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LECTURES IN DEFENCE  
OF  
THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF  
PROFESSOR F. GODET'S WORKS

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LECTURES IN DEFENCE  
OF  
THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

BY

PROFESSOR F. <sup>rédéric</sup> ~~GO~~DET, 1812-1900

AUTHOR OF COMMENTARIES ON ST. LUKE, ST. JOHN, AND ROMANS, ETC.

TRANSLATED BY

<sup>William Henry</sup> W. H. LYTTTELTON, M.A. 1820-1884.

RECTOR OF HAGLEY AND CANON OF GLOUCESTER

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## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE



TO add another to the many excellent books on "Christian Evidences" already current amongst us, may seem to require some justification. But, unless I am much mistaken, the Lectures which I here offer to English readers are specially fitted for usefulness in this country at this time. With the exception of the last, they were written by their able author in reply to attacks upon the Christian Faith, made by able Lecturers, in Neuchâtel, the town in which he lives. Professor Godet felt himself called upon to meet their challenge on the spur of the moment; and he delivered the following addresses almost immediately, with excellent effect upon the audiences who assembled to hear him. In their present form they make up a small book, which may be read through in a few days even by the busiest; but their substance is the matured result of the lifelong, comprehensive, and reverent study of the deep subjects of which they treat by their very competent author.

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Professor Godet is well known all over Europe as one of the ablest and most trustworthy of living Biblical scholars. It is not, I venture to think, too much to say that he combines in himself many of the most valuable characteristics of the best German, French, and English theologians. He has much of the depth of thought, and of the comprehensive knowledge of the whole literature of his subjects, of the Germans, much of the lucidity, compactness of style, and epigrammatic point of the French, and of the sobriety and practical mind of the English. The adversaries whose arguments he selects to meet are, it will not be denied, not the feeblest, but the ablest and most learned on their side—such as Strauss, Baur, and others of their stamp—in these vital controversies. And his mind is so richly furnished with the best kind of knowledge of the Bible and of Christian Theology, that the collateral interest and suggestiveness of these Essays, and of the Professor's *obiter dicta* upon the subjects of which he treats, is, it seems to me, great. So that, even when one may not be able to agree with his views, one can hardly fail to learn something from what he says.

Perhaps it may be thought that knowledge of French is now so common amongst us, that it is needless to translate French books. But besides that such knowledge is by no means universal

among Christian ministers and teachers, there are, I think, many, even of those who read French with ease, who would much prefer, as I do myself, to read books upon sacred subjects, and specially the Bible, in their native English.

I trust, therefore, that if I have succeeded in rendering Professor Godet's thoughts into idiomatic and readable English (I can warrant that the translation is strictly faithful), this book may prove a really valuable contribution to our English popular literature upon the great questions of which it treats. In these days, when so many have drifted to sea on the shoreless ocean of a boundless scepticism; when some are ready to erect altars, not only "to the Unknown," but even—alas that it should be so!—to One whom they think the "Unknowable" God—for some strangely think they *know* there is an "Unknowable" God; when one man of noble mind and nature, who had once been a devout Christian, sadly told us, at the end of his short life, that he had arrived at believing that he saw "an empty heaven looking down upon a soulless earth,"—so that "we" loving, hoping, fearing *persons*, "are the offspring" of a huge unconscious machine, grinding on from eternity, till it stumbled into producing *us*, and the human mind is the highest in existence!—in such days, one may indeed be thankful if one can contribute any thoughts, such as these of Professor

Godet, whereby any souls may, by the blessing of God, be saved from the miseries of blank and hopeless unbelief.

May this book now give its readers some of the great pleasure and edification which its translation has afforded me during a painful illness which unfitted me for other work, and bring some gratitude, and some new readers of his other valuable works, to my honoured friend, Professor Godet.

W. H. LYTTTELTON.

THE CLOISTERS, GLOUCESTER.

*P.S.*—I venture here to draw attention to two other books by Professor Godet, which I, in company with one now withdrawn “beyond the veil,” translated some years ago, namely, *Biblical Studies on the Old and New Testaments* (published by Hodder & Stoughton).

The earlier parts of this book were originally published in *The Expositor*, which I regret that I forgot to mention in the First Edition.

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I  
THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS  
CHRIST





## I

### *THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST*

THE question of miracles is to be decided primarily by experience. We have not sufficient knowledge of the essential nature of God, of the world, and of ourselves, to enable us without presumption to affirm, on the authority of reason alone, that miracles are impossible. We must look to facts; we must investigate. If the supernatural makes its appearance undeniably in history, we must accept it. To show that anything is real, is to show that it is possible. "Nothing," Napoleon is reported to have said, "is so obstinate as a fact." Perhaps it would have been better to say, "Nothing is so sacred as a fact." The sum-total of all established facts—that is the infallible, unimpeachable code of Science. It is upon this principle that the study of nature proceeds. The man of science cannot claim a right to create a natural world according to his own fancies. He observes, he ascertains, he repeats his experiments; then, upon the basis of the materials so collected, he carries on his investigations. Neither, again, has Reason a right to fashion history after her own fancies; in this domain also she must proceed upon observation; and for this purpose she makes

use of testimony, which is to the study of history what experiment is to that of nature. As the student of nature repeats, as often as is needful, the experiments which are to ascertain first facts, then laws, so does the historian cross-examine the witnesses upon whose testimony he bases his conclusion, and pass their testimony through the sieve of his criticism. Its validity having been once established, he submits; and his reason has nothing more to do but to discover the *how* and the *wherefore* of the events that have been established. And the more strange and exceptional is the fact he arrives at, the more securely will historical Science expect to discover in it one of her most important secrets.

It is this experimental method, adopted now by all sound minds, which we are about to apply to the cardinal fact of the Christian faith, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are not now asking, Is the supernatural possible? Is the assertion that God raised a dead man to life admissible? We are not about to proceed by way of *à priori* decrees of Reason, which would be in the highest degree anti-scientific. We prefer to inquire whether, according to the laws of historical criticism, the fact of the resurrection can be considered ascertained. Then, after that has been done, it will be time to look into the questions *how* and *why* such an event has been possible, and has actually taken place.

It will be seen that I identify the question of the resurrection of Jesus with that of the supernatural generally. As a fact, we know that when the subject in debate is the miracles of healing said to have

been worked by Jesus Christ, and it is found to be impossible altogether to deny their reality, an attempt is made to explain them by the help of certain influences of an exceptional nature,—by the magical power exerted over the nerves of the sufferer, by the exquisite personality of the Nazarene Rabbi. But such a solution of the problem is inadmissible when we come to deal with cases of men raised from the dead by Jesus Christ. Dead men have no nerves to be set vibrating; and how can His own resurrection be explained by such a hypothesis? What personality—what human agency—interposed its action within the mysterious precincts of that sepulchre? Between God and that dead body there was nothing. Either, then, the fact is unreal, or if it is real, we have here a miracle properly so called,—the supernatural, in the strict sense of that expression,—and St. Peter has a complete right to say, “*God raised Jesus from the dead.*”

This, then, is the point in history at which we may apply a decisive test to the question of the existence of the supernatural.

I. We will begin by establishing the *fact* of the testimony of the apostles. II. We shall investigate the validity of their testimony. III. We shall inquire into the degree of importance to be attached to the resurrection itself.

Were it, in fact, to come to pass that the religious importance of this fact could no longer be demonstrated, we should always feel tempted, notwithstanding the solidity of the historical proof, to call

in question its reality. An assumed fact which had the appearance of a purposeless display of the Divine Power would, after all, remain under suspicion.

