

their demand from him to show his divine authority by a sign from heaven.

But the power to predict future events and the power to perform miracles were demanded by the people from the earlier Hebrew prophets as essential credentials of their proper relationship with Jehovah, just as the prophets of Baal were required to show their superhuman power and consequent relationship to their Gods by the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Philistines and the Egyptians.

These traits of character in the Hebrew prophets were less and less prominent as the centuries passed, until, finally, we find no mention of them. It is the best that survives. Error is short-lived and transient. Truth alone is permanent. Had the Hebrew prophets nothing else to bequeath to the world than their recorded supernatural characteristics, our Bible would hold no more durable place in history than the many other Bibles that far surpass ours in this particular. Fortunately for Israel, fortunately for the world, the Hebrew prophets were prophets of righteousness, and our Bible is a history of the righteousness of God gradually illuminating the souls of men and inspiring them to the purest and holiest utterance of the Divine message that, as human beings, they were capable of understanding. Something in the Hebrew life and character made them the fittest subjects for spiritual evolution, hence they became the channel for the revelation of God in man, and the Bible, which records their thoughts of duty and religion more clearly shows the character of the Divine message than does any other Bible that the world has known.

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EXTREME DOCTRINES.

In my reading of the religious progress of the world I have had occasion to notice the harm that is done the good cause by advancing extreme doctrines. For example, the doctrine that

no one can escape eternal perdition save by believing in Jesus Christ, draws from an eminent Roman Catholic the avowal that he would rather believe in no God at all, than in one who would damn men for not believing in one of whom they had never heard. (This brought from Rome a decision confirming the doctrine, and in a form making it applicable to infants born dead). The danger is that men, unable to dispute the doctrine otherwise, will get rid of an obligation abhorrent to their healthy instincts by denying the authority by which it is promulgated. This is especially the difficulty with the command of Jesus, "Resist not evil." All denominations, except Friends, simply ignore it, apparently on the ground that Jesus could not have intended it. But Barclay, whose apology is regarded by Friends as correctly stating their principles and setting forth the Scriptures on which they are founded, says distinctly, that "it is not lawful for Christians to resist evil." And he rests the prohibition on the above cited passage in the Sermon on the Mount. Taking it literally, as Barclay does, "a man cannot without sin resist a ruffian who assaults his wife or his daughter; nay, even the woman herself cannot lawfully resist him, but must quietly and humbly submit to the worst evil that a woman can endure. I do not hesitate to say that no member of the Society would obey the command in such a case, and I think it a monstrous error to profess with our lips what we have no intention whatever of carrying out in our conduct. Eminent English churchmen have said, "We must revise our creeds and I doubt that in any of them stands a proposition which should be more speedily removed. Why the injunction, though, no doubt, uttered by Jesus, is not obligatory on us, might be explained if our organization provided a place for such an explanation.

It is remarkable that Geo. Fox, though he protested against wars and warned Friends not to engage in