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## Masonry in the Garb of Christianity.

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Pastors will often meet with Masons who assert most emphatically that since their initiation they view the Masonic oath-bound fraternity in a different light and consider it a distinctly Christian institution, and that his opposition to their favorite lodge betrays his ignorance, excusable indeed because he has not been "entered, passed, and raised." All material at the service of the pastor proving the distinctly unchristian character of Masonry must in such cases be of special value to him. But Masonry does bedeck itself with the livery of Christianity, both before the eyes of the public and in various of its degrees of the American and Scottish Rites.

From all that has been written and printed about Blue, or Symbolic, Masonry, comprising the first three degrees, Entered Apprentice, Fellow-Craft, and Master Mason, it is evident that in not one of its many lines does it voice any distinctively Christian doctrine or make any reference to the name of our adorable Savior. In Chapter Masonry there are two Scripture-readings from which the name of Christ has been studiously expunged. Mackey admits (*Ritualist*, p. 272) that in the fourth degree of Mark Master, the first degree of the Chapter, "slight, but necessary modifications" have been applied to 1 Pet. 2, 1—5. The Masonic mutilation renders the closing words thus: "to offer up sacrifices acceptable to God," omitting the words "by Jesus Christ." Again, according to Mackey's *Ritualist*, p. 348, when 2 Thess. 3, 6—16 is read during the opening ceremonies of the Royal Arch degree, the fourth of the Chapter, the name of our Savior is omitted from verses 6 and 12. But when some of our anti-Masonic friends maintain that Masonry in no instance adopts a Christian garb or mentions the name of Christ and His suffering and death, they are quite mistaken.

# The Bible and the Sins of the Saints.

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Satan opened his hostilities against the Church of God here on earth with the words: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" These words the arch-enemy of God and man addressed to our common mother Eve in the Garden of Eden, insinuating that she and her husband were sorely mistaken if they thought that God really meant to forbid them to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This questioning of the authenticity of the Word of God has ever since been one of the chief weapons of the devil in his fight against God and His Church. In many instances where his other weapons have failed him, this weapon has brought success to him and achieved the ends he desired. Some of the fiercest enemies of the Church have tried to exterminate the Bible by physical force and

bloodshed. Antiochus Epiphanes ordered the scribes of the Law to be torn to pieces wherever they would be found, and those with whom sacred books or rolls were found were cruelly put to death. The fury of the Roman Emperor Diocletian was mainly directed against the ministers of the Gospel, against the copies of the New Testament, and against other writings of the Church. We all know too well the rage of the Roman Catholic hierarchy against the Bible to need any specific description of it. What Antiochus, the type of the man of sin and the son of perdition, did for a few years, the antitype has practised on an infinitely larger scale for almost a thousand years, and even to-day not a single layman would be permitted to read the Bible if he could prevent him from doing so. The Pope still declares the Bible to be a dangerous book, and if a priest or bishop gives permission to a layman to read it, it is because the present conditions of the world wring such a concession from the Church of Rome. Besides this, in order to counterbalance the effect of the Bible upon the readers in the Catholic Church, this Church has placed into the hands of both priest and layman a faulty rendition of the original, interspersed with intentional falsifications of some of the most important passages of Holy Writ.

But in spite of the most terrible and persistent persecutions of the Bible neither pagans nor the great Antichrist has been successful in exterminating it. Many millions of copies of the Bible are printed and spread every year by the Protestant churches not only in the so-called Christian countries, but also in the remotest recesses of the Mohammedan and pagan world. Seeing this, the devil in our days, more than ever before, uses the same tactics which he employed at the very outset of his unholy warfare against God. He disputes and denies the authenticity, the divine origin, and the inspiration of the Bible. In some of the sectarian churches, in lodge-halls, in the public schools, and in the lecture-rooms of academies and universities his tools, false prophets of every description, declare with many bombastic phrases, with an air of superior wisdom and learnedness, that the Bible must be placed in the same category with the writings of such great men as Shakespeare and Goethe or with other religious books, such as the Koran, the Zend-Avesta, or the writings of Confucius. Some even go so far as to brand the Bible as a book of myths or lies. In order to support and prove their claim, they bring all kinds of charges against this sacred Book, which, according to their opinion, prove that the Bible cannot be the Word of God. One

of their assertions that the Bible cannot be God's own Word is based on the fact that this Book gives such a minute account of the sins of the saints. The burden of this treatise is to make a brief and concise answer to this charge.