### I.—THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLES

Our investigation must take its start from some point of undeniable certainty, and unanimously conceded. And we have such a starting-point; it is the fact that the apostles testified to the resurrection of Jesus. We can verify for ourselves the reality of this testimony by the speeches of St. Peter and St. Paul, reported in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. The resurrection of Jesus occupies the central place in all these speeches.<sup>1</sup> But we may be met with the objection that these speeches are perhaps no more than literary compositions of the author of this book. We appeal, then, in the second place, to the fact of the foundation of the Church, and to the unanimous conviction of the Christians of the first ages. These two great historic facts make it impossible to doubt that the proclamation of the resurrection formed part of the testimony of the founders of the Church.

But, still further, of this apostolic testimony we are in possession; we read it with our own eyes; we are still hearing it, so to say, with our own ears. It lies before us in the writings which came from the hands of the apostles, or of the men who worked with them.

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 24-32, iii. 15, iv. 10, etc., xiii. 30, xvii. 41, etc.

Of these testimonies the one which we shall study first, because it is the most ancient in date, and comprehends in itself, by its very tenor, all the rest, is that of St. Paul. In all his Epistles he speaks of the resurrection of the Saviour. But there is one in which he directly faces this question—the First to the Corinthians. The authenticity of this Epistle has never in any age been disputed by anyone, neither is it disputed in our own day by any person whatever. There is an equal consensus of belief respecting the time and place of its composition. It was written at Ephesus, in the year 58 of our era, in the spring of that year, twenty-five years after the Lord's death. Here is the passage referring to the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. xv. 3–11): “For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures: and that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that He was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Therefore, whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed."

These words were written by St. Paul in answer to the doctrine taught by some in the Church of Corinth, that when once the body had returned to dust, it would never rise again. The soul alone, according to them, was to benefit by the salvation procured for man by Jesus Christ. St. Paul's answer is (in substance) as follows: "The salvation is to be realized in the believer in the same way in which it was accomplished in the person of the Christ, our pattern. Now the unanimous testimony of the apostles and of a great number of brethren, to which I may add my own, proves that Jesus, after His death, rose again, not only in soul, but in body also. This is the fact established by each of the appearances recorded by those who witnessed them. The salvation therefore for which we look comprehends our body as well as soul. As we have borne, by physical death, the image of the first Adam, we shall also bear, by the resurrection of the body, that of the second—of the Christ."

Such is the occasion which leads St. Paul to enumerate the various testimonies on which rests the faith of the Church in the resurrection of her Head. Of these he mentions six:—

1. That of St. Peter, to whom Jesus showed Himself alive on the very day of His resurrection, in an appearance alluded to, but not described, in our Gospels. The inner details of this event had, no doubt, remained a secret between the Lord and His disciple.

2. That of the Twelve, in the midst of whom Jesus had appeared, as our Gospels record, on the very evening of the day of the resurrection, whilst they were still at Jerusalem.

3. That of the five hundred brethren, to whom Jesus showed Himself at one time. St. Paul does not tell us where this appearance took place. It is probable that it was in Galilee, for it was from thence that Jesus had brought to Jerusalem the whole multitude of His disciples, and it was there also that He had resolved to reconstitute His flock, which had been scattered by His death. Already, on the eve of His Passion, He had expressed that intention.<sup>1</sup> Immediately after His resurrection He takes up again the same thought, and invites the whole multitude of His disciples, including the women who formed part of the multitude who followed Him, to meet in Galilee, when He would once more appear in the midst of them.<sup>2</sup> It is, then, probable that the great and solemn reunion, spoken of by St. Paul in this place, was the result of this *rendezvous* determined upon so long before, and that it was under these circumstances that the Lord took leave of His assembled Church.

4. The testimony of James the brother of Jesus. During the ministry of the Lord, His own brethren did not recognise Him as the Messiah.<sup>3</sup> But after the ascension we find them assembled with the disciples in the upper chamber, where they are together,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvi. 31, 32 ; Mark xiv. 27, 28.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxvii 10 ; Mark xvi. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Mark iii. 21, 22 ; John vii. 5.



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awaiting the Day of Pentecost.<sup>1</sup> There must then have occurred some decisive event to put an end to their hesitations, and to silence their objections. That event, no doubt, was this appearance of Jesus to James, the eldest of His brethren. St. Paul had made the personal acquaintance of St. Peter and St. James at Jerusalem, as we know from the Epistle to the Galatians, which, like 1 Corinthians, is of undisputed authenticity.<sup>2</sup> It was probably directly from the lips of these men that he had gathered their testimony with regard to the appearances that had been granted them.

5. The testimony of all the apostles together. This refers, without doubt, to the last appearance of Jesus, on the day of the ascension, which is described in Luke xxiv. 50-53, and which was the special leave-taking of Jesus from His apostles.

6. That of Paul himself; for he, too, saw Jesus risen from the dead, and it was this appearance to him which made him at once a believer and an apostle. It is true, it has been questioned whether Jesus did appear in the body to St. Paul after His departure from the earth. Some have begun by giving a negative answer to this question, then gone on to assert that it is evident we are dealing with a mere vision, and finally, have made an attempt to apply the same method of exegesis to all the appearances previously mentioned by the apostle.<sup>3</sup> We shall examine this hypothesis later on. For the present, we will confine ourselves to proving that it contradicts the thought of the apostle himself. For

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. i. 18, 19.

<sup>3</sup> Strauss.

in this passage his object is to prove the doctrine of the bodily resurrection of believers, by that of Jesus; and it is therefore clear that the appearance granted to him would have no bearing upon the question before him, if he had believed it to have been a mere vision. St. Paul declares, in the Epistle to the Colossians, that "all the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth *bodily*," in the glorified Jesus. Jesus, therefore, in His glorified state, possesses still our human nature, and can therefore appear to us in a bodily form. Did not Jesus Himself foretell that, as the lightning shineth from one end of heaven to the other, so the Son of Man will appear visibly, and simultaneously to all eyes, in His day? "Whether it were they (the apostles) or we," adds St. Paul, after this enumeration, "so we preach. And if Jesus was not really risen, we should be found false witnesses of God, since we have testified *against God* that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not."<sup>1</sup> "Against God,"<sup>2</sup> says the apostle; for it is indeed to testify against anyone to attribute to him any work, good or bad, which he did not do. This expression shows how clearly St. Paul realized to himself the moral gravity of his own position and of that of the other apostles, as witnesses to the fact of the resurrection of Jesus.

The whole of this passage absolutely proves the fact that the apostles, and with them the whole multitude of the first believers, witnesses of the ministry of Jesus, and finally, St. Paul, His per-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 11-15.

<sup>2</sup> [So it is in the original Greek.—Tr.]

secutor before He was His apostle, testified to His resurrection. The written testimony of the other apostles is included in our evangelic records. Our first three Gospels do not, according to the most recent critical investigations, date later than a few years subsequent to the Epistle of St. Paul which I have just cited; from 60 to 80 A.D., according to Holtzmann, the free-thinking theologian of the Grand Duchy of Baden.<sup>1</sup>

That of St. Matthew mentions two appearances of the risen Jesus: (1) That which was granted to the women who came to the sepulchre on the morning of the resurrection; (2) That which took place "*upon a mountain of Galilee, where Jesus had appointed,*" and where He gave to the eleven apostles the commission to evangelize the world and to baptize all nations.<sup>2</sup> This appearance is probably the same as that which took place in the presence of the five hundred, mentioned by St. Paul. St. Matthew speaks only of the Eleven, because it was to them alone that the great Messianic mission was entrusted, with reference to which the first Gospel records this scene.

St. Luke mentions four appearances:—(1) That to Peter, mentioned by St. Paul; (2) That to the two disciples going to Emmaus, at two leagues' distance from Jerusalem, in the afternoon of the day of the resurrection (this is narrated in detail by St. Luke only); (3) That to the Twelve on the evening of the day of the Resurrection, alluded to by St. Paul;

<sup>1</sup> *Die synoptischen Evangelien*, 1863.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxviii. 16-20.

(4) That on the day of the ascension, also mentioned by St. Paul.

