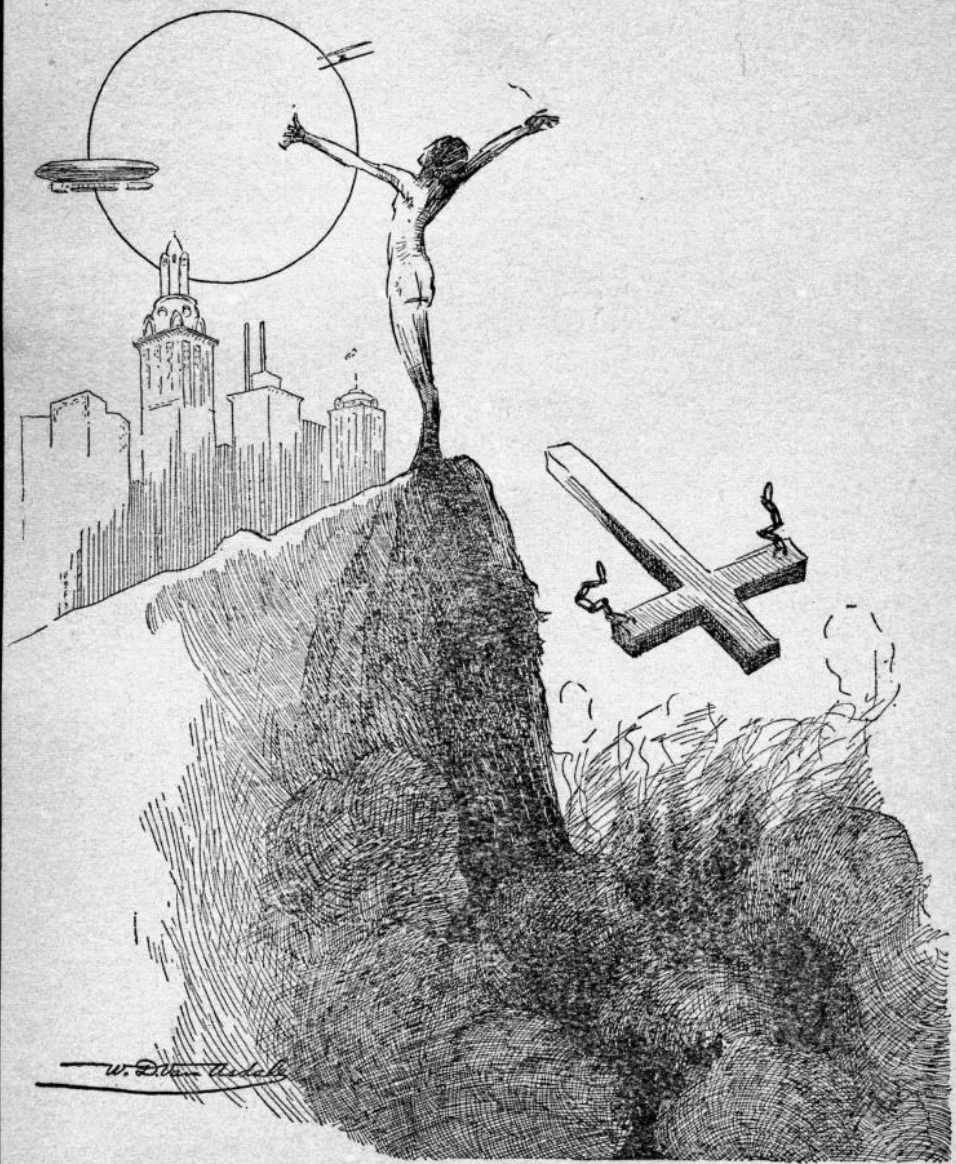


# CHRISTIANITY.

THE WORLD'S FAST  
FADING FAITH.

A LECTURE BY  
MARSHALL J. GAUVIN





NEW 25

# CHRISTIANITY:

## The World's Fast-Fading Faith

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## FOREWORD

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One of the marked characteristics of this inquisitive age is the decay of religious belief, and nothing is more certain than that all reverence for the dogmas of Christianity is rapidly disappearing from the world. In his great work on "*The Decay of the Church of Rome*," Joseph McCabe, one of the foremost living students of the history of Christianity, shows that in France the church has lost since 1870, 25,000,000 people, and that when these are added to those she lost before 1870, she is left with a population of about 5,500,000 Catholics in France out of a total population of more than 39,000,000. Her loss in Italy he places at 6,000,000; in Spain at 4,000,000; in Portugal at 500,000; and in Spanish America at 8,000,000; making a total loss in the Latin world, sustained overwhelmingly during the last 50 years, of 43,500,000.

In England and Wales she has lost 2,000,000; in Scotland, 250,000; in Canada, 700,000; in Australasia, 550,000; and in the United States, where, according to the immigration and the natural increase of her people, she should have "23,000,000 without a single convert," she has only 9,000,000, having lost in the United States 14,000,000. These figures show her total loss in the English speaking world to be 17,500,000.

For the Germanic and Slavonic world, Mr. McCabe apportioned the losses of the mother church as follows: German Empire, 5,000,000; Austria-Hungary, 4,000,000; Switzerland, 500,000; Belgium, 2,500,000; Holland, 300,000; and Russia, 6,500,000; making a total loss in the Germanic and Slavonic world of 18,800,000.

If these figures are correct, the leakage from the Church of Rome, during the last 50 or 60 years, amounts to about 80,000,000 people. This is an amazing conclusion. It shows that the once proud edifice of Catholicism is crumbling to the dust. It certifies that the dogmas, the pretensions, the claims of the oldest Christian church no longer find acceptance in the minds of thoughtful men. And yet Mr. McCabe repeatedly points out that if his book is in error, it is because his figures are too low; and that in every country native seceders from the Church of Rome place her losses higher than he does.

