

ONE HUNDRED CONTRADICTIONS IN THE BIBLE

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I believe we ought to know the truth about the Bible. If the Bible is true, the truth cannot harm it. If the Bible is not true, the world should be so informed. If we have not the right to know the truth about that book, then who has the right to know it? If we have not the right to tell that truth, then who has the right to tell it? If the time has not come to face this intellectual question in a fearless, intellectual way, when shall that time arrive? Has not ignorance ruled the world long enough? Has not superstition had her day of rioting in the human brain?

We live in a new age. New knowledge and new hope are flooding the world with the light of new ideals. We build better as we learn more. Our time demands intellectual democracy. The prosperity of the world depends upon widespread knowledge and freedom; and the greater the number of free minds, the greater the number of free men.

The Bible is still the greatest of enslavers. It is still a fetter on the brain of millions who believe in it, and a lock on the lips of millions who have outgrown its myths and follies. Many are prevented from engaging in scientific studies by their fear of disagreeing with the Bible; many dare not express their honest thought for fear that believers in the Bible will visit them with political, social, or financial loss.

Even the clergy are the bondmen of their own book! There is not a preacher in any orthodox church who can tell the truth about the Bible and retain his position. His salary depends upon his silence concerning all that differs from the creed. The preacher must stifle his doubts. If he is intelligent, he must preach what he does not believe. In this way, the church is the great creator of hypocrisy, and the Bible, the Paper 'Pope of the Protestants, is a barrier to the progress of the world.

For this reason the truth about the Bible should be told. Every man and every woman should know what that book is, and what it is not. There is no virtue in hugging a delusion. Falsehood cannot be a firm foundation. A lie cannot be holy even though it is old and sanctified. Let us know the truth! Let us stand erect in the presence of the Bible and ask it to reveal its real character.

Strictly speaking, the Bible is not a book; it is a literature --the collected writings of a nation. Its many parts were written at various times during the interval of a thousand years. How many its writers were, or who they were, we do not know. But we do know that it abounds in miracles and magic; that it is utterly unscientific; and that it is so full of contradictions that almost anything can be proved from its pages.

If the Bible were the word of God, it would be a perfect book. It would be consistent with itself and in accord with the facts of nature. God could not contradict himself and remain God. Contradiction is human; Deity must be infallible. A contradiction betrays a limitation of knowledge --a conflict of opinion. Where there is contradiction; there is antagonism of thought --warfare of mind against mind. Both terms of a contradiction cannot be true; but they may both be false.

Christianity claims that the Bible is absolutely true, and that it is sinful to disbelieve it. As a matter of fact, it contains more contradictions than any other book any Christian ever saw; and these contradictions prove --if they prove anything-- that its writers did not believe one another.

A brief discourse cannot discuss all the contradictions of the Bible; but to deal with about a hundred of them should and will enable you to draw your own conclusions as to the doctrine of inspiration, and the sincerity or intelligence of the orthodox clergy.

In the first chapter of Genesis, there is a legendary account of the creation. In the second chapter, beginning with the fourth verse, there is another account. These legends contradict each other at every point. In the first, the earth is represented as coming into existence completely enveloped in water. In the second, it is represented as being originally a dry plain, lacking even moisture.¹ (Gen. 1:2, 9; 2:6) According to the first account, all the fowls of the air were created out of water -- *"and God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth" ... and the waters brought forth "every winged fowl after his kind."* But according to the second account, the fowls were created out of the ground: *"And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air."*² (Gen. 1:20-21; 2:19) The first story has it that the trees were made on the third day, and that man was formed three days later. The second story declares that man was made before the trees.³ (Gen.1:12-13, 26-31; 2:7,9)

If the first account is true, the fowls were created before man. If the second is correct, they were created after man.⁴ (Gen. 1:21, 27 2:7,19) The first tale distinctly teaches that man was created after all the beasts. The second is as positive in its assurance that man was formed before the beasts.⁵ (Gen. 1:25,27; 2:7,19) In the first account, we are told that man and woman were created at the same time, by one act of creation, and after all other things had been made. In the second story, it is explained that the man was made alone; that the woman was not formed until the man had failed to find a wife among the beasts, and that the making of the man, before the beasts, and of the woman, after the beasts, constituted two distinct acts of creation.⁶ (Gen. 1:25,27; 2:7, 20-22) According to the first account, the man and the woman were given the freedom of the world, and were told to subdue it. According to the second, they were confined within the narrow limits of a garden.⁷ (Gen. 1:28; 2:15) Read the first account with care, and you will observe that in it the creator is always called "God." Read the second story, and you will see that he is invariably called "Lord God"⁸ (Gen. 1:1-23; 2:4)

What is the meaning of all these contradictions? Simply this: two writers, both ignorant of the facts of nature, have endeavored,

seriously or in romance, to account for the origin of the world. Poetic fancy has woven myths out of ignorance. Knowing nothing of what the first man had guessed, the second wrote down what he supposed, and he wrote in such a way that, had he written with the express purpose of contradicting all the first man said, he could not have succeeded more admirably. Honest people who know very little about science, and theologians who are well informed in scientific matters, tell us that Genesis and geology agree to perfection. The truth is that the two stories in Genesis destroy each other, and both are worthless in the light of science. The world and its forms of life have been produced by a slow process of evolution, and there never was any miraculous creation.