St. Mark refers to three appearances: those which were granted to Mary Magdalene, that to the two on the way to Emmaus, and finally, that to the Twelve.

It is to St. John in this case, as in so many others, that we owe the fullest and the most exact account. His narrative comprehends four appearances. (1) He describes in inimitable traits that which was granted to Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre; (2) That granted to the apostles in the absence of Thomas; (3) That which took place eight days after, in presence of Thomas; and (4) That granted to seven disciples on the banks of the Lake of Genesareth. The two latter are recorded by John alone.

Let us note in these evangelic records two characteristics: the variations in the details, the agreement in the substance of the story. The substance is the fact of the resurrection. On this the accounts are unanimous. The diversity in the details is the consequence of that between the witnesses who communicated the facts to the writers, or who themselves drew up these records. It proves that no previous agreement, no ingenious calculation, guided them in drawing them up.

It is, on the other hand, very easy to combine the narratives of all these various appearances, distributed among the Gospels, into a complete and consistent picture. They are like the scattered fragments of the pictures which children delight in putting together again by fitting them into each other. Accord-

ingly, when we reduce to order all these records of appearances, we perceive that Jesus began by acts of which the object was to administer comfort and reassurance. That was the first task to be accomplished; for were not these hearts all trembling and fearful? That was the work of the first day. He fulfilled it in succession in regard to Mary Magdalene, to the two Emmaus disciples, to Peter and the Twelve. "Peace be unto you!"—that was the burden of the whole. After that, Jesus sets Himself to bring back to the fold the one sheep which had gone astray, and was in danger of perishing—Thomas. That is the task of the following days. When the flock had been reconstituted in its completeness, He sent them back to Galilee, where He had already appointed to meet them. There, on the mountain which He had indicated to them, He once more gives His apostles their commission; He explains it to them, and adds the promise that He will help them. Lastly, He brings them back to Jerusalem, where they are to await His return in the Spirit at Pentecost; and in a final appearance He bids them adieu.

On looking back upon the whole, we easily perceive how wonderfully the several fragments of the picture fit into each other. But the records themselves give not the slightest hint respecting this mutual interconnection and this natural progress of the advancing steps of the story.

What a proof is this of the perfect faithfulness, as well as intrinsic truthfulness, of these primitive records!

Let us, in conclusion, notice in passing the testimony of St. Peter in his first Epistle (i. 3), "Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead;" and that of St. John in the Apocalypse (i. 18), "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."<sup>1</sup>

We have, then, here a sevenfold testimony, of which we have ourselves examined the solidity: that of the three evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke; that of the three principal apostles, Peter, John, and Paul; and finally, that of the whole primitive Church, as represented by the five hundred mentioned by St. Paul, and of whom the greater part were still living at the time at which he did not hesitate to make his appeal to their testimony.

We are now about to examine the validity of this testimony, or, in other words, to inquire whether it would be possible to account for the fact that the apostle bore witness to the resurrection on the hypothesis that the event itself did not take place.

## II.—VALIDITY OF THE APOSTOLIC TESTIMONY

The first doubt that might arise in our minds would regard the sincerity of the apostles, and suggest a suspicion that their witness was a deliberate

<sup>1</sup> How could Strauss venture to question the reference of this passage to the resurrection? What would be the meaning of the words, "I was dead," if no more was meant than the continued existence of Jesus in the spirit?

imposture. For after they had made the cause of Jesus their own, must they not do all they could to sustain it? And even if falsehood was necessary for this end, had they not gone too far to draw back? It would not be the first time in history that pious fraud was employed in support of a cause that had become desperate.

It was by the aid of this charge of deliberate fraud that the Jews attempted to paralyze the effect of the preaching of the apostles. At the time at which the first Gospel was drawn up, some thirty years after the death of Jesus, the report, originally spread by the Sanhedrim, that the apostles had secretly carried off the body of Jesus, and made away with it, to enable them to announce His resurrection, was still believed by a large part of the Jewish people.<sup>1</sup>

But this assertion could not have gained much credit among the men then living, since it did not prevent a Church of many thousands of believers being immediately formed in Jerusalem, extending itself through the whole of Palestine, and into Gentile countries, so that, twenty-five years after the death of Jesus, St. Paul could write letters to Christian Churches, very numerous and very active, scattered through Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy. The Epistle to the Romans, written in the winter of A.D. 58-59, implies that the Church was then already founded in the capital of the world. The great persecution which raged in A.D. 64, thirty years after the death of Jesus, against the Christians in Rome, and of which the heathen historian, Tacitus, has

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii, 13-15.

preserved for us a terrible picture, would in itself suffice to prove the rapidity and the power with which the preaching of the resurrection had spread through the world, and the credit it had everywhere gained.

We prove, then, by a manifest fact, that the charge brought by the Jews against the sincerity of the apostolic testimony has failed, and that it has remained without effect upon the minds of impartial men in the whole world—and for what reason? Because the human conscience possesses the instinct of moral truth, and in consequence of that instinct it has never been able to make up its mind to attach the epithet of false witnesses to the apostles of Jesus Christ.

Those men were judged by the conscience of their contemporaries to be upright, faithful, even holy men; and that judgment, pronounced upon them by their contemporaries, in view of themselves, is accepted by the conscience of mankind now, in view of their writings. Let anyone read a few lines of the Epistle of St. James, or of the First of St. Peter, he will feel himself in an atmosphere of truth and holiness which excludes imposture.

This remark applies still more evidently to St. Paul. It cannot be said of him that his past life biassed him; or, if it did, it was in a direction precisely opposed to the Gospel. To preach the resurrection was for him to give the lie to the whole of his past life, to his whole career as a Pharisee. In receiving baptism in the name of Jesus, he sacrificed all the hopes of honour, of power, of riches,



which he could have built upon his immense talents, and upon the influence which he had already gained, though still so young, among his own people. Now, how is it possible to question the sincerity of a man who prefers to the most brilliant of future destinies that of a simple craftsman, earning his daily bread by the labour of his hands, exposed to all kinds of privation, subject to the fiercest hatred of his former admirers? We possess some words written by this man, at the very time when he was preparing to lay his head upon the block. "The time of my departure is at hand. I have finished my course, I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."<sup>1</sup> Reading these words, the human conscience will always affirm that the writer of them was, at anyrate, an honest man.

And, besides, the triumphant energy with which St. Paul and the Twelve laid the foundations of the Church, and with which they were enabled to inspire it, would be inconceivable in men who had to bear the burden of remorse, the crushing weight of the sense that they were bearing false witness before the world.

What I am now saying is so manifestly true, that the most advanced modern infidelity will not dispute it. Strauss and Baur, these two coryphæi of modern scepticism, reject, both of them, as morally impos-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 6-8.

sible, the hypothesis of imposture on the part of the apostles. "History," says Baur, "must hold to the assertion that to the faith of the disciples the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a fact, certain and indisputable. It is in this faith only that Christianity found a ground solid enough to erect upon it the superstructure of its whole historic development."<sup>1</sup> "The historian," says Strauss, "must acknowledge that the disciples firmly believed that Jesus was risen." And, once more, "The fact that the Apostle Paul heard from the mouth of Peter, of James, and of others besides, that Jesus had appeared to them, and that they all, and the five hundred brethren also, were absolutely convinced that they had seen Jesus living after He had died, is one which we will not call in question."<sup>2</sup>

The suspicion of deliberate imposture being cleared out of our way, a second possible hypothesis presents itself, which has been advocated by some in our day.<sup>3</sup> Might not that which the apostles mistook for a resurrection have been nothing more than a simple reawakening after a long swoon, a perfectly natural convalescence, following upon a state of lethargy? Jesus had hung but for six hours upon the cross. Now, as a rule, two or three days passed before a criminal, condemned to this kind of death, breathed his last breath. The soldiers, believing Jesus to be dead, had not broken His legs, as they had those of the two malefactors; but He had really only fainted. He had been laid as dead in the

<sup>1</sup> *Drei ersten Jahrhunderte*, 2d ed. pp. 39, 40.

