was shaved – Judges xvi. That a woman for looking behind her was turned into a pillar of salt – Genesis xix. 26. That a man went up by a whirlwind into heaven – 2 Kings ii. 11. That a whale swallowed a man, carried him in his belly for three days, and then vomited him up on dry land – Jonah i. 2.; Matthew xii. 40. That the devil took a man on to the top of an exceeding high mountain, and shewed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time – Matthew iv. 8; Luke iv. 5.; etc., etc., etc.

Now, we hold that these stories are quite as absurd as any that can be found in the lives of the saints; and we cannot refrain from again respectfully, but emphatically, reiterating our strong conviction of the fact – a fact which we think cannot be too much impressed upon the mind – that no rational person possibly could believe them, unless he became unconsciously prejudiced in their favor by being born and brought up to such belief.

But, urges the Protestant, further – the legends of the saints are uncanonical, whilst our Scriptures are canonical. But let us not too hastily be led away by a high sounding term. What is a canonical scripture? Generally one that has received the dictum in its favor of a council of clergy assembled to authoritatively decide, or, as Walker expresses it, “a writing fixed by ecclesiastical law.” But before we can accept the dictum of any council as infallible, we must inquire into the composition of that council and its capability of rightly deciding. Now, ecclesiastical history demonstrates to us that councils in solemn conclave assembled have declared to be true the most erroneous and extravagant things, and that it is an exceedingly common thing for the decrees of one council to contradict and disannul the decrees of another council. To take one instance from memory: The Council of Laodicea, assembled in the year 364, rejected the book of Revelations, while several councils since, amongst which we may mention that of Trent, have accepted it. We could give scores of others, but this one instance shews that councils are not infallible. And we must not take the men forming these councils out of the pale of common humanity, and ascribe to them a penetration and a learning they did not possess. For, according to the tenor of all history bearing on the subject, a council of the Christian Church assembled in the first,

second, third, or fourth century, was certainly more superstitious and much inferior in general intelligence and education to our modern ecclesiastical councils – to a Conclave of Cardinals, an Assembly of the Church of England, a Synod of the Church of Scotland, or a Conference of the Wesleyan Methodists; and we may remark, in passing, that few out of their immediate pale would accept the dictum of either of these bodies on any point as an infallible rule.

The councils which formed what is now the Protestant canon of Scripture were assembled before the age of printing; and the evidence supplied by history is conclusive, that very few of the clergy or so-called bishops forming them could read or write – bishops in those days being generally chosen for their sanctity, and not for their learning, as in our times. History informs us that at the council of Nice, the first great general council of the church, and held in the year 325, there were assembled 318 bishops, the greater part of whom could not read; that they violently disputed together for some weeks, and then, as far as the scriptures were concerned, put it to a simple vote whether such and such books were to form the word of God or no, and to their decision we are asked to bow as to infallible standard. But universal experience of the possible fallibility of human decisions forbids us to do so, or to blindly receive as absolute truth the decisions of any council that was ever held on earth.\*

*[Footnote added:*

\*Lecount, discoursing on Apocryphal writings, after enumerating a considerable number of them, says, “Now if this list has reached us, how many have, doubtless, missed our times; in fact, there was a complete host of gospels, epistles, revelations, and acts. Above are twenty-nine lost gospels, we have five now besides four in the New Testament; that makes thirty-eight. Is it too much to say there were fifty gospels for the council of Nice to decide on? ... The council have given us four. ... Did each of the 318 bishops have a copy of each of the fifty gospels, and all the epistles, acts, and revelations, to enable him to form his judgment on their pretensions to validity? Or had they to wait for each other, and read by turns? And how long would this have taken? These questions are best solved by Salinus, one of their number, who says, excepting two, they were ‘illiterate, simple creatures.’ ... If they decided as assemblies usually do, it was done by vote; if, as Pappus says, the whole of the books were put under the table, and the right ones jumped on the table, it was a piece of roguery. At any rate, they ought to have transmitted all the books down to posterity, that each man might judge for himself. Paul, who preached a religion of his own, has sent down many writings; Peter, his antagonist, few, yet there were several of his works, namely his Doctrine, Acts, Gospel, Judgment, Preaching, and Revelations. Here are six tolerably essential ones, beside others mentioned generally. Now, if the 316 illiterate, simple bishops had voted these in the room of Paul’s works, whereabouts might we not have been now instead of where we are? – *Lecount*, p. 93 - 94.

We are aware that he it is held by many, especially of the Protestants, that the council of Nice did not first definitely fix the canon of the New Testament, but that the usage of the church in general had previously settled the point. Now, it is most probable that at the time of that council the church had already given a general preference to most of the books forming the present canon; yet there is much evidence to shew that many of the Christians attached an equal value to a number of other books which were omitted from the canon by the authority of that council. – See *Middleton's Enquiry into the Miraculous Powers*. Introduction, pages 87 - 92.]

As well as the Christians, all the other religionists of the world have their canonical Scriptures. The Buddhists have their Tripithaka; the Hindoos their Vedas; Upavedas, Vedangas, and Upangas; the Mahometans their Koran and Sonna; the Taouists their Touth-king; the Confusians their Woo-king and Sze-shoo; the Jews their Bible, Talmud, and Targums, the Shintoos their Nippon, Odaika, and Sin-dia-ki; the Sikhs their Grunths; the Parsees their Zen-Davesta, Bundeshne, and Saddar; the Druses their book of the Testimonies; and so on with the rest. – see Appendix No. 2. *[No appendixes at all appear in the actual publication.]*

Among all the religions of the world, at some time in their history a similar contingency has arisen, which has caused certain writings to be pronounced and received as canonical to the exclusion of others; and this has generally been done by the heads of the faith meeting together in council, or by some holy man of overwhelming influence in the church authoritatively and arbitrarily deciding. The history of the various religions shews us that it is one of the most marked features of them all, that traditions respecting their founder and his personal disciples multiply to an enormous extent; and to keep the history of the faith and the faith itself from utter confusion, it has been found necessary for the heads of the church, by an act of public authority, to stamp the earlier documents as canonical, and reject the later or spurious ones. In accordance with this law of analogy, characterizing the different faiths of the world in the fourth

century, the various written traditions of Christendom were become exceedingly voluminous, and many of them contradictory, until people did not know what to believe. Here was an exigency that must be met to save the faith from utter confusion. What more natural, then, than that the heads of the church should come together and make a collection of what, in their wisdom, they considered the best or most authentic, out of this immense mass of writings, by the authority of their decision stamp it as canonical, and reject the rest. To keep down confusion and endless divisions in the church, they could have acted no other way.

A few years after the death of Mahomet, under a simple exigency of increasing and contradictory traditions, the canon of the Koran was fixed; and about 230 years after Mahomet's death, consequent upon the still vastly increasing traditions, the canon of the Sonna was fixed, and as before remarked, in one instance only 4,000 traditions being accepted out of at least 600,000 extant. – *Calcutta Review*, vol. xix. p. 9, 10, 11, 33.

So with respect to the Buddhist canonical scriptures, and authority before us says – “During the first year after Sakya's (Buddha's) death, it was necessary to council at Bagagaha, the capital of Maghada. The doctrines of Buddhism were then defined by the most eminent followers of the system. To the Sutto-Pittaka, ascribed to Gotama (Buddha) himself, they added to supplementary parts; these compose the most valued Buddhist writings, for the council is supposed to have been divinely inspired, that they might transmit the system pure and authoritous to future ages.” – *Calcutta Review*, vol. xix. p. 265.

Another authority says – “According to the Buddhists themselves, the doctrines of Sakya Muni (Buddha) were not committed to writing by him, but were orally communicated to his disciples. ... When they were first written is not clearly made out from the traditions of the north, but they agree with those of the south, in describing the occurrence of different public councils or convocations, at which the senior Buddhist priests corrected the errors that had crept into the teaching of heterodox disciples, and agreed upon the chief points of discipline and doctrines that were to be promulgated. The first of these councils was held, it is said, immediately after Sakya Muni's death, the second 110, the third 218 years afterwards. ... According to the traditions which were current in the south as well as the north, the classification of the Buddhist authorities as the Tripithaka (the three collections) took place at the first council; the portion termed Sutra – the doctrinal precepts – being compiled by Ananda; the Vinaya, or discipline of the priesthood, by Uphala; and the Abhidharma, or philosophical portion, by Kasyapa – all three Buddha's disciples. Their compilations were revised at the second council, and were finally established as canonical in the last.” – *Royal Asiatic Journal*, vol. xvi. p. 239.

We need not multiply instances. In the histories of the various religions they can be found. A like emergency has arisen and been met by them all in a similar way; therefore we are quite willing to give councils their proper weight. Generally speaking, councils of any religion sitting in judgment upon a great collection of indiscriminate legends, their common sense would lead them to reject the most extravagant and least authenticated; consequently, canonical scriptures are generally more authentic than non-canonical or apocryphal ones. But, at the same time, we must not be led to attach an undue importance to the so-termed canonical ones of any religion whatever; for all that can be said at most in their favor, or to distinguish them from the uncanonical ones is, that upon a certain time, a number of men, or a leading man of the particular faith in question, believed them and pronounced them to be the best or most authentic. Accordingly, it is probable that on the whole, the writings accepted as canonical by the Protestants, are more authentic than the uncanonical or apocryphal ones of the first centuries of Christianity: because they passed the scrutiny of a number of well-meaning men, who possessed some discrimination and reflection, even although they might have been somewhat superstitious, and have held pre-conceived ideas in matters of faith.

But the life and miracles of Jesus, as portrayed in the Gospels, are in no way better authenticated than the lives and miracles of the Catholic saints of one, two, or three centuries ago; for a council of bishops and clergy of the Christian Church, a great portion of whom could neither read nor write, assembled at Nice, Laodicea, Carthage, Constantinople, or Rome, fifteen or sixteen hundred years ago, to pronounce on the authenticity of the gospel histories, could not possibly be superior to a modern council of learned bishops, cardinals, and other clergy, assembled at Rome to pronounce on the genuineness of the piety and miracles of a saint before his canonization. In fact, to ask it seems to

require more faith to believe in the miracles of the gospel histories than it does in the miracles of the saints; because the evidence is of exactly and only of the same kind, is much farther removed back into the superstitious past, and, to all appearances, is far less strong. True, there is a striking similarity in the two cases, which tends to place them on a par; in each we have the same extravagant statements respecting the enormous, the incredible number of miracles – miracles which were witnessed by vast multitudes and moved the whole country – the same persistent silence of contemporary secular industry respecting these astonishing events, and the same silence both in the Testament epistles, written by the disciples of Jesus, and in the writings of the Catholic saints respecting their own miracles; but taking the case in all its aspects, we venture to affirm that he who believes the miracles of Jesus upon the evidence we have, is inconsistent if he does not believe the Catholic miracles also.

It is said that a belief in the Christian and Jewish miracles is necessary to our eternal salvation; that if we sweep away the belief in miracles, the moral, the essential doctrines of Christianity, of religion at large, will go with them. A statement, we think, more utterly erroneous was never uttered. Miracles, by their very nature, cannot be believed without doing violence to reason, and are the greatest stumbling-blocks in the minds of reflecting men to the reception of those eternal truths with which they have unhappily been mixed by an uninformed, superstitious, and mistaken past. The truths of Christianity – the living, vital, saving religion of humanity – depends not for proof upon such a monstrosity as the suspension of Nature's laws. Nor can a miracle, however great, prove the truth of a doctrine it has not the slightest connexion with it. A missionary, in speaking of the doctrines of Christianity to a Hindoo priest, instanced, as one proof of their truth, the miracle of Jesus walking on the sea. The Hindoo replied that he also took miracles as an evidence of the truth of his faith; but that his divine teacher wrought a greater miracle still – that he drank up the sea one night and vomited it again the next morning; and that consequently this being the larger miracle, his doctrine was the most true.

In the peninsula of Spain, 16,000,000 people tell us that the miracles of Jesus are an evidence of the truth of Christianity. Cross the straits of Gibraltar, a few miles in width, and 10,000,000 people give us the miracles of Mahomet as an indubitable evidence of the truth of the doctrines of Mahometanism. No! although the men of nearly all the religious creeds throughout the world attempt to prove the truth of their doctrines by relating the miracles of their founder and his disciples, yet the fact remains that a miracle is no evidence whatever of the truth of any doctrine; nay, more, a doctrine that requires miracles to make man accept it, is unworthy the acceptance of man. Doctrines worthy the acceptance of man when once uttered, render themselves glaringly apparent by the virtue of their own inherent force, beauty, and truthfulness, so that all reflecting men throughout the earth, of whatever creed, cannot but admit their truthfulness and intrinsic worth. As one instance, **do unto others as you would they should do unto you**, is a precept so beautiful in itself, appeals with such force to the reason and to the consciences of men, that were ten thousand miracles wrought, it could not add one iota to its force, or make its transcendent beauty more apparent. Again, miracles are so contrary to all our experience, so contrary to all the laws of nature as we see them working, so contrary to these laws, that the more a man knows of them, the less he believes in the miraculous; and, with respect to Christian miracles in particular, we are asked to believe a number of events, opposed to all our knowledge of the unvarying laws of the physical world, and opposed, as is the case of the total darkness throughout the earth at the crucifixion (Luke xxiii. 44), to the silence of all the histories of the Jews, of the united history, direct and incidental, of all the nations living at the time as given in the works of the historians, philosophers, naturalists, astronomers, poets, etc., of India, China, Persia, and especially of Egypt, and Greece, and of Rome, in her palmyest days. To overcome such negative evidence as this, we should have testimony of the most convincing kind; but instead of which, we have the isolated statements given in one book, of unknown date and of unknown authorship.

