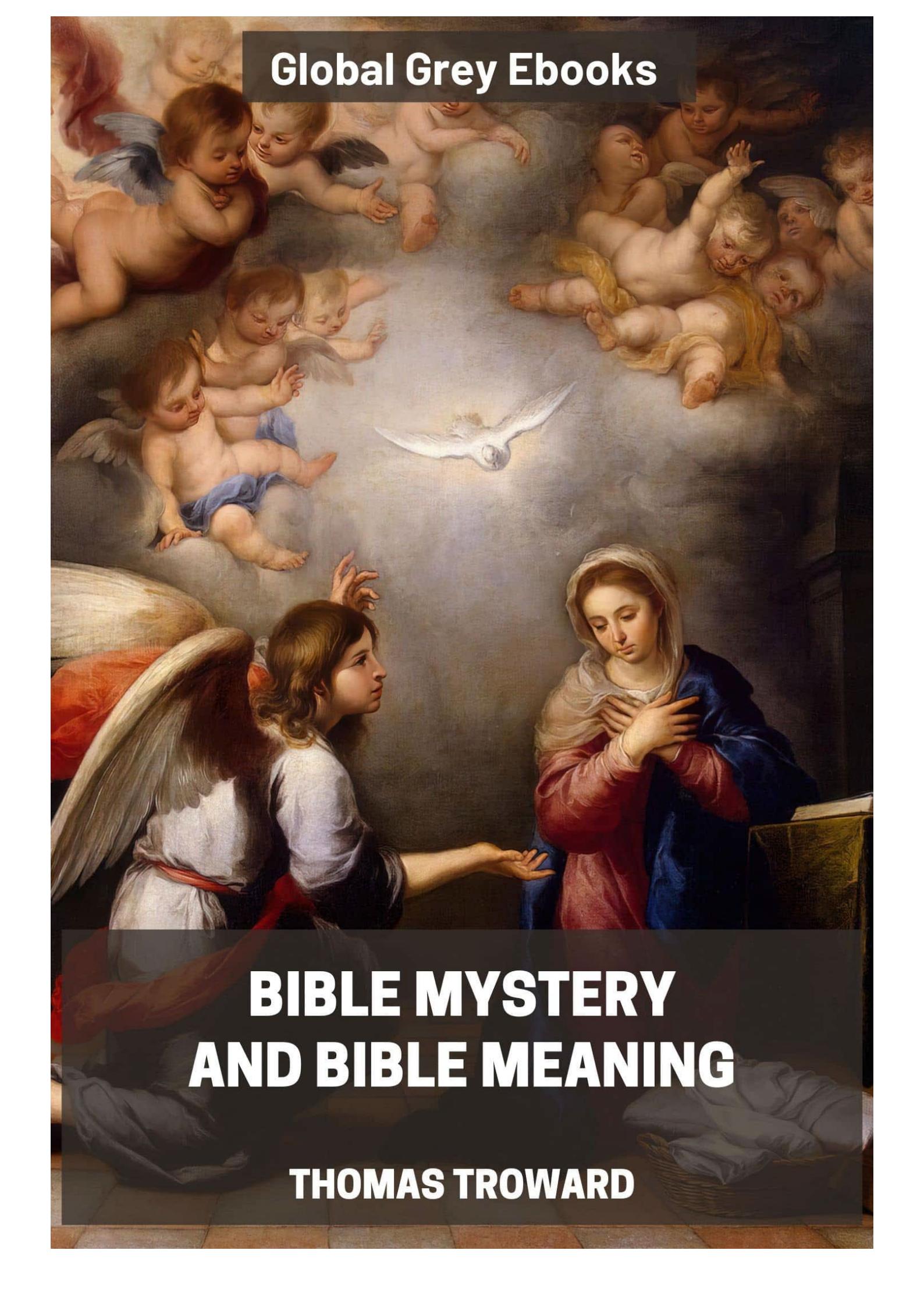


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BIBLE MYSTERY AND BIBLE MEANING

THOMAS TROWARD

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I. The Creation

THE BIBLE is the Book of the Emancipation of Man. The emancipation of man means his deliverance from sorrow and sickness, from poverty, struggle, and uncertainty, from ignorance and limitation, and finally from death itself. This may appear to be what the euphuistic colloquialism of the day would call "a tall order," but nevertheless it is impossible to read the Bible with a mind unwarped by antecedent conceptions derived from traditional interpretation without seeing that this is exactly what it promises, and that it professes to contain the secret whereby this happy condition of perfect liberty may be attained. Jesus says that if a man keeps his saying he shall never see death (John viii. 51): in the Book of Job we are told that if a man has with him "a messenger, an interpreter," he shall be delivered from going down to the pit, and shall return to the days of his youth (Job xxxiii. 24): the Psalms speak of our renewing our youth (Psalm ciii. 5): and yet again we are told in Job that by acquainting ourselves with God we shall be at peace, we shall lay up gold as dust and have plenty of silver, we shall decree a thing and it shall be established unto us (Job xxii. 21-23).