### I.

Raising the aforementioned accusation against the Bible, the unbelievers take particular delight in pointing to such sins as Noah's drunkenness and his lying naked in his tent, to Abraham's denial, before Abimelech, the king of the Philistines, and before Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, of Sarah's being his wife, to Lot's incest, to the deception Jacob practised in securing for himself the best blessing of his father Isaac, to Moses' unbelief and disobedience at Kadesh-Meribah, especially to David's adultery with Bathsheba and the doing away with Uriah, and then to Peter's denial of Christ in the palace of the high priest. How can a book, they say, which makes mention of the sins of its great men, who are otherwise described in the same book as holy men, as favorites of God, not only in passing, but with such minuteness, with many words and details, — how can such a book have God, the holy and righteous God, for its Author, the God who abhors sin and iniquity, who, according to the claims of the Christians, is absolutely holy and pure! How can we harmonize the fact that He has had men record the very particulars of some of the foulest deeds that ever have been perpetrated with the other fact that He is a spotless and immaculate Being, before whose splendor even the brightness of the angels must fade! How can it be said to comport with His purity to hold up before the eyes of men the crimes of Lot and David in all their ugliness! Even a strictly moral man will, as a rule, hesitate to besmirch his pen with the filth and nastiness of human licentiousness and sexual perversions. Hence, the unbelievers argue, the Bible cannot be the Word of God.

In answering this charge, it is certainly not altogether outside the scope of our treatise to observe that some of the acts of the saints branded by the enemies of the Bible and even by superficial Bible students as great offenses and scandalous deeds are, in their last analysis, not crimes and grievous transgressions, but acts of faith, though with an admixture of human weakness. This is true of Abraham's denial of Sarah's being his wife before the above-mentioned kings and of Jacob's conduct when by strategy he obtained the blessings of the first-born.

Abraham, knowing the wickedness of the people of Sodom,

had certainly reason to fear that other heathens, such as the Philistines and the Egyptians, would be equally unprincipled and therefore would not shrink from most heinous misdeeds. He feared he would be killed if he would at once disclose the fact to the heathen kings that fair and beautiful Sarah was his wife. But since Sarah had not yet born a son to him, how could the promise be fulfilled that he was to be the father of many nations and the forefather of the blessed Seed, the Messiah, if he were to be cut off now out of the land of the living? Thus in the hour of trial and temptation that great promise is uppermost in the mind of this pious man and friend of God, and he clings to it with firm faith; and this firm belief, that the divine promise given to him individually must come true, prompts him to seek the preservation and safety of his own life, and seeing no other way in his confusion and excitement, he withholds part of the truth, saying merely that Sarah was his sister, trusting to Almighty God to find a way of preserving Sarah's chastity in the house of both Abimelech and Pharaoh. This hope, however, also rested on a divine promise, especially in the second temptation which came upon him. For not long before his going to Egypt, God had clearly and expressly told him that Sarah would be the mother, not only of the heir of his temporal possessions, but, above all, of the bearer of the divine promise regarding the Messiah. Thus we see that the guiding and controlling principle in all this was faith, faith in the divine promise and faith in the wisdom and power of the Most High, who would and could straighten out the tangle into which both of them had gotten. Beyond doubt it would have been more heroic to tell these two kings the full truth at the beginning; but a saint, as long as he is on earth, is no perfect angel and constantly has to fight against his own flesh and blood every day of his life, and all the more so in the hour of trial and temptation.