<sup>2</sup> *Leben Jesu*, 1864, p. 289.

<sup>3</sup> Schleiermacher.

sepulchre, and the fresh air in that new tomb, together with the reviving effects of the spices with which He had been embalmed, soon brought Him back to life, and gave Him strength to reappear amongst the disciples on the third day.

Let us begin our examination of this hypothesis by recalling a fact which may throw some light upon that before us. The Jewish historian, Josephus, tells us that during the siege of Jerusalem he received an order from the Roman General, Titus, to whom he was a prisoner of war, to direct a reconnoissance. On his road he saw some of his unhappy fellow-countrymen whom the Romans had made prisoners, and had crucified by the roadside. On his return to the camp, he begged of Titus an order of release for three of them whom he had recognised: this was granted him. Notwithstanding the utmost medical care, two of them soon died; persevering efforts saved the life of the third. We see by this case, that even after a man had escaped out of this horrible kind of death, it was no easy matter for him to recover life and the use of his powers.

Now Jesus, before His crucifixion, had already suffered much, both in body and soul. He had passed through the anticipation of His death in Gethsemane. He had undergone the frightful pain of a Roman scourging, which left deep scars upon the back of the sufferer, and which is almost equivalent to capital punishment. Then they had pierced His hands and feet with nails. The small amount of strength which He might still have had left had

been worn away by the six hours of frightful suffering which He had already passed through. Consumed with thirst and completely exhausted, He had at last breathed out His soul in that last cry recorded by the evangelists. Again, a Roman soldier had pierced His heart with a spear. With no food or drink, with no one to dress His wounds or alleviate His sufferings in any way, He had passed a whole day and two nights in the cave in which He was laid. And yet, on the morning of the third day behold Him reappearing, active and radiant! On His feet, which had been pierced through and through only two days back, He walks without difficulty the two leagues between Emmaus and Jerusalem. He is so active, that during the repast He disappears suddenly from out the sight of His fellow-travellers, and when they return to the capital to announce the good news to the apostles, they find Him there again! He has overtaken them. With the same quickness which characterizes all His movements, He presents Himself suddenly in the room in which the disciples are assembled. . . . Are these the actions of a man who has just been taken down half-dead from the cross, and who has been laid in a grave in a condition of complete exhaustion? No; the alternative is that these supposed facts are inventions; and if so, what becomes of the good faith, already conceded by our adversaries, of those who affirmed them to be true? Or else they are true, and the restoration of Jesus to life was something different in kind from a mere convalescence after a swoon. Here again Strauss has

done homage to the truth: "A man half-dead, dragging himself in languor and exhaustion out of his tomb, with wounds requiring careful and continuous medical treatment,—could He, in such a state, have produced upon the minds of the disciples the impression that He was the victor over death and the grave, the Prince of Life,—an impression which nevertheless was the source and spring of all their subsequent activity? *Such* a return to life could only have served to weaken the impressions which Jesus had in His former life made upon their minds by His life and death, and could never have turned their sorrow into enthusiasm, and intensified their admiration into adoration."<sup>1</sup>

And finally, how are we to suppose that Jesus ended a life so recovered? We must suppose that, withdrawing Himself from the notice of His apostles, He retired privately into some remote region; and that while life gradually decayed, as in the case of all other mortal men, from the effects of sickness or old age, He allowed them to publish to the world the news of His resurrection, and of His glorious ascension! What should we think of such conduct? If the suspicion of deliberate imposture proved inadmissible in the case of the servants, is it not still more so in that of the Master?

The testimony of the apostles presupposes a real conviction in their minds, as our adversaries themselves allow. This conviction cannot have been produced by the sight of one half-dead crawling out of

<sup>1</sup> *Leben Jesu*, 1864, p. 298.

his sepulchre. This second point of the argument has been reached, and is conceded. How then, here again we must ask, are we to account for the triumphant faith of the apostles in the resurrection of Jesus, unless we grant the reality of that fact? Infidelity has but one resource left—the third and the last: it is to affirm that the appearances of Jesus risen were but mental visions produced in the minds of the believers by their state of excitement. It is into this way of accounting for the facts that modern infidelity has generally settled down; and it is reduced into shape as follows:—

Mary Magdalene was the first who believed she saw Jesus risen, near the sepulchre. It was a mere hallucination, an effect of the mental disease, not yet completely conquered, of which Jesus had formerly cured her. This morbid state of mind spread amongst the first Christians, and became a kind of epidemic; especially when the apostles, on their return from Galilee, where they had lived with their Master, were continually coming upon places and objects which reawakened in their minds memories so dear to their hearts.

From that time they began to imagine that they saw Jesus everywhere—on the seashore, on the roads, on the tops of mountains; everywhere His image haunted them. It was thus quite honestly that they believed that their Master was risen again, though these apparitions were but reflections of their own inner belief. It was the same with the Lord's appearance to Paul on the way to Damascus. Paul believed that he saw and heard all he said he did,

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but he really saw and heard only what was passing within him.

Let us confront this hypothesis, as we have the others, with the facts,—those, I mean, of which the reality is conceded by our adversaries themselves.

I. This hypothesis might seem admissible, if in these apparitions of Jesus the apostles thought they had only seen a celestial form hovering between them and earth. But they heard discourses, rebukes, commands, promises, proceeding from the mouth of Him whom they thought they saw. He said to them, “O slow of heart to believe!” He said to them again, “Go ye and teach all nations”; and again, “Wait in Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.” And not only did He speak to them, but He ate and drank with them, and that on purpose to prove to them that He was no mere phantom or dream of their imagination.

Does not all this surpass even the extremest effects of hallucination? We are driven, then, to set down all these assertions as deliberate falsehoods. But what becomes then of the good faith of those who filled the mind of the Church with these fictitious stories?

II. Hallucinations, whether affecting the sense of sight or of hearing, are a phenomenon of disease,—a symptom of some grave physical or moral derangement, the prelude of a nervous fever, perhaps, or of a state of mental alienation. But we hear of nothing of the kind in the subsequent lives of the apostles. St. Paul, it is true, speaks of a “thorn in the flesh”

—of some suffering which he had painfully to bear. But none the less during a period of thirty years does he carry on a mighty mission through the whole world, labouring through the night to earn his living, through the day in winning souls for Jesus Christ, till the sword of the Roman Emperor puts an end to his life on the road from Rome to Ostia. We look in vain for this nervous fever, which the strange illusion on the way to Damascus portended. And as to madness, read his *Epistles*! One could wish that many men of sense reasoned with a logic as close and a judgment as sound. Besides, St. Paul was not the only person who, on the road to Damascus, saw and heard something. According to the two accounts given us in the *Book of the Acts*, the companions of St. Paul did not distinguish the words of Him who spoke to him, but they heard a voice. Neither did they see the form of the speaker; but they were smitten with a marvellous light. If anyone thinks these reports deliberate falsehoods, we understand his position. But then we are once more landed in the hypothesis of imposture, from which we thought we had escaped.

The career of St. Peter and of the other apostles lasted from thirty to fifty years, during which, so far as we know, their sanity was unimpeachable. At their death they left, already established over the whole world, a Church of about 500,000 believers, the fruit of their missionary labours. With regard to St. Peter in particular, we know that he underwent martyrdom at Rome during the persecutions of Nero, about the year 64, after a ministry of thirty



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years. Such a work is undeniably sufficient evidence of sanity. Besides which, we are still in possession of his principal Epistle, written a short time before his death; it forms part of our New Testament. Anything more sober-minded and composed it would be impossible to write.

