

Concordia Theological Monthly

Volume 11

Article 21

3-1-1940

Miscellanea

P. E. Kretzmann

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kretzmann, P. E. (1940) "Miscellanea," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 11 , Article 21.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol11/iss1/21>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

Miscellanea

About Faith-Healing

Faith-healing, as a religious manifestation, is not confined to certain Christian cults, nor even to Christianity itself. Dharsun, in Central India, has a Moslem shrine which is famous for its health-restoring promises and professed properties by the faith route. Those who become afflicted with moodiness or melancholy or strange visions or are subject to fits of irresponsibility or violent rages are brought there by friends or relatives, even from remote districts. Though the shrine is definitely Moslem, it is sought out also by Hindus, Sikhs, Jainites, and even by Christians. Any patient can have the willing help of a group of women (for a consideration) who, heavily shrouded, sway and chant in unison: "Help, help, O King, thou who hast empire over the spirit world; vouch-safe help, O thou who burnest evil spirits that trouble human beings." This is chanted incessantly during the faith exercises at the sacred hole. This is a hole in a corner of the sacred enclosure of the shrine, which was blessed and endowed with healing properties 500 years ago by Sheik Jamal, a holy man. He promised that any sufferer would be cured if he put his head into the hole and held his legs in a strictly upright position as long and as still as possible. This, of course, had to be a serial operation. During the period of sojourn the patients are required to live a wholly chaste life and subsist on a simple and severe diet of dry bread, greens cooked in mustard oil, and the eating of five hot peppers at each meal. The treatment is naturally heroic (faith itself is supposed to be); but it is altogether likely that the strict regimen contributes materially to the recovery. Nevertheless, all credit is given to the faith of those who are cured and the miraculous powers of the shrine. The shrine abounds in mementoes and votive offerings in just the same way in which the chapel of St. Anne de Beaupre and the grotto of Lourdes are decorated. There are also to be found the more prosaic testimonials, such as those with which Christian Science and Pentecostal meeting-places advertise the curative qualities of their teachings and the operations of their faith.

The Lutheran

The Four Monarchies in Ancient Literature

In an important article, entitled "The Theory of the Four Monarchies" and published in *Classical Philology* of January, 1940, Prof. Joseph Ward Swaine of the University of Illinois makes some remarks which arrested our attention on account of their bearing on the authenticity of the Book of Daniel. The writer accepts the view of higher critics that this book, at least in its present form, was not written by Daniel in the sixth century B. C., but must be regarded as a product of the second century B. C., having its origin in the struggle between the Jews and Antiochus Epiphanes. It is a view which we, of course, altogether reject. But what is significant is that Professor Swain as well as higher critics whose theories he adopts, admits that the teaching respecting the four world empires was in existence long before the celebrated war of liberation

fought by the Maccabees, and that likewise at an earlier time there were stories current containing the material which we have in the accounts of the fiery furnace and the lions' den in Daniel 3 and 6. It seems to us that this emphasizes the tenuousness of the grounds on which higher critical antagonism to the genuineness of the Book of Daniel rests. If it must be conceded that at least some of the chief ideas of the book were in existence long before the second century B. C., what hinders us from believing that the book itself was written in the sixth century and became the source of the wide-spread view pertaining to the four monarchies, to be succeeded by a fifth one that would be everlasting? Professor Swaine holds that this teaching was brought to the West by Persian colonists who settled in Asia Minor probably not far from Magnesia, where Scipio defeated Antiochus the Great in 190 B. C., and that it was through the contact with these Persians that Roman thinkers and writers had their attention drawn to this construction of world history. At any rate, the reference to four world monarchies, so the writer points out, emerges in Roman literature early in the second century B. C., soon after 190. Since it is unlikely that Roman scholars at this time had read the Septuagint, the conjecture of Professor Swaine as to the source where they obtained the idea of arranging the past history in such a striking way is plausible. It fully agrees with the assumption of many Bible scholars that the prophecies of Daniel were widely known and handed down from one generation to the other in non-Jewish circles of Media and Persia.

A.

The Old Rationalism Revamped

Writing about a book by Carl A. Glover having the title *With the Twelve* Dr. Samuel M. Zwemer presents criticisms which we should like to submit to our readers. In *The Presbyterian* of January 4, he publishes these comments:

This book could have no better subtitle than *Explaining Away the Miracles*. The author refers to the synoptic gospels, especially to Mark, as the earliest and most authentic record of the life of our Savior. That Gospel contains thirty-six miracles. Here is how Mr. Glover disposes of most of them. We quote without comment (p. 10): "People were persuaded that Jesus and His disciples wrought an enormous number of miracles; some miracles can be explained as the working of God within the field of natural law; some accounts are best interpreted on the basis of the findings of reverent Biblical scholarship; some miracles which cannot be explained very definitely influenced the disciples in their attitude toward Jesus Christ. . . . Carried by his friends into the presence of Jesus, a paralyzed man was healed by the assurance of forgiveness. The relationship between mental and physical states is discussed in a later chapter" (page 33): "Forgiveness struck off the fetters which bound the victim's mind and thereby released his body from its ailment."

