**THE FUNDAMENTALS: A TESTIMONY TO THE TRUTH**

**VOLUME 2; CHAPTER 18. CHRISTIANITY, NO FABLE**

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**I. THE FIRST MARK OF THE TRUTHFULNESS OF CHRISTIANITY IS TO BE FOUND IN**

**ITS SUPREME EXCELLENCE AS A RELIGIOUS SYSTEM.**

The unapproachable beauty and resistless charm of its conception, and the unique character of the means by which it seeks to carry out its aims, are not reconcilable with the notion of Fable.

If, however, notwithstanding, Christianity is a Fable, then it is the Divinest Fable ever clothed in human speech. Nothing like it can be found in the literature of the world. Paul only spoke the unvarnished truth when he declared that eye had not seen nor ear heard, neither had the mind of man conceived the things which God had revealed to men in the Gospel.

**NOT OF HUMAN ORIGIN**

**1.** The very conception of the Gospel as a scheme for rescuing a lost world from the guilt and power of Sin, for transforming men into servants of righteousness, followers of Christ, and children of God, each one resembling Himself and partaking of His nature, and for eventually lifting them up into a state of holy and blessed immortality like that in which He Himself dwells - that conception never took its rise in the brains of a human fable monger, and least of all in that of a crafty priest or political deceiver - no, not even in that of the best and most brilliantly endowed thinker, poet, prophet or philosopher that ever lived. Men do not write novels and compose fictions in order to redeem their fellows from guilt and sin, to comfort and support them in death, and to prepare them for immortality. Even those who regard Christianity as being based on delusions and deceptions do not assert that the object of its instructors was anything so lofty and spiritual, but rather that its fabricators sought thereby to enrich themselves by imposing on their credulous fellows, blinding them to the truth by setting before them fictions as if they were facts, frightening them with ghostly terrors and so securing a hold upon their services or their means. The latest sensation provided by German speulation as to the origin of Christianity is that it was manufactured in Rome in the time of Trajan, i.e., about the beginning of the second century, in order to help on a great liberation movement amongst the Jewish slave proletariat against their tyrannical masters, and that in fact it was an imaginary compound of Roman Socialism, Greek Philosophy and Jewish Messiahism. Neither of these, however, is the account furnished by Christianity itself in its accredited documents, of its aim, which, as already stated, is to deliver men from sin and death. The very grandeur of this aim proves that Christianity has not emanated from the mind of man, but must have proceeded from the heart of God. And it may be safely contended that Infinite Wisdom and Love makes no use of fables and deceptions, legends and fictions to further its purposes and realize its aims.

**2.** If, in addition, the details of the Christian Scheme be considered, that is to say, the particular means by which it proposes to effect its aim, it will further appear that the idea of fiction and fable must be laid aside and that of reality and truth set in its place. It will not be seriously questioned that the details of the Christian Scheme are substantially and briefly these: (1) that God in infinite love and out of pure grace, from eternity purposed to provide salvation for the fallen race of man; (2) that in order to carry out that purpose He sent His own Son, only begotten and well-beloved, the brightness of His Glory and the express image of His Person, into this world in the likeness of sinful flesh, to die for men's sins, thereby rendering satisfaction for the same, and to rise again from the dead, thereby showing that God had accepted the Sacrifice and could on the ground of it be just and the justifier of the ungodly, as well as bringing life and immortality to light; and (3) that on the ground of this atoning work Salvation is offered to all on the sole condition of faith. This being so, can anyone for a moment believe that forgers and fable-mongers would or could have invented so divine a tale? All experience certifies the contrary.

Whensoever men have attempted to construct schemes of Salvation, they have not sought the origin of these schemes in God but in themselves. Human schemes have always been plans by which men might be able to save themselves, with such salvation as they have supposed themselves to need - not always a Salvation from sin and death; more frequently a salvation from material poverty, bodily discomfort, mental ignorance and generally temporal needs. Nor have they ever dreamt of a salvation that should come to them through the mediation of another, and certainly not of God Himself in the Person of His Son; but always of a salvation through their own efforts. Never of a Salvation by grace through faith and therefore free; but always of a Salvation by works and through merit and therefore as a debt - a Salvation by outward forms and magical rites, or by education and culture.