III. But suppose we granted that the apparitions of Jesus were an effect of delusions of sight and hearing in the cases of one, or two, or even three of the persons who declared that they saw Him after He was risen. Yet this moral phenomenon, strange enough in itself, is far from sufficient to account for the facts. Were we to admit its possibility in the cases of Mary Magdalene, of St. Peter, of St. Paul, we should have, further, to accept it in that of James and of the two disciples going to Emmaus, though a walk together and a conversation lasting for two hours is difficult to harmonize with such an hypothesis. We must further extend this supposition of hallucination to the Twelve, including cautious Thomas, who believed that he saw, heard, and even touched Him, when, according to this hypothesis, there was absolutely nothing external to his own mind! Well, suppose we grant all this. Still, what shall we say of the five hundred? Five hundred persons under a simultaneous delusion, five hundred who persuade themselves that they see One who is not there, that they hear Him speak and bid them farewell. Physicians would do well to take a note of these facts, unique surely in the annals of science!

IV. When one under a hallucination believes that he sees and hears things which have no existence outside of his own brain, these illusions usually refer to matters bearing upon his favourite topics of thought and interest; they are reflections of fears and hopes which occupy his mind. But this condition does not exist in the case before us. The disciples entertained no hope, no idea, of seeing that dead body which they had laid in the sepulchre reappear among them. They treated as madness the idea of the women who first asserted that they had seen Him risen from the dead. To these very women, going to the sepulchre, such an expectation was so utterly foreign, that they carried with them spices to embalm the body of the Lord. That was the express purpose of the visit of Mary Magdalene to the sepulchre. It is not difficult to persuade oneself that one sees and hears something which one fervently wishes for, or is eagerly expecting;—but something which one never dreamed of—it is a moral impossibility.

Now, what the disciples seem to have expected was this: they figured to themselves Jesus descending once more in glory from the heaven into which they thought He had entered at His death, in accordance with the words which He had spoken to them: "I go unto My Father." It was under this idea, natural enough from the point of view of the Jews, that the penitent thief said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me *when Thou comest into Thy kingdom*,"—that is to say, when Thou shalt return from heaven as King Messiah. It was probably this

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idea possessing the minds of His disciples, standing in the way of their acceptance of the idea of His having risen again, which Jesus wished to clear away when He said to Mary Magdalene, "I am not yet ascended to My Father."<sup>1</sup> If, then, the disciples had imagined to themselves anything in accordance with the ideas with which they were possessed, it would have been an appearance of their Master from heaven, but certainly not a return to life of that infirm body which they believed He had left behind Him for ever.

But perhaps someone will suggest that they had retained the memory of the words in which Jesus had foretold His resurrection. Strauss had too much ability to involve himself in any plea of that sort. In fact, if rationalism were to adopt such a profession of belief, it could only be at a great cost to its own credit.

To extricate themselves from this terrible network of difficulties, two of the best philosophers of Germany, Weisse and Lotze, have acknowledged that one is driven ultimately to admit that something did take place, but that that something may well have been no more than some influence exerted by the spirit of Jesus, after He had entered the world of spirits, upon the spirits of the disciples, to give them such an apprehension of the reality of His existence, and to communicate to them such "springs of energy as were needful to fit them to be propagators of His religion." This, to put it in other words, is an attempt to put a faith in ghosts in the place of faith

<sup>1</sup> St. John xx. 17.

in the resurrection. If one must make a choice between these two, I think the decision will be easy. If it is not so, call to mind that the spirit of Jesus, which we are to believe showed itself to the spirits of the disciples, is recorded to have spoken, acted, eaten and drunk in their presence, expressly in order to prove to them that He was no mere spirit or bodiless phantom! That, indeed, would be an act of *malice prepense*, such as we are told spirits sometimes indulge in. And, after all, we have not yet faced the greatest difficulty which besets the hypothesis of visions, whether imaginary or real, the question what became of the body of Jesus?

As to this, there are but two alternatives open to us: either the body remained in the hands of the disciples, or else it was given up to the Jews. In the first case, it is clear that, by the act of proclaiming the fact of the resurrection of their Master while they had His dead body before their eyes, the disciples would have involved themselves in the guilt of wilful and deliberate imposture. Now that hypothesis has been recognised as inadmissible, as we have seen, by the leaders of the modern rationalism. We must then take refuge in the second of the alternative theories, and suppose that the body of Jesus remained in the hands of the Jews. Let us accept this theory for a moment. But, we then ask, how, in this case, did it happen that the Jews did not produce this piece of absolutely conclusive evidence when the apostles began to proclaim the resurrection at Jerusalem? Why should they have had recourse to imprisonment or to scourging, to silence these

poor deluded men? They had a simpler resource at hand: the dead body is in their hands; exhibit it to view! But, no! They reason, they dispute, they imprison, they scourge the witnesses; they show nothing.

What answer is made to this argument by the unbelievers in the resurrection? Baur, in answer, stammers out: "What really happened at that which we call the resurrection, remains outside the sphere of historical investigation." How so? What?—that outside the sphere of historical investigation which, if it is a fact, is the central one of the world's history! Strauss, a brother Pantheist of Baur's, calls him over the coals for that expression of his, and charges him, with much reason, with evading by this means the key-point of the controversy. And what does he himself say? He talks to us about a dead body thrown by the Jews to the dust-heap, so that no remains of it were to be recovered. But between the feast of the Passover and that of Pentecost, in which the resurrection of Jesus was publicly proclaimed in Jerusalem by St. Peter and the Twelve, only a few weeks had elapsed; and during that interval a dead body does not become lost or unrecognisable.

But why talk of weeks passed away? It was but on the morning of the third day that, according to all the accounts, and to the concordant witness of St. Paul, the disciples convinced themselves of the resurrection of their Master. Now, if the body was thrown to the dust-heap, the friends of Jesus would have been very quickly disabused of their delusion by its exhibition in public.

In using this argument, we have for the moment granted that the body had been given up to the Jews. But that could not be; for, according to Roman law, the dead bodies of those who had been executed were given to those who claimed them. Now, if our evangelic records are not fictitious, it was Joseph of Arimathæa who put in this claim, and who, after having obtained from the Roman governor the body of Jesus, buried it in his own sepulchre. This account agrees with what we are told of the women,—that, in going to the sepulchre, their intention had been to embalm the body. They were therefore sure that they should have the disposal of it; which proves that it had remained in the hands of the friends of Jesus. Besides, did not the Jews, when they charged the disciples with having stolen and made away with the body, themselves thereby confess as clearly as possible that it had not remained in their hands?

So, then, this body, so precious both to the love of one party and to the hatred of others, is not in the hands of either! Friends and enemies alike, we are to suppose, look for it, and cannot find it. What, then, really became of it? The only possible explanation of this mysterious disappearance is that it reappeared as the body of Jesus risen.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The question has been asked, What was the nature of that risen body? Was it a material body like ours? If so, how could Jesus have appeared in it in a room with the doors closed? Or was it a body of some non-material nature? If so, how could it eat, or allow itself to be handled? In any case, the reality of the resurrection cannot be compromised by the obscurity which hangs over the new body of Jesus. We are here in a region which altogether transcends our

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No success, then, has yet attended any of the attempts made to account for the fact of the testimony of the apostles, while suppressing that of the resurrection itself. The apostles did not invent the story of the resurrection: their good faith is acknowledged. They did not mistake one fact for another, confounding a mere awakening out of sleep with a resurrection: that is conceded. Nor, lastly, were they the dupes of their imagination, fancying that they saw and heard things which really took place only in their minds; the very nature of the appearances, the number and character of the witnesses, the mysterious disappearance of the body, shut out the third hypothesis. And with this the list of rationalistic attempts at explanation is exhausted.

