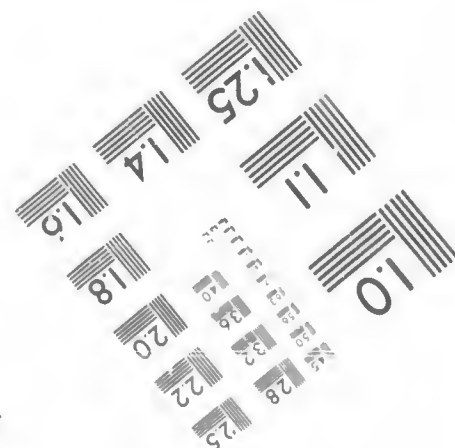
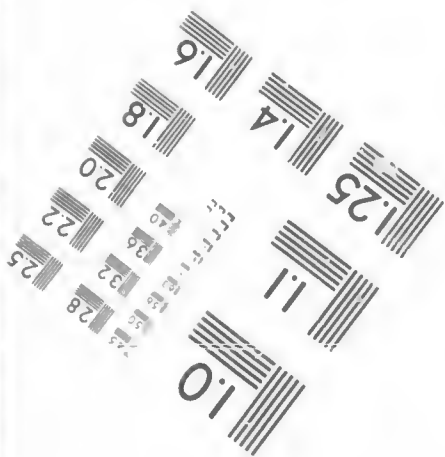
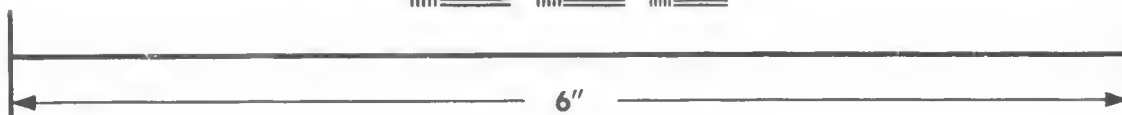
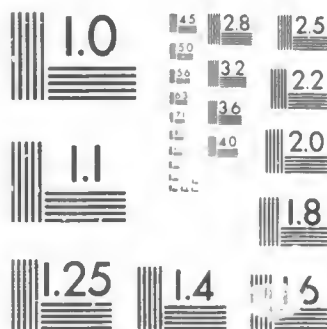


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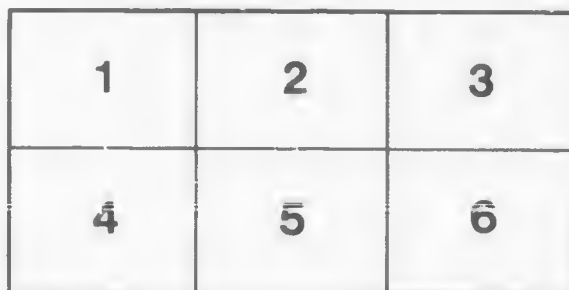
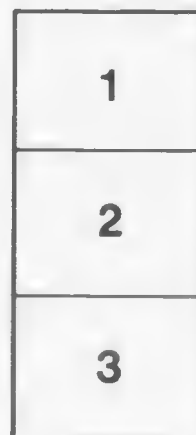
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# Will the Old Book Stand?

A REPLY TO

MR. H. L. HASTINGS ON THE INSPIRATION  
OF THE BIBLE.

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BY

B. C. GESNER.

*Moncton, N.B.*

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## MR. H. L. HASTINGS ON THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE.

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF "THE  
CHRISTIAN," BOSTON, MASS.

SIR,—Your lecture on the Inspiration of the Bible has been placed in my hands by a friend, who desired me to read it, as "it contains." said he, "an irrefutable argument to prove that the Bible is the word of God." Well, sir, I have read it, and I have jotted down a few things to say about it.

You introduce the subject by saying :

"The inspiration of the Bible is a question that was not raised by me. It is already up for discussion throughout the land." And you ask : "How are we to regard it? What are we to do with it? Is it God's book or is it man's book?"

This question of the inspiration of the Bible is altogether an unnecessary one. It should never have been raised at all. If the Bible is true, inspiration is superfluous; if it is false, either in whole or in part, inspiration is impossible and even unthinkable.

In 2 Tim. 3 : 16 I read : "All scripture is given by inspiration of God;" and in 2 Pet. 1 : 21 : "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of men; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Had these passages been true, the question could not have been raised. When Peter (with an oath) said to the housemaid Rhoda : "Woman, I know not this man!" he lied, straight from the shoulder; but when he says that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," we are expected to believe that he tells the truth.

If we look at the Bible merely as a book, it is neither better nor worse than any other so-called "sacred book;" but if our view embraces also the results it has produced in the lives of those who believe it to have been given by "inspiration of God," it must appear, it seems to me, not merely a bad book, but a great, an immeasurable curse.

Who ever heard of men cutting each other's throats over a

difference of opinion about Shakespeare's plays, or Plato's Republic or Euclid's Geometry? It is quite true that when we open a volume of Shakespeare or Plato, we do not find, "Thus saith the Lord" or "Hear ye the word of the Lord;" but we do find something of far more importance. We find facts; we find representations true to nature; we find indications that the men who wrote those books were endowed with that valuable mental commodity known as common sense.

Shakespeare was in many ways the most wonderful man the world has ever seen. His heart and brain seem to have contained all there is of love and hate, of joy and sorrow, of pleasure and pain; and a knowledge of human nature as broad as the whole race of man. His mammoth mind soared to all heights and descended to all depths; and with an almost infinite perception he searched out and described the hidden motives of the human heart, in a manner that justly entitles him to be ranked among the highest, if not as *the* highest, of the sons of men.

Had it not been for Plato, Christ would still be a man, and not the third part of an incomprehensible god. The writer of the Gospel according to St. John (whoever he was) has stolen the thought of that great philosopher, and this stolen property has become the corner-stone of your religion. The less you say about Plato the better will it be for you. "All the writers of the Bible rolled into one" could not have produced Plato's dialogue which bears the name of "Lysis," or the most inferior of Shakespeare's plays; and there are tons of literature published in our own day which for beauty, purity and moral tone is as much superior to the Bible as Jesus was to the rabble that crucified him.