And what of Protestantism? Let us see. In 1886, the *British Weekly* took a census of the church-going population of the city of London; in 1903 a similar census was taken by the *Daily News*. The last census proved that during the inter-

vening period of 17 years the church-going population of London had decreased by nearly half a million. The Rev. Rhondda Williams, an English clergyman, declares that "already the cultured laity on the one hand and the bulk of the democracy on the other lie entirely outside of the churches."

Of religious decadence in America, the late Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage declared: "Within the last 25 years, the churches of this country have averaged less than two conversions a year each. There has been an average of four or five deaths in the churches. *We gain two; we lose four.*" In 1905, the Rev. Walter Laidlaw found that there were 1,071,981 churchless Protestants in New York city. Other American cities are, in some instances, even more unbelieving; while the last census showed that in the United States as a whole, out of a population of 92,000,000, only 34,000,000, or 36 per cent, were church members. Dr. Charles W. Eliot tells us of "the abandonment of churches altogether by a large proportion of the population in countries mainly Protestant."

The fact is that Protestantism, like Catholicism, is everywhere dying. Its dogmas and doctrines are no longer believed by the commanding minds of the world; its enthusiasm for progress has passed away; it is being criticised from within and from without and is powerless to defend its claims; it is permeated with heresy and unbelief and without any definite plan of action; its clergy hesitate, apologize, and speak without authority; while increasing millions are severing their connection with the churches.

The following lecture, delivered before the Pittsburgh Rationalist Society, at the Academy Theater, Sunday evening, December 3, 1916, by showing that the dogmas of Christianity are untenable in reason and untrue in fact, explains why that religion is the world's fast-fading faith.

M. J. G.

# CHRISTIANITY: THE WORLD'S FAST-FADING FAITH

By MARSHALL J. GAUVIN

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THE world no longer trembles in slavish fear. Priests and kings no longer rule. Man at last is free. The Dark Ages are gone. The midnight of ignorance has been passed. Mankind now face the rising sun. It is daybreak in the world of rational thought. The light of knowledge is illuminating all before. Superstition is taking her departure from the brain. Upon the brow of science has been placed the laurel wreath. And still the forward march of man leads on to greater truth, to higher happiness, and to more perfect freedom. The people are beginning to really think. Inquiry is becoming common; and nothing less than truth will satisfy the earnest seekers after light. In politics, in industry and in religion, there is universal unrest. Old ideas and institutions are being examined and judged.

The religion of the Christian world comes under the action of this general law. Reason says to Christianity: "You must be tested by my standard." Justice holds aloft her scales and says: "You must be balanced here."

Millions of men and women have studied Christianity and have rejected it. Unbelief is everywhere increasing with the advance of knowledge. The churches are growing empty. The pew has its doubts and the pulpit is not convinced. Hundreds of honest men are leaving the ministry and the priesthood, because they can no longer preach a theology they have outgrown. Thousands who are less honest continue to preach what they do not believe. The fact is notorious that promising young men shun the ministry as they would avoid a plague.

Everything points to the conclusion that Christian-

ity has passed the zenith of its power, and is now in process of rapid decay. Conscious of their growing weakness, the churches now talk of uniting. They want to bring together their scattered and shrunken forces, in order to do their best with their depleted resources. Accordingly, in the year 1911, the Presbyterians, the Methodists, and the Congregationalists of Canada, acting through their associated representatives, published a creed, as a basis on which it was hoped to effect the organic union of those religious bodies. This creed, the latest statement of Canadian Protestantism, is as good a definition of Christianity as can be made. It IS Christianity. Therefore, in discussing Christianity, I am going to examine this creed in the light of reason, of science, of Scripture and of history.

Speaking of God, these Christians say: "We believe in the one only living and true God, a spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being and perfections." According to Christianity, God is a spirit. But what is a spirit? Is it any kind of matter? How can it be material if it is spiritual? Can we conceive of a kind of matter that is not matter? Or is a spirit some form of force? This cannot be, for force cannot be conceived of apart from matter. Force and matter are fundamentally one. A force that is a spirit is as unthinkable as a kind of matter that is not material. Again I ask: What is a spirit? Is it something that has weight, density and extension? How can a spirit have weight? How can it occupy in a solid form a certain amount of space? Is it true, then, that God has no weight, and that he occupies no space? In this creed, we read of God's "being and perfection." But how can we conceive of a "being" without a definite bodily outline—without personality? And how can there be outline and personality, where there is no material body having size and shape? Again, why should God be spoken of as of the masculine gender? Can a spirit have sex?



The statement that God is a spirit is refuted by the Bible. According to the Bible, God "walked in the garden in the cool of the day;" ate butter, milk and veal with Abraham; wrestled with Jacob; talked with Moses face to face; and Isaiah speaks of his shaving somebody with a borrowed razor! It would seem that a God who walks, and talks, and eats, and wrestles, and shaves must be something more than a spirit. And yet a material God is just as inconceivable as a spiritual one.

The creed continues: "We worship Him in the unity of the Godhead, and the mystery of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three persons, of the same substance, equal in power and glory." At this point the story becomes amusing. Having failed even to conceive of one God, we are given two others to account for. The last two are made of the same substance as the first, the first being, however, not made of substance at all, but spirit. The three persons of the Godhead are also equal in power. This, however, can scarcely be, for we are told that the Father is infinite in power; and as there can be only one infinite power in the universe, it follows, if the Father has that power, that there can be no power left for either the Son or the Holy Spirit. But while there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and while each of these persons is the equal of either of the others and has infinite power, there are, in reality, not three gods—there is only one god. A spiritual person having infinite power and otherwise equal to God, is really not a God, but only a third part of a God. It takes three of these infinite persons, each of whom is at the same time only a third of God and yet equal to the whole of God, to make one complete God. For although there are three persons, three infinities, and three equals, there is, if you understand it rightly, only one person, one infinite and one who has no equals. So it turns out that three times one are one, and once three is not three

but only one. You will observe, also, that this God is worshipped in two ways—"in the unity of the Godhead and the mystery of the Holy Trinity." The God of Christianity is therefore a unity, a trinity, and a mystery. I submit that the existence of such a God would be a matter somewhat mysterious.