**WHO INVENTED IT?**

**3.** Then, it may be added: If the Christian Scheme is a fable, who invented the idea of an Incarnation? For to Jewish minds at any rate such an idea was foreign, being forbidden by their strong monotheism. Who put together the picture of Jesus as it appears in the Gospels? Who conceived the notion of making it that of a sinless man, and doing it so successfully that all subsequent generations of beholders, with a few exceptions at most, have regarded Him as sinless? Yet a sinless man had never been seen before nor has ever been beheld since His appearance. Who supplied this Jesus with the superhuman power that performed works only possible to God, and with the superhuman wisdom that fell from His lips, if such wisdom was never spoken but only imagined? It is universally allowed that the power and wisdom of Jesus have never been surpassed or even equalled. Whose was the daring genius that struck out the notion not merely of making atonement for Sin, but of doing this by Christ's giving His life a ransom for many and demonstrating its reality through His rising from the dead? These conceptions were so incredible to His followers at the first and have been so unacceptable to natural man since that it is hard to believe any fable-monger would have selected them for his work, even though they had occurred to him. And who suggested the doctrine of a general resurrection at the end of time? - a doctrine to which unaided human science or philosophy has never been able to attain.

The impartial reasoner must perceive that in all these themes we are dealing not with purely human thoughts but with thoughts that are divine and that it is idle to talk of them as fabulous or untrue. "God is not a man that He should lie." He is neither a tyrant that He should seek to oppress men, nor a false priest that He should want to cheat men, nor a novel writer that He should study to amuse men, but a Father whose dearest interest is to save men, who is Light and in Him is no darkness at all, and whose words are like Himself, the same yesterday, today and forever.

**II. THE SECOND MARK OF TRUTHFULNESS IN THE CHRISTIAN SCHEME IS**

**ITS PERFECT ADAPTATION TO THE END FOR WHICH IT WAS DESIGNED.**

**1.** Assuming for the moment that the Christian System as entirely a product of the human mind, or a pure fabrication, the question to be considered is, Whether it is at all likely that it would perfectly answer the end for which it was intended If that end was to deceive men in order to enslave and degrade them, then its concocters have signally outwitted themselves; for no sooner does a man accept Christianity than he finds that if he is deceived thereby, it is a blessed deception which makes it impossible to keep him in subjection or degradation since it illuminates his understanding, purifies his heart cleanses his imagination, quickens his conscience, strengthens his will and ennobles his whole nature. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free," said Christ. On the other hand if its end was to do this very thing, then undoubtedly its end has been reached; but the mere fact that it has been reached shows that the Scheme has not proceeded from the human mind as a work of fiction, but from the heart of God as a Scripture of truth.

**2.** If there be one thing more characteristic of man's works than another, it is imperfection. Magnificent as some of man's inventions have been, few of them are absolutely free from defects, and those that are freest have been brought to their present state of excellence only by slow and short stages and after repeated modifications and improvements- witness the printing press, the steam engine, telegraphy, electrical power and lighting, musical instruments, aeroplanes etc. And what is more, however perfect any human invention may appear to be at the present moment, there is no guarantee that it will not be in time superseded by something more adapted to the end it has in view.

The case, however, is different with God's works which like Himself, are all perfect; and if it shall turn out on examination that the Christian System is perfectly adapted to the end it has in view, viz., Salvation, and has never needed to be changed, modified or improved, then the inference will be unavoidable that it is God's work and not man's, and as a consequence not a fiction but a fact, not fable but truth.

I am aware that at the present moment there are those who declare that Christianity is played out, that it has served its day, that it has lost its hold on men's minds and will require to give place to some other panacea for the ills of life. But for the most part that is the cry of those who have not themselves tried Christianity and hardly understand what it means. And in any case no effective substitute for Christianity has ever been put forward by its opponents or critics. Nor has any attempt to modify or improve Christianity as a system of religious doctrine ever been successful. Perhaps one of the most strenuous efforts in this direction has been that of so-called liberal (alias rationalistic) theology which seeks to divest Christianity of all its supernatural elements, and in particular of its divine-human Jesus by reducing Him to the dimensions of an ordinary man - in which case it is obvious, the whole superstructure of Christianity would fall to the ground. Yet a contributor to the Hibbart Journal (Jan. 1910) who himself does not accept orthodox Christianity writes of "The Collapse of Liberal Christianity," and frankly confesses that "the simple Jesus of Liberal Christianity cannot be found," which amounts to an admission that the picture of Jesus in the Gospels as a Divine Man, a supernatural Christ, is no fiction but a sublime truth.