To the objection that a miracle is contrary to the established and unchangeable laws of nature, we are aware that the ever ready and all-sufficing answer is, all things are possible with God, and hence it is inferred that a man must believe a thing to be true which appears to him to be altogether absurd and untrue. But it by no means follows that because a thing is possible with God, and therefore it is probable that because he could do certain things, that therefore he has done them. People of all religions have miraculous accounts, which when objected to as being contrary to the established laws of nature, the

answer invariability is, and without exception amongst them all – Mahometans, Hindoos, Buddhists, Parsees, etc., etc. – “all things are possible with God”\*

*[Footnote added:*

\* This solving a theological difficulty by an old hackneyed mode of saying all things are possible with God, is sometimes shown in rather a ludicrous light, an instance of which occurred at a religious discussion at which we were present, a few weeks ago. The matter in debate was the contradiction, absurdities, etc., of the Bible. One individual affirmed that the Bible could not be all true, for that, amongst other absurdities, in one place (2 Chron. xxi. 20 - 22) it made a man two years older than his father. The matter was debated pro and con, at length one gentleman rose and humourously suggested to the orthodox defender of the passage, that he need not make so much ado about a man being two years older than his father, he had but to apply his favourite and convenient dogma of “All things are possible with God,” and the difficulty would at once vanish. All present at once saw the absurdity of so explaining it, because it had not been so explained before; but things as equally absurd and contrary to our experience of the unchangeable workings of natural law, have frequently been so explained, and men have become gradually familiarized with the explanation, and at length believed, and seen nothing absurd in them.]

If we accept this as a sufficing reason for our faith, to be consistent, we must believe all the absurdities quoted in these pages; nay more, in all the sacred books of mankind, which contain millions of absurdities, at which the sober reason revolts. We perfectly agree with the Rev. Robert Taylor, when he says – “I defy imagination to conceive that the human mind ever sunk or could sink into a depth of folly and madness, second to that of imagining that the Almighty would want a man to believe something to be true, which, in the natural exercise of his rational faculties, he could not help suspecting to be no better than a lie.” No! we cannot believe that man is called upon to sacrifice his reason at the shrine of faith, but we do believe that he is called upon, and that it is his highest duty, to exercise his reason and let faith follow, as it inevitably will.

## CHAPTER IV.

Accounts of miracles among all nations originate by two principal modes: 1. By exaggeration of simple occurrences into wonders by uninformed and superstitious individuals; 2. By pious frauds – Pious frauds exceedingly common amongst early Christians – Probable that many of the miracles, and some of the teachings, ascribed to Jesus in the Gospels were the product of this system of pious frauds.

A careful study of history shews us that there are two principal modes by which the stories of the miracles ascribed to all religious founders in particular have originated.

1. By gross exaggeration, or the gradual magnifying of ordinary occurrences and incidents in the lives of the founders into wonders, by exceedingly reverent, credulous, and wonder-loving individuals.

2. By the system of pious frauds, where the followers of the great teacher have thought that they could further the dissemination of his doctrines, and silence those of a different faith, by coining and ascribing to him fictitious miracles.

With respect to the first, in relation to the miracles of Jesus, it is probable that, by his great influence over the minds of a certain class of individuals, he brought about some cures, and that he relieved some who believed they were possessed of devils. These cures of both classes by mental impression are a phenomena which we shall presently shew attends many religious revivals in the different countries of the world; and at all times are very common in Eastern countries, where the practice of prescribing medicine is more or less discouraged, if not absolutely proscribed; and it is very probable, nay, almost certain, that many of these simple cures effected through the agency of Jesus, have been grossly exaggerated into the position which we have them now in New Testament. But there are many other statements, which are not common events exaggerated, but deliberate frauds – such as Jesus feeding 5,000 people upon less than nothing, stilling the winds, walking on the sea, turning water into wine, withering a fig tree with his curse, raising the dead, that of the devil of taking him on to the top of a high mountain and shewing him all the kingdoms of the earth in a moment of time, of the mid-day darkness at the crucifixion, of dead persons rising to life and visiting many of the inhabitants of Jerusalem – these and many other stories as related in the Gospels, we have little hesitation in announcing to be “pious frauds.”

That this system of pious frauds did exist to an enormous extent in the early ages of Christianity, we shall quote some of the most respectable of the ecclesiastical historians to prove. Dean Milman, in his *History of Christianity*, speaking of the early ages, says –

“That some of the Christian legends were deliberate forgeries can scarcely be questioned. The principle of pious frauds appeared to justify the mode of working on the popular mind, it was admitted and avowed. To deceive into Christianity was so valuable a service as to hallow deceit itself.” – Vol. 3. p. 471.

Jortin, referring more particularly to the fourth century, says – “It is hardly possible to enumerate the multitude of ridiculous legends, false reports, and pious lies, which were propagated and continued through all ensuing ages, and the maxim, ‘to lie and to deceive became a virtue, if religion can be profited by it,’ a maxim almost generally adopted.” – Quoted in *Lecount*, p. 910; from *Jortin*, vol. iii. p. 8; see also *Lardner*, vol. iv. p. 524.

But the writer who gives us the most general information respecting the extent and continuance of these frauds is Mosheim, the greatest and most popular of the Protestant ecclesiastical historians. This work is divided into centuries, and strictly following the evidence before him, he gives a statement respecting the prevalence of pious frauds in each century. Speaking of the first century, he says – “Not long after Christ's ascension into heaven, several histories of his life and doctrines, full of pious frauds and fabulous wonders, were composed by persons, whose intentions, perhaps, were not bad, but whose writings discovered the greatest superstition and ignorance. Nor was this all – productions appeared which were imposed upon the world by fraudulent men, as the writings of the holy apostles.” – *Mosheim*, vol. i. p. 78; *McLeane's Translation*.

Of the second century, he says - "Another error among the Christians, a pernicious one, and productive of many evils, was the following: - "The Platonists and Pythagoreans deemed it only not only lawful, but commendable, to deceive and to lie for the sake of truth and piety. The Jews living in Egypt learned from them this sentiment before the Christian era, as appears from many proofs: and from both this vice early spread amongst the Christians. Of this no one will doubt, who calls to mind the numerous forgeries of books under the names of eminent men, the Sybyline verses, and other similar trash, a large mass of which appeared in this and the following centuries." - *Murdoch's Translation*, p. 70.

On the third century, he says - "But it must by no means pass unnoticed, that the discussions instituted against the opposers of Christianity in this age, departed far from the primitive simplicity and the correct method of controversy; for the Christian doctors, who were in part educated in the schools of rhetoricians and sophists, inconsiderately transferred the arts of these teachers to the cause of Christianity, and therefore considered it of no importance whether an antagonist was confounded by base artifices or by solid arguments. Thus that mode of disputing which the ancients called economical, and which had victory rather than truth for its object, was almost universally approved. This culpable disposition to circumvent and confound an adversary, rather than confute him with sound argument, produced also a multitude of books, falsely bearing on their front the names of certain distinguished men; for the greater part of mankind being influenced more by the authority of names than by arguments and Scripture testimony, the writers conceived they should prefix names of the greatest weight to their books, in order to oppose successfully their adversaries, hence those canons which were falsely ascribed to the apostles, hence those apostolic constitutions which Clemens Romanus was reputed to have collected, hence to the "Recognitions of Clement," as they are called, and the Clementia and other works of the like character, which a too credulous world long held in high estimation. ... Thus, they who wished to surpass all others in piety, deemed it a pious act to employ deception and fraud in support of piety. - *Idem*, p. 102 - 103.

Of the fourth century, he says: "This inconsiderate piety of the common people opened a wide door to the endless frauds of persons who were base enough to take advantage of the ignorance and errors of others to advance their own interests. Rumors were artfully disseminated of prodigies and wonders to be seen in certain edifices and places, whereby the infatuated populace were drawn together, and the stupidity and ignorance of those who looked upon everything new and unusual as a miracle were often wretchedly imposed upon. Graves of saints and martyrs were supposed to be where they were not. The list of saints was enriched with fictitious names, and even robbers were converted into martyrs. Some buried bloodstained bones in retired places, and then gave out that they had been informed in a dream that the corpse of some friend of God was there interred. Many, especially of the monks, travelled through the different provinces, and not only shamefully carried on a traffic in fictitious relics, but also deceived the eyes of the multitude with ludicrous combats with evil spirits. It would require a volume to detail the various impositions, which were for the most part successfully practised by artful knaves. - *Idem*, p. 144.

In another place he says: "If the enthusiastic frenzy of the monks exaggerated, in a matter pernicious to the interests of morality, the discipline that is obligatory upon Christians, the interests of virtue and true religion suffered yet more grievously, by two monstrous errors which were almost universally adopted in this century, and became a source of innumerable calamities and mischiefs in the succeeding ages. The first of these maxims was, 'that it was an act of virtue to deceive and lie, when by that means the interests of the church might be promoted;' and the second, equally horrible, though in another point of view, was, that 'errors in religion, when maintained and adhered to after proper admonition, were punishable with civil penalties and corporeal tortures.' The former of these enormous maxims was now of a long standing; it had been adopted for some ages past, and had produced an incredible number of ridiculous fables, fictitious prodigies, and pious frauds, to the unspeakable detriment of that glorious cause in which they were employed. And it must be frankly confessed, that the greatest men, and most eminent saints of this century, were more all less tainted with the infection of this corrupt principle, as will appear evident to such as look with an attentive eye into their writings and their actions. We would willingly except from this charge Ambrose and Hilary, Augustine, Gregory, Nazianzen, and Jerome; but truth, which is more respectable than these venerable fathers, obliges us to involve them in the general accusation." - Vol. i. p. 281, *McLeane's Translation*.

Of the fifth century, he says: "Those who contended against the Christian sectaries followed the rules of the ancient sophists, and also (what is truly surprising) the practice of the Roman courts. ... In the Roman courts very difficult and doubtful points were decided, according to the opinions of certain ancient jurists. ... This imitation of the practice of the Roman courts in conducting religious controversies, stimulated very much the base audacity of those that did not blush to palm their own spurious productions on the great men of former times, and even on Christ himself and his apostles, so that they might be able in the councils and in their books to oppose names against names, and authorities against authorities. The whole Christian Church of this century was overwhelmed with these disgraceful fictions." P. 193, *Murdoch's Translation*.

Of the sixth century, he says: "If credit is to be given to the writers of this century, the conversion of these uncivilized nations to Christianity was principally effected by the prodigies and miracles, which the heralds of the Gospel were enabled to work in its behalf; nor were they at all delicate or scrupulous in choosing the means of establishing their credit; for they looked upon it as lawful, nay, even meritorious, to deceive an ignorant and inattentive multitude, by representing to them as prodigies, things that were merely natural, as we learn from the most authentic records of those times." - Vol 1. p. 392, *McLeane's Translation*.

Of the seventh century, he says: "During this century, true religion lay buried under a senseless mass of superstitions, and was unable to raise her head." After describing some new doctrines that were taught, he continues - "Did any one hesitate to believe, two irrefragable arguments were at hand, the authority of the church and miracles, for the working of which in those times of ignorance, but a moderate share of dexterity was requisite." - P. 250 - 251, *Murdoch's Translation*.

Of the eighth century, he says: "The many and stupendous miracles which are said to have been wrought by the Christian missionaries who were sent to convert the barbarous nations, have lost, in our times, the credit they obtained in former ages. The corrupt discipline that then prevailed admitted of these fallacious stratagems which are very improperly called pious frauds; nor did the heralds of the Gospel think it all unlawful to terrify or allure to the profession of Christianity by fictitious prodigies, those obdurate hearts which they could not subdue by reason and argument." - Vol. i. p. 476 *Maclean's Translation*.