What has been said of Abraham applies also to Jacob's disguising himself and asking for the blessing which the misguided father had intended for his brother Esau. Isaac acted contrary to the will of God when he resolved to give the Messianic blessing to Esau. Even before the birth of the twins the Lord had told Rebekah that the elder should serve the younger, that is, according to the phraseology of the Oriental nations, the younger should be the lord and heir and, in this particular case, also the bearer of the most-prized promise that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Moreover, Esau had sold the birthright of the first-born, which he imagined he still had, to his brother in

a most frivolous manner. The blessing of the first-born therefore belonged to the younger by a twofold right, both divine and human. But Isaac, with almost childish stubbornness, disregarded this, without doubt notwithstanding all previous protests of his wife Rebekah. If, then, Rebekah and Jacob, knowing too well the partiality and stubbornness of the aged sire, resorted to a stratagem to turn the blessing to him to whom it belonged, who possessed a rightful claim and title to it, it is altogether unreasonable to call the act of Jacob a vulgar and despicable fraud or a punishable, criminal deception. The patriarch, in the ensuing hour of divine illumination, undoubtedly would have rebuked Rebekah and Jacob for what they had done and taken the blessing away from the malefactor Jacob, if he had become guilty of a detestable treachery.

But while we emphatically protest against stigmatizing the conduct of Abraham and Jacob in the above-quoted instances as outrageous and scandalous sins, we readily concede that the other cases mentioned in the beginning of the first part of this essay are exceedingly grievous, most scandalous, and offensive sins which admit of little or no extenuation or excuse. These sins certainly gave offense within and without the Church of God, and to this day very many, especially such as are outside of the pale of the visible Church, take occasion from them to disparage the Christian Church, to malign the Bible, and to blaspheme the Lord. It is true what the prophet Nathan said to David, 2 Sam. 12, 14: "By this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme," and applies not only to David, but also to Noah, Lot, Peter, and others. In addition to this we also readily admit that the Scriptures are very explicit in the description of these sins, not sparing of words, laying bare all their hideousness and ugliness to the eyes of the readers. We fail, however, to see that for these reasons the Bible cannot be the Word of God, given by inspiration. On the contrary, after a closer inspection of these narratives we find that these very narratives as they are presented in Holy Scripture furnish a by no means inconsiderable argument for the divine origin of the Bible.

God is no man, neither is He to be judged according to man's obscured and perverted ideas of purity and holiness. His very holiness and purity demand that He picture sin as it is in truth, in all its hideousness and turpitude as to its origin, the manner of its performance, and its fatal consequences. We must expect Him to call white white and black black, without any diminution or addition, without excusing those who have in reality wantonly

broken His commandments and become guilty of a grave offense. In our superrefined and hypocritical age it is often considered an outrage to call sins by their proper names. I remember that before the great war I read one day that it had become customary in some classes of society in Germany to call adultery "*Eheirrung*," which may be rendered by "conjugal error." How indignant at times an audience will become if a preacher employs clear and unmistakable terms in describing the various sins of impurity and unchastity and exposing the sins of race suicide and birth prevention! But this is not because those who are so indignant on account of this are so pure of heart and so clean of tongue that the very mentioning of these sins and crimes endangers their purity and becomes an incentive to meditate on, plan and design, such crimes. Among themselves, perhaps, they often speak of them in even plainer words, and some of them do not even refrain from committing those sins themselves. Their purity is only feigned, and the real cause of their indignation is the sting which such a rebuke has left in their conscience. If God would do like men and use euphemistic words in describing the sins of the saints or pass over them in silence, it would be nothing short of connivance at these transgressions; and the very men who raise all kinds of objections against the divine origin of the Bible because it narrates such sins would be among the first to accuse the Bible of partiality, favoritism, and other defects and use them as a proof to show that such a book could not be the work of God.