In the seventh chapter of Genesis, at the second verse, it is stated that Noah was commanded to take into the ark seven males and seven females of all clean beasts. In the fifth verse, we are assured that Noah did as he was told. But in the eighth and ninth verses, it is stated that of clean beasts there went into the ark only two and two a male and a female.⁹ (Gen. 7:2,5; Gen. 7:8-9)

According to the ninth chapter, the murderer must die; yet God "set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him."¹⁰ (Gen. 9:5-6 Gen.4:15) The ninth chapter also says: "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you;" but the fourteenth chapter of Deuteronomy gives a list of animals, birds and fish that we must not eat.¹¹ (Gen. 9:3, Deut. 14:7,19)

To Abraham, God is represented as having said: "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised." But a gentleman of the name of St. Paul writing in the Epistle to the Galatians, knew more about circumcision than God, and therefore wrote: "Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing."¹² (Gen.17:10; Gal. 5:2)

We are told that the Bible is God's inspired word, and that it points out the way of salvation; and yet the Bible itself abolishes the word of God, and declares that those who do as God commands cannot be saved! The same inspired book assures us that God promised Abraham all the land of Canaan, and that he gave him none of it whatever;¹³ (Gen. 17:8; Acts 7:5) that Abraham had a wife whose name was Keturah; that Keturah was only his concubine;¹⁴ (Gen. 25:1; I Chron. 1:32) that Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac; that Isaac was Abraham's only son¹⁵ (Gen 16:15; 21:3; Heb.

11:17) that Abraham bought a burying place from the sons of Emmor; that the sepulcher was bought, not by Abraham, but by Jacob. ¹⁶ (Acts 7:16; Josh. 24:32) If you should fail to see the beautiful harmony in all these contradictions, remember that, according to the church, it is because you are carnally minded, and lacking in spiritual discernment!

If the Bible were a revelation from God, it would surely be consistent in what it has to say of God. Every statement would agree with every other statement, and every attribute and quality described would unite in the portrayal of a character clearly distinguishable, easily understood, and infinitely grand. But as to the nature, character and conduct of God, the Bible asserts only to deny, and describes only to destroy. In the Old Testament, God is like a man; he walks and talks and eats and mingles with men of affairs. In the New, he is a spirit, and his everlasting seat is heaven's throne.

In Exodus 33:20, God is made to say: "Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live." This is contradicted in Genesis 32:30, where Jacob declares: "I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved." ¹⁷ (Gen. 32:30; Ex. 33:20) God must have been mistaken. To look him in the face was not sure death. Jacob looked on his visage, and Jacob's health remained unimpaired. God was seen by others also. In the twenty-fourth chapter of Exodus, we read: "Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and they saw the God of Israel

. . They saw God and did eat and drink." This, however, is declared to be false in John 1:18--"No man hath seen God at any time." How shall we decide? For my part, I agree with John ¹⁸ (Ex. 24:9,10,11; John 1:18) The probabilities are his way. An infinite God could better employ his time than in wandering through the universe every little while to converse with some barbarians in Palestine; and it ought to be safe to assume that a God would choose better company. Why should he be engaged in performing tricks of magic in the Syrian desert for a tribe of polygamous nomads, when he might have been talking to the Wise Men of Greece?

Where does God dwell? "Dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto," says 1 Timothy 6:16. Not so, declares 1 Kings 8:12 "The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness." These statements cannot both be true. ¹⁹ (I Tim. 6:16; I Kings 8:12) Dazzling light and total darkness are opposite extremes. God cannot dwell in both. It is indeed taught in one of the Psalms that God is

omnipresent. "Whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." But in Genesis, the Psalmist is contradicted, God is not omnipresent; he moves from place to place. "And Lord said, because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know." ²⁰ (Psalm 139:7-10; Gen. 18:20-21) The God of the Psalmist filled the universe with his presence. The writer of Genesis believed in a local tribal God of personal form--a God whose knowledge was limited like that of a human being, and who walked about the earth in the role of Sherlock Holmes.

Think of an infinite God, dowered with the knowledge of all the worlds, appointing himself as a Vice Commission and going to a little village to study its social affairs! Think of his saying: "I will go and see; and if not, I will know" Those who believe in inspiration surely lack the sense of humor. Orthodoxy is solemn; and stupid. Heresy thinks and smiles.

Matthew tells us that "with God all things are possible." The Book of Judges disagrees. It holds in chapter one, verse nineteen, that God is not almighty -- "And the Lord was with Judah; and he drave out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron." ²¹ (Matt.19:26; Judges 1:19) If the omnipotent God could not prevail against a few carts cased with metal, what would happen to him if he attacked a modern battleship? "If we say that God is all-powerful, does our statement become inspired when we explain that his strength was bathed by a human device?

In Exodus 31:17, God is represented as being like a man, in as much as work tires him and he is refreshed with rest --"For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed." According to Isaiah, this is not true. Isaiah will allow no such contemptible weakness to limit the glory of his God. In the fortieth chapter of his book, he exclaims: "Hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary." ²² (Ex. 31:17; Is. 40:28) To be tired, to need rest, to be refreshed, are human attributes--the qualities of beings capable of change. An infinite God must be

unchangeable -- he cannot tire; he cannot be refreshed. Isaiah makes this claim for God, but Exodus denies it.