**3.** A detailed examination of the Christian Scheme shows that means better fitted to secure its ends could not have been devised.

**(a).** It will not be denied that part of the aim of Christianity is to restore mankind in general and individuals in particular to the favor and fellowship of God, out of which they have been cast by sin. Whether the Bible is right in its explanation of the origin of sin need not now be argued. Common observation as well as individual conscience testifies to the fact of sin; and the disastrous condition of the race induced by sin Christianity proposes to remedy - not by telling men that sin is only a figment of the imagination (which men know better than believe); or, if a reality, so trifling a matter that God will overlook it (which men in their best moments doubt); and certainly not by asking men to save themselves (which they soon discover they cannot do); but by first setting forth sin in all its moral loathsomeness and legal guiltiness, and then announcing that God Himself had provided a lamb for a burnt-offering, even His own Son, upon whom He has laid the iniquity of us all, and that now He is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses.

**(b).** A second thing proposed by Christianity is to make men holy, to free them from the love and practice of sin, to conform them in the love and practice of truth and righteousness; and this it seeks to do by giving man a new heart and a right spirit, by changing his nature, implanting in it holy principles and putting it under the government of the divine and eternal spirit.

That the means are adequate has been proved by the experience of the past nineteen centuries, in which millions of human souls have been translated out of darkness into light and turned from the service of Satan to the service of the Living God. And what is more, other methods have been tried without effecting any permanent transformation of either hearts or lives. Magical incantations, meaningless mummeries, laborious ceremonies, painful penances, legislations, education, philanthropy, have in turn been resorted to, but in vain. Never once has the Gospel method been fairly tried and proved inefficient.

**(c).** A third thing Christianity engages to do, is to confer on those who accept it a blessed immortality - to support them when they come to die, to cheer them with the prospect of a happy existence while their bodies are in the grave, to bring those bodies forth again and in the end to bestow on their whole personality a glorious unending life beneath a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. And Christianity does this by first securing its adherents a title to eternal life through the obedience unto death of Christ, next by making them meet for the inheritance through the indwelling and operation of Christ's spirit, then by opening for them the gates of immortality through Christ's resurrection, and finally by Christ's coming for them at the end of the age.

Now can anything more complete be thought of as a Scheme of Salvation? Is there any part of it that is not exactly fitted to its place and suited to its end? So far is this from being the case that not a single pin can be removed from the building without bringing down the whole superstructure. Abstract from Christianity the Incarnation, or the Atonement, or the Resurrection, or the Exaltation, or the Future coming, and its framework is shattered. Take away Pardon or Purity or Peace or Sonship or Heaven, and its value as a system of religion is gone. But these are not assertions that will hold good of fables and fictions, myths and legends, which might all be tampered with, taken from or added to, without endangering their worth. Hence, it is fair to argue, that a scheme so admirably adjusted in all its parts, so complete in its provisions and so exquisitely adapted to its design, could only have emanated from the mind of Him who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working, who is the true God and the Eternal Life.

**III. A THIRD MARK OF TRUTHFULNESS IN THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM IS**

**ITS CONSPICUOUS SUCCESS IN EFFECTING THE END FOR WHICH IT WAS DESIGNED.**

Had Christianity been a baseless imagination, or a superstitious legend, is there reason to suppose either that it would have lived so long or that it would have achieved the wonders it has done during the past nineteen centuries - either upon individuals or upon the world at large? It is true that mere length of time in which a religion has prevailed when considered by itself, is no sufficient guarantee of the truth of that religion, else Buddhism would possess a higher certificate of truthfulness than Christianity; but when viewed in connection with the beneficial results in elevating mankind, both individually and collectively, which have followed from a religion, the length of time during which it has continued is no small testimony to its truth. Still the practical effects of a religion upon individuals and upon the world at large, as has been said, forms an argument in its favor which cannot easily be set aside.