What has been my purpose in this discussion of a purely scientific nature? Has it been to afford to my readers a basis for faith in the resurrection of Jesus? By no means; faith cannot be founded upon argument; all that science can aspire to do is to dissipate doubts that have been suggested by science. To beget faith is the work of the testimony of the apostles, displaying itself before our conscience in its noble, holy simplicity. The divine characteristics that distinguish it are immediately seized by

experience. The whole condition of Jesus at that period was one of transition. "I am not yet ascended," He says in John xx. 17, . . . "but I ascend." His body also, then, was in process of transformation. On the one hand, it participated in the nature of the former body; on the other, it had in some measure the attributes of the spiritual body—that is to say, it was perfectly under the command of the soul, and subject to its will. The ascension marked the terminal point of this time of development.

all minds which possess in their purity the instincts of the true, the good, the divine. Out of these is born Faith. If she should happen to meet on her way with the objections of Science which threaten to bar her passage, she is not troubled; she waits and leaves Science to act by herself. The latter soon sets herself to her proper work; she re-tests the argument she has used, and soon with her own hands sweeps away the difficulties she has accumulated. When Science has accomplished this task, in the way in which we have just been endeavouring to do, Faith, seeing thenceforth the way clear before her, marches on again in peace, with the feeling of one more victory won, and of a more assured possession of the treasure in which she rejoices.

### III.—THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION

But what, then, is there in the fact of the resurrection of Jésus which is so precious to faith? Is this prodigy different in its nature from so many others recorded in our sacred books?

Twice, when Jesus was asked for a miraculous attestation to His claim as Messiah, He referred those who so pressed Him to the miracle of the resurrection, and He added that "no other sign should be given them." In fact, His other miracles have something of an accidental character about them; but this is an essential part of the divine plan in the working out of our salvation. It is one of the great redeeming acts of God. It has, then, a character of necessity, and it was for that reason that



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Jesus could speak of it beforehand as the true *sign*. He could not have so spoken of any of His ordinary miracles.

To bring into clear light this special importance of the resurrection, I will begin with two preliminary remarks :—

1. If the resurrection is a fact, it cannot be an isolated one ; this divine act must contribute something essential to the *ensemble* of a great work of God. Considered apart from that which went before and that which followed it, such a miracle would seem even stranger and more out of harmony with reason than it is in its own nature. It is in virtue of the place which it occupies in a homogeneous whole, that, without ceasing to be supernatural, it becomes at the same time logical and natural. It is thereby freed from that character of abruptness which it would otherwise wear. It is a mountain-top in the middle of the chain of which it forms one of the main connecting links. And this chain, if we wish to discern it, is not difficult to make out ; it is the sacred history, — that of the Old Testament, which in all its lines converges upon this great fact, and that of the New, which wholly flows from it. As the existence of the fruit proves that of the tree which bare it, and as from it one may argue the nature of that which is to be its product ; so, by the divine fact of the resurrection, the divine character of that Israelitish history which culminates in it is demonstrated, and the divine renewal of the whole condition of humanity which dates from that moment finds its explanation.

2. It is not more possible for the miracle of the resurrection, if it was a reality, to have been an isolated fact, than it is for the part which that miracle plays in the divine history to which it belongs to have been a *secondary* part. By the fact of the absence of any human agent as its instrument, it takes its place on a level with the most prodigious of miracles, that of the creation. This analogy holds good even to the very fundamental nature of the two facts: to summon into life and to recall to life—are not these two acts of the same nature? Creation is the victory of Omnipotence over nothingness; the resurrection is the victory of this same power over death, which is the likeliest thing to nothingness known to us. As the creation is the primordial fact in the history of the universe, the resurrection of Jesus Christ must be its central fact. It is that or nothing.

Let us now endeavour to penetrate into the essence of the fact.

First of all, it is proper to give a hearing upon this subject to those who were commissioned to proclaim the resurrection, and to present this work of God to the faith of mankind. Now, the apostolic comment upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ is briefly summarized for us by the greatest of the founders of the gospel: "Christ was delivered because of our offences, and was raised again for our justification."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Rom. iv. 25. We use the expression "because of," and not "for," because the latter term is ambiguous. It is impossible to misunderstand it in the Greek, provided one keeps close to the words used by the apostle.

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In the same way, St. Paul means that all the offences of mankind came to a head and culminated in a single unique fact, the death of the Christ; and so did the acquittal, which was purchased by that death for these myriads of offences, culminate in another crowning fact of an opposite nature, the resurrection of the Christ.

This is not the place to develop the work of expiation referred to in the first proposition of this apostolic saying, or to set forth its wisdom, its holiness, its moral sublimity, even its justice. We confine ourselves to showing that, according to the first half of the verse, three facts appear to the apostle to be inseparable:—Man sins; God condemns; Christ dies. This Christ, the Son of Man, and as such the normal representative of His whole race, dies under the condemnation that falls upon it.

And, similarly, according to the second proposition of this verse parallel with the first, three other facts are quite as closely bound together in the view of St. Paul:—Christ expiates; God absolves; Christ rises again.

The glance of God has a divine power,—that of inflicting death, when it is a glance of condemnation; that of raising to life again, when it changes into a glance of absolution. The filial heart of Jesus felt to the full this twofold power, which fails of its effect upon our stony heart. Under this glance of condemnation which fell upon His whole family, the heart of the Son, become our brother, broke; and in breaking morally, it ceased to beat physically.

But when once the reparation was completed, this same filial heart became the primary object of the glance of absolution cast upon us; it regained life, power, warmth; and, being divinely reanimated, this heart communicated its life even to the body in which it had beaten, and raised it into a new state.

You see how profound is the solidarity, how close is the interconnection, which unites the destiny of each man to that of the Son of Man, the living centre, the palpitating heart of our race: I sin; Christ dies—I am absolved; my Christ rises again. Jesus made of my condemnation death to Him; my being forgiven—the grace granted to me—becomes life to Him. Similarly (even while holding fast the consciousness of the wide distance which separates these two moral facts, and which I shall by no means lose sight of), Paul said to the Thessalonians, as having in him the bowels—the heart of Jesus Christ, “Ye stand fast . . . I live.”<sup>1</sup>

You have a friend; he is to you more than a brother, he is a second self. He has made himself surety for you; you find yourself insolvent. The law lays hold of him. If he succeeds in liberating you, does he not thereby feel liberated himself? He was a debtor only with your debt. That once paid off, how should he not thereby recover his liberty? And when he comes forth from the prison into which his love for you had cast him, is it not your acquittal which has brought him out? Just so it is from our being absolved that the resurrection of Christ results.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. iii. 8.

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The sentence which brings Him out of the sepulchre is the same with that which delivers us from condemnation and proclaims our absolution; and when, with the eye of faith, we meet on our road Jesus risen again and glorified, we can say: I have looked upon my salvation. As it was my sin which had slain Him, so it is the declaration of my acquittal which restores Him to life.

Do you wish to see yourself as you are in truth, and to know all that you are, for good or ill? It is in Jesus dead and risen again that you must contemplate yourself and study yourself. In Him crucified, forsaken of God, expiring, you behold yourself such as you are in fact—a malefactor, condemned, under a curse. In Him risen again, radiant, triumphant, you behold yourself saved as you are by right, freely forgiven, blest, adopted of God.

What, then, does the resurrection of Jesus leave for us to do? One thing, and one thing only: to change, in our condition as before God, the state, in which we are standing already by right, into *fact*; to substitute this real new state—a state of sweetness, of holiness, of glory—for our former state of bitterness, pain, ignobleness; in a word, to become in ourselves what we already are in Jesus. This is the miracle worked by faith; a second miracle, worthy of the first, and one which, in completing that of the resurrection, sets the seal to our personal salvation.

