

## THE RIDDLE OF THE UNIVERSE

Council of Nicæa in 327. The entire list of gospels numbered forty; the canonical list contains four. As the contending and mutually abusive bishops could not agree about the choice, they determined to leave the selection to a miracle. They put all the books (according to the *Synodicon* of Pappus) together underneath the altar, and prayed that the apocryphal books, of human origin, might remain there, and the genuine, inspired books might be miraculously placed on the table of the Lord. And that, says tradition, really occurred! The three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke—all written *after* them, not *by* them, at the beginning of the second century) and the very different fourth gospel (ostensibly "after" John, written about the middle of the second century) leaped on the table, and were thenceforth recognized as the inspired (with their thousand mutual contradictions) foundations of Christian doctrine. If any modern "unbeliever" finds this story of the "leap of the sacred books" incredible, we must remind him that it is just as credible as the table-turning and spirit-rapping that are believed to take place to-day by millions of educated people; and that hundreds of millions of Christians believe just as implicitly in their personal immortality; their "resurrection from the dead," and the Trinity of God—dogmas that contradict pure reason no more and no less than that miraculous bound of the gospel manuscripts.

The most important sources after the gospels are the fourteen separate (and general'y forged) epistles of Paul. The genuine Pauline epistles (*three* in number, according to recent criticism—to the Romans, Galatians, and Corinthians) were written before the canonical gospels, and contain less incredible miraculous matter than they. They are also more concerned than the