Now, what I propose is that we shall re-read the Bible on the supposition that Jesus and these other speakers really meant what they said. Of course, from the standpoint of the traditional interpretation this is a startling proposition. The traditional explanation assumes that it is impossible for these things to be literally true, and therefore it seeks some other meaning in the words, and so gives them a "spiritual" interpretation. But in the same manner we may spiritualize away an Act of Parliament, and it hardly seems the best way of getting at the meaning of a book to follow the example of the preacher who commenced his discourse with the words, "Beloved brethren, the text doth not mean what it saith." Let us, however, start with the supposition that these texts do mean what they say, and try to interpret the Bible on these lines: it will at least have the attraction of novelty, and I think if the reader gives his careful attention to the following pages, he will see that this method carries with it the conviction of reason.

If a thing is true at all there is a *way* in which it is true, and when the *way* is seen, we find that to be perfectly reasonable which, before we understood the *way*, appeared unreasonable: we all go by railroad now, yet they were esteemed level-headed practical men in their day who proposed to confine George Stephenson as a lunatic for saying that it was possible to travel at thirty miles an hour.

The first thing to notice is that there is a common element running through the texts I have quoted; they all contain the idea of acquiring certain information, and the promised results are all contingent on our getting this information, and using it. Jesus says it depends on our keeping his saying, that is, receiving the information which he had to give and acting upon it. Job says that it depends on rightly interpreting a certain message, and again that it depends on our making ourselves acquainted with something; and the context of the passage in the Psalms makes it clear that the deliverance from death and the renewal of youth there promised are to be attained through the "ways" which the Lord "made known unto Moses." In all these passages we find that these wonderful results come from the attainment of certain knowledge, and the Bible therefore appeals to our Reason. From this point of view we may speak of the Science of the Bible, and as we advance in our study we shall find that this is not a misuse of terms, for the Bible is eminently scientific, only its science is not primarily physical but mental.

The Bible contemplates Man as composed of “Spirit, soul, and body” (I. Thess. v. 23), or in other words as combining into a single unity a threefold nature, spiritual, psychic, and corporeal; and the knowledge which it proposes to give us is the knowledge of the true relation between these three factors. The Bible also contemplates the totality of all Being, manifested and unmanifested, as likewise constituting a threefold unity, which may be distributed under the terms “God,” “Man,” and “the Universe”; and it occupies itself with telling us of the interaction, both positive and negative, which goes on between these three. Furthermore, it bases this interaction upon two great psychological laws, namely, that of the creative power of Thought and that of the amenability of Thought to control by Suggestion; and it affirms that this Creative Power is as innately inherent in Man’s Thought as in the Divine Thought.

But it also shows how through ignorance of these truths we unknowingly misuse our creative power, and so produce the evils we deplore; and it also realizes the extreme danger of recognizing our power before we have attained the moral qualities which will fit us to use it in accordance with those principles which keep the great totality of things in an abiding harmony, and to avoid this danger the Bible veils its ultimate meaning under symbols, allegories, and parables. But these are so framed as to reveal this ultimate meaning to those who will take the trouble to compare the various statements with one another, and who are sufficiently intelligent to draw the deductions which follow from thus putting two and two together; while those who cannot thus read between the lines are trained into the requisite obedience to the Universal Law by means of suggestions suited to the present extent of their capacity, and are thus gradually prepared for the fuller recognition of the Truth as they advance.

Seen in this light, the Bible is found not to be a mere collection of old-world fables or unintelligible dogmas, but a statement of great universal laws, all of which proceed simply and naturally from the initial truth that Creation is a process of Evolution. Grant the evolutionary theory, which every advance in modern science renders clearer, and all the rest follows, for the entire Bible is based upon the principle of Evolution. But the Bible is a statement of universal Law, of that which obtains in the realm of the invisible as well as that which obtains in the realm of the visible, and therefore it deals with facts of a transcendental nature as well as with those of the physical plane, and accordingly it contemplates an earlier process anterior to Evolution, the process, namely, of Involution, the passing of Spirit into Form as antecedent to the passing of Form into Consciousness. If we bear this in mind, it will throw light on many passages which must remain wrapped in impenetrable obscurity until we know something of the psychic principles to which they refer. The fact that the Bible always contemplates Evolution as necessarily preceded by Involution should never be lost sight of, and therefore much of the Bible requires to be read as referring to the involutionary process taking place upon the psychic plane. But Involution and Evolution are not opposed to one another, they are only the earlier and later stages of the same process, the perpetual urging onward of Spirit for Self-expression in infinite varieties of Form; and therefore the grand foundation on which the whole Bible system is built up is that the Spirit which is thus continually passing into manifestation is always the *same* Spirit, in other words it is only ONE.

These two fundamental truths, that under whatever varieties of Form the Spirit is only ONE, and that the creation of all *forms*, and consequently of the whole world of *conscious relations* is the result of Spirit’s ONE mode of action, which is Thought, are the basis of all that the Bible has to teach us, and therefore from its first page to its last, we shall find these two ideas continually recurring in a variety of different connections, the ONE-ness of the Divine Spirit and the Creative Power of Man’s Thought, which the Bible expresses in its two