The second article of this creed reads as follows: "We believe that God has revealed Himself in Nature, in history and in the heart of man." Where, I ask, has God revealed himself in nature? Has he revealed himself in the construction of frightful monsters that tear with beak and claw and fang the flesh of other living creatures for their food? Has he revealed himself in the fate of the countless millions of human beings who have been devoured by these ferocious beasts? Are the earthquakes that have swallowed the sons and daughters of men, the volcanoes that have overwhelmed them, the tornadoes that have mangled them, the pestilences that have consumed them, and the famines that have starved them—are these to be regarded as evidences of God's directing hand in Nature?

And where shall we look for proofs of God in history? Shall we look in the tyranny of governments, in the carnage of ten thousand wars, in the endless chain of false religions and their horrid persecutions, in the overthrow of civilization and the triumphs of ignorance and barbarism over science, order and law?

Where was God when the Inquisition ruled the world? Where was he during the awful centuries when fanatical priests inflicted every form of torture on men, women and children, and gloated like fiends over the dying agonies of helpless innocence? In what nation, in what religion, at what times has God revealed himself in the human heart? Can the history of any Christian nation be pointed to as a shining credit to God? Is not the history of Christianity a long and gruesome story of ignorance, persecution and war? Was God revealing

himself in the human heart when scientists languished in dungeons and when helpless old women were burned as witches? Can it be that God reveals himself to the Mohammedan and the Jew as a unity, to the Presbyterian and the Catholic as a Trinity, and to the great world of science as the unknowable—the inconceivable? Is it not reasonable to suppose that if God were addressing himself to the human heart, we would all receive and understand the message? In the nature of things there can be no evidence that God has revealed himself in the physical world, in history, or in the heart of man.

Christians accept the Bible as the infallible word of God. The creed I have been quoting says: "We receive the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament and of the New Testament, given by inspiration of God, as containing the only infallible rule of faith and life." And yet, every rational, human thought is a proof that the Bible is a human book. The doctrine of inspiration crumbles the moment the volume is examined. The Old Testament maintains that Jehovah is the only God. The New insists that Jehovah had a Son, who was also a God. To the Jew it is blasphemy to say that God had a son; to the Christian it is blasphemy to say that he had not. The New Testament teaches immortality; the Old denies it. According to Paul, the Jewish law was abolished; according to Christ, that law is still in force. If Matthew, Mark and Luke are right, salvation is the reward of good conduct; if John is correct, only those who believe can be saved. And yet we are assured that from such glaring contradictions can be deduced an infallible rule of faith! Not only is the Bible infallible in matters of faith, it is, according to Christianity, the only infallible rule of life. Let us see. The Bible is the friend of polygamy; it upholds slavery; it commands religious persecution; it sanctions wars of extermination; it places on the head of murder a kingly crown. It will not do to tell those who have read the Bible and who know some-

thing of its influence on the world that it contains the only infallible rule of faith and life. It will not do. It is not true.

Christianity teaches "that God is the creator, upholder and governor of all things; that he is above all his works and in them all; and that he made man in his own image." If God created the universe, where did he get his materials? If there was a time when nothing existed except God, how did God bring an infinite universe into existence out of that nothing? Can we conceive of nothing becoming something? Why should we say that the universe needed a creator and that God did not? If God could exist from eternity, why could not the universe? The universe is here—God is inconceivable. The universe is composed of matter and force. Matter and force are indestructible and therefore uncreatable. We are forced to the conclusion that the universe is eternal.

And how are we to understand the assertion that God made man in his own image? Which man does God most resemble—the African, the Indian or the European? If it be held that man was made in the intellectual image of God, I ask again, which man? Was it the Hottentot, or was it Shakespeare? After all, is it not absurd to expect a man to believe that a boundless universe, resplendent with myriads of constellations of glowing suns, and teeming with all forms of life, was set in motion by a being who bears a strong resemblance to the average politician? Is it possible to extract the smallest amount of sense from the statement that man was made in the image of God?

After telling us that man was made "free and able to choose between good and evil," this latest creed of Protestantism says: "We believe that our first parents, being tempted, chose evil, and so fell away from God, and came into the power of sin, the penalty of which is eternal death; and that, by reason of this disobedience,

all men are born with a sinful nature, that we have broken God's law, and that no man can be saved but by His Grace." Christianity cannot get away from Adam and Eve—from the mythical Garden of Eden. There, according to the church, the human race began; there a tragedy was enacted that doomed mankind to endless woe; there the first man fixed his tear-stained eyes upon the ocean of eternal hell; there arose the cross on which God was to die. And yet Adam is but a child of yesterday. Nations had risen and fallen, religions had grown old and passed away, gods had been buried and science had been born, countless ages before Adam was invented.

The church clings to the fall of man as a drowning man clings to floating wreckage. It is her only hope. When that foundation vanishes our religion disappears. If there was no Adam, there was no Christ—no Fall, no Atonement. The church must argue, and does argue, that the first man was made perfect; that he disobeyed and fell to sin; and that, in consequence, we are wicked and shall be damned unless we believe in Christ. How utterly childish, how tragically foolish is the whole story when we examine it. Adam had just been fashioned from the earth. Eve had just been moulded from one of his ribs. Adam was therefore as ignorant as mud and Eve knew no more than a bone. Never having had the slightest experience, knowing nothing of the consequences of actions, utterly ignorant of right and wrong, they could not be held responsible for anything.

