

**EVOLUTION OF CHRISTIANITY:
OR, ORIGIN, NATURE,
AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE
RELIGION OF THE BIBLE. [1911]**

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Evolution of Christianity: Or, Origin, Nature, and Development of the Religion of the Bible.
[1911] by F. G. Smith

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EVOLUTION
OF CHRISTIANITY
or
Origin, Nature, and Development
Of the Religion of the Bible

F. G. SMITH

Author of "The Revelation Explained"

"Religion's all. Descending from the skies
To wretched man, the goddess in her left
Holds out this world,
And, in her right, the next."
—Young.

"Thou shalt guide me with thy council, and afterward
receive me to glory." Psa. 73: 24.

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PREFACE.

Believers in Christianity usually appeal to the Bible as the source of authority for their religion. Such appeal is all that is essential wherever the divine Authorship of the Bible is recognized. In the present work, however, I have dealt with the subject of revealed religion from the standpoint of man's moral and mental necessities, showing his need of divine illumination, and arriving at the conclusion that CHRISTIANITY is the only religion adapted to his requirements and must therefore be the true religion and the *only successful religion* for the moral elevation and redemption of mankind. Contrasted with all other forms of religion, Christianity, because of its beautiful nature and marvelous success, is in a class by itself, thus clearly demonstrating the fact that it proceeded from a source higher than human.

I have endeavored to show that there has, from the earliest period, been a constant unfolding and developing of the religion of the Bible in accordance with a prearranged plan. That such a revelation from God to man was essential was made clear by a consideration of the natural constitution of man himself. As this revelation increased from age to age, the record of its progress was written by living witnesses, and thus we have our

Bible, the Book of Life for the world. So, after all, the authority for the Christian religion lies, not in the Bible itself as a book, but in the *source from which the Bible came*. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

The beneficial effect of revealed religion is shown by the mental and the moral elevation of mankind wherever the Bible has gone with its message of mercy. By imposing wholesome restraints upon human pride and selfishness true religion has conserved the natural energies of man and contributed powerfully toward the refining, purifying, and elevating results manifested in the highest type of modern civilization. Let the work of evangelizing the world with the pure religion of Jesus go forward!

"Thou whose Almighty word
Chaos and darkness heard,
And took their flight,
Hear us, we humbly pray;
And, where the gospel day
Sheds not its glorious ray,
'Let there be light!'"

Yours in the interest of the Truth,

F. G. Smith.

Grand Junction, Mich., Oct. 1, 1910.

INTRODUCTION.

Christianity is a mighty factor in the history of world-progress. Believing her origin to be divine, and fully convinced of the truth and justice of her claims, millions have arrayed themselves under her banner; and every passing year multitudes still join her ranks. Exclusive in her claims and opposed to every principle of human selfishness, she has successfully fought her way against contending rivals and the antagonizing forces of evil men, and today she stands crowned triumphant—the most brilliant example of endurance and of glory in the entire history of religious phenomena. Whence came this wondrous moral force?—from heaven, or from men? To consider the origin, the nature, and the development of this religion of the Bible is the object of the present work.

Man possesses a religious nature. He intuitively desires to worship something. This has been his uniform experience in all countries and in all ages. It is on account of this universality of religious sentiment that philosophers have applied to man the generic appellation “the religious animal.” But his conception of spirit-powers and of divine worship, independent of direct revela-

tion, has been crude and oftentimes grotesquely absurd, varying, in accordance with the state of his intellectual development, from the lowest fetishism to a semi-ethical anthropomorphic polytheism, with some traces, perhaps, of monotheistic ideas.

But while universal experience establishes the fact that man is by nature religious, universal testimony also acknowledges him to be a sinful being morally accountable to a higher power. However, many nations have preserved traditions of a former period of holiness and happiness. Thus, we read in the Chinese books that "during the period of the first heaven, the whole creation enjoyed a state of happiness: everything was beautiful; everything was good; all beings were perfect in their kind. In this happy age, heaven and earth employed their virtues jointly to embellish nature. There was no jarring in the elements, no inclemency in the air; all things grew without labor, and universal fertility prevailed. The active and the passive virtues conspired together, without any effort or opposition, to produce and perfect the universe."¹ The Chaldean traditions of the primeval state—the sacred tree, its guardian cherubs, and flaming sword—strikingly

¹ Faber's *Horae Mosalcae*, p. 146, as quoted by Rawlinson.

resemble the Hebrew account.² The story of the fall of man is preserved in Thibetan, Mongolian, and Cingalese traditions, and the account given in some of the Persian books closely resembles the Scriptural narrative.³ But the religious aspirations of man, independent of divine revelation, have ever been merely the longing of the infant crying in the night for its food.

Turning to the Bible, we find not only an account of the primitive fall and man's subsequent sinful condition, but also, during the ages, increasing evidences of a plan for his restoration. Now, that plan must of necessity be divine in order to be successful. Man could not redeem himself; for, having been originally placed under a law that required perfect obedience and love for God with all the heart and soul, he could have no surplus obedience to make reparation for the sins that were past. Therefore works of supererogation were clearly impossible. The broken law of obedience could not be set aside; its infinite dignity and majesty had to be vindicated by the enforcement of its penalties. No created intelligence could secure man's redemption; for the fact of creatureship implies dependence and obliga-

² See George Smith's Chaldean Account of Genesis, 1876.

³ Kalisch, Comment on Genesis, p. 68.

tion. Even the angels of heaven were under the same law exacting perfect obedience, and hence they could have no surplus righteousness to atone for fallen man. Only a being over whom the law had no jurisdiction was adequate to such a task, and therefore only God could redeem. After predictions by prophets and typical foreshadowing by many of the ceremonies of Moses' law, "when the fulness of the time was come, *God sent forth his Son*, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Gal. 4: 4, 5.

Although this plan of salvation was perfect and complete in the mind and purpose of God from the beginning, its full revelation to mankind was reserved until the incarnation of Christ. Therefore the apostle Paul refers to it as a "mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God" (Eph. 3: 9), "even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Col. 1: 26, 27. But looking backward upon the history of God's dealings with his people in olden times, we can