Indeed, it would be altogether inconsistent with God's holiness and truthfulness had He exposed to full view the sins of individuals and whole nations outside of the Church, but at the same time extenuated and covered up the sins of His people, especially of those who occupied a prominent position in the commonwealth of Israel or in the Church of the New Testament. To expect such a thing from Him would be equivalent to ascribing to Jehovah human weaknesses, frailties, and passions such as the pagans are wont to attribute to their gods and goddesses. Men are partial, sometimes intentionally so, at other times without knowing it. It is an experience commonly met with that parents do not see or notice the faults of their own children, while their eyes are wonderfully sharp in detecting the faults of other people's children and are ever ready to censure them and expose their faults and sins. Even the most respectable biographers and historians are not free from partiality and one-sidedness. Let, for instance, a Frenchman write the history of Napoleon I or the history of

Louis XIV, tyrants and butchers of the worst type. The writer may be a pacifist and, in addition, a Socialist, a rabid opponent of the form of government which these two bloody men represented; yet this very writer will bask in the sunshine of the *gloire* which they were instrumental in heaping upon the *Grande Nation* by their robberies and their conquests. Lest their names be tarnished too much to the detriment of their nation's fame, it is beyond dispute that the historian will cover up, or touch only lightly, some of the most atrocious deeds which these murderers and robbers in high places committed either directly or through their henchmen. We have also reason to doubt whether any of the historians of the nations engaged in the World War will ever be able to give us an altogether dependable and unbiased presentation of the various causes which plunged the greater part of the nations of the earth into the maelstrom of this bloodiest of all tragedies. It is human to be partial and biased; to be absolutely truthful is divine.

If the Scriptures would not have fully related and described the sins of the great men of the Bible, or if they would have excused or extenuated them in one way or the other, we should indeed have reason to doubt, or call in question, their claim to divine authorship and origin. The transgressions of the saints were unquestionably also handed down to the succeeding generations by oral communication. The fathers who were contemporaries of David related the fall and sin of their king to their children and these again to their progeny living at the time of the writer of the Second Book of Samuel. But if this book would have dwelt at length on the virtues and valorous deeds of this great warrior, statesman, and prophet without also mentioning and describing his grievous transgression, would this omission not have shaken the belief in the divine origin of this book in the hearts of those listeners and readers in whose memories the narratives of their grandsires was still fresh? Peter's deep fall, without a doubt, made a deep and lasting impression not only on his fellow-apostles, but also on all the disciples of those days. Some of these disciples still lived when the evangelists penned and circulated their gospels. A lack of proper information concerning the great offense which Peter had given would by no means have been a factor in inducing them to accept and acknowledge these gospels as books inspired by the Holy Ghost. On the contrary, the absence of such information would have raised many doubts in the minds of these brethren as to the divine authorship of



these books. The very fact, however, that these books and indeed the whole Bible presents to us a true, uncolored, and altogether trustworthy, reliable picture of these saints and heroes as they appeared in their worst light, is certainly not an argument against, but for, the authenticity and divine authorship of this unique Book. The Bible, absolutely unbiased and impartial, exhibiting to our eyes the sins of the saints and the ungodly alike and in high relief, with the same frankness and candor, cannot be the mere product of a human mind, but is and must be the work of God Himself, of that God of whom the Scripture says, 1 Sam. 15, 29: "The Strength of Israel will not lie," and Heb. 6, 18: "It was impossible for God to lie." If, therefore, we read of the sins of the saints, it behooves us to adore in humility God's truthfulness, which gave us an absolutely veracious and dependable account of the lives of the heroes of Holy Scripture and to admire His wisdom, which forestalled any accusation of partiality and favoritism after the manner of men.

## II.

Another objection raised against the divine origin of the Bible and the doctrine of inspiration is: The sins of the saints as recorded in the Bible, sometimes with great minuteness and copiousness, must necessarily have an evil effect on the morals and ethical conduct of its readers. The description of them breeds familiarity with sin and stirs into action the evil passions lying dormant in every man's heart. Will not the readers say: If men like Noah, Lot, Moses, David, and Peter, who were guilty of either drunkenness, or incest, or adultery, or blasphemy, received forgiveness of their horrible sins and even continued to be great men in the Church, it cannot, after all, be such a dreadful and fatal sin to set aside the moral precepts and to transgress them, as other Scripture-passages represent it and as the ministers and teachers of the Christian religion assert it to be. The effect of these narratives consequently will serve as an encouragement and a stimulus to break the Law of God. God, however, certainly does not wish and intend to incite men to sin and lawlessness; according to His holiness He cannot be instrumental in furthering the corruption of men. You Christians emphasize even more than we, who deny the inspiration of the Bible, that God has no pleasure in wickedness and that He will absolutely not countenance and promote the service of sin. Besides this, do not Christian preachers and Christian books and papers continually protest against books, newspapers, theatrical productions, films, and pictures which pre-