Of the ninth century, he says: "The ignorance and corruption that dishonored the Christian church, in this century, was great beyond measure; and were no other examples of their enormity upon record, than the single instance of that stupid veneration that was paid to the bones and carcasses of departed saints, this would be sufficient to convince us of the deplorable progress of superstition. ... The priests and monks set their invention at work, and peopled at discretion the invisible world with imaginary protectors. They dispelled the thick darkness which covered the pretended spiritual exploits of many holy men; and they invented both names and histories of saints that never existed, that they might not be at a loss to furnish the credulous and wretched multitude with objects proper to perpetuate their superstition, and to nourish their confidence. Many chose their own guides, and committed their spiritual interests either to phantoms of their own creation, or to distracted fanatics, whom they esteemed as saints, for no other reason than their having lived madmen. ... This preposterous multiplication of saints was a new source of abuses and frauds. It was thought necessary to write the lives of these celestial patrons, in order to procure for them the veneration and confidence of a deluded multitude; and here lying wonders were invented, and all the resources of forgery and fable exhausted, to celebrate exploits which had never been performed, and to perpetuate the memory of holy persons who had never existed. We have yet extant a prodigious quantity of these trifling legends. ... The same imposters who peopled the celestial regions with fictitious saints, employed also their fruitful inventions in embellishing with false miracles, and various other impertinent forgeries, the history of those who had been really martyrs, or confessors in the cause of Christ." - *Idem*, vol. ii p. 33 - 35.

Such are the hands through which we have received the Christian scriptures, and there is no doubt -- at least in our mind -- that the greater part of the miracles, and some of the teachings ascribed to Jesus in these scriptures, were the product of this system of pious frauds.



## CHAPTER V.

Period when the Gospels were written, and who wrote them, altogether conjectural -- Probably they were written at later date than usually assigned, and after the Epistles -- that Matthew, Mark, and Luke were taken partly from one common document, and partly from tradition -- Four Gospels contain many contradictions -- Instances given -- Real history of Jesus contained in the Gospels, intermixed with much legend -- the Bible a history, and to be read critically like any other history -- Undue importance frequently given by some Christian reasoners to assumed mistranslations and mistranscriptions of the Bible -- And to figurative language -- Inspiration of the Bible a fallacy originated by spiritual egotism -- People of all religions throughout the world say that their own particular scripture is the "Book of Books."

We have no reliable information respecting the time when the various books forming the New Testament were written, or by whom most of them were written. Respecting the date of their composition, even ecclesiastical authorities are greatly divided; in fact, all opinion is grounded upon the merest conjecture, and we believe that no two independent writers agree upon the subject.

The following are given by four writers of respectability, as the assumed dates of the Gospels:

	Dr. Lardner.	Rev. J. Jones.	Dr. Owen.	Carpenter.
Matthew	A.D. 64	41	38	37
Mark	64	67	63	44
Luke	63	63	53	64
John	63	97	69	97

--*Lecount*, p. 92.

For various reasons we think that at the these dates generally are too early, that the final arrangement of the Gospels in their present form did not take place until a much later period, and that the epistles were written before the Gospels, as they never mention them or refer to any of the miracles related in them.

With respect to the origin of the books, the strong possibility is that Paul, an early Christian convert, was the author of most of the writings bearing his name, and that some of the other epistles were written by the apostles of Jesus; but who wrote the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, is altogether conjectural. The names of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, respectively placed at the head of the Gospels, by no means prove that these four persons wrote them, especially as we now have them. It is exceedingly probable that after the death of Jesus, one or more of his disciples wrote down his teachings and actions, and these formed the groundwork of the Gospels.

If we look for internal evidence to the Gospels themselves, it appears as if the three synoptic Gospels -- Matthew, Mark and Luke -- were partly taken from one common document, as we find considerable passages common to the three, which are almost or quite, word for word, the same in each. This would not be, if three men had independently related the same occurrence -- they would at least have used some different words. Again, there are many parts of the Gospels, which appear to be from hearsay or tradition: for instance, one writer makes Jesus speak certain words under certain circumstances, and another makes him speak the identical words, in another place, and under quite different circumstances. Any one can prove this statement by taking a reference Bible, and examining the parallel passages. Again, in many places, the same story as told by the different writers, varies in detail, as traditional relations generally do: for instance, take the robe that was put upon Jesus -- Matthew says it was the scarlet robe (Matt. xxvii. 28) -- John says it was a purple robe (John xix. 2.); or take the inscription over the cross -- Matthew says it was

THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

(Matt. xxvii. 37)

Mark says it was

## THE KING OF THE JEWS.

(Mark xv. 26)

Luke says it was

## THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

(Luke xxiii. 38)

John says it was

## JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.

(John xix. 19)

These and a great number of other passages seem to have been written from tradition, and certainly not inspired tradition.

Again, there are many passages which clearly and directly contradict each other: for instance in Matt. i. 1 - 17, the writer traces the descent of Joseph, the father of Jesus, from King David through his son Solomon; while in Luke iii. 23 - 38, the descent is brought through Nathan, another of David's sons. The account respecting the infancy of Jesus in Luke, totally contradicts the account as given in Matthew. In Matthew ii. it is related that an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, commanded him to take the young child, and flee into Egypt from Herod the King, who sought to kill it -- that he did flee into Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod -- that upon hearing of the death of Herod, he was returning into Judea, but hearing further that Archelaus, the son of Herod, reigned in his stead, he was afraid to go to Jerusalem, and therefore turned aside into a place called Nazareth, in Galilee, and dwelt there. The account as given in Luke ii 22 - 42, says not a word about the slaughter of the babes or the going into Egypt, but informs us that when Jesus was a month old, his parents brought him to Jerusalem to present him before the Lord in the temple; that from Jerusalem they returned direct to Nazareth; and that from that time they went up every year at the feast of the passover held at Jerusalem, until Jesus was twelve years old. Here are evidently two different legends respecting the early history of Jesus.

In John iii. 22, it is related that Jesus baptized; in John iv. 2, it is related that Jesus did not baptize.

Matthew xi. 14 affirms that the John the Baptist was Elias, while John i. 21 affirms that he was not Elias.

In John ii. 1, it is related that on the third day after Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, he was at the marriage at Cana, in Galilee (see John chap. 1 from 29 to 43); whilst in Mark i. 12, it is related that immediately upon his coming out of the water the spirit carried him into the wilderness, where he remained forty days.

In John i. 29 - 36, it is related that John the Baptist publicly and emphatically proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah; whilst in Mark xi. 2 - 3, it is related that when John was in prison a short time after, he sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus "Art thou he that shall come, or do we look for another?"

Matthew v. 1 makes Jesus deliver his famous sermon on a mountain; Luke vi. 17 makes him and deliver it on a plain.

In Matthew iv. 3 - 11, it is related in what is called the temptation, that the devil first took Jesus and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and afterwards took him up into an exceeding high mountain and left him there; in Luke iv. 5 - 9, it is related that the devil took him up into the mountain first, and afterwards set him on a pinnacle of the temple.

In Mark x. 46, it is related that Jesus gave sight to a certain blind man as he came from Jericho; in Luke xviii. 35, it is related that it was as he was going towards the Jericho.

In Matthew viii. 28 - 32, it is related that Jesus cast a legion of devils out of two men, and allowed them to go into 2000 pigs; the writer of Luke viii. 26 - 33, relating the same story, says that the legion came out of one man only.

In Matthew viii. 5 - 13, it is related that at Capernium, a centurion came personally to Jesus, and begged that he would come and heal his servant, who laid at the point of death; in Mark vii. 1 - 10 the writer in relating the same story, says that the centurion did not come to Jesus, but sent some of his friends, saying that he was unworthy to come himself.

In Matthew x. 5 - 6, it is related that when Jesus sent out his disciples, he instructed them to preach to the Jews only; again, in Matthew xv. 22 - 26, it is related about when his assistance was implored by a woman of Canaan, he answered, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" and when she still importuned, he further said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs;" while in Mark xvi. 15, he is related to have said to his disciples, "Go ye unto all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."

Mark xiv. 3, relates that a woman came with a box of precious ointment and anointed the head of Jesus; John xii. 3, referring to the same circumstance, says that she anointed his feet. Matthew xxvi. 6, and Mark xiv. 3, to say it was in the house of Simon the leper, at the village of Bethany; Luke vii. 36, says it was in the house of a Pharisee, in the city of Nain; while John xii. 2, leaves us to infer that it was in the house of Lazarus, whom Jesus is said to have raised from the dead.

In Matthew xxvii. 3 - 5, it is related that Judas, when he saw that Jesus was arrested, repented that he had betrayed him, cast down of the thirty pieces of silver in the temple, and went and hanged himself, and that the chief priest took the money and purchased a field with it; while in Acts i. 18, it is related that Judas himself purchased a field with the money, and that instead of hanging himself, retributive justice overtook him, that falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

In Matthew xxvi. 52, it is related that Jesus severely rebuked one of his disciples because he used his sword, saying, "All they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword;" while in Luke xxii. 36, it is related that Jesus commanded his disciples to obtain swords, even if they sold their garments to buy them.

In Matthew xxvii. 44, and Mark xv. 32, it is related that both the thieves which were crucified with Jesus reviled him; whilst in Luke xxiii. 39 - 43, it is related that one of them only reviled him and the other the reverse.

In Luke xxiii. 43, it is related that Jesus said to one of the thieves on the Cross, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise; whilst in Acts i. 3 - 11, it is related that Jesus was forty days before he went to Paradise.

In John xix. 14, it is related that Jesus was crucified at the sixth hour; whilst Mark xv. 25, said it was the third hour.

The five accounts of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, given respectively at the end of the four Gospels and beginning of Acts, are very contradictory. The number of such contradictions are best seen by writing the different accounts out in columns, and then comparing, which the enquiring reader, if inclined, can do for himself. In this place we shall only just mention two or three of these contradictions.

In Luke xxiv. 13 - 33, according to the narrative, Jesus was on the earth only one day after his resurrection before he ascended to heaven; whilst in Acts i. 3, it says that he was on earth forty days.

In John xx. 17, it is related that on the day of his resurrection, he appeared to one of his followers, and said, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God;" whilst in Luke xxiv. 39, it is related that Jesus appeared to some of his followers, and invited them to handle him and see that he had flesh and bones, and was not a spirit.

Luke xxiv. 50 - 51, says that Jesus ascended up into heaven from Bethany, fifteen furlongs from Jerusalem; whilst Acts i. 9 - 12, states that he ascended from Mount Olivet, a much less distance from Jerusalem.

Again, the four accounts referring to Paul's conversion when on his road to Damascus contradict each other to a great extent. In Acts ix. 11, it is related that those which journeyed with him heard the voice that spoke to him; while Acts xxii. 9, says that they did not hear the voice.

In Acts ix. 7, it is related that those which accompanied him when they heard the voice stood speechless; while in Act xxvi. 14, it says that they all fell to the ground.

In the account in Acts ix. 4 - 17, and Acts xxii. 14 - 18, it is related that the voice commanded Paul to go into Damascus and receive instructions of what he was to do; while in Acts xxvi. 14 - 18, it is related that the voice instructed him upon the spot what he wants to do. Compare also Acts ix. 8 - 28, and Galatians i. 17 - 19.

We need not in this place particularize others, but will simply remark that both in the letter and in the spirit, the New Testament contains hundreds of glaring contradictions.

Again, a great many of, apparently, the real sayings of Jesus are mixed up with miracles; now most of these miracles were probably interspersed and filled in at a later date on the principle of pious frauds, to give great importance and authority to the sayings. We would beg it therefore to be distinctly understood, that when we accept any passage as probable, we by no means accept the miracle that is attached to it for. For instance, we are told that Jesus cursed a fig-tree, and it withered away, and that he took advantage of the circumstance to inform his disciples that faith could accomplish all things. Now, we may except as probable, that at some time he made the peculiar statement in question respecting the efficacy of faith, it being in accordance with his usual teaching; at the same time we may reject the story of the miraculous withering of the tree, as probably a later embellishment. Finally, although taken as a whole, the four Gospels form a complete jumble of history – probably, in proportion to their extent, almost as great a jumble as ever was seriously penned in any age or country – yet, we think that most of the teachings and real history of Jesus after he appeared in public is contained in them, mixed up with some sayings and many miracles that he never heard of. We have now defined the way in which we read the Gospel histories; we view them simply as a collection of legends respecting the life and acts of Jesus, exactly as we view the legends respecting the life and acts of this or that saint, or of this or that other founder of a religious system; and this mode of viewing them explains all the contradictions, inconsistencies, and absurdities to be found in them, in a way that no other does.

We are aware that it is objected that we have no right to read the Bible in this manner – that we cannot accept a part and reject a part – to be consistent we must believe or disbelieve the whole of it; but this is a most fallacious view. He who objects that we cannot accept a part and reject a part of any ancient history is inconsistent with himself; the objector is not governed by his own objection: for we venture to affirm that there is not a single considerable author of antiquity, even the most reliable, who has not recorded relations of the miraculous etc., etc., which no intelligent man believes at the present day, although he in the main accepts the relations of these ancient historians.

