

four was the number of the Beasts, and four were God's covenants through Adam, Noah, Moses, and Christ. It is probable that these four narratives survived by their intrinsic merits. But for their authenticity little security can be found in the critical faculty or discernment of the patristic age.

Miraculous Christianity involves anti-scientific ideas of the world. It assumes that the earth is the centre of the universe with the heaven, which is the abode of the Deity, stretched above it, and Hades sunk beneath it. The angels and the mystic dove descend from the skies, and the risen Christ ascends to them. When Satan shows Christ all the kingdoms of the earth from a high mountain, the writer seems to take the globe for a plane. The theological geocentricism, which makes our planet the centre of all interest, the especial care of the Divinity, and the sole field of divine action, appears in the Johannine doctrine of the Trinity. It might be possible to imagine Deity stooping from a limited heaven to redeem the inhabitants of earth. It would have been hardly possible to imagine a Being who fills eternity and infinity becoming, for the redemption of one speck in the universe, an embryo in the womb of a Jewish maiden. For this stupendous doctrine our principal evidence is the anonymous work of a mystic writer.

The Incarnation, it will be observed, is the centre of this whole circle of miracles. Without it they can be hardly said to have a purpose or a meaning. But since our rejection of the authenticity and authority of the book of Genesis, the purpose and meaning of the Incarnation itself have been withdrawn. If there was no Fall of Man, there can be no need of the Redemption. If there was no need of the Redemption, there can have been no motive for the Incarnation. The whole ecclesiastical scheme of salvation with all its miraculous appurtenances apparently falls to the ground. This is a vital point.

In the story of the Star of the Nativity primitive astronomy and astrology are involved. It is useless to attempt scientific explanations, such as a remarkable conjunction of the planets, or the temporary appearance and sudden extinction of a star. The Magi, as astrologers, recognize the star of Christ; it moves before them as a guide, regardless of the general march of planets or the sidereal system, and stops over the cradle in which the child of destiny lies.

There is one class of the miraculous evidences respecting which we have undoubtedly the means of forming our own judgment. We can tell whether there was really a miraculous fulfilment of Hebrew prophecies in the history of Jesus. To the alleged prophecy that Christ should be called a Nazarene, there is nothing whatsoever corresponding in the Old Testament. Apologists, after trying such expedients as the identification of Nazarene with Nazarite, which even if it were feasible would help them but little, Christ having fulfilled none of the conditions of a Nazarene, are fain to give up the problem in despair. But once more it must be said that we cannot pick and choose. Our assurance of the miraculous