This position of solidarity with us, which the love of Christ could work out only on one side,—that is, on His part,—our faith is to complete on our part. Faith is, as it were, our act of reciprocity answering

to the grace of God, the response of men to the overtures of God. It lays hold of the forgiveness which has been won for us and offered to us, by seizing it in its palpable pledge—Jesus risen. By it every man comes in turn to bury himself in the death of the Son of Man, that so we may become, in this abyss, one with Him in a mysterious fellowship of suffering and of condemnation, and with Him to come forth from it, justified in Him, risen with Him.<sup>1</sup>

Do not, then, look upon faith as a fancy theory, a caprice of the understanding, standing in no connection with the moral life we have lived, and shall live, whether preceding it or subsequent to it. Faith is to your life that which to the life of a tree is that profound incision which opens access to the graft—to that new principle which is to change the nature of its juices and the quality of its sap. So does faith open our heart to the holiest and most potent of principles. By it Jesus can establish Himself in us, and work henceforth at substituting Himself for our condemned and perverse selves. And how should not such a living principle, once admitted into our souls, and so long as access to it is kept open, have the power of transforming everything in us, from the sap even to the fruit?

As it needs but a fresh breeze from the east to sweep the mountains clear of the clouds gathered over our heads, and to restore to us, after a rainy season, the azure sky and the life-giving rays of the sun; so does it need but the manifestation in our

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 3-5.

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troubled consciousness of Jesus risen, and of our justification accomplished in Him, to scatter the thick clouds which had interposed themselves between our hearts and God, and which were darkening our lives. It opens the way for the face of a Father, just and holy, but at the same time reconciled and full of tender compassion, to shine upon us; and this divine look is the beaming of the sun, which makes every faculty to blossom and bud in the world within us. By means of it we become united with the celestial life of the risen Saviour.

A man who did not start from the ground of gospel faith, but who approaches it by degrees, under the influence of a moral logic more powerful than that of Aristotle,—Professor Keim,—has made use of this expression: “It is upon an empty tomb that the Christian Church is founded.” Yes, a tomb emptied not only of the dead body which had been laid in it, but also of the curse upon us which had descended at the same time into it; emptied of the power of death itself, which triumphed by means of this curse, and of the divine right of the law which proclaimed it. “The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law.”<sup>1</sup> Emptied of that which constitutes our death, this tomb is in exchange filled with that which constitutes our life,—filled with the invisible presence of Jesus risen; filled with the glory of the Father, which broke forth in this sanctuary, into which no eye of man pierced, and where, in a

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 56.

conflict, of which God alone knows the mysteries, death was swallowed up of life. "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord."<sup>1</sup>

Let us often visit this spot; it is not necessary for this end to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem; the entrance into the holy sepulchre opens in the depths of the heart of each one of us. Let us descend into it, to find there the pledges of our adoption, the shreds of the letter of acknowledgment of debt, which bore witness against us, and which the hand of our Heavenly Creditor has torn up; the fragments of the sceptre of Death, which the foot of our Deliverer has broken to pieces; and lastly, the helmet of hope, which His hand has deposited there in order that each believer may go thither to put it on his head. Ah! what good such a visit does to the overwhelmed soul! She returns out of it as John came out of the sepulchre after seeing in it the linen clothes wrapped together, and the napkin folded and laid by in a place by itself. "He saw and believed," he tells us himself; summing up in these two words the deepest experience of his life. Let us believe in the testimony of those who saw, in that which authenticates itself to our hearts as holy, and therefore true, and then we too shall *see*; we shall behold, even here on earth, the glory of God.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 57.





II  
THE HYPOTHESIS OF VISIONS



## II

### *THE HYPOTHESIS OF VISIONS*

**T**HERE is one fact, the proclamation of which has renewed the face of the world, founded upon earth the holiest of religions, and given shape to the highest hopes of the noblest portions of humanity. This fact is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

After such long-continued and great services done to humanity, this fact might have seemed to have established a claim upon our faith. It is not so, however; the truth of it is now disputed. I do not complain of this. Even the best established claims must pass through opposition before they can become incontrovertible.

In attacking the reality of the resurrection, M. Réville evidently had before him the lecture which I lately published on this subject; for he has followed the argument of it point by point. This circumstance gives to the discussion all the advantages of a formal debate,—attack, defence, reply,—without its inconveniences. You see that I am here speaking only of the second lecture of M. Réville. With regard to the first, perhaps it is my fault; but I have found nothing in it deserving of an answer.

I. In the lecture in which he has examined the proofs of the resurrection, M. Réville has introduced his subject with some *general reflections* upon the supernatural, which have, I fear, from the outset given a distorted view of the point from which this great question should be regarded, and turned the discussion aside from its normal path. He has, in fact, begun by laying down as an axiom the impossibility of miracles.

That in a question of metaphysics one should lay a foundation in an abstract principle, is quite legitimate. The nature of the subject requires this method of dealing with it. But in studying a question of fact, to begin by a metaphysical axiom is not a very philosophical procedure. For, evidently, such a principle having been once laid down, an impartial study of the facts becomes impossible. The result to be arrived at having been settled beforehand, one must reach it at all costs, even were it necessary for that end to do violence to truth and to pervert facts. But to grant such conditions is to put an end to all truly scientific inquiry, to all impartial and disinterested search for truth.

And upon what grounds, then, are miracles from the outset declared impossible?

1. "Because an experience, verifiable at every moment, has impressed upon our minds the sense of the inviolability of the laws of nature." But is this experience perfectly well established? And, above all, is it complete? May not that which is no longer to be seen in our day, have taken place nevertheless under a different state of things? Do we, for

instance, in our day, see men come into existence who were not born from other human beings,—as must nevertheless have happened in the case of the first human pair? Or, if some of you prefer so to state the question, do we now see monkeys in process of metamorphosis into men?

Neither of these two alternatives takes place in our age of the world; and yet it is a fact, as certain as our own existence, that one of the two must of necessity have once occurred.

Therefore it is neither philosophical, nor in conformity with experience, to say that that can never have happened which we do not see happening now. And that sense of the inviolability of the laws of nature which is impressed upon us by the experience of all our lives, may well be nothing more than illusion due to the force of habit.

2. Again, M. Réville says: The order of nature can neither be suppressed nor contradicted. For it is one and the same thing with the will of God. The supernatural would be the *superdivine*,—in other words, an impossibility. Now, that the laws of nature are a manifestation of the will of God, is undeniable. But to say that that will has passed complete into the laws of nature in such a way that they are, so to say, co-extensive with it, and that it retains nothing proper to itself and overpassing these laws, is an assertion which reason has no right to make, and which seems in the highest degree improbable. The artist does not merge himself altogether in his work.

M. Réville seems still to hold to that old and

defective definition of a miracle which made it to be a suspension of the laws of nature. When I throw any object into the air, the law of gravity still continues to act. For, that the object has weight, is proved by the fact that we soon see it falling again to the ground. But the impulse communicated to it by my free-will has, as it were, enveloped in itself, and carried away with it, the force of gravity. How much more is God able, while still maintaining the laws of nature, to produce effects resulting from greater forces, and of which Nature was not in herself capable!

3. According to M. Réville, a miracle would be a suspension not only of the laws of nature, but also of the laws of logic. To affirm a miracle, he says, is as if one should speak of a circular triangle, or to say that 2 and 2 make 5. The miraculous is the absurd. But if a miracle were really an absurdity,—that is to say, a contradiction in terms,—none but diseased brains would ever have admitted—I will not say the reality, but even the possibility of them. Now, in this case, how could M. Renan—no friend of miracles, as we know—himself say, “We do not say a miracle is impossible; we say there has been no instance up to this time of a proved miracle”?<sup>1</sup> Is M. Renan, then, the kind of man to regard the absurd as possible? And how could he make the suggestion that, in case of an asserted resurrection from the dead, a commission of scientific men should be appointed to decide upon the facts? A commission of men of science to decide as to the reality of a

<sup>1</sup> *Vie de Jésus*, p. 57.

circular triangle! Surely M. Réville himself would not have paused to spend an hour in refuting the testimony of men, even the best accredited, who should have come forward to declare that they had seen a circular triangle, or that they had visited a country where 2 and 2 made 5. The orator has in this case evidently allowed himself to strike a blow, which he does not himself intend in real earnest.