And yet to that mud man and bone woman, an infinite God, according to the church, gave a command involving, not only their own ruin, not only the everlasting damnation of nearly all the human beings of all future generations, but even the crucifixion of God himself! Think of an infinite god giving such a command to such human beings! Did he not know that they could not obey without a knowledge of consequences, and did

he not know that they had no knowledge? Did he not know that they would be tempted, that the serpent would deceive them? Did he not foresee their fall? Why did he not make them so that they would not fall? Why did he make the serpent wiser than the man? Why did he make the serpent at all? Is there not something peculiar about a religion that teaches that a serpent, a mud man, and a bone woman, crucified an infinite God?

Of course, God foresaw and foreordained it all. Having infinite knowledge, he knew that Adam's ruin was assured. Having infinite power, the serpent was but the instrument he used. If the fall occurred, God was responsible. Is there any wonder that Christianity is dying, when that religion means, if it means anything, that God designed the ruin of the human race, designed a hell in which to burn his children, and designed his own death on a cross to save a few!

But this is not only the meaning, it is the teaching of Christianity. Let me read to you what the Presbyterians, the Methodists and the Congregationalists have to say on this point: "We believe that the eternal, wise, holy and loving purpose of God embraces all events, so that while the freedom of man is not taken away, nor is God the author of sin, yet in His Providence, He makes all things work together in the fulfillment of His sovereign design, and the manifestation of His glory." Christianity must insist that man has a free will; but the logic of Christianity denies the freedom of the will—hence the contradiction in the passage I have quoted. If the eternal purpose of an infinite God embraces all events, how can man's will be free? How can a thing be independent and yet subject to the purpose of God? If God in his Providence makes all things work together to fulfill his sovereign design, where does the freedom of the will come in? Can I go my own way in spite of the purpose of an infinite power that seeks to manifest its glory in my actions? If God controls the universe,

he controls my thoughts and deeds, and all I think and do is subject to his will. If an infinite God foreknew what I would be, he also foreknew what I would not be, and if, having infinite power, he made me, knowing what I would be, he is responsible for my being what I am.

No amount of theological ingenuity can harmonize the freedom of the will with the infinity of God. If an infinite God controls the universe, and in his Providence contrives all things so that his sovereign design shall be fulfilled, not only is man's will not free, but God is responsible for all the evils of the world. If an infinite God is master of the world, he is responsible for all the countless cruel wars, for all the ages of consuming persecution that drenched the face of earth with tears and blood, for all the chains that wore their heavy links in human limbs, for all the backs that have been scarred with slavery's lash, for all the homesick, painful years that exiles have endured. If the events of the world illustrate the purpose of a sovereign providence, then to that providence is due the credit or the blame for inflicting on his children all the pains and the diseases that torture and deform the sons of men. Cancers, tumors and consumption, diphtheria, fevers and the cholera plague, are but a few of the means whereby his purpose is secured. He sends human beings into the world deaf and dumb and blind; he creates others without arms or legs; he makes myriads idiotic; and many millions are born to become insane. When the flesh of a tender woman is bruised by a brutal husband, it is a part of God's plan. When a weary traveller on a lonely road is murdered in the dead of night, his fate is but a detail of providential purpose. Honest industry in a hovel and indulgent idleness in a stately home, virtue clothed in rags and vice arrayed in silken robes, truth beneath the feet of priests and superstition made sublime, liberty dying on the scaffold and tyranny raised to the monarch's throne—these are but the means

by which the providence of God realizes its design. That is, if Christianity be true.

Recall the awful fate of the steamship Titanic. The great Titanic rides the ocean's waves. Her cargo is as precious as any that ever crossed the sea. Husbands with their wives, mothers with their babes, guardians with their charges, buoyant in spirit and hopeful of the future, are hurrying across the ocean to greet their loved ones and their friends. 'Tis Sunday night, and prayers ascend to God that all things may be well. But the God whose eternal design heeds not the cry of man, has ordained a sadder fate for the great ship and her precious lives. He steers his ice before her speeding prow. He hears the crash that wrecks her mighty frame. He sees her list and knows her fate is sealed. He sees the women's faces white with fear. He knows that man at best can save but few. He hears ten thousand prayers to him for help. But he extends no helping hand. He has a purpose in the awful tragedy. The prow sinks down and lower down. Despair displaces hope. Heroic men,—grander than God,—stand back that women may attempt to live. The great ship sinks forever from man's view, and more than fifteen hundred human lives are strangled in the ocean's icy waves.

God did not help. His eternal purpose and sovereign design had to be fulfilled. The greatest ocean tragedy known to man was enacted for the manifestation of God's glory! That is, if Christianity be true.

Put a God above all things, and you make him responsible for everything that happens. So I insist that if the first man sinned, and if, in consequence of that sin, God had to die, God himself was responsible for the tragedy.

But I am told that there is a devil; that this devil is nearly as strong as God; that it was really he who assumed the serpent's form and tempted Eve; and that



this devil now wars with God to conquer human souls for hell. But did not God make the devil? Did he not give him victory? And why has God allowed the devil to live so long? It is only on the sufferance of God that the devil can live. Why, then, should God enable his enemy to prosper and impoverish heaven to people hell? Again, I maintain that if there is a devil, God is responsible for all the devil does. Is it possible to imagine a more silly superstition than this story of the devil? In an age of science, is it not idiotic? But if there is no devil, there was no fall; and hell is left without a keeper. Ah, there's the rub! No devil—no fall, no atonement, no inspired Bible, no divine religion. Christ and the devil are the running mates of faith. When the devil vanishes, the saviour disappears. Satan carries on his back the religion of the Christian world.