The stilling of the tempest is admitted to be one of the best attested incidents in the life of Jesus, but the author does his best to explain it away. It may have been an allegory or an imitation of the story found in Jonah (page 53): "One theory is that Jesus slept through the brief

storm and did not know about it until the sea had calmed. When told of the terror with which the disciples regarded the tempest, He expressed surprise at their fearfulness and tried to inculcate in them His own characteristic faith in the care of the heavenly Father, whose love arches over all His creatures."

As for the herd of swine and the one possessed of devils, it is explained as follows (p. 55): "It is possible also that the maniac, believing that devils had passed from him into the swine, shouted and gestured to drive far away the creatures which reminded him of his recent bondage, and that the swine, filled with panic, dashed over the slopes into the sea."

The daughter of Jairus was not really dead, but the "adolescent girl" had fainted (page 57): "The touch, the tone of voice, and—it may be supposed—the assistance of the hand contributed to restore the child from her faint or deathlike trance, and she arose and walked. Jesus then directed that the child be given something to eat. The instruction to supply food to the girl probably contains the clue to this incident."

The miracle of the loaves and fishes is explained as follows (p. 67): "More tenable is the theory that the extra food came from the luncheon baskets of the crowd. It is argued that Jesus had been speaking of the larger importance of spiritual food over material sustenance and that, when the people saw the willingness of the small boy to share the loaves and fishes, they brought out the lunches that they had prepared for themselves and offered them for the common good. There was such an abundance that, even after every one had partaken, there were twelve baskets of fragments left."

When Jesus walked on the water, it was not a real miracle because He possessed (pp. 68, 69) "power of levitation comparable to those instances which investigators believe to have occurred in modern times." "Should the miraculous element in the narrative be rejected, three alternatives are possible: (1) Jesus walked upon a submerged sand-bank near the shore, and the disciples, seeing this, imagined He walked on the water; (2) Jesus arrived at a place of meeting agreed upon beforehand and suddenly loomed before the disciples in the darkness when they thought He was on the other side of the lake; (3) the figurative language of religious faith—Christ on hand to guard His servants embarked on troubled waters—was taken literally and interpreted as relating to a historical occurrence."

(Page 87): "The interpretation of the transfiguration in terms of a psychic experience commends itself to reverent, well-informed investigators in the field of psychiatry. Jesus admittedly possessed unusual psychic powers; and it is quite credible that the three disciples were in a state of abnormal sensitiveness when they accompanied their Master to a prayer tryst in the high mountain. The twentieth century recognizes the power of hypnotism and honors mystics like Socrates and Paul and Francis of Assisi and Teresa and Joan of Arc. Therefore this generation should find little difficulty in interpreting the transfiguration as a psychic experience received by the purest personality ever known and imparted by him to his chosen disciples."

We pass by other miracles which are whittled away, such as the cursing of the fig-tree, Peter's finding the coin in the mouth of a fish,

the healing of the blind and the deaf. It is in his theory of the resurrection that we have the finest array of antisupernaturalism. In other parts of the book the author confounds immortality with resurrection; so we are not surprised that after a discussion of the various theories and the nature of the appearances to the disciples he seems to rest on a new psychical theory (page 149): "Granting the possibility of some kind of continuance of the personality beyond death, it is not difficult to imagine that at the moment of death the spirit may be able to subtract from the body certain essential realities wherewith to clothe itself or even to collect about its center electrons from the surrounding world." He then refers to Paul's illustration from the life of the farmer who sows seed and reaps a harvest. Findings of the Psychical Research Society are also presented. Clairvoyants report having observed a luminous and cloudy outline or shape of the dying person slowly distilled from the body at the moment of death (p.150). The three streams of thought from the physicist, the farmer, and the clairvoyant are blended into one whole by these modern interpreters in an attempt to understand the resurrection story. The interpreters argue that Jesus had a healthy body that was untouched by disease, a spirit that was sinless, and a soul that was in constant fellowship with God. The spiritual principle in Jesus Christ completely dominated His physical frame; therefore one can believe that at the moment of death His vital essence attracted the elements for the glorified body which He revealed to those who loved Him. The question arises: "If this theory is correct, why did He not rise at the moment of death?" The answer of these modern interpreters is, "He did. There is no Scriptural authority for stating that He emerged from the tomb on the first day of the week. The narrative states that he was seen at that time. He may have risen earlier." And the reader is left with this latest modern theory as the best explanation available. We might extend our evidence, only to find similar aversion to the miraculous on pages 166, 169, 178, 180, 181, 203, and 261. It may be interesting to close with his reference to the rending of the veil at the earthquake. This was undoubtedly not literal but metaphorical! as was also the rising of the saints from their tombs recorded in Matthew's gospel (p.261).