You say: "The Bible must be judged by a standard different from all other books." May I ask this simple question, Why? If your lecture gave any reason, or even a rag of a reason, I would pass on; but when I remember that, "Hear ye the word of the Lord," "The word of the Lord came unto me," etc., are alike common (either expressed or implied) to the Koran, the Dhammapada, the Vedas, the Zend-Avesta and the Bible, I am at a loss to understand why the Bible, on that account, must be "inspired," and the other sacred books of



the world not inspired ; and I ask again, *Why* must we judge the Bible by a standard different from that we use in the case of all other books, " sacred " or secular ?

Not on account of the stories of miracles it contains, surely, for all the other sacred books of the world are full of them ; and if on that ground the inspiration of the Bible is established, you can in exactly the same way, and with equal truth, claim inspiration for the sacred books of the Chinese, the Hindoos, Mahommedans, etc. There is not a solitary argument that has ever been invented to prove the inspiration of the Christian Bible that cannot be used with equal force to prove the validity of the same claim for any and every so-called sacred book the world has ever seen.

Let me tell you why you want the Christian Bible treated in this unfair way. It is, because it pays the Christian priest, and you, true to the instincts of your profession, prefer to put pocket above principle.

You say : " The Bible is the word of God, as it professes to be, or else it is a fraud." And to illustrate this idea you say : " A man tells me that Jesus of Nazareth was a good man, but then there were other men just as good. He was a Spiritualistic medium, but there are other mediums just as powerful in these days " " To be sure," you say, as if you were clinching an unanswerable argument, instead of simply bursting your own soap-bubble, " I have not heard of a Spiritualistic medium giving a public dinner to five thousand hungry people ! "

Neither have I ; but I have read of many cases within the last year where people have starved to death, in spite of the 25th verse of the 37th Psalm. There is not a city on this continent from which, in every hour of the twenty-four, there are not prayers by the hundred ascending from hungry men that God will furnish them with food or the means of earning it, and you know as well as I can tell you that these prayers are not answered.

You say you " have not heard of a Spiritualistic medium hushing winds or calming a storm." Neither have I ; but there is scarcely a newspaper whose every issue does not contain accounts of storms at sea, when scores of brave men go to a watery grave, but there is no record that Christ ever interfered

to stop the war of the elements. The bed of every sea is covered with wrecks, and the skeletons of men and women who have gone down amid the hoarse thunder of the storm. Their requiem was chanted by the sad sea fowl, but no Christ has ever been known to say, "Peace, be still!" When the brave sailor leaves a widow and orphans, does Christ give them "dinners for nothing?" No. What becomes of them? The children are sent to a poor-house, the widow often becomes a prostitute or starves; and this in a country where people, with you, believe in Christ and in the "inspiration" of the Bible.

After the allegory of "old Jenkins' son" deceiving the people by passing himself off as a young English nobleman, you deliver this eloquent admonition: "Now, don't be fooled with this soft talk about the Bible being a good book."

It is difficult for me to understand how you could write such a sentence, when your whole lecture is little else than a mass of very soft talk about the Bible being a good book. Speaking for myself, I don't intend being "fooled" by any such "soft talk." I have, in the course of a not very long lifetime, heard and read a great deal of "soft talk," which was intended to prove what you have attempted to prove in your lecture, and I think you will agree with me that the tone of this letter is evidence of the fact that I have not yet been "fooled" by it.

But, however that may be, when any evidence is presented to me as authority upon any point, I want to know something about the source whence the information comes—about the character and credibility of my informant. For example, if I were to read a history of the civil war in your country in 1861-65, before I would attach very great weight to the work I would want to know whether the writer was a native born American or a foreigner; whether he was a Catholic or a Protestant, and whether he was a Northern or a Southern sympathizer. It would be an easy matter to determine these points, but with the Bible it is entirely different. I ask where, when, and by whom was it written, and what was the character and credibility of the writers, and you cannot tell me; and no other person can tell me; and I hope you will not be grieved when I tell you that you know perfectly well that what I say is true.

When you say, "There is not another book like it in the

world," I agree with you. I really believe that among all the books that have ever been published since the invention of printing, there is not another containing so much of the impossible, the unreasonable, the incredible, the bloodthirsty, the cruel and the filthy, between its covers.

The BIBLE, you say, "has been refuted, demolished, overthrown and exploded more times than any other book you ever heard of."

I agree with you again, and only for the unblushing effrontery and unmitigated impudence of those interested in its maintenance, it would long ago have taken its place alongside the "Arabian Nights" and similar literature; but not until ignorance ceases to be the mother of devotion will it come to its proper level. Your similitude of the cube of granite is only useful to show that it is just as bad one side up as the other.

Next, you find occasion for a fling at Voltaire, and here you repeat a statement said to have been made by him, to the effect that in a hundred years from his time "Christianity will have been swept from existence and will have passed into history."

I thought I had read Voltaire pretty carefully, but somehow I must have contrived to miss this beautiful prophecy. If he ever expressed such an idea, it simply shows that he has a better claim to the title of "prophet" than any man mentioned in the Bible, Jesus Christ (be he God or man or both) included; for, since Voltaire's day, Christianity has in a great measure passed into history. It is absolutely certain that the religion of Jesus does not wield the same influence over men's minds to-day that it did 120 or even 60 years ago. Its flat earth is gone, its witchcraft is gone, the fires of hell are out, its devil is dead, and at every point where it has been confronted by the natural and physical sciences its fallacies have been exposed and seen in their true light. As Col. Ingersoll has well said, "Science has written over her high altars its 'Mene, mene, tekem, upharsin,' those old words destined to be the epitaph of all religions." "The Christendom of to-day is a valley of dry bones, a wilderness of unsightly weeds, a home made desolate by the strife of its denizens in the mad race for gold and power, and in the light of nineteenth century knowledge it stands aghast begging for its life."