Moreover, we have the express testimony of Scripture that God does not change. In James 1:17, we read of "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." This, however, is sweepingly contradicted in Jonah 3:10. It is there shown that God does change "And God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not." ²³ (James 1:17, Jonah 3:10) Again we are confidently assured in Numbers 23:19, that "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent." But so heartily does God disagree with those who say he does not change, that in Jeremiah 15:6 he volunteers this striking information: "I am weary with repenting," How human is this confession! ²⁴ (Num. 28:19; Jer. 15:6) Imagine an infinite, eternal, and unchangeable God avowing himself to be "weary with repenting"! Is God a being of narrowly limited intelligence? Does he lack resolution and self-reliance? Is he of fickle disposition -- inconstant and uncertain? If he is not, then he never was "weary with repenting."

Does God know the hearts of men? The question is fair; the answer should be exact. How does the Bible answer? It tells us that he does, and that he does not. In Acts we read: "Thou Lord which knowest the heart's of all men." The contrary is found in Deuteronomy, where it is said that God led the Jews forty years in the wilderness, to humble them, to prove them, and to know what was in their hearts." ²⁵ (Acts 1:24; Deut.8:2) God either knows the hearts of men, or he does not. If he does, the statement in the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy is not true; or he does not, then he is not a real God, but a myth. Perhaps it is a peculiarity of inspiration, not only to defy the laws of logic, but to prove the truth of its assertions by denying them!

The same inspired book informs us that God is generous with his gifts -- "If any of you lack wisdom," says James, "let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally." If God gives to all men liberally, how can it be that he renders some men incapable of receiving his good things, to deprive them of his blessings? If John tells the truth, that is what he does "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted and I should heal them." ²⁶ (James 1:5, John 12:40) Can this be real? If God wants men to know his truth, why should he blind their eyes? If he desires their conversion, why

should he harden their hearts? On the other hand, if God has no message for the world, if he is indifferent as to human fate, what is the mission of the Bible? What is the meaning of Christianity?

We read in Deuteronomy that "God is a consuming fire," and in John that "God is love."²⁷ (Deut. 4:24, I John 4:1) Reason fails to conceive of a God who is either, but how great is the contrast here! but how consuming fire is a wave of ruin. It advances to destroy. Home, wealth and life turn to ashes in its path. Behind its awful sweep there is but death and desolation. How different is love--the tenderest passion of the human soul! Love raises the mind to lofty aims, and fills the heart with joy. Finding its ideal in the true, the beautiful and the good, it grows in likeness to the things it worships. It is the noblest of the virtues, and all its aspirations are as pure as the silver stream from the morning sun. A God who could be likened unto a consuming fire would be a ferocious fiend; a God of love would be a tender father.

Although Deuteronomy holds such a terrible opinion of God, it tells us in a later chapter that he is a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right." Yet this same book declares in its fourteenth chapter, that God gave the Jews the following commandment: "Ye shall not eat of anything that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien."²⁸ (Deut. 32:4; 14:21) Such a precept is offered as evidence that God is "just and right" -- is it a God who is "without iniquity" said: "Do not eat the flesh of an ox that died of itself; but sell it to an alien -- did he? Is it really probable that God ever uttered such a command? Is it not more reasonable to believe that some pious Israelite, with an economic turn of mind, did not like to eat carrion himself and hated to miss the profit it would bring, and so claimed divine authority for selling Embalmed Beef?

In the nineteenth Psalm it is said that, "The law of the Lord is perfect... The statutes of the Lord are right... The commandment of the Lord is pure." If this is true, God cannot be the author of evil. But according to Isaiah, it is not true. In his forty-fifth chapter, Isaiah makes God contradict the Psalmist -- "I make peace and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." Amos stands with Isaiah -- "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?"²⁹ (Psalm 19:7,8; Is. 45:7; Amos 3:6) So, my Christian friend, the next time you hear your preacher blaming the devil for the evil of the world, do not forget to remind him that, according to the Bible, God is the creator of evil.

When we ask the Scriptures what they have to say as to the attitude of God toward peace and war, we are answered with another contradiction. "The God of peace," says Romans; not so, says Exodus, "The Lord is a man of war."³⁰ (Rom. 15:33; Ex. 15:3)

But is not God kind and merciful? Does he not soothe the troubled brow of age with the calming consciousness of his protecting care? Does he not smile with pity on the tender helplessness of the prattling babe? And does he not fill with the sunshine of his wondrous love - the sorrowing mother's aching heart? Oh, yes - "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." Oh, no--such is the cruelty of God that no human need can atop or stay the march of his destructive fury. Contemplate these frightful words: "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."³¹ (Psalm 145:9; I Sam. 15:3) Was ever a more heartless command issued by the chief of a cannibal tribe?

Slay the old man with trembling hands; and silvered hair; murder the mother who shields with her body the life of her child; rifle the cradle, and plunge the glittering sword of death through the frail form of the smiling babe; kill even the cattle that feed in their stalls, and know, ye fiends of ruthless slaughter, ye but fulfill the command of the God whose "mercy endureth forever!" Such is the consistency of the Bible.

Let us, however, guard ourselves against taking these things too seriously. No God ever commanded massacre. We are simply dealing with the contradictions in the religious literature of an uncivilized people. To call such writings the inspired word of an all-wise Deity is an insult to the meanest intelligence!

We come now to God's anger. "His anger endureth but a moment," says the Psalmist. This is denied without reserve in Jeremiah 17:4 -- "Ye have kindled a fire in mine anger which shall burn forever."³² (Psalm 30:5; Jer. 17:4) Forever! A very long moment indeed! What a unique disposition -- forever angry! An immortal grouch! Of course, a real God could not be angry. Anger necessitates a change of mind. The Infinite could not change. What is called the anger of God is but the ignorance of man.