We read in Herodotus, that a dolphin picked up a man in the sea, carried him for many miles on his back, and deposited him safely on land – we cannot accept this story as true – but are we therefore altogether to disbelieve every part of one of the best histories of antiquity, in fact one of the best histories ever written? We read in the Bible, that a whale swallowed a man, carried him for three days and three nights in its belly, and then deposited him alive on dry land. If we cannot accept these and many other even more improbable stories related in the Bible, does it follow that we are to reject the sober history contained in it? – the probable historical facts that the Jews were enslaved in Egypt, came out and settled in Judea, fought with the surrounding nations, set up a king, built a great city and temple, split into two sections or governments, that one of the sections was carried captive to Babylon, a part of which returned to Judea after many years; that Jesus lived and taught in Judea, railed against the empty forms and hypocrisy of the Jewish priests and pharisees, engendered their hatred, and was crucified at their instance upon Mount Calvary.

The Bible is a history, and we have to read history intelligently – not to believe or disbelieve all that history records, but guided by our experience, to take the probabilities of the case. In a court of justice it would not do to believe all that the witnesses say: the jury experienced in the affairs of every-day life, have to consider and weigh the evidence, to scan the features of the witnesses, and calculate upon their honesty, to carefully examine what they say, and see if there is any hidden or interested motive in giving such evidence, to mark their care or carelessness in speaking, and their capacity to represent truly what

they saw or heard; and then after carefully remarking all the parts and features of the evidence, return their verdict.

History is but the written evidence of men – some of it written by wise men, some by foolish or gullible men, some by honest men, some by designing men, some by prejudiced men, and some by careless men, and nearly every writer will be at times more or less of these. It is then the duty of every reader to accept and weigh the evidence of history, exactly as he would the evidence of a witness in a court of justice, and never disbelieve a whole history simply because some of it is false or foolish, and not to believe a whole history because it contains some that is true and wise; and this should be particularly the case in reference to the Bible, because it was written in different ages, in different countries, by men of different capacities, and holding different opinions. For instance, who could possibly believe the whole of the following – “No man hath seen God at any time,” 1 Epistle of John iv. 12; “God is a spirit,” John iv. 24. “Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nahab, and Abihu, and serenty of the elders of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, ... and upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.” – Exodus xxiv. 9 - 11.

We are also told that at another time God put Moses in a cleft of the rock, put his hand over him, passed by, and that Moses saw his back parts. – Exodus xxxiii. 18 - 23.

Here are two totally different conceptions of God by two different writers – the one says that no man had seen God at any time, for that God is a spirit; the other says that he is of human form, with face, hands, feet, and back parts, and has been seen by man.

Many hundreds of these point blank contradictions are scattered throughout the Bible, and any reasonable man cannot believe the whole; if he accepts the one, he of necessity, in obedience to a law of his nature, as a thinking logical being, must reject its opposite.

It may not be amiss in this place to concisely review another feature or two respecting the popular Christian, but erroneous, mode of reading and interpreting the Bible.

Firstly, then, respecting mistranslations and mistranscriptions. It is frequently said that the contradictions and absurdities in the Bible nearly all result from mistranslations of the vernacular copies from the present manuscripts, or from the mistranscriptions of the present manuscripts from the first but now extinct manuscripts. We heard a minister a few weeks ago declare that if the Bible was correctly translated from the first originals that there would be no longer any sceptics, for there would not be a contradiction or absurdity in the book. Now, on this point we are compelled to speak plainly, for the fact there are mistranslations particularly, is a harbor of refuge for the Christian sophist, and, we are compelled to add, not unfrequently for the more conscientious Christian reasoner. No sooner is a glaring contradiction or absurdity pointed out than the frequent answer is, and nine times out of ten without the least reason, If it was properly translated it would all agree or all appear quite reasonable.

Now we are quite prepared to admit, and, in fact, to assert, that no translation of an ancient book which we possess – say Homer, Herodotus, Plato, Cicero, Josephus – is in every respect literally rendered; but no doubt that as far as the translation only is concerned, they are approximately correct, and the Bible, even with its two hundred thousand different readings, is the same.

It is not the differences in translation which make the absurdities in the Bible. The story of the fish swallowing Jonah; of the sun and moon standing still at the command of a man; of men walking in the midst of a red-hot furnace without harm; of the walls of a city falling down flat consequent on the simultaneous shout of a besieging army; of a man, simply by stretching out his walking-stick, turning the whole water of a country into blood, and its dust into lice; of this stick at one time turning into a serpent, and at another time in one night budding, blossoming, and yielding almonds; of a man going up by a whirlwind into heaven; of a serpent and an ass uttering and conversing in human speech. These and other similar stories are told substantially the same in the Latin Vulgate, the Septuagint, and the common Hebrew, as well as in the translations from them. Read these stories in any of the originals or translations you choose, and they are still absurd. The same argument will apply with respect to most of the contradictions: each copy contains hundreds of contradictions within itself. That there are

mistranslations and mistranscriptions in the different versions of the Bible no person can fairly doubt; but the reasoner is not justified in assuming them in places where they do not exist, simply for the purpose of defeating an opponent in debate, or supporting a favourite dogma.

We may also remark in passing, that the Christian reasoner gains nothing by charging the contradictions and absurdities contained in the Bible upon the mistranslations and mistranscriptions of it, for by so doing he vitally stabs the infallibility of the book itself; he himself demolishes the very doctrine of plenary inspiration which is generally he so tenaciously, and we think unreasonably, holds; for if so many passages have had their meaning changed by mistranslations and mistranscriptions, it is not possible for him to point to a single passage in the book, and positively affirm that it also has not been changed; and although a mistranslation from existing documents may be rectified, the mistranscriptions from the now extinct manuscripts never can; and therefore the infallibility of the book, according to the simplest rules of logic, is for ever gone.

Another common, but erroneous, mode of interpreting the Bible, is respecting its figurative language. That great luminary of the early Christian church, Origen, laid it down as a rule, to be invariably followed, that when anything occurred in the Scripture which appeared absurd or contradictory, it did not mean what it said, but something else – and since his time multitudes have followed this rule, and do so still. No sooner is a conscientious and rational objection raised against any passage of the book, than the ever-ready answer of this class of reasoners is – it does not mean what it says – the language is figurative. And this answer also is given in nine cases out of ten, without the slightest reflection or examination of the passage. It is a standing answer of the slothful, who are too careless to read, or read without thinking; of the ignorant, who adopt the opinions of others; and of those of great faith, who are determined to believe certain things in spite of the evidence of their senses. The latter class tell us that when it is said in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, “and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.” (Exodus xxxi. 17.) – because it does not agree with the later and higher conception of God as a god of infinite attributes, who could neither weary nor be refreshed – that it does not mean what it says, but something else. That when it is said the waters of Noah flood covered the whole earth, “and all the high hills under the whole heavens were covered.” (Gen. vii. 19.) – because it does not agree with the clear undeniable evidence of geology, that no such flood ever took place – it means not what it says, but a partial flood. That when Jesus foretold the end of the world, and that himself should come in the clouds of heaven in power and great glory, to call together his followers and judge all mankind, and said, “verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away until all these things be fulfilled;” and again, “verily I say unto you, there are many standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom” (Matt. xxiv. 21, 35, 10, 23, xvi. 27, 28; Luke xxi. 10 – 33) – because the fact remains, that Jesus did not come to judge the world in that generation, or before the death of some then standing around him – that he did not mean what he said, but something else. We might mention hundreds of other passages, but let these suffice. But there is figurative language in the Bible as in our own language of every-day life, is patent to every reader; but these passages are not figurative, but plain literal statements, the sense of which is also borne out by the whole account, and beyond all reasonable doubt, the writers meant exactly what they said. As well might we say that the statement, that the Jews came out of Egypt, that David was one of their kings, that they were carried captive to Babylon, or that Jesus was crucified on Mount Calvary, is figurative also. Now, we hold that this arbitrary calling of literal language figurative, whenever it suits the convenience of the reader to do so, is a most pernicious way of reading history, for it upsets all the rules of rational criticism. Let us but fairly apply this principle to all history, and there is not an absurdity or contradiction on paper – never was nor ever can be – but can be explained to be strictly consistent with truth or the most consummate wisdom.

Other modes of explaining away the many contradictions and absurdities of the Bible could be mentioned, but space does not permit; but we would beg to impress upon the mind of the reader that for ages, hundreds of millions of people and millions of clergy have been born to a belief in the Bible; that amongst these, thousands upon thousands of the most talented have continually racked their brains to discover ingenious and plausible answers and explanations to the objections of the sceptic; and that in many cases there are a score or more of different, but plausible, explanations of the same difficulty; so that all a minister or defender of the Bible has to do, is to get by rote a certain number of these, and he

can without hesitation plausibly explain away every contradiction or absurdity in the book. These plausible explanations ever have, and will still, satisfy the unreflecting masses; but it is the duty of every intelligent man to satisfy himself in each case, that the explanation given to him is a fair and logical one, and one that does not do violence to the text or the context.

It may be objected here, that it is presumptuous in us to set up our judgment against the united wisdom of the Christian world, and the objection at first sight seems a strong one; but the answer we again repeat is this – that the magnates and talented thousands of Christian countries are born to a belief in the Bible, thereby become prejudiced in its favor, defend it, and explain away its contradictions and absurdities, exactly as the magnates and talented thousands of Mahometan, Hindoo, Buddhist, and other countries, being born to the belief respectively of the Koran, Veda, Tripithaka, etc., become prejudiced in their favor, defend them, and explain away their contradictions and absurdities. Point out any contradiction or absurdity you like in any of the sacred books of mankind, and its priests and talented admirers will give you a plausible explanation to your objection. The phenomena manifested by the human mind on this point are alike in all countries.

Respecting the assertion that the Christian Scriptures are inspired -- that they are the word of God -- we answer that this is but another similarity in the religions of the world, and another of those expressions of the natural egotism of man by which he invariably places that which belongs to himself on the highest possible level.

It is but another expression of that feeling which makes every man throughout the wide world assert that his religion is the purest and best – that the founder of his religion is the greatest and wisest man that ever lived on earth – the same feeling that makes all the ignorant and half-civilised nations throughout the earth consider that their country is the finest – is in the centre of the world – that they are God's especial favourites – and the greatest nation on earth. In matters of religion particularly, the analogical expression of this natural egotism of mankind is apparent to the reader of history, and in no respect more so than in their assertions that respecting their sacred Scriptures – each, without exception, came from God, contains the essence of all wisdom, and is *par excellence*, THE BOOK OF BOOKS. For a demonstration of this statement, see appendix 2, under respective headings of Hindoo, Buddhist, Mahometan Taouist, Sikh, Parsee, Sintoo and Druse scriptures. In conclusion, we look upon the assertions of the votaries of each religious creed throughout the world respecting the inspiration and heavenly origin of their sacred books, as an expression of the natural egotism of mankind; and view such books, one and all, simply as human productions consecrated and rendered sacred by time.

## CHAPTER VI.

Nearly all religious founders of ancient times asserted by their respective followers to have been divine incarnations and miraculously conceived by virgin mothers -- Instances adduced from universal history -- Jesus -- Buddha, founder of Buddhism -- Menu, the great Hindoo legislator -- Lao-tse, founder of Taoism -- Confucius, founder of Confucianism -- Simmoo, founder of Sintooism -- Nanak, founder of Sikhism -- Zoroaster, founder of Parseeism -- Hakim and Hamza, founders of the Druseism -- Mahomet, founder of Mahometanism -- All other famous persons of ancient times, and in barbarous countries of modern times, miraculously conceived -- Instances adduced -- Plato, the great philosopher -- Pythagoras -- Alexander the Great -- Seleucus, emperor of Syria -- Romulus, founder of Rome -- Servius Tullus, king of Rome -- Augustus Caesar -- Genghis Khan -- Mexitli, a famous Mexican -- Mencius, the Chinese Plato -- Pau-tse, a famous woman of China -- Slain-nung, a famous king of China -- the founder of the Manchoo dynasty of China -- Yaou, a great king of China -- Ta-yu, a great king of China -- Vyasa, compiler of the Hindoo Vedas -- Ad-eswara, founder of the Jain sect -- Krishna, founder of a sect -- Moroba, founder of a sect -- Hanuman, founder of a sect -- Kabir, founder of a sect -- Sampson -- Samuel -- John the Baptist -- The Virgin Mary -- Another class of miraculous conceptions, viz., incarnations of the Devil -- Instances adduced -- Mahomet -- Antichrist -- Luther.