But you attempt to ridicule Voltaire by saying that *he* has passed into history, and not very respectable history either."

I am not at all surprised to read this sentence. Voltaire was one of a few great and noble men who, to their honor be it said, hated superstition, no matter whether it came to them arrayed in the robes of Brahma, or Mohammed or Christ; and they did more than any other men to make you and every other Christian priest ashamed of his calling. No wonder, then, that you hate them and stab them on every occasion.

Did John Calvin, who burned Servetus, pass into very respectable history? Don't you think the Presbyterian Church would be glad to expunge the record of that fearful crime from the life of its founder? Is the history of John Wesley, the defender of witchcraft, a respectable one?

Torquemada, Alva, Charles V. and Philip II.—are their histories respectable? Yet they were devout Christians, and not only believed in the inspiration of the Bible, but logically carried out their belief, by racking and roasting to death every man, woman and child who differed from them in opinion.

But, in spite of what you say, I find that many eminently respectable historians have made most honorable mention of Voltaire. Buckle, in his *History of Civilization*, says he was "the greatest historian Europe has ever produced." Lecky, in his *History of Rationalism*, says he "did more than any other of the sons of men to do away with that greatest of all curses, religious persecution." Lord Macaulay says that he and his school "were ready to encounter principalities and powers in the cause of justice, mercy and toleration." Here are respectable writers who have been honest enough to tell the truth about this great man, whose name stands first as a benefactor of the human race. A history which does not deal fairly and truthfully with such a man is not respectable. Judged by such a standard, how many respectable histories have you ever read? and how can you claim to be a judge of what a "respectable" history is, unless and until you do read it?

In the *Encyclopædia Britannica* I find also this statement in reference to Voltaire: "The stories set afloat about his dying in a state of terror and despair on account of his unbelief are certainly false." This gives the lie direct to all the calumnies

and falsehoods of the pulpit about his recantation and his despairing death. Don't you think it a little strange that the Christian priesthood seem never to have seen or heard of the 9th Commandment when speaking of an opponent of their religion?

France is a great nation. Some of her sons are among the greatest of the human family. She has produced statesmen and generals, philosophers, scientists, scholars and intellectual autocrats by the thousand; and yet a respectable history of that country cannot be written with the name of Voltaire left out. But it is doubtful if any respectable history of the United States ever to be written will contain even a clue to the fact that such a man as H. L. Hastings ever lived.

Thomas Paine also comes in for a share of your vulgar abuse, and in speaking of his death you say "he crawled despairingly into a drunkard's grave."

Unfortunately for you, there is sufficient evidence to prove that this, like almost all your other statements, is totally false, and had you not lived outside the modern world of literary culture you must surely have been aware that such is the case.

There was a man named Cheetham, a contemporary of Mr. Paine, and who edited a newspaper in which he malignantly attacked Paine's character, as you and your fellow ministers have done since Paine's death. Refusing to apologize, Paine prosecuted him for libel, and he was convicted and fined.

There is plenty of evidence to prove this charge a malicious falsehood, all of which you can read for yourself in Ingersoll's *Vindication of Thomas Paine*, published at 10 cents. It does not certainly say much for your veracity, that you should circulate an unverified story about a great and good man, injuring his character and degrading his memory, when a 10 cent book published at your own door would furnish you with the facts.

Thomas Paine did more for human liberty than all the priests that ever lived, and his whole life-work was in the most perfect harmony with his creed, if so I may call it, in which he says: "The world is my country, mankind are my brethren, and to do good is my religion."

Thomas Paine's whole life was one of constant adherence to principle, and his name will be as sweet incense to pure-souled

men when his traducers' becomes but a stench. To his pen as much as to the sword of Washington was due the success of the Revolution; and to him fully as much as to any other man are you indebted for the liberty you enjoy as a citizen of the great republic. If you did not know these things, you are to be pitied; if you knew them, you have been guilty of the meanest act that a man can commit against his fellow.

Colonel Ingersoll also receives some "kindly notice" in your lecture. It has always been usual among Christian ministers, when they can't answer a man's arguments, to attack the man. You seem to be grieved when you think Mr. Ingersoll can get \$200 a night for lecturing. How much did you get for delivering the lecture which is now before me? How much is it worth? In my opinion, it is worth less than nothing.

You not only did not touch the question with which you proposed to deal, but you actually went out of your way to attack Freethinkers and infidels. The real question of inspiration you have not touched at all: instead of that, you have filled up your lecture with a lot of scandal and abuse about better men than the Bible or Christianity ever produced. You really wasted the time of those who listened to you, for you did not bring forward a single argument to prove your theory that has not been worn threadbare time out of mind by every little gospel-huxter and hedge-preacher who could get people to listen to him. There are few men, and most of these few are not believers in the inspiration of the Bible, who can draw an audience or command a fee like this same Col. Ingersoll, so I suppose it is but natural for you to feel jealous.

But you think it is a great wrong for him to make fun of Moses, because Moses is dead and can't talk back. How did it come about that you didn't think of that when you were talking about Paine and Voltaire?

In a foot-note at page 7 of your lecture you refer to Colonel Ingersoll's military career, and you say, "It consists of a single engagement, in which he was chased into a hog-yard and surrendered to a boy sixteen years old." Of course, I do not know whether this story is true or not; but there is at least one very good reason for doubting its accuracy, and that reason is, that it comes from a very unreliable source—a minister of

the gospel of Christ. There is probably not a man in America to-day who has been so constantly and so viciously lied about by the orthodox clergy as Col Ingersoll has been. The stories that have been told have so uniformly been proved to be false, that I must hesitate to accept this one, unless it is supported by some respectable and reliable authority.