But let me read you more from the creed: "We believe in and confess the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man, who, being the Eternal Son of God, for us men and for our salvation became truly man, being conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, yet without sin."

It is asserted that Christ is the eternal Son of God. But how can Christ be eternal, being the son of God? If Christ is the son of God, there must have been a time when he did not exist—a time before he was born. A father must be at least a little older than his son. Now, if God the Father existed before Christ the Son was born, and if God never had beginning, then God alone existed from eternity. Before Christ began to exist, an eternity must have passed away, during which time he had no existence, and if eternity rolled away before Christ was born, it surely cannot be maintained that he is eternal. Let me tell you that the Catholic church spent centuries in developing and establishing the dogma of the trinity. Let me tell you that during those centuries the Christian church—the divine insti-

tution—was torn into violent factions over the incomprehensible relationship of the three Gods in one. And let me tell you that during those centuries fanatical priests led infuriated mobs of ignorant Christians who fought with other priest-led mobs like ferocious fiends, and with an insane hatred drenched Christian lands with blood, on account of an invented dogma that none could understand.

But while it is held that Christ is the eternal son of God, it is admitted that he was born less than two thousand years ago. The fact that he existed before he was born will, I suppose, be easily understood by every pious Christian who has been born again! It is only those people who use their reason who find it difficult to believe that Christ was the creator of his own mother. The father of Christ is said to have been the Holy Ghost; but as the Father, Christ and the Holy Ghost are all one, Christ must have been his own father. That a God should be at once his own father and his own son is, I suppose, a matter of such common occurrences that we need not dispute it.

The mother of Christ was a young woman named Mary and she is said to have been a virgin. Whatever may have been the law of nature then, we know that virgins do not become mothers now. There is not a minister or a priest in the world, however benighted in superstition, who would believe that any child born today had for a father a Holy Ghost, and for a mother, a virgin. Were a man to stand in any church and insist that he knew of the birth of such a child in the family of a neighbor, even orthodox people would pronounce him mentally unsound; and he would perhaps be confined in an asylum. And yet, the Christian religion is founded on precisely such a story. What the knowledge of our day would spurn as the wild vagary of a disordered brain, the ignorance of the early Christians accepted as a revelation!

But who was the first to say that Christ was born of a virgin? We know that Christ himself never said a word about it. We know that not one of his disciples ever mentioned it. We know that the Apostle Paul was utterly ignorant of it. We know that neither Joseph nor Mary has left a written word to show that he or she had the slightest knowledge of it. Who can explain this silence? If Christ was born of a virgin, why did he not plainly say so? If Paul knew of the miracle that defied the laws of nature, why did he not devote at least a line to it in one of his epistles? If Mary knew herself to be the mother of a God, who was his own father as well as hers, why did she not proclaim the wondrous fact to all the world?

Where is the evidence to show that Christ was virgin-born? We are told that it is in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Let us see. Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph. What for? To show that Joseph was of the seed of David. What for? To show that Christ, through Joseph, was David's latest son. Luke also traces the genealogy of Joseph through the line of David. Again I ask, what for? Why, to show that Christ, through his father, Joseph, bore in his veins the royal blood of Judah's favorite king. These genealogies deny the virgin birth. They are given for the express purpose of showing that Joseph was of the royal line, and that he was Christ's father. If Joseph was not the father of Christ, why did the two Evangelists waste time and space in giving his genealogy? Is it possible that they recorded the genealogy of a man with the manifest intention of showing that he was Christ's father, when they knew that that man was no more the father of Christ than Julius Caesar?

Not only do the genealogies contradict the priestly invention of the virgin birth, but the miraculous birth is denied elsewhere in the Gospels. Luke says that when the infant Christ was presented at the Temple,

“Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.” The Revised Version says his father and mother marvelled. Why should Joseph be called “his father,” if he was not his father? And why should Mary marvel at the things that were said of her son, if she knew that her son was God? Again, when the anxious parents of the boy Christ found him in the Temple, his mother said to him: “Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.” Is it possible that Mary was mistaken as to the father of her child?

Let us take another step. Matthew tells us that when Jesus went into his own country, the people—those who knew him—those who knew his family—were astonished and offended. They would not believe in him. They said: “Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brethren, James and Joses, and Simon and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us?” Of course, those people—the men and women who had grown up as boys and girls with Christ—had never heard of his virgin birth. What an opportunity he had to tell them! But he was dumb. If the Gospels are not historically worthless, it is reasonable to believe that Christ was the eldest of a large family—that he had at least four brothers and two sisters. The evidence is overwhelming that, if he lived, he was born in the manner common to all men. The early Christians, for several generations, regarded him as a man. His divinity was a growth stimulated by necessity.

In the pagan world, rich in poetic gods and goddesses, Christianity could never have survived preaching the religion of a mere man. The popular imagination demanded gods and miracles. Gods were easily manufactured. The nations had been making them for countless ages. India, Egypt, Greece and Rome were full of gods. Their loves and hates, their sorrows and their joys, their patronage and their neglect; their all-

sustaining power and their destroying wrath, made up the mythologies of the world. Men of genius and distinction—philosophers, poets and emperors—were praised and worshipped as the sons of God. Divinity was looked for and had to be supplied. Christianity followed the custom of the pagan world. She cut her cloth according to the pattern then in vogue, and made the style of clothes the people wanted. Jehovah, who hated every other god, was forced to adopt a son. The preaching peasant of Galilee was deified, and placed beside the Jewish god on heaven's throne. Even his mother, who had cooked and sewed, and washed and scrubbed to rear her several children, was taken from her quiet grave by priests, and given a commanding seat in the council of the gods.