Does God ever tempt his children? James avers that he does not - - "let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of god; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." In spite

of this, Genesis insists that God does tempt -- "And it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham" ³³ (James 1:13; Gen. 22:1) How perfect is the consistency of inspiration! How could anybody but a wicked unbeliever doubt the divine origin of such a harmonious book!

Let us take another step. Is God truthful? Certainly we do not raise this question: it is asked merely because it is suggested by another contradiction in the Bible. In Numbers there is the emphatic affirmation that "God is not a man that he should lie." We can heartily agree with that statement. It is easy to believe that men have lied about God; in fact, we find many such lies in the Bible, but it is hard to believe that God would lie. We will, however, let the Bible answer. The twenty-second chapter of First Kings is certain that God does lie -- "Now, therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee." ³⁴ (Num. 23:19; I Kings 22:23) In many other passages, God is represented as employing falsehood. If these passages are true, can God be worthy of respect? If they are false, can the Bible be inspired?

The Jewish religion was founded on sacrifice. When a man or a woman committed a sin, that sin had to be atoned for by the killing of an animal; that is to say, by a contribution to the larder of the priests. The altars of Jehovah ran red with blood. The smoke that rose from the burning flesh of lambs and bulls was incense in the nostrils of Israel's God. In Exodus, it is commanded: "and thou shalt offer every day a bullock for a sin offering for atonement." Numerous chapters of the Old Testament are devoted to the most minute details concerning these sacrifices. Take away from the Bible these offerings and sacrifices of rams, and doves, and bulls, and the religion of the Jews cannot be understood. And yet, in the seventh chapter of Jeremiah, the whole sacrificial system of the Jews is repudiated; its divine origin is denied; and God declares that he never approved of it -- "For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices." And in these impassioned words, Isaiah denounces the sacrificial system: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord... When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand? ... Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me." ³⁵ (Ex. 29:36; Jer. 7:22, Is. 1:11-13)

Consider the importance of this contradiction. In the chief books of the Old Testament--in the Pentateuch, the books of the Law -- God is represented as the founder of an elaborate system of sacrifices; in chapter after chapter he is represented as giving the most precise instructions as to how the animals were to be killed, and what was to be done with their blood, their fat, and their flesh. But in the works of his leading prophets, all this is declared to be "vain" and an "abomination," and is utterly swept away by the very God who is said to have been its author!

And this is called inspiration! God himself -- according to the Bible--declares whole sections of the Bible to be false, yet man, in his stupid ignorance, hugs these falsehoods to his bosom, and in spite of God holds them to be inspired!

And what shall we say of the human sacrifices which the Bible commands? I know that in Deuteronomy the Jews are warped against sacrificing their sons and daughters. But in the last chapter of Leviticus human sacrifices are upheld in a very positive manner. It is there written that "no devoted thing, that a man shall devote unto the Lord of all that he hath, both of man and beast, and of the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed, but shall surely be put to death." ³⁶ (Deut. 12:30, 31; Lev. 27:28, 29) All living things devoted to God had to be sacrificed; human beings were devoted to him; therefore, human sacrifices formed a part of the worship of Jehovah. That human sacrifices were a part of the Jewish religion is further proved by Abraham's preparation to sacrifice Isaac, by Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter, and by David's sacrifice of the seven sons of Saul.

Every man who has studied this question is aware that for ages the Jewish people, in their frightful superstition, immolated their children to appease their phantom God. If the Bible proves anything, it proves that the religion of the Jews was to the Jews at once a curse and a crime. Yet we are asked to believe that the blood-stained record of that religion, dictated by ignorance, superstition and fanaticism, is the infallible revelation of a God of love! How absurd is superstition! How audacious is ignorance when perverted by an idiotic creed!

The New Testament is built upon the Old. The God who demanded human blood is the god if they would use their reason, if they would, barbaric myth, the God to whom the Christians pray does not exist.

If Christians would be honest with themselves, if they would use their reason, if they would read the Bible without prejudice, and weigh its conflicting statements in the balance of common sense, they would become convinced that it is not a revelation, but the record of a nation's slow and painful progress from barbarism to civilization.

"The Bible is the best of all books," says the believer, "because it teaches that there is to be a resurrection and a future life." Well, before we make sure about this matter, let us see what the Bible has to say about it. According to John, the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." The assurance is explicit. If these words are true, there is to be a resurrection from the dead. Are they true? Job affirms that they are not -- "As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more." ³⁷ (John 5:28, 29; Job 7:9; Eccl. 3:19-22; 9:5) Language could not be plainer. Job denies the resurrection with all the emphasis of conviction. Still more, we are told in Ecclesiastes that man has no pre-eminence above the beast; that man and beast enjoy the same breath; that they die the same death; that both return to the dust whence they came, and that a man's portion is the enjoyment of his works in this world. And is it not declared in the same book that "the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward?" The Old Testament denies immortality in language that is clear and emphatic. The New teaches it, only to make it an endless agony for nearly all the children of men!

From the many contradictions so far reviewed -- contradictions that destroy the most vital doctrines of the Bible -- contradictions that no ingenuity can explain away -- contradictions that make the dogma of inspiration look like a departure from sanity -- contradictions that prove, beyond the hope of doubt, that the Bible is a human book-- from all these contradictions arises the question: *Where is the harmony in the Bible? What does it affirm that it does not deny?* And yet we have but touched the fringe of the Bible's inconsistency. We have had but a glimpse of the true character of the book that contains more contradictions than any other book the world has ever known.