It has been stated over and over again that one of Colonel Ingersoll's daughters has been "converted" and has joined the Presbyterian church; that he had a cancer in his throat, evidently a "judgment upon him by God for his blasphemy;" that in 1882 he had prophesied that in ten years there would be more theatres than churches in the United States; and that he himself had renounced his unbelief and intended shortly to join the church. Although these wild and baseless assertions have been denied and refuted times without number, still the "religious" newspapers—*The Christian*, for example—seem never to tire of repeating them. It was also stated that his "son," having been reared in an atmosphere saturated with infidelity, had become insane, and was confined in a lunatic asylum; and this in spite of the fact that he never had a son.

But suppose any or all of these stories to be true; suppose he did surrender to a lad of sixteen summers, would that tend to prove the inspiration of the Bible? At best, it would only show that the Colonel was unfortunate and this boy brave and lucky; but have not Christians been cowards? Your effort to glorify the Bible at the expense of Mr. Ingersoll only serves to exemplify that passage of scripture which speaks of certain people who have "a zeal which is not according to knowledge," and also a saying of Ingersoll's—"The meek are often malicious."

I have every reason to believe that Col. Ingersoll is a most exemplary man in public as in private life—a patriot in the truest sense, and that the destinies of the American people might safely be committed to his care. I believe that, but for the orthodox bigotry which has followed him like his shadow and watched him day and night, he would before this have received the reward of his services to his country, military and civil, by being placed at the head of the greatest republic the world has ever seen; but, after all, if it could be proved he,

Voltaire and Paine were three of the worst of men, still the crimes of Christians, the cruelties of their religion, and their foolish belief in the divine inspiration of the Bible would remain as a dark blot on our civilization and a drawback to our intellectual development.

The statistics you give as to the number of Bibles and Bible societies are no doubt intended to convey the idea that the question of inspiration is one that can be settled by numbers. It is quite true that 165,000,000 Bibles is a large number, and when to that we add the other millions privately published, it seems something enormous. But why are so many copies of that book published? One would suppose that with so many of them scattered abroad every year, everybody would have a copy and would be thoroughly familiar with its contents; but what are the facts? The Bible is not only not read by the mass of people in Christian countries, but certainly has not yet been even seen by the larger portion of the human race; and equally true is it that, by most educated people, it is regarded as nothing more than the barbarous records of a barbarous people. To a large extent, it was written by barbarians for barbarians; and I might almost add, it is believed in only by barbarians.

And how are these Bibles produced? "At this very hour," says W. Stewart Ross, "not only the teachings of the Bible, but the multiplying of copies of the Bible, degrades and debases woman," and to support the statement he quotes a letter from a Mr. Swift, which was published a short time ago in an English paper called the *Liberator*. From this it appears that the work involved in producing the cheap Bibles was mainly done by young women, who received wages quite insufficient to procure them food, lodging and clothing, and that, as many of these young women had no relatives to assist them, they were obliged to go on the streets one or two nights in the week to add to their wages. In answer to their petition, they were told that no higher wages could be paid, as the Bibles must be produced as cheaply as possible. The *London Times*, in a leading article, commented strongly on the society's action; and a Mr. Campbell, a Scotch minister at that time residing in London, and who was editor of the *Nonconformist*, sought



out some of the girls and found their statements to be quite true. Verily, it is quite consistent that a book which immortalizes Lot and Judah, Rahab and David and Solomon, should be produced by the wages of prostitution.

You admit that there is much ignorance among believers as to the contents of the Bible, and you have given several instances of misquotations resulting from it. Here is another. Two men were disputing about the nationality of Jesus Christ. One of them said that he was an Egyptian and the other that he was an Ethiopian, and they both quoted passages which they claimed to be in the Bible to prove their respective theories. I once heard one of those men seriously quote as a passage from the Bible, "Every cub stands on its own bottom," and I could fill a page with the same kind of stuff, but there is no need of that, for you and everybody else knows that there is not one person in fifty who knows anything whatever about the Bible, for the simple reason that they never read it, but the few who really do read it are like me, they read and reject.

The great bulk of Bibles are unread; the great mass of those who do read it reject it so what is the use of your 165 million bibles? Under the circumstances, if the supply could be wholly cut off nobody would be the worse off, except perhaps a few lazy priests and Bible dealers, those vendors of oral and printed superstition.

"The longest message ever wired," you say, "was the first 118,000 words of the New Testament."

You have heard, also, I suppose, that the first message sent over the Atlantic cable was a quotation from the Bible, and that the first package sent through the "pneumatic tube" from New York to Philadelphia was a Bible, but do any or all of these things prove it to be God's book? Certainly not, but on the contrary, the vast number of copies printed, and the reverence with which it is regarded by ignorant and credulous people, is one of the strong points against it. A book that delights the ignorant always bears upon its face the impress of falsehood.

The vast number of people professing to believe the Bible no more tends to establish its truth than the discovery of America or the eruption of a volcano.

The great trouble with arguments of this kind is, they prove too much. Do you suppose that enough people could join the Catholic Church to prove the infallibility of the Pope? If they prove anything at all it is only that human credulity is almost infinite, that the people are ignorant and the priesthood crafty. The belief in the divine authority of the Bible, like all other religious beliefs, had a small beginning; at most it was only the opinion of a few, perhaps of one. Others simply believed the report of those who believed before them, and in the course of time so many believed, it was considered outrageous or sacrilegious to disbelieve or to demand evidence. Then the number of believers and the number of Bibles is viewed as an overwhelming proof of the doctrine of divine inspiration.

With a kind of sanctified scorn you say, "It is a curious fact that most of our sceptical friends contrive to keep very close to where the shadow of the Bible falls," which conveys to my mind the idea that you, true to the spirit of your religion, think every Freethinker ought to be banished or burnt. Why do you not do it? Why do you not light again the fires of persecution and redden the heavens with the flame and the earth with the blood of the dying heretic, as ye were wont to do in your palmy days 250 years ago? I will tell you why. It is because Voltaire and Paine broke the teeth of the old dragon of religious persecution, and as with the fire of hell branded upon its hideous visage the one word, "Ichabod."