sent to the eyes and ears of men human foibles, passions, illicit sexual relations, and crimes in all their shameful reality? If this must also be said of the Bible, how can this Book be inspired by God Himself? Has it not thereby forfeited all claims to being God's own Book?

We answer: There is a manner of describing and picturing sins and crimes which panders to the lower appetites of man, which is welcome fuel for the sins and crimes lying dormant in every man's bosom; a description which does not deter man from the commission of crime, but really makes him familiar with it and induces him to make light of it. And such a description of sin and passion is the daily food of millions of people in journals, magazines, books, in the theaters, cabarets, picture shows and dance-halls. Not only ministers and strict moralists will tell us this, but also doctors, police inspectors, judges, and the wardens of insane asylums. But in the Bible, also in the Biblical stories under consideration, sin is never presented as something desirable, as something that promises and gives true happiness, satisfaction, and peace of heart and soul. The Bible never speaks of sin in bantering, frivolous words. Weseloh, in his *Buch des Herrn und seine Feinde* ("Book of the Lord and His Enemies"), says, p. 121: "There are passages in the Bible which form the anatomy of sin, showing what a hotbed of sin the human heart is. If you read these passages, you will not be like one that has been infected with the evil, but like one that comes out of the dissecting-room and is much wiser than before he went in; he is by no means filled with enthusiasm for the putrefaction he has seen. This is surely also true of the Bible. Take, for instance, the comparatively brief account given of Noah's sin. There we have the pitiful sight of a very old man, a patriarch, a preacher of righteousness, a man who alone with his family was preserved, through the all-devouring floods of the Deluge, by God's special interposition and wonderful providence. This old, venerable man becomes intoxicated from drinking too much wine, having in an unguarded moment yielded to his lower appetites. In his state of complete intoxication he falls upon his rude couch and uncovers himself. While he is lying there in this condition, his son Ham, who is ill disposed towards his father, enters the hut, and what his eyes behold furnishes a welcome occasion to make sport of the old man. He calls his brothers, hoping they will gladly join him in taunting and jeering at the head of the family. But these two brothers at once administer the severest rebuke to the rebellious and frivolous son.

Being mindful of the filial respect which children owe even to sinning parents and being chaste in their hearts, Shem and Japheth take a garment, lay it upon their shoulders, and going backward, cover the nakedness of their father. But Scripture does not content itself with merely narrating the sin of Noah, the levity and disrespect of Ham, and the pious act of the two other sons; it also tells us that, when Noah had heard what his youngest son had done to him, he arose and, illumined by the Spirit of prophecy, as a true patriarch blessed his two pious sons and then pronounced the well-known curse upon the posterity of Ham which is still being fulfilled more than four thousand years after this oracle was proclaimed. This narration of the sin of Noah is surely no encouragement to the readers to indulge in the sin of drunkenness and immodesty. On the contrary, it shows how the inebriety of the father gave occasion to a son to commit a sin and an outrage even more hideous and odious than that into which the father had fallen, and furthermore, how the grandsire, in consequence of his own sin and the sin of his youngest son, was compelled by the Holy Ghost to pronounce a ban upon a great part of his progeny for all times to come. If Noah realized but to a small extent what this curse meant, his whole life afterwards must have been darkened and made bitter by the remembrance of his sin, although he undoubtedly had received forgiveness from the Lord. How dare any one that reads this narrative carefully say, then, that the perusal of it will cause the reader to make light of the sin of drunkenness! No, the careful reading of this passage will fill the reader with horror at, and disgust of, this sin and help to deter him from a similar act. It would not be difficult to analyze the sins of Moses, David, and Peter in a similar way.

*(To be concluded.)*

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