

PREFACE.

AN incredible number of legends exists connected with the personages whose history is given in the Old Testament. The collection now presented to the public must by no means be considered as exhaustive. The compiler has been obliged to limit himself as to the number, it being quite impossible to insert all. He trusts that few of peculiar interest have been omitted.

The Mussulman traditions are nearly all derived from the Talmudic writers, just as the history of Christ in the Koran is taken from the Apocryphal Gospels. The Koran follows the "Sepher Hajaschar" (Book of the Just) far more closely than the canonical Scriptures; and the "Sepher Hajaschar" is a storehouse of the Rabbinic tradition on the subject of the Patriarchs from Adam to Joshua.

The Jewish traditions are of various value. Some can be traced to their origin without fail. One class is derived from Persia, as, for instance, those of Asmodeus, the name of the demon being taken, along with his story, from Iranian sources. Another class springs from the Cabbalists, who, by permutation of the letters of a name, formed the nuclei, so to speak, from which legends spread.

Another class, again, is due to the Rabbinic commentators, who, unable to allow for poetical periphrasis, insisted on literal interpretations, and then coined fables to explain them. Thus the saying of David, "Thou hast heard me from among the horns of the unicorns" which signified that David was assisted by God in trouble, was taken quite literally by the Rabbis, and a story was invented to explain it.

Another class, again, is no doubt due to the exaggeration of Oriental imagery, just as that previously mentioned is due to the deficiency of the poetic fancy in certain Rabbis. Thus, imagination or defect of imagination, each contributed to add to the store.

But when we have swept all these classes aside, there remains a residuum, small, no doubt, of genuine tradition. To this class, if I am not mistaken, belong the account of Lamech and his wives, and the story of the sacrifice of Isaac. In the latter instance, the type comes out far clearer in the Talmudic tradition than in the canonical Scriptures; and this can hardly have been the result of Jewish interpolation, knowing, as they did, that Christians pointed triumphantly to this type.

With regard to Jewish traditions, it is unfortunate that both Eisenmenger and Bartolucci, who collected many of them, were so prejudiced, so moved with violent animosity against the Rabbinic writers, that they preserved only the grotesque, absurd, and indecent legends, and wholly passed over those and there are many of them which are redolent of poetry and which contain an element of truth.

A certain curious interest attaches to these legends at least, I think so; and, should they find favor with the public, this volume will be followed by another series on the legends connected with the New Testament characters.

The author is not aware of any existing collection of these legends, except that of M. Colin de Plancy, "Legendes de l'Ancien Testament," Paris, 1861; but he has found this work of little or no use to him in composing his volume, as M. de Plancy gives no reference to authorities; and also,

because nearly the whole of the contents are taken from D'Herbelot's "Bibliothèque Orientale" and Migne's "Dictionnaire des Apocryphes."

It will be necessary to add a few words on certain works largely quoted in the following pages.

1. Dr. G. Weil's "Biblische Legende des Muselmanner," Frankfurt a. M., 1845, 'Is derived from three Arabic MS. works - "Chamis," by Husein Ibn Mohammed Ibn Alhasan Addiarbekri; "Dsachirat Alulun wanstidjat Alfuhum" by Ahmed Ibn zein Alabidin Albekri; and "Kissat Alanbija" by Mohammed Ibn Ahmed Alkissai.

2. The Chronicle of Abou-djafar Mohammed Tabari was translated into Persian by Abou Ali Mohammed Belami, who added sundry traditions circulating in Persia; and has been rendered into French, in part, by M. Hermann Zolenberg, for the Oriental Translation Fund, Paris, 1867.

3. The "Sepher Hajaschar," or Book of Jasher (Yaschar), is quoted from the translation by Le Chevalier P. L. B. Drach, inserted in Migne's "Dictionnaire des Apocryphes."

4. Eisenmenger, "Neuentdektes Judenthum," 2 vols. 8vo, Konigsburg, 1711, contains a great many Rabbinic traditions collected from sources inaccessible to most persons.

5. Bartolucci, "Bibliotheca Magna Rabbinica," 4 vols. fol., Rome, 1675-93, is a very valuable storehouse of information, but sadly disfigured by prejudice.

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Chapter 1: The Fall of the Angels

~ IN the beginning, before the creation of heaven and earth, God made the angels; free intelligences and free wills; out of His Love He made them, that they might be eternally happy. And that their happiness might be complete, He gave them the perfection of a created nature; that is, He gave them freedom.

But happiness is only attained by the free will agreeing in its freedom to accord with the will of God. Some of the angels by an act of free will obeyed the will of God, and in such obedience found perfect happiness; other angels by an act of free will rebelled against the will of God, and in such disobedience found misery.

Such is the catholic theory of the fall of the angels.

Historically, it is represented as a war in heaven. *"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." (1 Rev. xii. 7 9.)* The reason of the revolt was that Satan desired to be as great as God. *"Thou hast said in thine heart I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation in the sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High." (2 Isaiah xiv. 13, 14.)*

The war ended in the fall of Satan and those whom he had led into apostasy; and to this fall are referred the words of Christ, " I saw Satan like lightning fall from heaven" (1 Luke x. 1 8.)

Fabricius, in his collections of the apocryphal writings of the Old Testament, has preserved the song of triumph which the Archangel Michael sang on obtaining the victory. This in a portion of it: -

"Glory to our God! Praise to His Holy Name! He is our God; glory be to Him! He is our Lord! His be the triumph! He has stretched forth His right hand; He has manifested His power. He has cast down our adversaries. They are mad who resist Him; they are accursed who depart from His commandments! He knoweth all things, and cannot err. His will is sovereignly just, and all that He wills is good, all that He advises is holy. Supreme Intelligence cannot be deceived; Perfect Being cannot will what is evil. Nothing is above that which is supreme, nothing is better than that which is perfect. None is worthy beside Him but him whom He has made worthy. He must be loved above all things and adored as the eternal King. You have abandoned your God, you have revolted against Him, you have desired to be gods; you have fallen from your high estates, you have gone down like a fallen stone. Acknowledge that God is great, that His works are perfect, and that His judgments are just. Glory be to God through ages of ages, praises of joy for all His works! " This song of the Archangel is said to have been revealed to S. Amadeus. (Fabracina (J.A.) Codex Pseudepigraphus Vet. Text. Hamb., 1722, p. 21.)