**1.** As to the INDIVIDUAL. Had the facts upon which Christianity is based been purely fictitious, had the story of the Incarnation, Death and Resurrection of Jesus been only a legend, and had the promise of pardon, purity and peace, of everlasting life and glory which Christianity holds out to men been a deception instead of a verity, does anyone imagine it would have effected the transformations it has wrought on individual hearts and lives? I remember that the first lie told by the devil in Eden plunged the whole race of mankind into spiritual death. I have yet to learn that a lie hatched by even good people can save men from perdition and lift them to heaven, can bless them with inward happiness and assure them of divine favor, can comfort them in sorrow, strengthen them in weakness, sustain them in death and fit them for eternity. And yet that is what Christianity can do - has done in past ages to millions who have tried it, and is doing to-day to thousands who are trying it. It will take more than has been said by critics and scoffers to persuade me that these things have been done by a fable. I have heard of fables and fictions, legends and superstitions amusing men and women, diverting them when wearied, occupying them when idle, taking their thoughts off serious matters, and even helping them to shut their eyes against death's approach; I never heard of their bringing souls to God, assuring them of His favor, cleansing them from sin, blessing them with peace, preparing them for eternity. But these again are what Christianity can do and does; and so I reason it is not a fable, but a fact, not a legend but a history, not an imaginary tale, but a solid truth.

**2.** And when to this I add what it has done on the BROAD THEATRE OF THE WORLD, my faith in its truth is confirmed. Nineteen centuries ago Christianity started out on its conquering career. It had neither wealth nor power, nor learning, nor social influence, nor imperial patronage upon its side. It was despised by the great ones of the earth as a superstition. It was looked upon by Jew and Gentile as subversive of religion and morals. Its adherents were collected from the dregs of the population, from the poor and the ignorant (at least in the world's estimation); and its apostles were a humble band, mostly of fishermen - though they soon had their ranks enlarged by the accession of one (Paul) whose mental force and religious earnestness were worth to Christianity whole battalions of common disciples or of average preachers. But what was one, even though he was an intellectual and spiritual giant, to the mighty task set before it of conquering the world and making all nations obedient to the Faith? Yet that task was immediately taken in hand and with what success the annals of the past centuries declare.

In the first century, which may be called the Apostolic Age, it practically defeated Judaism, by establishing itself as an organized religion, not in Palestine alone, but in Asia Minor, and in some of the chief cities of Europe. To this it was no doubt helped by the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 by the armies of Titus; but the undermining of Judaism was being gradually brought about by the spread of the Christian Faith.

In the next two centuries, which may be called the Age of the Fathers, it overcame paganism, substituting in wide circles the worship of Jesus for the worship of heathen divinities and of the Roman Emperor. Not without passing through fierce tribulation in the long succession of persecutions with which it was assailed did it achieve the victory, but in its experience was repeated the experience of Israel in Egypt - "the more it was afflicted the more it multiplied and grew," so that by the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth century it had within its pale about a fifth of the Roman Empire.

From that time on Christianity applied itself to the task of making nominal Christians into real ones; and but for the mercy of God at the Reformation it might have been defeated But God's Spirit brooded upon the moral and spiritual waste as erst He did upon the material in the beginning, and God's Word said - "Let there be light!" and there was light. Luther in Germany, Calvin in Geneva, and Knox in Scotland, with others in different parts arose as champions of the Truth and recalled men's thoughts to the simplicities and certainties of the Gospel; and a great awakening overspread the nominally Christian world.

Thereafter Christianity took a forward step among the nations; and is now doing for the world what no other religion has done or can do - neither Buddhism, nor Confucianism, nor Mohammedanism - what no modern substitute for Christianity can do - whether materialism, or agnosticism, or spiritism, or socialism; and just because of this we may rest assured that Christianity is no cunningly devised fable but a divinely revealed truth - that it alone contains hope for the world, as a whole, and for generation after generation as it passes, and that the day will yet come when it will fill the globe.

In short, when one remembers that Christianity has built up the Christian church and that the Christian church has been the most powerful factor in creating modern civilization, it becomes an impossibility to credit the allegation or even to harbor the suspicion, that it is founded on a lie. By its fruits it may be tested. Notwithstanding the imperfections that adhere to the Christian church, so far as it is a human institution, few will deny that its existence in the world has been productive of preponderatingly good results; and on that certificate alone it may be claimed that the Christianity of which the church is a concrete and living embodiment is no "cunningly devised fable" but a "Scripture of Truth."