We shall now turn to another feature -- to another class of traditional analogies in the history of religious founders, but which is strictly belonging to their miraculous history. In the history of nearly all religious founders we find it related

1. *That they were born of pure, unspotted virgins, and were of divine paternity.*
2. *That the order of nature was suspended, and supernatural wonders took place at their birth.*
3. *That their future greatness was predicted before birth or during their infancy.*
4. *That they were precocious to an astonishing degree -- generally ending by instructing their schoolmasters.*
5. *That they were of unequalled beauty of person.*
6. *That they were of unparalleled wisdom, goodness, and greatness.*
7. *That they were of royal descent.*
8. *That great convulsions of nature and other astonishing events occurred at their death.*
9. *That their relics after death were possessed of miraculous powers.*

We think that a consideration of the several points or features here enumerated, are collectively so important, that we shall give a number of short extracts and references in support of our general statement.

The principal religious systems extant are eleven in number, namely, Christianity, Buddhism, Hindooism, Mahometanism, Taouism, Confucianism, the Judaism, Sintooism, Sikhism, Parseeism, and Druseism; and as our object is to illustrate the real and legendary history of Jesus, by the history of the founders of these systems, who hold a parallel place in the annals of the world, we shall first mention what is said of him, and then what is said of them.

1. Analogy. -- *All religious founders miraculously conceived.*

It is related of Jesus, that his mother and being betrothed, but while yet a virgin, conceived him of the Holy Ghost (one form or manifestation of the Supreme Being), that when the signs of maternity grew upon her, Joseph, her betrothed, thinking she had been unfaithful to him, was about to put her away, when an angel appeared in a dream, and informed him of the miraculous cause; and the narrative concludes, by affirming that Joseph knew not his wife till she brought forth her first-born son. -- Matthew i. 18 - 25; Luke i. 25 - 36.

Buddha, founder of Buddhism, according to the most numerous Buddhist authorities, was born in India, about 1,000 years before the Christian era. In the sacred books of the Buddhists, it is stated, and throughout the Buddhist world believed, that he was born of a virgin, and was of divine paternity. And



authority before us says – “Klaproth, in his *Asia Polyglota*, has given a life of Buddha, from the Mogul historians, of which the following is an abstract: In the kingdom of Maghada, in western Behar, there flourished the family of Chakia, of which the king himself was a member. The queen of this powerful sovereign was Maha-maya, who, while yet a virgin, conceived by the divine influence, and bore a son. – *Westminster Review*, Jan., 1830; art. History and Doctrine of Buddhism.

The Abbe Huc speaking of the Buddhist belief, respecting the divine incarnation of Buddha, says – “His mother was married to the emperor of Maghada, in southern Bahar, and while as yet, the marriage was not consummated, and his mother still a virgin, she conceived, by divine influence, and brought a son into the world, after she had borne him in the womb three hundred days.” – *Huc's Chinese Empire*, vol. 2. p. 187.

Another authority says that the queen dreamed a deity opened her side and entered into it. She related her dream to the king, who thereupon called sixty-four interpreters of dreams of the highest order to interpret the dream. When they had heard the dream, they told the king that the queen had conceived and would bear a male child, who would either obtain dominion and rule over the world as a temporal king, or become Boodh (a supreme divinity). “Thus they gave the interpretation of the dream.” It is further related that a number of astonishing wonders and supernatural events occurred at the moment of his conception.” – From the life of a Gotama Buddha, entitled Mala-len-ga-ra-wottoo, translated from the Burmese, by Rev. Chester Bennet, and given in the journal of the *American Oriental Society*, vol. iii.

For more evidence respecting the divine incarnation of Buddha, see *Upham's Sacred and Historical Books of Ceylon*, vol. iii. p. 44; *Sirr's Ceylon and the Cingalese*, vol. ii p. 64; *Asiatic Journal*, vol. xxii. p. 640.

Menu, the great prophet and legislator of the Hindoos, was born in India, and probably about 1200 years before the Christian era. The Hindoos teach that he was a miraculously conceived, and he is generally termed in Hindoo literature, “Son of the Self-Existent.” We have not in this case an authority at hand, but the reader of oriental history will be quite familiar with the fact, that the Hindoos universally teach that he was an incarnation of the Deity. Father Sangermano also says, the Hindoos believe that his mother was the daughter of a Nat or angel, and a famous hermit or religious recluse. – *Burmese Empire*, p. 172.

The Taeists teach that Lao-tze, or Lao-tan, their founder, has appeared at least twice upon earth as a divine incarnation. An authority before us says – “His fabulous incarnation is as follows: – The venerable prince existed before the creation, but was incarnate in the time of Yang-kea, of the Shang dynasty, B.C. 1407, when from the regions of great purity and eternal reason, a subtle fluid descended from the superior principle of nature (God), and was transformed into a yellow substance about the size of a pill, which rolling into the mouth of a pearly damsel while she was asleep, caused her to conceive. The child was not born till eighty-one years afterwards, and on his appearance, was grey-headed, and was called Lao-tze, the ‘venerable one.’ The second appearance of this wonderful individual was in the person of Lao-tan, who was visited by Confucius, B.C. 500.” – *Martin's China*, vol. i. p. 66; see also *Gutzlaff's Voyages to China*, p. 397; *Huc's Chinese Empire*, vol. ii. p. 178; *Chinese Repository*, vol. xx. p. 196.

Confucius, the great Chinese sage and founder of Confucianism, was born in China, 551 years before the Christian era. He is said to have been miraculously conceived. An authority before us says – “Concerning this prince of philosophers the Chinese have propagated the following legendary tale: His mother walking in a solitary place, was impregnated by the vivifying influence of the heavens, the babe thus produced, spoke and reasoned as soon as it was born.” – *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, art. Mythology.

Simmoo, the great legislator of the Japanese, and founder of Sintooism, born about 600 years before the Christian era, was of divine origin. A god “married a mortal wife, and left a mortal son upon earth,” which son was Simmoo. – *Oliphant's Narrative of Elgin's Mission*, vol. ii. p. 80.

Nanak, founder of Sikhism, was born in India, in the year 1468. The Sikhs teach that he was an incarnation of the Deity. The following story relates the particular mode of his miraculous conception.

His earthly father's name was Kulloo. "For a long time after his marriage, Kulloo had no children, and became a fukeer or religious mendicant. It so happened that one day and other fukeer came to Kulloo's hut, and partook of some food. Kulloo no doubt told his story to his guest, for no sooner had the latter finished his meal, that he ordered the fragments to be carried to Kulloo's wife, who, he said, would conceive, and her son be a great man. After she ate of the food, the fukeer's prophecy was fulfilled." – *Macgregor's History of the Sikhs*, vol. i. p. 32.

Zoroaster, the great prophet of the Parsees and founder of Parseeism, was born in Persia, probably about 1500 years B.C. The Parsees hold it as a fundamental dogma that he was miraculously conceived. Mr. Wilson in his account of the Parsee religion (p. 65) says, "They tell us that an angel was sent to his father, who persuaded him to drink a glass of wine, and that his wife soon afterwards conceived and bore a son."

Hakim and Hamza, founders of the Druses, were born – the former in Egypt, the latter in Persia – about the year at 1000 of the Christian era. The Druses teach that Hakim was an incarnation of the Deity, and that Hamza was also miraculously conceived; that God has at various times become incarnate, and appeared upon earth in the human form; and, lastly, manifested himself to mankind in the person of Hakim; that Hamza has each of the nine times become incarnate and accompanied the divine manifestation as his prophet or announcer to proclaim him to the world. – *Churchill's Mount Lebanon*, vol. i. p. 44; *Earl of Carnarvon on the Druses*, p. 53; *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, art. Druses.

Mahomet, founder of Mahometanism, was born in Arabia in the year 570 of the Christian era. The leading doctrine taught by him was the unity of God, and he declaimed emphatically against the doctrine of incarnations of the Deity. "God is one, the Eternal God; he begetteth not, neither is he begotten. ... They are, verily, infidels who say God is Christ, the son of Mary. ... Christ the son of Mary, was no more than an apostle. ... The Jews say Ezra is the son of God, and the Christians say Christ is the son of God. ... May God resist them; how they are infatuated. They take their priests and their monks for their Lords beside God. ... Do not call yourselves by my name as the Christians after the son of Mary, you become thus idolators of the prophet. ... Set not up any other God as equal unto God, lest thou be cast into hell, reprov'd and rejected." – *Koran*, chaps. 5, 9, 17, 22, 112.

The doctrine of the oneness of God being then the leading principle taught by Mahomet, his followers could not, without stultifying the faith with a gross inconsistency, assert that he was an incarnation of the Deity. But, although they were precluded by the circumstances of the case from giving him a divine paternity, yet they could, and do, most solemnly affirm, that his conception, according to the established laws of nature, was attended with extraordinary and miraculous events. We shall give one quotation referring to the nature of the events, as collected from the authorized biographies of Mahomet.

"When God wished to manifest himself, he formed light of Mahommed a hundred thousand years before the creation. ... The light of Mahommed was given to man, and beamed forth from the forehead of Adam. It descended from generation to generation through a favored chain, and at last shone in the brow of Abdallah (Mahomet's father). At times a brilliant lustre encircled everything around him; the earth saluted him as the light of Mahommed at his approach, the withered trees revived and again drooped as he departed; the idol demons entreated him not to come too near and precipitate their destruction; and his father, Abdal Mutallib, prophesied, saying, 'Hail! Abdullah, from thy loins shall be begotten the lord of the prophets.' ... Then follows the transfer of this light to Amina, Mahommed's mother. The night of Mahommed's conception was marked by prodigies in heaven and in earth; 200 damsels of the Koriesh (Mahomet's tribe) died of envy; the din of the angels' joy was heard even on earth; Gabriel affixed a green crescent to the Caaba," etc. – *Calcutta Review*, vol. 17, art. Biographies of Mahommed for India.

Such are the relations we have collected from a limited reading, respecting the miraculous conceptions of the founders of the extant religions of the world. As we before remarked, they are eleven in number; and here are statements collected from the sacred traditions of the different faiths, at nine out of the eleven were miraculously conceived, and that extraordinary events at least attended the conception of one of the other two. And most unquestionably this is another forcible illustration of that

law, that even in matters of faith like circumstances produce like results. The venerated founder of each religion has been gradually deified by his followers, and in course of time a story has arisen ascribing to him divine parentage, which story has been accepted unquestioned as a sacred truth by those ardent and venerated votaries, who, with favourable preinclinations, love to believe it true; and it must be remembered that these are no idle tales which command only a partial belief of the faithful of each creed. For instance, the miraculous conception of Buddha is as fundamental a doctrine of the Buddhist faith, as the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ is that of the Christian faith; and the Buddhists universally believe the divine incarnation of Buddha to be a fact, with as undoubting a faith as that which the Christian exercises, who believes the divine incarnation of Jesus Christ to be a fact – and the same may be said of the Parsees, Sintooists, Sikhs, and the others.

We shall now give a number of short quotations collected from history, as collateral and corroborative testimony to the correctness of our foregoing remarks; from which it will be seen that in all parts of the world, mankind in the past have not only ascribed miraculous conceptions to religious founders, but also to nearly all extraordinary men, who in after ages have become famous in the world; such as great philosophers, great kings, great generals, founders of dynasties, etc., etc.

Plato, the “Divine philosopher,” was miraculously conceived. Diogenes Laertius speaking of him, says – “Speusippus, in his book, which is entitled the *Funeral Banquet of Plato*, and Clearchus, in his *Panegyric on Plato*, and Anaxilides, in the second book of his *History of Philosophers*, says that the report at Athens was that Perictione (Plato's mother) was very beautiful, and the Ariston (her husband) endeavoured to violate her, and did not succeed; and that he, after he had desisted from his violence, saw a vision of Apollo in a dream, in consequence of which he abstained from approaching his wife till after her confinement.” – *Diogenes Laertius' Life of Plato*, chap. i.

Pythagoras, the great philosopher, was miraculously conceived. Dr. Smith, in his sketch of the life of Pythagoras, says – “In this way a multitude of the most absurd fictions took their rise – such as that Apollo was his father, that his person gleamed with a super-natural brightness,” etc. – *Smith's Greek and Roman Biography*, art. Pythagoras.

Alexander the Great was miraculously conceived. The account will be found in Plutarch, who adds – “According to Erastosthenes, Olympias (Alexander's mother), when she conducted Alexander on his way in his first expedition, privately discovered to him the secret of his birth, and exhorted him to behave with a dignity suitable to his divine extraction.” – *Langhorne's Plutarch [Life of Alexander]*.

Justin, in his *History of the World*, book 15, chap. iv. relates the story of the miraculous conception of Seleucus, one of the generals and successors of Alexander the Great. The details of the story are scarcely suitable for these pages, but the curious reader, if inclined, can consult the account for himself.

Romulus, the founder of Rome, was miraculously conceived. Plutarch, accepting the popular tradition respecting him with caution, says that some people affirm “that Emilia, the daughter of Eneas and Lavinia, had him by Mars.” – *Life of Romulus*.