It is said that the miracles of Christ recorded in the Gospels prove his divinity. But before anything can be proven by miracles, the miracles themselves require to be proved. What is a miracle? A miracle is a violation of natural law—a fact produced by a master of nature, contrary to the order of nature. If two and two could make seven, that would be a miracle. If fire would freeze a thing and not consume it, that would be a miracle. If prayer could make a negro white, that would be a miracle. If a man whose head had been cut off could pick it up and walk away, that would be a miracle. In the nature of things, there can be no evidence to substantiate the miraculous. All evidence is the other way. All evidence is natural, and nature in her unity, upholds herself. Every fact is related to every other fact, and every fact bears witness to the ceaseless sway of universal law.

If a man were to try to prove a miracle, he would have to satisfy the reason that the miracle had happened. This he could not do, for reason is the product of natural order in the mind. He could not prove the unnatural by an appeal to nature. He could not persuade

nature to bear witness against herself. Reason repudiates the miraculous in self-defence. Where miracles are believed, reason does not rule. He who believes in miracles must throw his reason away. Now, if miracles cannot be accepted by the reason, must we believe in the miracles of Christ in spite of our reason? Must a man do violence to his mind in trying to believe what his mind pronounces to be false? Is such a belief worth holding?

Why should a man get rid of his reason to accept a religion? Is it a good religion that will not move into a man's mind until his sanity has moved out? Why should we believe in the miracles that are said to prove the divinity of Christ? Is it not astonishing that those reputed miracles made no real impression on the Jewish people? Is it not wonderful that even the raising of Lazarus failed to excite the slightest curiosity? A man who had been summoned from behind the veil of death, and given to this life a second time, would have been the object of the wonder of mankind. The great and mighty would have fallen at his feet and begged of him to tell what he had seen and heard in the land where he had been. And yet, amazing as it may seem, Lazarus, who had been brought back from the realm of death—the first since time began who had returned from the shadowy region of the shrouded world—fades away like a vision in a dream. Nobody questions him; nobody cares. There is but one explanation of this remarkable silence—the miracle is a myth.

If Christ could heal the sick, and if at his command, the grave gave up its dead, why did he not use his wondrous powers in a way to convince mankind that he was master of disease and death? Why did he not cure all disease, and banish pain and poverty and suffering of every kind forever from the world? If he wished to give an exhibition of his miraculous powers

by raising somebody from the dead, instead of bothering with Lazarus, why did he not raise somebody of consequence—somebody who was known to be dead? Why did he not raise some person whose death had been mourned by the nation? Such a miracle would have placed his divinity beyond dispute; but no such miracle was performed.

Where are the witnesses who saw the miracles of Christ? Did the scientists, the historians, the philosophers who lived in that age see them? They did not. Scores of Jewish merchants, travellers, lawyers and writers were familiar with the places where the miracles are said to have been wrought; yet not a Jew of that age has left a single line to show that he had ever even heard of any miracle of Christ. St. Paul, the earliest Christian writer, wrote his epistles long after Christ was dead; but Paul, the ardent preacher of the faith, never having heard about the miracle, never mentioned one of them. Those who saw the miracles cannot be found. The whole period maintains a fatal silence. Generations passed away before the miracles were heard of. A hundred years after Christ, if he lived, was dead, after the facts of his life had been forgotten, after his sayings and his deeds had been distorted and deformed, after a thousand myths had grown around his memory, the miracles were invented and the Gospels were written.

And who wrote the Gospels? We do not know. We do know that they were not written until the second century; and we know that neither Matthew, nor Mark, nor Luke, nor John ever wrote a single line in any one of them. But the Gospels are not unanimous in teaching that Christ worked miracles. There is at least one discordant note. Mark says that when the Pharisees asked Christ for a sign from heaven, he sighed deeply in his spirit and said: "Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily, I say unto you,

there shall no sign be given unto this generation." (Mark viii: 12). Such, then, is the evidence for the miracles of Christ. All nature denies that they are true; the age in which they are said to have been wrought is utterly ignorant of them; four unknown men assert them a hundred years too late; and one of those men declares that Christ himself refused to work any miracles at all!

There is another thing that is incomprehensible. If Christ gave sight to blind men's eyes, if his magic touch brought youthful vigor to the palsied frame, if the putrefying dead, at his command, returned to life and love again, why did the people not believe in him? Why did they lay violent hands upon the man who healed their sick? Why did they crucify one who could restore their dead? Let Christ come to earth again. Let him do for us what he is said to have done for the Jews; and all the world will worship at his feet. Science will bow its head in recognition of his majesty. Humanity will crown him, not with thorns, but with its love and its devotion. Why was it not so then?

The Jews were looking for a Messiah, a deliverer. Why did Christ fail to win their confidence in his Messiahship? Why did he not liberate his nation from the power of Rome? If all the forces of the world were subject to his will, he might have conquered Roman legions and freed his nation from a galling yoke without the shedding of a drop of blood. Why did he not make Jerusalem the head of an independent nation? Why did he not bless his people with the proud possession of enlightened freedom? If he was God, he need not have been crucified; rather, he might have made all human hearts thrill with his divinity. Indifference could not exist in the presence of a God. A God could have no enemies.

The fact that Christ was brought to trial, that no one spoke in his defence, that no man said: "My



daughter was a leper and he healed her," that no woman said: "He called my husband from the grave and gave him back to me," the fact that he was silent in the face of accusations, that he failed to use his reputed power when it would have saved his life—these facts prove that what is said about him in the Gospels as a supernatural being cannot possibly be true.

And let me ask: If Christ was God, how could he die? How could the Infinite suffer pain and death? How could death conquer the creator and master of death? If pain tortured his poor nerves as it does ours, and if he died as men have died, is that evidence that he was God? If Christ was God, and, as God, died, was there no living God in the universe while God was dead? And if God lay dead in a Jewish tomb, how did he come to life again? There was no other God to resurrect him—he was the only God—and he was dead. He could not resurrect himself—death has no power of resurrection. There was no power in the universe that could reanimate the lifeless God. God was dead! And yet the stars wheeled in their courses, the rivers ran; the flowers bloomed; the birds sang; men and women loved; babes were born—nature appeared utterly unconscious that God was dead!