Take up your Bible and read it. Read it as you would read any other book -- with your eyes open, with your reasoning faculties awake, and with your mind determined to be honest. You will find in it all the contradictions that have been mentioned, and you will find

hundreds more. You will find that because of man's wickedness, God drowned the world, and that for the same reason he resolved never to drown it again; ³⁸ (Gen. 6:5-7; 8:21) that God is no respecter of persons, and that he hated Esau and loved Jacob before the brothers were born; ³⁹ (Rom. 2:11; 9:13) that the children shall suffer for the sins of their parents, and that no one shall bear any sins but his own; ⁴⁰ (Ex. 20:5; Ezek. 18:20) that the Sabbath is holy and must be kept by all, and that every man must decide for himself whether any day is holy or not; ⁴¹ (Ex. 20:8; Rom. 14:5) that certain men devoted to God must wear long hair, and that the wearing of long hair is a shame; ⁴² (Num. 6:5; I Cor. 11:14) that it is wrong to judge others, and that others must be judged; ⁴³ (Matt. 7:1; I Cor. 6:2-4) that we must never swear at all, and that we must always swear by the God of truth; ⁴⁴ (Matt. 5:34; Is. 65:16) that a man may divorce his wife for one reason only, and that he may divorce her for any reason whatever; ⁴⁵ (Matt. 5:32; Deut. 21:14; 24:1) that the Christian must honor his father and mother, and that he must hate his father and mother; ⁴⁶ (Ex. 20:12; Luke 14:26) that the sin against the Holy Ghost will never be forgiven, and that those who believe in Christ "are justified from all things." ⁴⁷ (Mark 3:29; Acts 13:39)

You see, it will not do to press the Bible too closely for consistency. Being an inspired book, perhaps it ought not to be consistent. If it were consistent, it might be reasonable; and, being reasonable, we might believe it to have been written by men, since we acknowledge that men have written many reasonable books. When a thing is consistent and reasonable, we do not say it is inspired -- we say it is logical, natural, and it may be that when a thing is inconsistent and unreasonable, we ought to call it divine!

Reason repudiates revelation. All that is natural, reasonable and true is a part of science. The unnatural, the unreasonable and the false belong to religion's realm of fancy.

Are we through with the contradictions of the Bible? Certainly not. "For there is no man that sinneth not," says I Kings. In other words, we are all sinners. But John does not believe this. In his first Epistle, he argues that "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not. ... He that committeth sin is of the devil." ⁴⁸ (I Kings 8:46; I John 3:6-8) According to John, there are some who do not sin. According to Kings, there are none. Let us see how this works out. If we are all sinners, and if all sinners are of the devil, then we are all of the devil -- Christians and Freethinkers, sinners and saints. If Christians are "of the devil" only when they commit sins, and if they become the

children of God, and "abide in him," after each forgiveness, then it is evident that the average Christian changes his spiritual fathers a good many times a-year !

We are told in the ninetieth Psalm, at verse ten, that "the days of our years are three score years and ten." But hold a while -- that is not true, for is it not written in Genesis six and three, that man's "days shall be an hundred and twenty years"? Of course a small matter like fifty years ought not to make a noticeable difference in the life of the average man! We may therefore allow that trifle to pass as another evidence of inspiration. ⁴⁹ (Psalm 90:10, Gen. 6:3)

If we could believe the Bible, we might rest assured that the good man has nothing to fear, since Proverbs avows that "there shall no evil happen to the just." But the sacred book cannot be trusted, for the case of Job contradicts the proverb. God acknowledged that Job was so perfect and upright, that there was "none like him in the earth"; and yet he delivered, him up to the tender mercies of the devil, who smote him "with sore boils from the sole of his foot to his crown." ⁵⁰ (Prov. 12:21; Job 2:3-7) It would be interesting to hear some clergyman explain why God and the devil were on such friendly terms; why God, the infinitely good, abandoned Job, his most devoted worshipper to the cruelty of his enemy, the devil; and why the virtuous Job was tortured by the vicious devil under the supervision of a righteous God!

Is not God a friend to his friends? Does he not shield the innocent from harm? The Psalmist tells us that he does -- "For the Lord loveth judgment, and for forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved forever.... The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him: The Lord will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged. ... Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."

If these words were really true, if an infinite God stood guard over the welfare of the righteous, how different would be the history of the world! The worshippers of God have been robbed of their property and of their liberty by other worshippers of God. They have been imprisoned in loathsome dungeons; stretched on racks of torture until their joints were torn apart; and burned alive at slow fires, cursed and jeered by hypocrites and fiends. All the outrages that wickedness could suggest, all the agonizing tortures that inhuman ingenuity could devise, have been inflicted by believers in God upon the loving, the virtuous and the brave -- upon those who

yearned to bring into the world the reign of wisdom, peace and righteousness. In a world where those who sought for truth had their eyes extinguished, where those who uttered honest words had their tongues torn out, where those who fought for freedom had molten lead poured into their ears, where those who took the side of mercy had their legs crushed in iron boots--in such a world, where liberty was chained to the dungeon floor, where virtue perished in the flames, it will not do to say that God protects his friends from the cruel persecutions of their foes.

While the groans of innocent suffering have pierced the clouds, God has been silent. While Christians tortured Christians with a zeal that was ferocious, the heavens have shown no sign of displeasure.