It is also related in several of the ancients, that Servius Tullus, king of Rome, was miraculously conceived, by a captive attendant of Tanquil the queen. The following is Ovid's version of the story: – “Vulcan was the father of Tullus, Ocrisia was his mother, a woman of Corniculum, remarkable for her beauty. Her Tanquil having duly performed the sacred rites, ordered in company with herself to pour the wine on the decorated altar. Here among the ashes, either was, or seemed to be, a form of obscene shape, but such it really was. Being ordered to do so, the captive submits to its embraces; conceived by her, Servius has the origin of his birth from heaven.” – *Ovid's Fasti*, vi. 625; see also *Pliny's Natural History*, book 36, chap. xxvii.

Augustus Caesar was miraculously conceived. – *Seutonius' Life of Caesar*, chap. 94.

Genghis Khan, the great conqueror, was miraculously conceived. One authority, speaking of the Nogai Tartars, says – “According to one of their traditions, Genghis Khan was born among them of a virgin, by a sunbeam, without the intercourse of man.” – *Haxthausen's Russian Empire*, vol. ii. p. 91.

Mexitli, a great leader of the Mexicans, and who, in later times, was deified as their war god, was miraculously conceived. McCulloch, in his *Aboriginal History of America*, p. 238, relates the story as follows: – “Huitzilopochtli, or Mexitli, was the god of war, the deity most honored by the Mexicans, and was considered their chief protector. His origin is thus described: – There lived in Coatepec, a place near the ancient city of Tula, a woman called Coatlicue, who was extremely devoted to the service of the gods. One day, according to custom, as she was walking in the temple, she beheld descending in the air a ball made of various feathers; she seized it, and placed it on her bosom, intending afterwards to decorate the altar with the feathers; but, on searching for them after her walk, to her great surprise, it was not to be found, and her wonder was much increased, when she perceived from that moment she was pregnant.” Mexitli was the product of this remarkable conception, who in after years, “becoming the protector of the Mexicans, conducted them through their pilgrimage, and at length settled them on the place where Mexico was afterwards built.”

Mencius, the great Chinese philosopher, frequently termed by Europeans as the Chinese Plato, was miraculously conceived by a virgin. – *Mackay's Progress of the Intellect*, vol. ii. p. 350.

Pau-tze, who, according to the Chinese, was one of the four most beautiful women that ever lived, was miraculously conceived. The account is as follows: – “A servant maid going to open the drawer, saw two tortoises, felt a movement, conceived, and in due time gave birth to Pau-tze who ... was one of the four beauties. – *Gutzlaff's Chinese History*.

Slain-nung, called the husbandman, who first taught men agriculture, was miraculously conceived. Our authority says – “His mother was a virgin, and was travelling along a road; she placed her foot upon a step in the path, felt a movement in her body, and conceived. A son was born to her in due time. ... When he was grown up, he taught men to cultivate the ground, and sew the five sorts of grain, etc. – *Gutzlaff's Chinese History*.

The founder of the Imperial family, from whom sprung the Manchoo dynasty of China, was miraculously conceived, through his mother eating a cherry, which a sacred bird had dropped on her clothes while bathing. When born he could immediately speak. – *Gutzlaff's Chinese History*, vol. ii. p. 2.

Yaou, one of the early famous kings of China, was miraculously conceived. Our authority says – “Yaou began to reign in 2337 B.C. He was then very young, but his heart was penetrated by a benevolence as extensive as heaven; in prudence he equalled the most; the lustre of his intelligence shone like the sun in his glory; like the rain which descends from the clouds and fertilizes the country, his blessings were spread over the whole nation: all was simplicity, all was sincerity. His mother observed a red dragon, and was delivered of him after fourteen months of pregnancy. – *Gutzlaff's Chinese History* vol. i. p. 126.

Ta-yu, or the great Yu, another famous king of China, who died 2198 B.C., was miraculously conceived. Mr. Gutzlaff says – “Ta-yu died after a reign of seven years. His name will always rank high in the pages of Chinese history; nor deserves such a prince to be forgotten in the annals of nations. ... His birth, like that of every Chinese hero, was miraculous. His mother saw a shooting star, and dreamt that she swallowed some pearl barley at the moment she conceived.” – *Chinese History*, vol. i. p. 139.

Vyasa, the compiler of the Vedas, the oldest sacred books of the Hindoos, who was born probably about 1500 years B.C., was miraculously conceived. Thomson, in the index of proper names appended to his translation of the Bhagavad-Gita, speaking of Vyasa, remarks – “It is the plan of the Puranic period to multiply or systemize all that tradition has handed down from previous periods, and accordingly we find mention made of twenty-eight Vyasas, who are incarnations of Brahma, and descend to earth at various periods to arrange and promulgate the Vedas. The Vyasa in question was of these incarnations the last and most celebrated.

Ad-eswara, founder of the Jain sect of Buddhists, and author of their principal sacred book, was miraculously conceived. – *Dubois' People of India*, p. 558.

Krishna, the most celebrated hero of Indian history, and who is now extensively worshipped in India, was miraculously conceived. – *Index of proper names affixed to Thomson's Bhagavad-Gita*.

Moroba, a deified religious mendicant, and who is now extensively worshipped in India, was miraculously conceived. Our authority says – “E’er Siragee had established the Mahratta empire, there lived in the village of Poona a humble, but virtuous couple, whose only possession was resignation. Their utmost exertions during a long life had been insufficient to insure their declining years from the attacks of poverty, and their happiness was otherwise incomplete from the want of children. These circumstances bore upon them the more severely as their piety had been sincere: they had been zealous votaries of Gunputtee, and had never failed in paying the most trifling attention which was due to the god. At last their perseverance propitiated Gunputtee, and the husband was promised in a dream a male child. In return the old man gratefully vowed to dedicate the child to the god, should he have the happiness to have his wishes fulfilled. It excited some wonder when his aged wife became pregnant, and in due course of time presented her lord with a fine boy. The child was named Moroba, a name of Gunputtee, in honour of the god.” The account goes on to relate that Moroba grew up to be a very holy man, and that, “conscious of the incarnation of the divinity in his own person, he performed numerous miracles, which spread his fame to the remotest parts of India. – *Translations of the Literary Society of Bombay*, vol. iii. art. – An account of the origin of the living god at the village of Chinchore, near Poona.

Hanuman, another deified man, and who is now extensively worshipped in India, was miraculously conceived. Our authority says – “It is related that a married Brahmany, named Angeri, being childless, had piously performed divers acts leading to fecundity: such as supplication and sacrifice, etc., etc., ... and had by these powerful means so exhorted the favor of the generative deity, Rudra, that he promised her an incomparable offspring, and directed her to fix her eyes in profound attention on the sun, holding upward the palms of her hands (in the posture of suppliant expectancy, called ‘angli’), and to eat directly of any substance that might, heaven-directed, fall therein – calling on his name.” The account goes on to say that a kite flew over with a cake and let it fall into her hand. “She ate it, as ordered, and became pregnant, and in due season was delivered of a son. This child was Hanuman. – *Moor's Hindoo Pantheon*, p. 316.

Kabir, founder of the Kabir Panthis, another sect of Hindoos, was miraculously conceived. Our authority says – “The origin of the founder of this sect is variously narrated, although in the main points the traditions are agreed. The story told in the Bhakata Mala is that he was the son of a virgin widow of Brahmin, whose father was a follower of Ramanand (another founder of a sect). At his daughter's frequent request, he took her to see a Ramanand, and that teacher, without adverting to her situation, saluted her with the benediction he thought acceptable to all women, and wished her the conception of a son. His words could not be recalled, and the young widow, in order to conceal the disgrace thus inflicted on her, contrived to be privately delivered, and exposed to the child. It was found by a weaver and his wife, and brought up as their own.” – *Wilson's Religion of the Hindus*, vol. i. p. 17.

Sampson, Samuel, and John the Baptist, three renowned men of Jewish history, although it is not stated that they were incarnations of the Deity, yet, according to the relation, they were conceived in a miraculous manner.

Sampson's mother was barren, and an angel appeared to her and informed her that she should bear a son, who should become an extraordinary man and initiate the deliverance of his nation from bondage, which predictions came to pass. – Judges, chap. xiii. Josephus, in relating the story more in detail, makes it appear, as in most of the cases of miraculous conceptions amongst all nations, that the favor was granted as a reward of the piety of the parents. He says – “There was one Manoah, a person of such great virtue that he had few men his equals, and without dispute the principal person of his country. He had a wife celebrated for her beauty, and excellency among her contemporaries. He had no children, and being uneasy at his want of posterity, the untreated God to give them seed of their own bodies to succeed them. ... Now, when his wife was once alone, an apparition was seen by her; it was an angel of God, and resembled a young man, beautiful and tall, and brought her the good news, that she should have a son born by God's providence, that should be a goodly child, of great strength,” etc. – *Antiquities of the Jews*, book v. chap. 8.

Samuel's mother was barren, and she prayed unto God for a son, and vowed that should her wish be granted that she would devote him to his service. The account goes on to say that God granted her

prayer, that she kept her vow, and that Samuel, her son, became a great prophet, and the principal religious and political man of the country. -- 1 Samuel i. 17.

John the Baptist's mother was barren, and both she and Zacharias, her husband, were well stricken in years; they were very pious people, "walking in all the commandments and ordinances of God blameless." At one time, when Zacharias was in the temple, an angel appeared, and informed him that his wife should bear a son, who would become a great man. Zacharias replied to the angel that he could not believe it, seeing that both himself and his wife were so old; but the angel affirmed that the prediction should come true, and as an evidence, that Zacharias should become and remain dumb until the child was born, which accordingly came to pass. -- Luke i.

The last particular miraculous conception which we shall notice is that of the Virgin Mary. The following is the story as given in the Gospel of Mary: -- "Her (Mary's) father's name was Joachim, and her mother's Anna. ... Their lives were plain and right in the sight of the Lord, pious and faultless before men, for they divided all their substance in three parts: one of which they devoted to the temple and officers of the temple; another they distributed among strangers, and persons in poor circumstances; and the third they reserved for themselves and the uses of their own family. In this manner they lived for about twenty years chastely, in the favor of God, and the esteem of men, without any children; but they vowed, if God should favor them with any issue, they would devote it to the service of the Lord; on which account they went at every feast in the year to the temple of the Lord." At length an angel appeared to Joachim and Anna, and informed them that their prayers were heard, that they should have a daughter, who should be an extraordinary individual, and while yet a virgin bring forth a son, to be the saviour of the world. The promised child was born accordingly shortly afterwards, and named Mary.

The doctrine of the miraculous conception of Mary has for many years been the subject of controversy in the Christian Church. An authority before us, referring to it, says -- "In support of this doctrine more perhaps has been written than upon any other point of ecclesiastical controversy. ... One author, Peter D'Alvia, has published forty-eight folios on the mysteries of the conception." -- *Brady's Clavis*, vol. ii. p. 316.

Another writer in referring to it says -- "Conception (Immaculate), a doctrine maintained both in the Romish and Greek churches, that the Virgin Mary was conceived in the womb of a her mother without the slightest stain of sin, and in the same state of purity in which Christ was conceived in her womb. ... The council of Trent, in its decree on original sin, declared that the conception of all men in a state of sin, does not include the Virgin Mary." And, finally, in the year "1854, Pious IX, the present Pope, declared this tenet to be henceforth an article of faith, binding upon the consciences of all faithful Romanists, and which dare not to be disbelieved or denied under pain of final condemnation." *Faiths of the World*, art. Conception Immaculate.

Such are the particular relations which we have collected from a very limited search amongst universal history, respecting divine incarnations and miraculous conceptions. We read the story of the miraculous conception of Jesus, Sampson, Samuel, John the Baptist, and one or two other renowned men, and reflecting on the tendency of mankind in general, to relate extraordinary things of those they admire, the question naturally arose -- Was it not the work of an after age to ascribe to the prominent actors and extraordinary origin which they themselves never heard of? We felt convinced that it was, and reasoned thus:-- If our theory is correct, there will be found scattered through history, accounts of the miraculous origin of most of the men who have become famous in the world -- as conquerors, founders of dynasties, founders of religions, philosophers, eminent religious teachers, etc. -- in the lives of such men as Alexander, Romulus, Caesar, Genghis Khan, Attila, Tamerlane, Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Mahomet, Homer, Socrates, Plato, Pythagoras, and others; and as far as opportunity has allowed our search, the truth of the theory has been emphatically demonstrated; in fact, it appears from history, that so common has been the ascription of a miraculous origin to great men who have lived in the long past, as to have been almost universal.

Justin Martyr, in his appeal for the toleration of Christianity, addressed to Adrian and Antonius, the Roman emperors, in the year 141, referring to the then existing belief of the Pagans, respecting their famous men of ancient times, says -- "By declaring ... our master, Jesus Christ, to be born of a virgin

without any human mixture ... We say no more in this than what you say of those whom you style the Sons of Jove.” – quoted from *Justin’s Apology*, in *Taylor’s Diegesis*, p. 316.