But, although your religion is impotent, it is willing to persecute. Not long since, a Spanish newspaper gloated over the agonies inflicted by the Holy Inquisition, and gloried in the prospect of the Inquisition being re-established. And one of the most celebrated Protestant Doctors of Divinity in America, in addressing a meeting of the Evangelical Alliance, held in New York a year or two ago, asked: "What are the rights of the Atheist?" and answered thus: "I would tolerate him as I would a poor lunatic, but in that he has any property or legal rights, I hold that he is utterly disqualified." These things show what religionists would do if they had the power.

Were it not for the influence that has been exerted by such men as Charles Bradlaugh and D. M. Bennett, Horace Seaver

and Robert Cooper, Ingersoll and Holyoake, Christendom to-day would be a perfect hell, and the clank of chains and the creak of the rack, the groan of the heretic and the exulting cry of priests, would be as common as in the worst days before the Reformation. But, happily for humanity, the Christian religion has been torn asunder into two contending camps, and it is only because these hostile camps hold each other in check that liberal-minded men, whether Christians or not, can live in security and peace.

The shipwrecked sailor, you say, was overjoyed to see the spire of a church? Would he not, think you, have been equally pleased to see the British flag flying over a fort, or the sign of a hotel, where food, and whisky, and tobacco could be procured? Had he been a Protestant cast upon the shores of Catholic Spain three hundred years ago, how much better off would he have been than among the cannibals? Had he been a Mahomedian missionary landing among either Catholics or Protestants of our own time, what would be the duty of the latter according to Deuteronomy 13?

As to a man's scalp being safer in a Christian land than in any other, I would call your attention to the fact that about four years ago a monument was erected in the city of Rome to the memory of Giordano Bruno. Why? Because his scalp was not safe in any Christian country in all Europe on account of his religious opinions. Had not God thundered through the inspired 13th chapter of Deuteronomy that, it was the duty of the faithful to destroy heretics? Were Christian sectarians or heretics safer in New England than in the old country? Have not the lives and property of even Christians themselves been rendered safer by the efforts of heretics and Freethinkers to wrest power from the hands of the tyrannical priest? Bruno and many another noble man was hounded to torture and to death because your divinely (!) inspired book taught that an honest unbeliever was not fit to live, and that it was the duty of the faithful to take his life.

It makes me sick at heart when I find that even to-day men are willing to defend this kind of deviltry, for no defender of the Bible can fail to be logically a defender of religious persecution.

Both the Old and the New Testament abound in precepts of persecution, and it is only the power of the secular law and the restraining influence of Freethought and advancing civilization that prevent religious fanatics again building the martyr fires of the days of Mary and Elizabeth.

The Bible inspired? Did you ever read the 15th chapter of 1 Samuel, or the 109th Psalm, or the 68th Psalm? Just look at a few passages.

1 Sam. 15 : 3. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not ; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

Has human savagery ever invented a more bloodthirsty and cruel warfare than this divinely-inspired vendetta? What was the crime of the Amalekites? That many ages before their forefathers had fought to save their lives and their homes. And Saul himself was punished because he saved the life of the king and took some of the best of the cattle and sheep!

What do you think of this from the 68th Psalm? "That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same." If the annals of hell were written, could they contain a more fiendish passage?

How does this strike you coming from the mouth of Paul? "Hymeneus and Alexander have I delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." And this from 1 Cor. 5 : 5? "Deliver such an one unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord," etc. This was what the pious Inquisitors did—destroyed the body in order to save the soul!

These and other like horrible passages are the seeds from which all the religious persecutions have grown during the past fifteen hundred years; and any man ought to be ashamed to defend the book that contains them as a revelation from God.

It is of no avail for you to say that Catholicism is wholly to blame for religious persecution, for, although Protestantism is the younger and the meaner of the two, still, allowing for the comparatively small chance she has had to show herself, she has been fully as sanguinary as her rival. We often hear of "Bloody Mary," but never of Bloody Elizabeth, although the

latter was far the bloodier of the two. As William Cobbett puts it: "For every drop of blood shed by Mary, Elizabeth shed a pint." But for every pang suffered and for every drop of blood shed the Bible is responsible, and in the light of the facts of history, it is impossible for you or any other man to successfully refute this statement.

The story of the young infidel travelling in the west in company with his uncle, who was afraid that the keeper of the log cabin would rob them, but whose fears were dispelled when he saw their host take down a Bible, read it, and then offer up a prayer, is like most stories of its class. No names or dates are given. But, instead of a Bible, suppose the old man had taken from the shelf Darwin's "Origin of Species," or Buchner's "Force and Matter," or Huxley's "Controverted Questions," do you think the young man would still have been afraid of him?

Suppose instead of taking any sort of a book from the shelf he had taken a crucifix and a string of beads, do you think the plan adopted as to the keeping watch would have been abandoned? Knowing what you do or ought to know about the history of religion, in whose hands had you rather trust yourself unprotected, those of a Freethinker or a Jesuit? You may say, the Jesuit, but you would act differently if the case were to be tested.

Thousands of lying religious tracts are circulated every year containing just such foolish stories as this which are manufactured on purpose to cast ridicule on Freethought and Freethinkers by pious persons who, like St. Paul, think it no harm to lie for the glory of God (Romans 3 : 8).

"Everybody knows," you say, "where the Bible has influence it makes things safe." Did it make things safe for Quakers in Puritan New England? Do you not know that they had their ears cropped and were whipped at the cart tail from town to town, by the hundred, and that the Bible was the direct cause of it (Luke 12 : 47)? Did it make things safe for Protestants in the Netherlands in the reign of Charles V., or for Huguenots in France in the reign of Charles IX? Has it ever made things safe for Freethinkers anywhere or at any time? Have not thousands of the best and noblest of the

earth, in all places and times since there was a Bible, lived in jeopardy and died either a cruel death or in poverty and obscurity because its cruelty became the life-blood and the stock-in-trade of both priest and king?