The Psalmist was mistaken. God has forsaken the righteous. The wicked have triumphed over them. They have been condemned and slain. The Bible admits this. In Hebrews, we are told of what the early saints endured -- "They were stoned, they were "sawn asunder", were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented." 51 (Psalm 37:28,32,33,37; Heb. 11:37)

A God who leaves his saints to be "sawn asunder," and "slain with the sword," certainly does not deliver them from the hands of the wicked! Peter seems to have been ignorant of all this when he asked "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" But Paul was aware of God's neglect, when he contradicted Peter--"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 52 (I Peter 3:13; 2 Tim. 3:12)

It is often proclaimed in churches, and set down in religious books, that the writers of the Bible wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Now, if these contradictions are the work of a spirit, may we not inquire into the nature of this spirit? What is he like? And how does he affect human beings? We have it from Paul, in Galatians, that "the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness." Very fine. That is one man's opinion. Turn now to the fifteenth chapter of Judges, and you will find that when "the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon" Samson, "he slew a thousand men." 53 (Gal. 5:22; Judges 15:14,15) Paul did not tell the whole truth. Perhaps he was not very well acquainted with the spirit. Be that as it may, in Samson's case the fruit of the spirit was not love or goodness, but murder. The spirit was not satisfied with less than a thousand lives ! If Paul is not mistaken, and

if Judges is correct, the spirit must be endowed with a dual personality--possibly he is the original of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde--and if he is the real author of the Bible, his changing character might account for its many contradictions!

As an historical book, the Bible stands alone. No secular historian has ever even tried to imitate its style. The remarkable method by which the Scriptures teach history seems to be confined to inspiration. To appreciate my meaning, compare the sixteenth chapter of First Kings, with the sixteenth chapter of Second Chronicles. From the first you will learn that Baasha, king of Israel, died, and was succeeded by his son Elah, in the twenty-sixth year of the reign of Asa, king of Judah. The second will tell you that in the thirty-sixth year of Asa, Baasha, king of Israel, came up against Judah. 54 (I Kings 16:6,8; 2 Chron. 16:1) A king dies and is buried; his son succeeds him on the throne; and yet, ten years later, the dead king, is still alive conducting a military campaign! In truthful histories dead men stay dead. According to the Bible, when a man dies, he is just getting ready to start trouble!

Another peculiar contradiction deals with the age of Ahaziah. You will find it in the eighth chapter of Second Kings, and the twenty-second chapter of Second Chronicles. According to Kings, Jehoram died at the age of forty years, and was succeeded on the throne by his son Ahaziah, whose age was twenty-two. But if Chronicles is correct, Ahaziah was "forty and two years old when he began to reign." 55 (2 Kings 8:17, 24, 26; 2 Chron. 21:20; 22:1,2) He was, therefore, two years older than his father! Of course we can readily understand how easily a boy could be two years older than his father.

You are probably acquainted with many such boys. The point of real difficulty in connection with the story is the statement that Ahaziah was his father's youngest son; and it may be in place to ask: If a man's youngest son can be two years older than his father, how much older than his father could the oldest son be? a little "spiritual discernment" ought to enable the average preacher to answer this question.

The historical quarrel between Samuel, Kings and Chronicles is continued through many chapters. According to Samuel, God tempted David to take a census of the people of Israel and Judah; according to Chronicles, it was the devil who tempted him; 56 (2 Sam. 24:1; I Chron. 21:1) Samuel declares that David sinned in

numbering the people; Kings insists that David never sinned except in the matter of Uriah; 57 (2 Sam. 24:17; I Kings 15:5) Samuel holds that David paid for the threshing floor on which he offered sacrifice to God after numbering the people, fifty shekels of silver; Chronicles has it that he paid for the place six hundred shekels of gold; 58 (2 Sam. 24:24; I Chron. 21:25) in Kings it is stated that Asa and Jehoshaphat did not abolish the places of idolatrous worship; in Chronicles it is maintained that they did abolish them. 59 (I Kings 15:14; 22:43; 2 Chron. 14:5; 17:6)

The number of contradictions in the Bible is simply bewildering. In reading it one is amazed at the blindness and folly of mankind in regarding it as the perfect and inspired word of God. On one page it tells us that Moses was the meekest man of his time; on another, that he ordered women and children to be butchered in cold blood. 60 (Num. 12:3; Num. 31:17) In one place it assures us that all the horses of the Egyptians died of the plague of murrain; in another, that all the horses of the Egyptian army were used in pursuit of the Jews. 61 (Ex. 9:3,6; Ex. 14:9) It tells us that Elijah, in a chariot of fire, ascended into heaven, and it asserts that Christ is the only man who ever made that ascension 62 (2 Kings 2:11; John 3:13) it speaks highly in favor of intoxicating liquors and it condemns them in language equally strong; 63 (Deut. 14:26; Prov. 20:1) it teaches us to pray to avoid temptation, and it tells us to hail temptation with joy; 64 (Matt. 6:13; James 1:12) it praises wealth as a blessing and condemns it as though it were a blighting curse. 65 (Prov. 10:15; Luke 6:24)

Let any scientist, philosopher, or critic write a book; let that boob contradict itself as the Bible does, and on the head of that writer, the world will pour out the full measure of its scorn, while his book will become a monument to the ignorance, folly and presumption of a man who took the human race for fools.