If there is but one God, and if he sat on Heaven's throne while Christ was dead, then God did not die and Christ was not God. If Christ was God, and really died, then God still sleeps in the quiet tomb and there is no living God who rules the world. Take either horn of the dilemma and Christianity cannot be true.

The corner-stone of Christianity is Christ's resurrection. If Christ did not rise from the dead, Christianity crumbles. But there is not the slightest evidence that Christ did rise from the dead, there being no certainty that he died in the crucifixion. Nobody knows but that he swooned and was buried in the airy tomb alive, but unconscious. If he actually appeared to his

disciples after having been buried, that fact certainly does not go to show that he had been dead; rather it proves, as much as anything can be proven, that he had not been dead. Suppose a man who had been hanged today, should be found associating with his friends tomorrow, as Christ is said to have associated with his disciples after his crucifixion, how many Christians would believe that he had really died? So far as reason can conceive, this must be true, that where life is, death has not yet come.

Christ is supposed to have risen from the tomb in his body of flesh and blood—the nail prints in his hands and feet—and he is said to have eaten some honey and fish after his resurrection. With this material, human body, we are told, he ascended into heaven.

Where is heaven? The nearest of the fixed stars, Alpha Centauri, is twenty millions of millions of miles away. It takes light, traveling at the rate of one hundred and eighty-six thousand miles a second, nearly three years and a half to reach us from that star. Did Christ go that far with a human body? The space between the stars is so cold that ice, in comparison, is hotter than flames. How did Christ keep warm in such killing cold? If he could die of crucifixion, could he not also freeze? How did he get food during his long journey? And what did he finally do with his human body?

Did anybody see the ascension take place? In a case of this kind, there ought to be at least a little evidence. Let us see what we have. Matthew does not mention it; John gives no account of it; the verse in which Mark speaks of it is an acknowledged forgery; Luke, who was not an eye-witness, describes it in a single verse. There is not a word about it from anybody who was present. Christianity is a structure built on hearsay, supposition and fraud.

Upon the belief that Christ rose from the dead

rests the doctrine of a general resurrection. It is believed that some day—nobody knows when—the countless billions who have died, in all ages, climes and creeds, will be brought back to life again. Will the resurrected body be spiritual, or will it be the body we now have? How can a spiritual body be resurrected when it was not a spiritual body that was buried? A resurrection requires that that which was buried shall be raised up. A spiritual body—if one could be conceived of—would be a new creation.

If the resurrected body does not retain its identity with the present body, it will not be the same person. In order that a person shall be conscious of himself, there must be an organism that lives, nerves that feel, a brain that thinks. This organism, with the nerves as they were, the brain as it was, must be resurrected, if man is to know himself again. Nothing else will do, for nothing else can remember, think and feel. But how is this present body going to be resurrected? A man is buried at sea. His body is eaten by little fishes. Larger fishes eat the little ones, and larger ones eat them. Now, suppose man eats the largest fishes. Where will the first man find himself? A cannibal cuts off a missionary's arms and eats them. The arms become a part of the living cannibal. Twenty years later, both men die. In the resurrection, who will own the arms?

Christianity is said to be a revelation, and yet it reveals nothing. There is not a doctrine nor a detail in the entire system that is logical, natural, or sensible. Everywhere there is mystery, darkness, contradiction. By what strange freak of nature or of divinity could such a religion be true? If man is to distinguish the true from the false, reason is the only faculty that can make the distinction; and it is this faculty of reason that, on every count, decides against the Christian faith. A religion that is at war with reason cannot endure where growing knowledge strengthens reason's power.

The school is growing great. The church is on the wane.

Whoever studies Christianity cannot fail to observe that it is founded on sacrifice. Its central theme is blood. Preachers are ever talking, and congregations are ever singing about the blood—the precious blood. Through the Old Testament and the New, through Judaism and Christianity, runs a wide, red line. Religion is the record of agony and death! When a Jew committed a sin, he had to bring a sacrifice to his God. Jehovah's priests were butchers, and his altars were always wet with blood. In times of distress and disaster, in the early ages of their history, the Jews—insane with their religion—sacrificed their sons and daughters to appease Jehovah's wrath; and in later times, a steady stream of blood poured from the veins of oxen, lambs and doves. Without the shedding of blood, there was no remission of sins.

Among the early Christians, the doctrine of blood atonement received a new development. Christ became the lamb that was slain. His blood atoned for all mankind. More blood need not be shed. God was satisfied. He accepted the death of the innocent Christ as the just penalty for all the sins of the guilty world! After the death of Christ, who was without sin, God looked with favor upon the vilest sinner! A world deserving of damnation was saved, because one deserving of no punishment, had been slain! Such is the Christian doctrine of the atonement. Is it just? Is it true? Why should God punish the virtuous and reward the vicious? Theologians argue that the justice of God had to be satisfied. But how could the death of the innocent satisfy justice? If the world ought to have been damned, it was an act of injustice to save it. If Christ was innocent, he was unjustly put to death. How could the justice of God be satisfied with injustice, and why

did it require more injustice to make justice and injustice agree?

If the murderers of Christ were criminals before the Crucifixion, was it impossible for God to forgive them until they had committed another crime? Did God require the commission of crime, to enable him to forgive crime? Where is the justice in a doctrine that punishes the innocent and rewards the guilty? Mr. Jones kills a man and the law acquits him. To atone for Jones' crime, the authorities hang Smith! Is that justice?