But if the Bible is a cruel book and has produced cruel people, what shall we say of its obscenity? On this point your lecture is silent, but I would like to ask if, in your opinion, the 38th chapter of Genesis could have been inspired by a decent and pure-minded God. What do you think of the 19th chapter of the same book? Would you think it a perfectly proper thing for a young minister to read the 15th chapter of Leviticus to a class of young ladies unless he could be included among those described in the 20th verse of the 21st chapter of that book?

Do you think anyone was ever made better by reading such stuff as is contained in the 5th and 31st chapters of Numbers? There is not a race of savages on earth to-day whose ideas of sexual morals are not higher and purer than those of the Bible. And, in addition to its obscenity and its cruelty, it gives abundant sanction to wars of extermination, to slavery, and even to human sacrifice. (Josh. 6 : 6-26 ; Lev. 25 : 44 and 27 : 29 ; Judges 11 : 30-39 ; and Deut. 21 : 11-14.)

I notice a great number of foolish and nonsensical expressions in the Bible, which in themselves are sufficient to demonstrate not merely its human but its savage origin. For example, in Psalms 91 : 4 I find God described in a manner in which the idea is conveyed to the mind that he is something like an enormous hen, inasmuch as that, under certain circumstances, it is declared that "He shall *cover thee with his feathers.*" But, notwithstanding its absurdity and its obscenity, you say that "where the Bible holds sway rovs and quarrels don't come." Don't they? Let me call your attention to a short extract from Ieckey's "History of European Morals." "In the 'Robber Council' of Ephesus, Flavius, Bishop of Constantinople, was kicked and beaten by the Bishop of Alexandria, or at least by his followers, and a few days later died from the effect of the blows."

"In the contested election that resulted in the election of St. Damasus as Pope of Rome, though no theological question

appears to have been at issue, the riots were so fierce that one hundred and thirty seven corpses were found in one of the churches." (Vol. II., p. 197.)

Dean Milman, in his "History of Latin Christianity," in speaking of the schisms in the Church, says: "Bloodshed, murder, treachery and assassinations, even during the public worship of God, were the frightful means by which each party strove to maintain its opinions and to defeat its adversary." (Vol. I., pp. 314-318.)

Only a few years ago a Bible Society meeting in the City of Hamilton, Ont., ended in a free fight. The weapons used by the combatants were Bibles and hymn books. A graphic account of the occurrence was published in the *Hamilton Daily Spectator* the next day, which said that there were a good many black eyes and broken noses on both sides.

Did you ever know a church choir to exist for a year without a row? There is not one of all the thousand sects into which Protestantism is divided which does not owe its birth to a row. Is it any wonder? Does not the Bible itself declare that a part of its mission, or rather the mission of Jesus, is to bring divisions, to set the child against the parents and the parents against the children, and that a man's enemies shall be those of his own house? (Matt. 10: 35, 36.)

Your whole lecture is so grossly at variance with truth and experience that I can hardly persuade myself it was delivered in earnest.

Your account of the compilation of the New Testament, in which you refer to a newspaper article written by an Infidel, seems to afford you some amusement. You impugn the authority of the Synodicon and of the article, and attempt to ridicule the writers of both by saying that the story of the Gospels getting up on the communion table is "the kind of stuff Infidels are made to swallow and digest." Did it not occur to you that the Synodicon is of exactly the same evidential value as the four Gospels? You surely did not imagine that any infidel believed the story. It was not written for them but for Christians, and thousands of Christians have believed it, and hundreds of other stories just as absurd.

A miracle is a miracle, and it ought not to be more difficult

to perform one than another, and a few pieces of parchment crawling up on a table in answer to prayer is certainly no *greater* miracle than turning water into wine or a stick into a snake, or for five red herrings and a few pieces of hard tack to satisfy the appetite of five thousand hungry Jews.

I have never seen the claim put forward by any Infidel writer that the Council of Niceæ compiled the Bible, but as that was the first "Œcumenical" council it is reasonably certain that the settlement of the Canon would be brought before it for discussion, and the story of the "jumping gospels" as related by Pappas is exactly the kind of stuff with which the history of the Church for centuries is filled. The New Testament as we know it had no existence until about the beginning of the sixth century, if not a good deal later, so when you say that Origen, Tertullian, Clement and Irenæus quoted it as we quoted it, and believed it as we believe it, you state what is wholly untrue, for it had not been completed in their day.

Some parts of the New Testament, no doubt, were written in or before their times, and they may have quoted from some of those unverified and disputed productions, in the same manner as a "Second Advent" preacher might quote from your lecture, but that men could quote a book that did not exist in their time is about as "wild" a statement as a man could well make. But suppose the New Testament did exist in the times in which these men lived, how do you account for the fact that Origen rejected the Epistle to the Hebrews, the 2nd Epistle of Peter, the Epistle of James, the 2nd and 3rd of John and the Epistle of Jude, but accepted the Shepherd of Hermas as inspired?

You quote from Tertullian a passage enjoining upon the faithful the duty of "attending the Apostolic churches where they can see the chairs and hear the authentic letters of the Apostles recited." This reminds me of the minister who, after his return from a tour in the East, in addressing his Sunday-school, told his scholars he had been to see the country where "Our Lord" lived and died. In his journey through Armenia on his way home he went to see Mount Ararat, and brought from it a small stone about the size of a nutmeg. Holding up this stone before the eyes of the children, he said, "Some



people deny the story of the Flood. Infidels and bad people say there never was a flood, but if you ever hear anyone say that, you can tell them it is certainly true, for you have seen a stone that came from Mt. Ararat, where the Ark rested." "That's the kind of stuff" Christians "are made to swallow and digest."

But here is a sample of the reasoning of Tertullian on the evidences of Christianity.