Altogether we have here a beautiful humanitarian portrait of Jesus, attractive as a teacher and because of His deep understanding of human nature; but this liberal portrait does not occupy itself with the problem of Christ's origin, His miracles and the supreme miracle of all history, His resurrection and the empty tomb. One cannot account for the lives of the twelve apostles on such a basis. If Peter had never seen and experienced the miracles of Jesus, he would never have been able to utter his great confession.

Vatican Appointment Draws Protestant Fire

Let those who believe that loosely organized Protestant churches are at a disadvantage when registering their views on public policy, compared with those under tight ecclesiastical control, study what has happened in the case of Mr. Roosevelt's appointment of an "ambassador extraordinary" to the Vatican. Within twenty-four hours after the appointment

was announced, the Baptists, fiercely jealous of their congregational independence, had pierced through the veil of sophistry woven by the White House and begun to make their protest known to the President. Starting with the letter to Mr. Roosevelt from the associate secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, Dr. Louis D. Newton of Atlanta, which asked six so far unanswered questions, the Baptists swung into action in a way which compelled attention even from a reluctant press. On December 28 their public relations committee, representing all three major Baptist conventions, presented a formal letter to the chief executive, in which, after approving the President's efforts for peace, it was pointedly said:

"We are deeply concerned lest your appointment of Hon. Myron C. Taylor as your personal representative to the Vatican with the rank of ambassador may retard rather than promote such efforts. The distinctive theory upon which this Government has been founded is the absolute separation of Church and State, and any recognition, implied or otherwise, of the political status of any ecclesiastical organization constitutes, in our judgment, an assault upon this principle."

The Lutherans have been almost equally swift in registering their disapproval. After initial protests from the presidents of the United Lutheran and American Lutheran churches, the executive committee of the American section of the Lutheran World Convention on January 4 adopted resolutions expressing its suspicion "that political influences from religious sources are being exerted upon American national life" and calling the action of the President "unnecessary," "un-American," and "disruptive of American unity." Judging by what has happened in this affair, the speed with which a Church can register its convictions depends not on the nature of its organization but on the clarity and depth of its convictions. On the necessity for separation between Church and State in America, Baptists and Lutherans knew from the first moment exactly where they stood.—*Christian Century*, Jan. 17, 1940.

The Number of Quails in Num. 11:31, 32

An item which appeared in several popular magazines a few months ago concerning a suit to be brought by a certain William Floyd against the Rev. Harry Rimmer, who had offered through the press \$1,000 for a scientific error in the Bible, caused some interest and possibly even a little apprehension on the part of those who believe in the inspiration of the Bible. The passage is not in Ex. 16, as given in the news dispatches, but Num. 11:31, 32, which reads, literally: "And a wind went out from Jehovah and brought over quails from the sea and let them fall on the camp, about a day's journey on this side and about a day's journey on that side round about the camp and about two cubits upon the face of the earth."

The text, as translated, explains itself and is commonly so taken by commentators. Keil writes: "The words cannot be understood in any other way but as they have already been understood in Ps. 78:27 f.: The wind scattered the quail over the camp, so that they fell on both sides of it a day's journey far in such numbers that they — naturally not every-

where at the given distance but next to the camp in spots — lay about two cubits high on the ground." (Cp. Lange-Schaff, Ehrlich, and others.) In other words, it was a miracle of the Lord and cannot be understood in any other way.

At the same time the fantastic figures of Mr. Floyd must be repudiated according to the text; for in all three instances where a measurement is indicated, it is done with the general particle "about." The text does not say that the quails were heaped up exactly two days' journey in every direction. It does not say that they were heaped up two cubits high on a level throughout that area. Every student of Hebrew will agree that the words simply denote a piling up of birds up to two cubits high, and such piles were found within approximately that distance about the camp. The text also does not state, as Mr. Floyd would assume, that the children of Israel gathered *all* the birds which had been scattered in this fashion, but it speaks merely of a minimum amount of quails gathered by the individual.

That the attack made on the Bible, specifically on this particular passage, is again evidence of a zeal not according to knowledge can be supported also by the corroborative evidence of immense flocks of birds which are sometimes brought to the attention of observers. Individual flocks of passenger-pigeons in our country, about a century ago, were estimated to contain more than a billion birds; and in an ice-storm which swept over Southwestern Minnesota some two decades ago, the number of shore-birds and related species that were forced down during migration, most of them to be killed, was estimated in the millions. If we should want to estimate the number of birds in the State of Missouri alone, counting three to the acre, we should arrive at a figure far beyond a billion. Yet in the case of the miracle whose authenticity is attacked by Floyd, the unusual circumstance of a mass migration is indicated, and the birds may well have been those which ordinarily inhabit several million square miles. To the present writer it is not the number of birds that furnishes the essence of the miracle, but the fact that the Lord caused them to be scattered at just that point where the camp of the Israelites was located. That fact is attested sufficiently in Ps. 78 and in Num. 11.

P. E. KRETMANN