Further, the reader of ancient history is aware, that so many of the eminent men of the ancient world have been deified, and their real history disfigured by accounts of divine origin and superhuman exploits, as almost in these later times to place them out of the character of real existencies, into that of the mythological; and this is not only the case with respect to the famous men of ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, etc., but particularly of India and China. In India they called an incarnation of the deity an Avator; and there histories are full of accounts respecting them. Mr. Moor, in his *Hindu Pantheon*, p. 402, remarks – “A learned Pandit, discoursing on the history of Jesus Christ, observed to me, that the English were a new people, and hitherto, perhaps, had in our confined records, a history of but one Avatara; whereas the Hindus, from their antiquity, and from the profundity of their sacred historical books, had an account of a great many that took place in remote parts, as well as in India; and that very likely, if the Puranas were closely examined, the incarnation of our Saviour would be found recorded in them.”

Another writer thus refers to the universality of the ascription of miraculous conceptions to great men in China: – “It followed from these prepossessions that the great prophets, Confucius and Mencius, must both have been miraculously born of virgins. It was even laid down that all saints and sages called Tien-tse, or Sons of Heaven, are without mortal fathers, and so called because their mothers conceived them by the operation of Heaven. There is a whole volume in the Chinese annals called births of the saints, filled with accounts of great men and kings born miraculously. The virgin mothers of antiquity bear appropriately significant names, as ‘Expected Beauty,’ ‘Pure Virgin,’ ‘Universal Felicity,’ ‘Great Fidelity,’ – *Mackay’s Progress of the Intellect*, vol. ii. p. 350.

We should rather have avoided dealing with this subject, a consideration of which must from its nature be unpopular, but had we done so we should have been unfaithful to history. He who would attempt to explain the character of Jesus and define his real historical position should deal with his character in every important aspect, and this is a most important one; in fact, the real point in question is whether Jesus was God or man – whether the Christians, like the Buddhists, Tacists, Sintooists, and others, have merely deified the man who founded their faith, and now worship him as God – or, whether he was God in reality from the beginning. For if Jesus, like them, was only a frail man, similar to ourselves, the sooner that mankind cease to pay him the honors which can be only due to a Supreme Being of infinite attributes the better. We see in the relation of the divine incarnation of Jesus but one story of a class – a story exactly similar to hundreds of others that have arisen in other countries under similar conditions; and the presumption is strong upon our mind that it, like them, is utterly fictitious, and consequently unworthy the belief of mankind. The origination of this belief in miraculous conceptions is particularly seen in the case of the Virgin Mary. She was first esteemed as a woman, simply because she was the mother of Jesus; she then gradually, in the course of ages, rose in the estimation of the Christian world, until at length she was deified, styled at the “Mother of God” and worshipped; and in accordance with the natural mode of procedure in nearly all the religious systems throughout the world, a miraculous conception was added to her history, and made a tenet of the faith; and, it is by no means improbable, that if by any chance it should so happen, that veneration for the person of Jesus should still increase, that this principle of deification may be carried farther, and the miraculous conception of his grandmother may yet be made a tenet of the faith, binding upon the consciences of the faithful, under pain of eternal condemnation. But we do not believe that this delusion will increase, for appearances – the signs of the times – are emphatically against it; rationalism is spreading with giant strides, and already more than one hundred million Protestants totally disbelieve; and many millions in Catholic countries are beginning to doubt in even the miraculous conception of the so-called “Mother of God” herself; and we are firm in the faith, that this rationalistic criticism cannot be stayed, but that it will sweep away the belief in all miraculous conceptions whatever, including that of Jesus itself; and we repeat, that if it is only a venerated delusion, the sooner that it is exploded the better – for a belief in error of any kind, no matter how sacred, can never advance, but must retard that the best interests of man. We are aware that it is objected by some well-intentioned and good men, that in dealing with this subject, we are treading with unhallowed feet upon holy ground. Matthew Henry, in his Comments on the first chapter of Matthew, speaking the sentiments of this class of men, says – “The

mystery of Christ's incarnation is to be adored, not pried into." But this is a most pernicious doctrine -- universally apply the principle, and Buddha, and all other incarnate gods throughout the world, must still be adored by their respective votaries. *Nothing that a man can believe is too sacred for investigation; everything that a man does believe should be investigated.* If a thing is eternally true, examination cannot prove it false, but must in the nature of things, make the truth more apparent in examination; error only suffers, and it should suffer, but truth never can; for, in the words of our motto, ***"Truth is immortal and shall live; Error is mortal and shall die."***

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We may remark, before leaving the present subject, that there is another class of incarnations spoken of in history -- we refer to incarnations of the devil. Upon the same principle that the admirers of famous men have ascribed to them a pure maternity and divine paternity, so they have ascribed to other famous men whom they have looked upon with prejudice, dislike, or abhorrence, and infamous maternity, and diabolical paternity.

The Jews and ancient Christian fathers taught that the deified men of the heathen world were either devils incarnate, although begotten by Satan, the arch-devil. We have seen it somewhere related that many Christians have taught that Mahomet was begotten by the devil.

It has also been held by many Christians, that the man who is to appear as Antichrist will be born of an infamous female begotten by the devil. St. Alphonsus Liguori, in his *Dissertation on a Future State*, says -- "A certain little book on Antichrist is circulated under the name of St. Augustine. In this work it is stated that Antichrist shall be born of a virgin by the operation of the devil." But the general opinion, as might be expected, appears to be against the idea of his mother being so respectable a person as a virgin; and Liguori adds -- "St. Hypolytus, St. Ephram of Syria, St. John of Damascus, say that Antichrist will be born of an unmarried woman of infamous character."

And, lastly, the Catholics have asserted that Luther, the great arch-heretic, was begotten by the devil. Bayle, in his *Dictionary of Biography*, referring to the Catholics, says -- "They have dared to publish that an incubus begat him. Father Maimbourg has been so equitable as to reject this ridiculous story. He was born, says he, at Isleben, in the county of Mansfield, in the year 1483, not of an incubus, as some, to render him more odious, have written, without any appearance of truth, but as other men are born -- a thing never called in question till he became an Heresiarch, which he might easily be without any need of substituting a devil in the place of his father, John Ludar, or disgracing his mother, Margarite Linderman, by so infamous a birth." -- *Bayle's Dictionary* art. Life of Luther.

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## CHAPTER VII.

Asserted by the various votaries of each religion that miraculous events attended the birth of their founder --  
Instances adduced from history -- Jesus -- Buddha -- Mahomet -- Confucius -- Zoroaster -- Nanak --  
Chaitanya -- Mehdi.

With respect to the miraculous occurrences of at the birth of Jesus, it is related in Luke that an angel appeared to some shepherds who were keeping their flocks in the country, and informed them that he brought good tidings of great joy, for that a saviour was born; that the shepherds, believing the announcement, left their flocks, went and saw the child; and that the angel who informed the shepherds was accompanied with "a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." -- Luke ii. 7 - 16.

In Matthew it is related that some wise men are having seen a star in their own country, and knowing that it indicated the birth of a king, came into Judea to worship him -- the star went before them as a guide, and finally pointed out the locality of the child, whom they immediately worshipped and presented with gifts. -- Matthew ii. 1 - 11.

Another account says that when the "Virgin Mary" was about to be delivered of Jesus, Joseph taking her and the rest of his family, started to go to the town of Bethlehem to be taxed -- as the Roman emperor had commanded that all Jews who belonged to the town of Bethlehem should be taxed\*

*[Footnote added:*

\*The writer of this legend seems to have been a little more circumspect than the author of Luke's gospel; for, instead of asserting a thing so much at variance with and so easily disproved from Roman and other history, as that the whole world was taxed at the command of Augustus Caesar (Luke ii. 1 - 2), he informs us that it was only the Jews belonging to Bethlehem that were taxed, a thing from its insignificance not so easily disapproved in later times. But still the glaring absurdity remains, that under any system of regular government, and especially that of the Roman, a poor man would be required to take his family, leave the town in which he dwelt, and travel one hundred and twenty miles simply to be taxed.]

When they had arrived at a desert place within three miles of Bethlehem, the signs of parturition coming upon the virgin, she requested Joseph to take her down from the ass on which she rode. "And Joseph took her down; and he found there a cave and let her into it. And leaving her and his sons in the cave, Joseph went forth to seek a Hebrew midwife in the village of Bethlehem; but as I was going, said Joseph, I looked into the air, and I saw the clouds astonished, and the fowls of the air stopping in the midst of their flight; and I looked down toward the earth and saw a table spread, and working people sitting around it, but their hands were upon the table, and they did not move to eat; they who lifted their hands up to their heads did not draw them back; and they who lifted them up to their mouths did not put anything in; but all their faces were fixed upwards. And I beheld the sheep dispersed, and yet the sheep stood still, and the shepherd lifted up his hands to smite them, and his hand continued up. And I looked unto a river, and saw the kids with their mouths close to the water and touching it, but they did not drink. Then I beheld a woman coming down from the mountains, and she said to me, Where art thou going, O man? and I said, I go to enquire for a Hebrew midwife; she replied to me, Where is the woman that is to be delivered? and I answered, in the cave, and she is betrothed to me: then said the midwife, is she not thy wife? Joseph answered, it is Mary, who was educated in the Holy of the Holies, in the house of the Lord, and she fell to me by lot, and is not my wife, but as conceived by the Holy Ghost. The midwife said, is this true? he answered, come and see. And the midwife went along with him and stood in the cave. Then a light cloud overshadowed the cave; ... but on a sudden, the cloud became a great light in the cave, so do their eyes could not bear it. But the light gradually decreased until the infant appeared and sucked the breast of his mother." -- Gospel of Protovangelian, chap. 1.

Another account says -- "It was sunset when the old woman and Joseph with her reached the cave, and they both went into it, and behold it was all filled with light greater than the light of lamps and candles, and greater than the light of the sun itself. The infant was then wrapped up in swaddling clothes and sucking the breast of his mother. ... After this, when the shepherds came and had made a fire, they were exceedingly rejoicing, the heavenly host appeared to them, praising and adoring the Supreme God,

and the shepherds were engaged in the same employment. The cave at that time seemed like a glorious temple, because both the tongues of angels and of men united to adore and magnify God, on account of the birth of the Lord Christ. But when the old Hebrew woman saw these evident miracles, she gave praises to God, and said, I thank thee, O God, thou God of Israel, for mine eyes have seen the birth of the saviour of the world.” – 1 Gospel of the Infancy, chap. 1. 9 - 21.

Miraculous events attended the birth of Buddha. A Buddhist sacred writer informs us that from his conception thousands of angels kept watch, “even until he was born, to prevent any evil happening to the mother or child. From the day of his conception the queen suffered none of those evils or inconveniences which usually attend the bearing of children, but remained comfortably enjoying herself amidst her attendants.” About the time of her delivery, having a desire, she started on a short pleasure trip to see some of her relations. On the road thither she went into a beautiful garden, and, unexpectedly, Buddha was born under a tree. “When they arrived at the tree, the queen, wishing to take hold of a limb which was wholly covered with flowers, as a young rattin bends in the fire, it bent down to meet her hand; the queen taking hold of the limb with one hand, and her sister with the other, she was seized with labour, on which the young maids in attendance made a screen, and put the men on the outside. As easily as all oil glides from one golden cup to another, and with the dignity with which a priest descends from his pulpit, the boy arose from his cross-legged posture, and being perfectly free from all impurity, came standing in the world. At that moment, four Brahmans from Aga-neik-ta (one of the Buddhist heavens), came with a piece of gold-lace network, each taking a corner, stood before the mother, and received the child upon it, saying to her, ‘O, most excellent queen, be joyful, you have received the treasure of a son. The boy, like a precious stone, ... shone most brilliantly. Thus was the great Buddha born! Though he was free from all impurity, the Nats (angels), wishing to make an offering, caused two streams of water to fall down from the clouds, the one warm, the other cold, for the bathing of the mother and child. The Nats rejoiced greatly with music and dancing, throwing up their pasos, and making other demonstrations of joy.’ A certain sage perceiving the manifestations of joy among the angels, ‘enquired why they were so much more joyful than at other times; they replied, there is a son born to king Thoke-dau-da-na, who will become Boodh, and we shall see him, and he the law from his lips; therefore, we rejoice.’” The sage immediately came and worshipped the holy child, which the child's father seeing, worshipped him also. – From the life of Gotama (Buddha), given in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. iii. art. 1.