"I maintain," says he, "that the Son of God was born. Why am I not ashamed to maintain such a thing? Why? Because it is itself a shameful thing. I maintain that the Son of God died. Well, that is wholly credible because it is most monstrously absurd. I maintain that after having been buried he rose again, and that I take to be absolutely true because it is manifestly impossible."

What is the evidence of such a man worth? Christian apologists must be driven to awful straits when they have to rely upon the testimony of a man who could say the like of that.

If the evidence of Clement was any good why was his epistle excluded from the Canon.

As to Irenæus, with the exception of Eusebius, Tertullian, Jerome, Origen, and Ignatius, he was probably the greatest hypocrite in the whole range of ecclesiastical history.

It is he who tells the story about the Devil building a monument in honor of Simon Magus (Acts 8 : 9-23) on the banks of the Tiber and that the Apostle John was a priest, a martyr and a Doctor of Divinity and that he wore a petalon, which I suppose is some sort of Popish trumpery.

It is perfectly useless for you to attempt to prove the inspiration of the Bible by the evidence of such men as these. There is no person in the world who really knows the value of evidence who would hang a mad dog on the testimony of any or all of the "Christian Fathers" that ever lived.

It is an undeniable fact that not a single trace exists of the application of historical criticism to any book of the New Testament in the early ages of Christianity, and during the Middle Ages the Church was powerful enough to prevent any and every thing of the kind. You know the result.

The Bible ruled and from the seventh to the seventeenth century Europe stood still. "For six hundred years," says Buckle, "Christianity gave to the world no scientific man."

It would take a good many longer volumes than the Bible to describe the awful conditions under which men lived in those times. Ignorance beyond belief, and filth beyond description, were found on every hand. With hypocrisy at the altar and tyranny upon the throne, between taxes to the state and tithes to the church, the common people were little better than the beasts of the field, and certainly much less cleanly and comfortable.

It has been demonstrated by men who have given attention to the subject that a population, unrestricted, will double itself in twenty-five years, but under the rule of the Bible and the religion founded upon it the population of Europe did not double in a thousand years.

Outside of Mohammedan Constantinople, there was not a public bath or sewer on the whole continent, and dogs and swine fought and snarled over favorite morsels of carrion in the public streets of great cities, and he who stepped over his threshold on a rainy day went to the ankle in the putrifying remains of animal filth and decomposing vegetable refuse.

The natural result of this kind of thing was, that every now and then a pestilence would break out and sweep the people into their graves by the million.

The Oriental bubo-plague ravaged Italy sixteen times between the years 1119 and 1340.

In 1348 the great plague known as the Black Death broke out and in six years carried off 25,000,000 people.

Medical science there was none, and in accordance with the ignorance of the time it was universally ascribed to a conjunction of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn.

The medical schools of former ages were suppressed as being out of harmony with the genius of Christianity.

From the beggar by the wayside to the king on the throne, everybody was infested with itch and vermin, and shortly after the discovery of America, syphilis turned the whole continent into a veritable charnel house. Even the Holy Father Leo X., Vicar of Jesus Christ, contracted the shameful disease.

Truly the taunt about faith and filth being partners seems to have a scrap of truth in it.

In these blessed days so much attention was paid to the saving of the soul the body was not thought of, except in the case of heretics whose bodies were tortured till the soul left them.

Add to this the drain on the population brought about by the crusades and the religious wars that are a disgrace to the human name, and it is no wonder that from the days of Constantine the Great to the French Revolution the population of Europe had barely doubled.

These things are not new. They have been said and sung "from the house tops" for the last twenty years. You must have known them to be true, and yet you told the people who heard your lecture that if they would make the Bible their rule of life and conduct their town would be turned into a paradise. What did the Bible do for Switzerland in the days of Calvin? What did it do for Scotland under John Knox? It was all right for you to prophesy to the people of Spenser what would have followed had they taken your advice, but can you point out one solitary nation or race within the whole scope of history who, with unquestioning faith, have accepted the Bible as the inspired word of God, and who have based their laws and their political economy upon it, and exactly the contrary result has not followed? The history of the religion of Christ is filled with the records of lying and fraud, of debauchery and wickedness of all sorts to a greater extent than is the case with any other religion whatever. Instances could be given by the thousand where unspeakable and almost unthinkable cruelties have been practised by its devotees. In the Irish massacre of 1640, Papists took the fat off the intestines of Protestants whom they had slaughtered, made it into candles, and burnt those candles on the altars of the Virgin Mary. In the wars in the Netherlands from 1660 to 1679 the most inhuman barbarities were transacted by Catholics and Protestants alike. The Catholics skinned some of their victims alive and made the skins into drum heads on which they beat the dead march of others to the stake, and the tearing out of a man's heart and throwing it in his face was an every-day occurrence. One Dutch Protestant stabbed his Catholic enemy, tore his heart

out, bit it with his teeth, and then threw it to a dog that stood near. In England from 1553 to 1558 two hundred and eighty-eight men, women and children were burned at the stake for being Protestants, and from 1558 to the end of Elizabeth's reign the disemboweling of Papists was as common as ditch-water. In Spain and Italy hundreds of people had their eyelids cut off, had melted lead poured into their ears, and in the case of Martha Constantine of Piedmont, her breasts were cut off, fried and given to another party of persecutors, who actually ate them without suspecting what they were.

Behind all this devilry was the Bible. Behind all the fearful things done by the Calvinists in Geneva and by Presbyterians in Scotland and by Puritans in New England, was the Bible; and there is not a single Christian sect, either Catholic or Protestant, but what would, at this very hour, were they not afraid of the civil law and of each other, with the Bible in one hand and the sword and torch in the other, "punish heresy with rack and fire."

Your attempt to explain the "quail story" is a pitiable failure. It stands upon the same level as the statement of the Rev. Alexander Cruden, who says in a commentary on the 11th chapter of Numbers that quails are so numerous in the country where this miracle is said to have been performed, that they often alight upon ships in the neighboring waters in such prodigious numbers as to sink them,—more of the "stuff" Christians "are made to swallow and digest."