It must not be forgotten that according to Christianity, God required the sacrifice of Christ. Nor let it be forgotten that Christ was God. Bear in mind also that the sacrifice was made to God. So, the doctrine of the atonement teaches that God sacrificed himself, to himself, to satisfy himself! Think of a God who would murder himself to "get square" with himself! Is it possible to imagine a greater absurdity? Christians tell us that the doctrine of the atonement cannot be understood in a natural sense, because it is a mystery. Mystery is the secret of the vitality of religion. Take mystery out of religion, and the whole supernatural content of faith would disappear like a shadow before the light of the sun. Every mystery of religion is an invention—a figment of the imagination. Nature alone is true; all that is contrary to nature is false. Mysteries are empty purses devised by priests to catch and hold the people's gold. They are the subtly forged, invisible chains of religion, by which the human mind is bound in the dungeon of superstition.

According to Christianity, Christ died to save the world from the hell that God had made. Think of the wisdom of a God who would make a hell and then die to save men from it! And yet we are not saved. Only those who believe can be saved. All others are under sentence of damnation. This is more injustice. Why

should a man be saved simply for believing that which is in accord with his mind? And why should another be damned for failing to believe what his reason cannot accept? Is mere belief a virtue? Is honest unbelief a crime?

Was the human mind intended only for believing? Is not everything we believe just the opposite to something we do not believe? Why should merit or demerit attach to mere belief or unbelief? A little child is playing in the street. I tell my companion that the child is a little dog. Should he be punished for disbelieving what I say? Should he be rewarded for believing that the child is a child? The church insists that a man can believe as he will. It is not true. I can no more believe as I like than I can fly, if I like. I cannot believe against evidence. I cannot believe in spite of reason. My brain believes or disbelieves according to its own laws. If a man can believe as he will, what is the value of evidence? Why do we speak of the "weight of evidence?" Why are witnesses brought into Court, and why are they cross-examined in the presence of trained judges? Because justice demands that all judgments shall be formed according to the evidence.

A man believes or disbelieves in the Christian religion according to the impression it makes upon his brain; and there can be no justice in punishing him if he concludes that it is not true. Christianity, however, holds him responsible for his conclusion, and sends him to eternal hell for having an honest opinion. No matter how good he may be—how honest, loving, kind and brave—he cannot be saved if he does not believe. But, on the other hand, no man, however vicious, can be lost, if he holds the right belief. There is no crime too black for belief to wash away! Think of a religion that saves the bad and damns the good! Think of sending vice to heaven and virtue down to hell! And all because of an idea—a mere belief.

But this is not the worst. While Christianity teaches salvation by faith, it also teaches that God selected, from eternity, those who would be saved. "We believe," say the Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists, in their creed, "that God in his own good pleasure, gave to His Son a people, an innumerable multitude, chosen in Christ unto holiness, service and salvation." Predestination is a necessary part of Christianity. If God is infinite, and if some men are damned, God must have foreknown and designed their fate. No man can be saved if God did not intend him for salvation; and no man can be damned except in accordance with God's desire. And yet, it is said in this creed, "that the finally impenitent shall go away into eternal punishment." In the New Testament, the heartless threat of endless pain is even more brutal—"Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matthew xxv; 41).

This crowns an everlasting horror with eternal infamy. This makes of God the most ferocious fiend whose shadow ever blasted human hope. What! Out of nature's silent night, out of still unconsciousness, innumerable billions of men and women have been born: blasted by heredity, perverted by environment, enslaved by ignorance, robbed by kings, betrayed by priests, they worked and wept, hoped and feared, staggered, fell and died. They did not plan their own existence; they did not carve their own careers. Their sorry plight was fixed by God, and all their struggling misery was endured to satisfy the Infinite's design. But God's injustice is not yet satisfied. They have, as yet, but passed the prelude to a fate infinitely more horrible than any they could have conceived. Before the world was, they were meant for endless hell! So, the day will come when God shall call; from the grave of dreamless sleep they shall arise; on their ears shall fall the awful words

of condemnation; and each shall take up his abode in the ocean of eternal flame.

Such is the Christianity, not of the Dark Ages, but of this age of mental light. Such is the religion that opposes education, cramps the mind, perverts moral judgment, pollutes affection, stands in the way of redress of social wrongs, and helps to prolong the age of strife and war.

Think of the awful centuries of religious persecution! Think of the insanity of the religious wars! Think of the myriads whose homes have been destroyed, and whose faces have been wet with bitter tears! Not satisfied with having made a hell on earth, Christianity prophesies for nearly all the human race, eternal torture in another world!

Can such a religion be real? Can such a nightmare be true? Is there such a God as the creature of the Christian creed? Did any God design the human race to gloat upon their endless pain? No! A thousand time, no! O Christianity! Where is thy humanity? O human heart! Why hast thou entertained so horrible a dream? What has man done that God should burn him for eternity? What has God done that man should think him such a fiend? Well might we exclaim, with Marc Antony: "O judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts, and men have lost their reason!"

There is something wrong with Christianity, and it is simply this: IT IS NOT TRUE. Its three Gods in one is an invention of ignorant and knavish priests. Its doctrine of design destroys the moral character of its God and makes him a cold and cruel tyrant. Its fall of man and virgin birth are oriental fables that had been worn to threads before a Jew was born. Its atonement is the essence of injustice and absurdity. Its resurrection and ascension were common myths among the ancient nations. Its doctrine of eternal punishment is the insane dream of poor fanatics, who hungered and



thirsted for revenge. If Christ lived, he was a man; if he was not a man, he is a myth. History proves that the Christian religion was developed by quarreling priests, and that its triumph in the world was a calamity. The world is growing wise and kind and good, because Christianity is fading from the brain; and on the ruins of the faith, calm reason is arising. Religion divided and destroyed mankind. Reason will unite the children of the world and fill the hearts of all with peace, and hope, and joy.



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