The following on the same subject is taken from *Upham's Sacred and Historical Books of Ceylon*. A series of ninety questions respecting the chief points of Buddhist doctrine was proposed by the Dutch governor of Ceylon to a Buddhist chief priest of that island. The 24<sup>th</sup> question and answer refers to Buddha's miraculous birth, and is as follows: –

Q. “Describe all the strange things or wonders that took place on the birthday of the Buddha Gautama.

A. “At the moment of the birth of our Buddhu, Maha-Brahma (prince of the Brahmas, one of the heavenly orders), received him in a golden net, and feasting his eyes with his beauty, he addressed the queen: – ‘I congratulate thee on the birth of a son from your womb, who is supreme over the whole three worlds (earth, heaven and hell):’ and soon after two bodies of water, similar to a large bar of silver, having come from above, and washing the mother and the child, it instantly vanished; and from the hands of the Maha-Brahma, the child was received in a soft and convenient hide of a tiger, by the king called Weeran-Rejas, and by the priests in a superfine linen cloth, from whose hands the child wanting to descend, pointed its feet towards the earth, and instantly a large flower emerged forth and received the child's feet, who then standing on the flower, looked up and down in the ten directions (according to the Cingalese calculation), when all the gods, the Brahmas, and the human beings, with offers of fragrant flowers, lifting up their hands unto their foreheads, addressed him: ‘Lord there is no one either to equal or excel you; you are the most high.’ And, thereupon, he went seven steps towards the north, when step by step sprung forth flowers; then stopping and saying, ‘I will be the highest; I will be the chief and the superior over all the worlds,’ he set up a loud but not terrifying noise, which noise, piercing into the 10,000 worlds, the 10,000 Brahmas in those worlds, holding white umbrellas each three leagues in

height, offered the same, etc., etc. ... At the moment of the aforesaid birth, the world experienced thirty-two unprecedented acts of bounty, namely: --

1. The earth of the ten thousand worlds quaked.
2. Every world paid homage unto one.
3. All born blind obtained sight.
4. The deaf obtained their hearing.
5. The dumb the power of speech.
6. The lame the power of walking.
7. The hump-back and bowed were straitened.
8. They confined had their release.
9. The hell-fire suffered a momentary extinguishment.
10. The demons had their hunger satisfied.
11. The brutes banished their dread.
12. The infirm were made whole.
13. The world was established by paternal words (or all men became friends.)
14. The horses neighed.
15. The elephants yawled.
16. The lions roared.
17. All the rest of the quadrupeds made a melodious howling.
18. Every jeweller's utensils made a sound.
19. A body of light dispersed throughout every ten directions.
20. The air was agitated with gentle winds.
21. The heavens rained.
22. A body of water emerged up, penetrating the earth.
23. All kinds of poultry descended into the earth without flying in the air.
24. The streams of the rivers stopped.
25. The salt water of the ocean became fresh.
26. The sea was adorned with flowers.
27. The flowers were blown on the surface of the land and sea.
28. Every tree was bent down with flowers.
29. The flowers emerged up by penetrating through the ground, stones, and trunks of trees.
30. The heaven was canopied with a flower canopy.
31. The whole world rained upon throughout with flowers.
32. How whole world was filled with banners;

and, beside all these thirty-two things, a variety of other miracles reached the world, both at the moment the Buddha was conceived in his mother's womb, and at the moment he was born, and therefore it is too tedious to describe by a concise enumeration." -- *Sacred and Historical Books of Ceylon*, vol. iii. p. 44 - 48; see also, *Sir's Ceylon and the Cingalese*, vol. ii. p. 64 - 66; *Westminster Review*, Jan. 1830, art. Hist. and Doc. Of Buddhism; *Asiatic Journal*, vol. xxii. art. The Buddhists of Ceylon (from Cingalese authorities).

Miraculous events attended the birth of Mahomet. One authority says - "His birth was accompanied by signs and portents, announcing a child of wonder. His mother suffered none of the pangs of travail. At the moment of his coming into the world, a celestial light illuminated the surrounding country, and the new-born child, raising his eyes to heaven, exclaimed, 'God is great! there is no God but God, and I am his prophet.' Heaven and earth, we are assured, were agitated at his advent. Lake Sawa shrank back

to its secret springs, leaving its borders dry; while the Tigris, bursting its bounds, overflowed the neighboring lands. The palace of Khosru, king of Persia, shook to its foundations, and several of its towers were toppled to the earth. In that troubled night, the Khadi, or Judge of Persia, beheld, in a dream, a ferocious camel conquered by an Arabian courser. He related his dream in the morning to the Persian monarch, and interpreted it to portend danger from the quarter of Arabia. In the same eventful night, the sacred fire of Zoroaster, which, guarded by the Magi, had burned without interruption for upwards of a thousand years, was suddenly extinguished; and all the idols of the world of suddenly fell down. The demons, as evil genii, which lurk in the stars and the signs of the Zodiac, and exert a malignant influence over the children of men, were cast forth by the pure angels, and hurled, with their arch-leader, Eblis, or Lucifer, into the depths of the sea.” – *Irving's life of Mahomet*, chap. 2.

Another authority says – “The following are a few specimens of wonders that followed the birth of the Mahommed. Amina (his mother) relates that she heard a fearful noise, which cast her into an agony of terror, but immediately a white bird came, and laying its wings upon her bosom, restore her confidence. She became thirsty, and anon a cup of delicious beverage, white like milk, and sweet like honey, was presented by an unseen hand; heavenly voices, and the tread of steps, were heard around her, but no person was seen. A sheet was let down from heaven, and a voice proclaimed that the blessed Mahommed was to be screened from mortal view: numerous birds of Paradise, with ruby beaks and wings of emerald, strutted along, regaling her with surpassing warbling; men from the mid heaven scattered aromas around her, etc. No sooner was Mahommed born, than he prostrated himself on the ground, and raising his hands to heaven, prayed earnestly for the pardon of his people. He was then swept away in the cloud of light, and carried to the four quarters of creation, that all things might recognize the glories of Mahommed, and know that in him all the excellencies of the previous prophets centred – the vicegerency of Adam, the beauty of Joseph, the grace of Jesus, etc. Safia, Mahommed’s aunt, was present at his birth, and testified to six memorable incidents. *First*, the newborn prophet performed obsequence, and prayed with a slow and distinct voice, ‘Oh, Lord, pardon my people; *Second*, in clear and eloquent tones, he repeated the creed, ‘I bear witness that there is no God but the Lord alone, and that I am his apostle.’ *Third*, the light of Mahommed obscured the lamp. *Fourth*, she was about to wash the new-born babe, when a voice from the unseen world said, ‘Oh, Safia, trouble not myself, I have sent forth the blessed Mahommed washed and pure. *Fifth*, he was born circumcised and with his naval cut. *Sixth*, on his holy back the seal of prophecy was visible in letters of light, more resplendent than the morning star, viz., ‘There is no other God,’ etc. Three persons, brilliant as the sun, appeared from heaven. One held a silver goblet, the second an emerald tray, the third a silken towel; they washed him seven times, then blessed and saluted him with a glorious address as the prince of mankind. Abdal Muttalib was at the time in the Caaba, where a number of prodigies and voices from the holy temple apprized him of the wonderful event. He instantly repaired to Amina, and ... insisted on seeing his grandchild; she informed him that its invisible guardians had ordered that no one should see it for three days. Abdal Muttalib thereupon fell into a rage, and threatened to kill either himself or her. She was about to produce the child, when one, with a drawn sword, stepped between, and exclaimed, that no mortal should set eyes upon the babe, until all the favored angels had visited him. Abdal Muttalib was affrighted, and the sword dropped from his hand. Are the kings of the earth were struck with dumbness, and remained inarticulate for a day and a night.” Etc. – *Calcutta Review*, vol. xvii. art. Biographies of Mahommed for India; see also, *North American Review*, volume lxxi. p. 276; *Bayle's Dictionary*, art. Mahomet; *Universal History*, vol. i. p. 11 - 12; *Calcutta Review*, vol. xxii. p. 365.

Miraculous events attended the birth of Confucius. One authority says – “On the memorable night when Confucius was born, two dragons were seen crawling over the roof of the house; five elders appeared in the great hall; celestial music was heard in the firmament, and two goddesses descended, bearing a vase of fragrant waters, with which they bathed the happy mother.” – *Chinese Repository*, vol. xviii. p. 341.

Another writer says – “Various prodigies, as in other instances, were the forerunners of the birth of this extraordinary person. On the eve of his appearance upon earth two dragons encircled the house, and celestial music sounded in the ears of his mother. When he was born this inscription appeared on his breast – “The maker of a rule for settling the world.” – *Davis' China*, vol. iii. p. 129.

Another writer says – “His birth was attended by extraordinary prodigies, all emblematic of his future greatness. ... For the first time and last time the mysterious animal, the keling, appeared alive on earth,” etc. – *Forbes’ Five Years in China*, p. 119.

Miraculous events attended at the birth of Zoroaster. Malcolm, in his *History of Persia*, vol. i. p. 193, says – When he was born “he burst into a loud laugh, and such a light shone from his body as illuminated the whole room.”

Pliny the Elder says – “Zoroaster was the only man that ever we could hear of who laughed the day that he was born; his brain did so evidently pant and beat that it would bear up their hands that laid them upon his head – a most certain presage and foretoken of the great learning that afterwards he attained unto.” – *Pliny’s Natural History*, book vii. chap. 16.

Another ancient writer says – “When the moon breathed light on the world, the holy Zartusht (Zoroaster) was born. As he left the womb he laughed; the house was enlightened by that laughter; his father was astonished at him – at his laughter, and beauty, and loveliness – he said in his heart, ‘This is the glory of God.’ Save this child, every infant born into the world has wept. They named the child Zartusht; great and small heard thereof; the word of the seer was fulfilled, as he had foretold the birth of the child. The women were envious of his laughter, and of the brightness of his destiny; they remained covetous of him, since the like of him had not been seen; they said, ‘We know not how this will be, or what will be the event.’ Child like this, saw they never; in beauty, the world would shew no equal to him: the city was filled with the news of the beauty and laughter of the infant; all who were unclean and evil were stung to the heart at that laughter. In those days were many magicians, who filled every place with their art; among them was spread anxiety; their souls were consumed as a torch; they said, ‘This is a calamity to us, we must remove this child from the world.’” – quoted from the Zartusht Nanah, or Parsee life of Zoroaster, appended to *Wilson’s Parsi Religion*.

Wonders attended the birth of Nanak. Our authority says – “Prodigy’s attended him from the first – on entering the world, he looked round and smiled. The nurse stated that at the moment she heard sounds resembling the cries of salutation and welcome with which a great man is received on his arrival. ...His mother, in a dream, beheld the gods worshipping and praising him.” – *Calcutta Review*, vol. xxxiii. art. Lahore Division.

Wonders attended to the birth of Chaitanya, founder of the Bengal Vaishnavas, a numerous sect of Hindoos. Our authority says – “At last to happy and long-wished-for day arrived; Chaitanya, who was full thirteen months in the womb, was ushered into the world in the month of Phalgun, in the year 1485 of the Christian era. The advent of such an illustrious personage could not take place without the accompaniment of miraculous occurrence. The moon suffered an eclipse. ... The joy of the people was great; they flocked to have a sight of the infant divinity; there was one especially whose joy knew no bounds, it was Adwaita Ananda (a sage); he danced, wept, and laughed round the village to the infinite amusement of the spectators. But Nadiya was not the only scene of festivity; the heavens were filled with gladness, and the Debtas (angels) shouted for joy. The countless deities of Vaikantha, and all the bright-robed dwellers of that happy paradise, the biographer gravely tells us, assuming the forms of men, visited the new-born babe and gave gifts to him. – *Calcutta Review*, vol. xv. p. 174 - 175, art. Chaitanya and the Vaishnavas of Bengal.

Wonders attended the birth of Medhi, founder of the Mahometan sect of Mehdivis, who was born near Benares, in the year 849 of the Hegira. Our authority says – “Many miraculous circumstances attended his birth; he is said to have spoken in his mother’s womb\* and when he was born that it was observed that he had no shadow.” – *Transactions of Bombay Lit. Soc.* vol ii. chap. 14.

[Footnote added:

\*An analogous story respecting John the Baptist is recorded in Luke i. 44.]

*[Glued inside the back cover on a coloured sheet of paper, smaller than the pages of the main book is the following leaflet:*

## WILL BE PUBLISHED SHORTLY

# PART TWO

CONTAINING: --

1. A discourse on the asserted predictions respecting religious founders.
2. On their asserted extraordinary precocity.
3. On their asserted extraordinary beauty of person.
4. On asserted unparalleled wisdom and goodness.
5. Respecting the prodigies said to have occurred at their death.
6. Respecting the miraculous power of their relics.
7. Respecting the cures wrought by Jesus.
8. Respecting the general question of casting out of devils in different countries of the world in ancient and modern times.

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PARTS 3 and 4 containing a Discourse demonstrating the strong probability that Jesus and Paul were both honest visionaries.

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### ERRATA TO PRESENT NUMBER.

Page 11. -- Instead of "Gospel of May," read Gospel of Mary".

Page 86 -- In passage referred to as making a man two years older than his father, instead of "2 Chronicles, xxi. 20 - 22," read 2 Chronicles, xxi. 20, xxii. 1 - 2.