It seems, according to the story, that the children of Israel had become tired of living upon manna. And no wonder; it was manna in the morning, manna at noon, manna at night. Breakfast, dinner and supper were all alike to them. Day in and day out, week in and week out, from year's end to year's end, it was nothing but manna. Could not an omnipotent god have given them a change of diet once in a while? Surely a god who could give "a public dinner for nothing to five thousand hungry people," could have given them at least *one square meal every day*? Think of a man living for twenty or thirty years on nothing but oatmeal. Do you think you yourself could stand that without a protest?

So the Israelites complained, and the Lord sent them quails,

and because the people ate the quails the Lord smote them with a very great plague ; and the account closes by saying, grimly enough, that he called the name of that place Kilbroth-hattaavah, " because there they buried the people that lusted " for the quails (Num 11 : 34). If he had called the place " Quail-broth Have-at-you " it would have been more in keeping with the story.

A company of half-starved savages are travelling in a desert. They pray for food. Some birds make their appearance, and, in accordance with their superstitious belief, they take this as an answer to their petition. Then they eat the birds, only to find that they have been poisoned. How much better is the god of the Jews than the god of these savages ?

If this frightful story is true, if Jehovah could act in this manner towards those whom he over and over again calls his " chosen people," he is certainly a god to be proud of. So far as I am concerned, you are welcome to all the comfort you can get out of the story.

You seem to place a great deal of reliance upon the truth of prophecy, but it is only necessary to examine some of the so-called prophecies recorded in the Bible to prove the truth of what one of the prophets themselves said about his colleagues and predecessors : " The prophet is a fool ; the spiritual man is mad " (Hosea 9 : 7).

Jesus Christ assumed the character of a prophet, and is described as a prophet mighty in word and in deed. He uttered a prophecy about the end of the world, which has not been fulfilled, and which, by the very nature of the case, never can be fulfilled. All the priests, preachers, prelates, patriarchs, primates and popes from his day till now have not been able to explain it away.

The second advent of Jesus and the end of the world were the hinges upon which the preaching of Jesus and his apostles swung.

" And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the *end of the world* " (Matt. 24 : 3).

After a rigmarole of troubles and trials which should first

afflict mankind, he tells them that "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and *then shall the end come*" (Matt. 24 : 14).

Then again he enumerates a lot of woes and tribulations, and in verse 54 he says : "Verily, I say unto you, *This generation* shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled."

The other gospels contain similar statements. "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1).

"But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God" (Luke 9 : 27).

In the 10th chapter of Matthew, Jesus is reported to have called his disciples to him, and after having given them power over unclean spirits, etc., sent them out to preach. 7. "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." In verses 5 and 6, they are told, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles" . . . but "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." And a reason is assigned for this in verse 23 : "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel *till the Son of Man be come.*"

St. James wrote : "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (James 5 : 8). St. Paul assured the Thessalonians that "We which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (2 Thes. 4.17).

Here are many prophecies from the mouth of Jesus and his apostles which the lapse of time has demonstrated to be false. What are you going to do about it? You might as well try to move the earth out of its orbit as to attempt to prove that they do not refer to the end of the world. This was what I meant when I said that Voltaire had a better claim to the title of "prophet" than Jesus or any of his apostles.

Jeremiah ought to have had a pretty good idea of what the prophets were like, and he says : "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so" (5 : 31). "They prophesy falsely unto you in my name; I have not sent them, saith the Lord" (29 : 9). "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Hearken not unto

the words of the prophets" (25 : 16). "The prophets prophesy in my name" (14 : 14).

And Jeremiah himself was openly accused of being a false prophet (Jer. 43 : 2). Ezekiel (13 : 4) says : "O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes of the desert."

According to your lecture, these passages are just as much inspired as any other parts of the Bible. Do you explain them by citing the case of Ahab, where God himself put a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets that Ahab might be enticed to his death. Will this avail you as an argument to prove the inspiration of the Bible ?

In speaking of the revision of the Bible, you say : "Some learned men, after working for a number of years on the revision of the New Testament, finished their work. Having inserted a few modern words instead of others which had become obsolete, made some slight corrections of errors in translation, and rectified from ancient manuscripts some little errors that had been made by copyists in transcribing," etc. According to this, the errors are both few and unimportant.

Prof. Moses Stewart, of Andover, says, in speaking of this matter in relation to the Old Testament, that in the Hebrew MSS. that have been examined "some 800,000 various readings actually occur as to the Hebrew consonants ; how many as to the vowel points and accents no man knows."

As to the New Testament, Christian *scholars* admit that the various readings of the manuscripts to which we are indebted for our text are so numerous as to be almost beyond computation. First, we heard of 20,000 various readings, then 30,000, then 50,000, till in the collection of MSS. for the Griesback edition as many as 150,000 were discovered. What does this prove ? Just this. That you intentionally misled those who listened to your lecture. It proves that the Bible is imperfect and fallible and is of human origin ; that it is not a revelation from God, and that no amount of assertion or assumption on the part of interested hypocrites can make it so ; and it shows us that *ignorance is the great bulwark and fortress of faith.*

Many men and most women, though completely ignorant of the very rudiments of Biblical criticism, historical research, or scientific knowledge ; though they have never read a single

page or understood a single proposition of the writings of those whom they condemn, and have absolutely no rational knowledge either of the arguments by which their faith is defended or of those by which it has been impugned, will nevertheless adjudicate with the utmost confidence upon every polemical question : will denounce, hate, pity, or pray for the conversion of all who dissent from what they have been taught ; and will assume, as a matter beyond the faintest possibility of doubt, that the opinions they have imbibed without inquiry must be true, and the opinions others have arrived at by inquiry must be false. And, strangely enough, they make it a main object of their lives to assail what they call infidelity in every way in their power except by examining the grounds upon which it rests.





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