Take another contradiction. Every normal human being is anxious to have a good name. To be favorably known, to be respected, to be recognized by all as honest, brave, and loving -- what could be more pleasing than this? So far the Bible agrees -- "*A good name is better than precious ointment.*" But according to Luke, a good name is a curse. "*Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you.*"⁶⁶ (Eccl. 7:1; Luke 6:26) Happy is the man who bears a good name; but, oh the terrible calamities that shall befall him! Such is the logic of the Bible. Can it really be that the contempt of mankind is to be courted rather than the love and approbation of one's fellows?

Who would exchange the wondrous name of Abraham Lincoln--the calm, logical, upright mind--the tender, loving, generous heart - serene in peace, heroic in war -- freedom's fearless friend -- unmoved by the hatred of millions --careless of the world's applause - worshipping the ideal -- anxious above all things to save a nation from disunion, to free a race from slavery's chains--and at the last, crowning a life of virtue and devotion to the common good with the melancholy laurel of the martyr -- who would exchange the name of Lincoln for that of Kaiser Wilhelm II, who plunged humanity into the most frightful of wars, made millions of martyrs and widows and orphans, brought the nations to the very verge of ruin to gratify his vicious lust for empire, and then fled from his tottering throne to save his loathsome life from the hands of an outraged world? Who would make the exchange?

Lincoln is a wreath of glory on the brow of the race. The Hohenzollern is a poisoned arrow in a broken heart. Upon the one the world bestows its honor. In the presence of the other it stands aghast. In the different regard in which Lincoln and the Kaiser are held, we behold the verdict of mankind that the Bible utters arrant folly when it pronounces woe upon those who deserve a good name.

Let it not be supposed that the contradictions of the Bible are chiefly in the Old Testament. The New has its full and rounded share. According to Matthew, the father of Joseph was called Jacob, according to Luke his name was Heli; 67 (Matt. 1:16; Luke 3:28) Matthew traces the descent of Joseph through Solomon; Luke follows it through Nathan, Solomon's brother 68 (Matt. 1:7; Luke 3:81) Matthew can count only forty-one generations from Abraham to Jesus; Luke mentions fifty-six; 69 (Matt.1:2-16; Luke 3:23-34) if Matthew is right, the angel announced the miraculous conception to Joseph; if Luke is correct, the annunciation was made to Mary; 70 (Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:30,31) the first Gospel teaches that Jesus was born when Herod was King of Judea; the third declares he was born when Cyrenius was governor of Syria -- ten years after Herod's death; 71 (Matt. 2:1; Luke 2:2-7) Matthew is sure that the child was hurried away by stealth to Egypt; Luke's Gospel plainly shows that he was taken without fear to Jerusalem; 72 (Matt. 2:13, 14; Luke 2:22, 39) Mark assures us that three days after his baptism Jesus was in the wilderness with Satan; John explains that at that time he was attending a marriage feast at Cana, 73 (Mark 1:12, 13; John 2:1,2) if Matthew was well informed, the Centurion came in person to Jesus and begged of him to heal his servant; if Luke was not mistaken, the

centurion did not come, but sent the elders of the Jews; 74 (Matt. 8:5,6,7; Luke 7:3) the first Gospel has it that Jesus was met by two men coming out of the tombs; the second states that he was met by only one; 75 (Matt. 8:28; Mark 5:2) the first teaches that two blind men cried out to him from the wayside; the third informs us that only one man so addressed him. 76 (Matt.20:30; Luke 18:35-38)

Search the New Testament for consistency, and you will search in vain. Everywhere you will find disagreement and denial. Rarely do two writers tell the same story. No man seems to have any real knowledge of his theme. Hearsay, half-remembered rumor, and pure invention make up the Gospel narratives.

The writers not only contradict each other, they contradict themselves. Matthew makes Jesus say: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works." A little later, in the same sermon, he puts into his mouth the very opposite -- "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them." 77 (Matt.5:16; 6:1)

John avows that Christ said: "I and my Father are one." Afterwards he makes him say: "My Father is greater than I" 78 (John 10:30; 14:28) John also writes that Christ declared himself the judge of all men, and later acknowledged that he judged no man. 79 (John 5:22; 8:15) Again, in John, Christ affirms: "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true," while in the same Gospel he proclaims: "Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true." 80 (John 5:31; 8:14)

Who can understand these contradictions? Who can believe them inspired? In the whole story of Christ, there is nothing certain, clear and definite. He was all-powerful, and he was not. 81 (Matt. 28:18; John 5:30) He came to bring peace on earth, and he did not. 82 (Luke 2:14; Matt. 10:34) He favored and condemned the use of the sword 83 (Luke 22:36; Matt. 26: 52) He preached non-resistance, and practiced open attack. 84 (Matt.5:39; John 2:15) He told men to love their enemies, and advised them to hate their friends. 85 (Matt. 5:44; Luke 14:26) In Matthew, Mark and Luke, salvation depends upon good works; in John it is the reward of faith. 86 (Matt. 6:14; Luke 6:35-37; John 3:36)

The accounts of the arrest, trial and crucifixion of Christ were written by men who did not know the facts. Matthew's simple story of the arrest contradicts John's statement that the arresting soldiers fell to the ground. ⁸⁷ (Matthew 26:47-57; John 18:3-13) Matthew

says that in his trial before Pilate, Christ spoke only two words -- "Thou sayest" -- and that Pilate marveled at his not saying more; according to John, he made a speech to Pilate. ⁸⁸ (Matt.27:11; John 18:34, 36, 37) He was crucified at the third hour, if Mark was not mistaken; at the sixth hour, if Luke was well informed. ⁸⁹ (Mark 15:25; Luke 23:44) Mark declares that he was reviled by the two thieves crucified with him; Luke says that one thief -railed on him and was rebuked by the other, who acknowledged Christ's innocence and also his divinity. ⁹⁰ (Mark 15:32; Luke 23:39-43)

Matthew says they gave him to drink "vinegar mingled with gall;" Mark says it was "wine mingled with myrrh." ⁹¹ (Matt.27:34; Mark 15:23) According to John, he was crucified before the Passover; the other Gospels say it was after the Passover. ⁹² (John 19:14; Matt.26:17-29) If John is correct, he was embalmed before he was buried; if Luke can be believed, he was not." ⁹³ (John 19:39,40; Luke 23:52-56)

How many women came to the sepulcher? John says one; Matthew two; Mark three; and Luke at least five. ⁹⁴ (John 20:1; Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10) The first Gospel says that Mary Magdalene met Jesus while on her way to tell the disciples; the fourth declares that she met him at the tomb. ⁹⁵ (Matt. 28:9; John 11:16) According to Matthew, she knew him when she met him; according to John, she thought he was the gardener. ⁹⁶ (Matt.28:9; John 20:15) Matthew says that immediately after the resurrection the disciples were commanded to meet Christ in Galilee; Luke says they were told to tarry in the city of Jerusalem. ⁹⁷ (Matt. 28:10; Luke 24:49) Therefore according to Matthew, they met him on a mountain in Galilee; while according to Luke, they met him in Jerusalem. ⁹⁸ (Matt. 28:16,17; Luke 24:33-36) The force of this contradiction lies in the fact that Galilee and Jerusalem are about a hundred miles apart!

According to Luke, Christ ascended into heaven with his human body; yet Paul asserts that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." ⁹⁹ (Luke 24:39, 42, 43, 50, 51; I Cor. 15:50) Luke makes the ascension occur in the evening of the day of the resurrection; the Book of Acts explains that forty days after this Christ had not yet ascended. And Matthew, who knows nothing of the upward flight, quotes from Christ the following words that deny the ascension altogether: "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." ¹⁰⁰ (Luke 24:1-53; Acts 1:3, Matt. 28:20)

We have considered one hundred contradictions from the Bible. We have seen that it asserts only to deny, and builds only to destroy. It is a wilderness of conflict, an asylum of confusion, an intellectual pandemonium. It discusses everything and settles nothing. It answers every question with a "yes" and a "no". How can any man using his common sense believe that such a book is sacred, inspired and true? How can he believe that such a book is the perfect word of an infinitely wise God? It is called a revelation. A revelation indeed! And what does it reveal?

Can it be truly said that the Bible sheds the faintest glint of light on the existence, character and conduct of God? How much have we learned about the God who has been seen by many, but whom no man has seen; the God who dwells in light, but whose home is enveloped in darkness; the God whose presence fills the countless worlds, but who moves about this tiny earth clothed in human form; the God who is all-powerful, but who retreats in defeat before a few charioteers; the God who tires, but who never grows weary; the God who is unchangeable, but who is weary with repenting? Let us be honest!

What particular information about God can be derived from a book in which we are assured that he knows the hearts of men, and that he does not; that he gives his blessings freely, and that he does not; that he is just to all, and that he is not; that he creates evil, and that he does not; that he is kind and loving, while commanding the murder of mothers and babes; and that his anger endures but a moment - a moment that lasts forever? Let us use our reason!

And, surely, a God who tempts, and who does not tempt; who lies and who does not lie; who is peaceful, yet a man of war; who is absurdly fussy about the incense of smoking beasts, and who denounces such incense as an abomination; who sanctions and condemns human sacrifices surely, such a God is not a real God, but a myth--a creature of the fancy--a child of superstition!

Is it conceivable that a God of infinite wisdom came to earth and left behind him such a mutilated, fragmentary and contradictory record as is contained in the four Gospels? If God spoke to man, he would have to address man's reason. Man has no other faculty with which he could understand the message. And the fact that the Bible and the reason are at war -- that reason at every crucial point contradicts the Bible 's claims -- proves that the Bible is not the perfect word of God, but the fallible utterance of man.

There are thousands of clergymen who are honest in their preaching--honest because they are not informed. Against these men I utter no word of reproach. They must live and learn. But what shall we say of the thousands of educated preachers who are thoroughly familiar with the Bible, who know its glaring contradictions, its absurdities, its cruelties, its crimes, and who, nevertheless, continue to preach as though its every word were holy and divine!

These men have really studied the Bible. Their library shelves are crowded with learned books that analyze and discuss it. They know, as every scholar knows, that the Bible is a collection of pamphlets and tracts; that these documents represent the guesses and opinions of unknown men; that the volume was compiled by priests; and that the doctrine of inspiration gradually grew as a child of priestly invention to fortify priestly power. And knowing as they do that the Bible is a human book, they spend their lives in expounding insipid nonsense about it that educated intellect has everywhere outgrown. Why? - Because they have families to support; because they fear to offend their friends; because, plainly, they are neither honest nor courageous.

To tell the truth about the maze of contradictions in the Bible is to free the clergy, to liberalize their congregations, to destroy bigotry, to augment intellectual freedom, and to make it possible for men and women to be honest by enlarging the horizon of their neighbors' minds. The tyranny of the Bible is due to its supposedly inspired character. A knowledge of its self-destroying contradictions will forever dispel that delusion, will shatter the shackles of the brain, drive out the phantoms of superstition's night and herald the glorious dawn of truth!