II. From these general observations, M. Réville passes to the examination of the *testimony* upon which rests the belief of the Church in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The earliest written testimony which we possess respecting the appearances of the risen Jesus, is that of St. Paul in the First Epistle to the Corinthians.<sup>1</sup> M. Réville does not positively call it in question; only, he reminds us that even this is separated from the event it records by a considerable space of time—about twenty-five years. But as to the fact of the resurrection itself, everyone knows that its proclamation took place immediately after the day of Pentecost—that is to say, a few days after it had taken place. The whole preaching of the apostles at Jerusalem, in the first days of the Church, is thus summed up by the author of the Acts: “And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.”<sup>2</sup> This, then, was the primary object of the first preaching of the apostles.

Thus much for the fact in itself; the preaching of

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 3 *sqq.*

<sup>2</sup> Acts iv. 33.



it followed as the thunder-clap follows the lightning. But if we inquire as to the particular appearances of the risen Jesus enumerated by St. Paul, since that apostle met Peter, John, and James, the three principal leaders of the flock,<sup>1</sup> at Jerusalem, after his conversion, he could hardly have gathered from other than their own lips the account of the appearances of which he gives the list in 1 Cor. xv. Now, it matters little whether he drew up this list one year or twenty years after he had heard this narrative. That which perverts a tradition is its passing through the lips of a great number of persons before it is stereotyped in writing.

To the testimony of St. Paul we have now to add that of the Gospels. But, says M. Réville, the end of St. Mark's Gospel, from the 9th verse of the last chapter, was added later, and it is there that the appearances are mentioned. Matthew's Gospel was not definitively drawn up till towards 100 A.D., and the whole of the historical part of it is only a reproduction of that of Mark. The Gospel of St. Luke is of still later date, and its author is so ill informed that he places the ascension on the same day as the resurrection. Lastly, that of John was only written towards the middle of the second century, and has no historical authority.

Notwithstanding all this, M. Réville does not dispute the intrinsic trustworthiness of the narratives; he only throws vague suspicions upon our evangelic writings, and does not positively rest his case upon these objections.

<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 18, 19, ii. 9.

It is true that the end of Mark is missing in a certain number of ancient manuscripts; but this is evidently the result either of an accidental injury to one of the oldest documents, or perhaps of an interruption which occurred to the author while engaged upon his work. In fact, in the first part of this chapter (which is not missing in any of the documents) the angel announces to the women that Jesus is risen, and that they, as well as the disciples, will see Him in Galilee. The author then certainly intended to find a place in his work for the account of this appearance. It is enough to call to mind that, according to the most ancient traditions, this Gospel was composed at Rome, at the time when Mark was there with Peter, and when this apostle suffered martyrdom during Nero's persecution of the Church, to understand how there might have been much to disturb the drawing up and the preservation of this document.

With respect to the Gospel of St. Matthew, it is quoted about the year 100,<sup>1</sup> in one of the oldest Christian writings which have been preserved to us,<sup>2</sup> and with the form of words, *It is written*, with which it was usual to quote the books of the Old Testament. This fact proves that the authority of this book was already established at that time. The composition of it, therefore, must be referred to a much earlier date. And, in fact, most of the critics regard it as anterior to the destruction of Jerusalem

<sup>1</sup> Hilgenfeld acknowledges the reality of the quotation, *Der Canon*, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Epistle of Barnabas, chap. 4 (Matt. xx. 16, xxii. 14).

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(70 A.D.). The latest writer on the subject, Holtzmann, a theologian of a very liberal school, places it in the years immediately before that event.<sup>1</sup>

Luke's Gospel, according to the same Holtzmann, is only a few years later in date than the preceding, and was composed at all events before the year 80.<sup>2</sup> If he seems to connect the ascension directly with the resurrection, the reason is simply that the author, coming now to the end of his narrative, abridges it, with the intention of taking it up again in greater detail at the beginning of his second volume—the Acts of the Apostles. Closely connected as he was with Paul, he could not have been unacquainted with the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and all the appearances which are there mentioned. Now, that in itself would have made it impossible for him to place the ascension on the same day with the resurrection. Call to mind the appearances to Peter and to the Twelve, then to James, then to the five hundred, then again to the Twelve—all alluded to by Paul. These could not certainly have taken place in a single day!

M. Réville places the composition of the fourth Gospel in the middle of the second century. But even critics of the negative school have now given up this late date. Hilgenfeld places it about 180 A.D.; and Keim, who on this point belongs still to that school, since he rejects the authenticity of this Gospel, puts it as far back as about 110 A.D.; and so only ten years after the death of John. But how

<sup>1</sup> *Die synopt. Evangelien*, p. 407.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; and *Diction. Biblique de Schenkel*, art. "Acts."

could it be possible that at a time when so many of those who had personally known John were still living, they themselves, and the whole Church, should have allowed a forger to impose upon them a book not really written by the apostle with whom they had been in close intercourse up to the time of his death? At all events, the Apocalypse, of which the composition by the Apostle John is admitted by the rationalistic school, is in our hands to give us the testimony of that apostle upon the resurrection of his Master.<sup>1</sup> M. Réville is silent upon this point.

III. After having endeavoured to throw discredit upon the evidence, M. Réville goes on to the *objections to the fact in itself*. He asserts that Jesus never intended to rest the divine character of His mission upon His miracles, and that consequently the miracles and the resurrection, even if real, would have served to no purpose; that if in St. Matthew<sup>2</sup> Jesus says that the Son of Man will become by His resurrection a sign like the prophet Jonas, these words are not accurately reported by this evangelist. The true meaning of them, according to him, is to be found in the narrative of St. Luke, when Jesus says that He *is*—at that very moment, and by His preaching—a sign to the Jews, as Jonas was to the Ninevites. In thus citing St. Luke, M. Réville has doubtless, by mistake, positively altered the text. St. Luke makes use, as well as St. Matthew, of the future tense *shall be*, “The Son of Man *shall be* a

<sup>1</sup> Rev. i. 17, 18, ii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> xii. 39-41; cf. Luke xi. 29, 39.

sign" . . . , not *is*. Therefore, in St. Luke also Jesus makes allusion to a future event by which He should be marked out in the sight of all men as a supernatural apparition. The meaning is thus identical in both the evangelists, although it is given in a more explicit and circumstantial manner in St. Matthew.

How is it possible to maintain that Jesus did not appeal to the authority of His miracles when He thus answers the messengers sent by John the Baptist, "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed . . . blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me;"<sup>1</sup> and when He exclaims, on leaving Galilee, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes;"<sup>2</sup> when He says to the Jews in Jerusalem, "Though ye believe not Me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in Me;"<sup>3</sup> and to His disciples, "Believe Me for the very works' sake"?<sup>4</sup>

M. Réville asks why, if the resurrection was a real fact, Jesus only appeared to His friends, and not rather to His enemies, in order to convince them? Jesus had explained this by anticipation, when, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, He put into the mouth of Abraham that answer to the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi. 2 *sqq.*

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xi. 21.

<sup>3</sup> John x. 38.

<sup>4</sup> John xiv. 11.

entreaties of the unhappy man on behalf of his five brothers: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."<sup>1</sup> Miracles, as manifestations of the glory of Jesus, may indeed develop faith in those who have the sense of that which is divine; they cannot create this sense in those who are without it. For this sense is of a moral nature; it is the hunger and thirst after holiness. Miracles have not the power to create this disposition of mind.

IV. Finally, M. Réville has revealed to us the method by which he believes he can explain the *asserted appearances of the risen Jesus*. He grants that the testimony of the apostles was quite sincere, and that it is impossible to make of the establishment of Christianity a work of imposture. He also concedes that the resurrection cannot have been a mere return to life after a state of lethargy or trance. But he holds to the third of the rationalistic ways of solving the problem which we have endeavoured to refute; which consists in regarding the appearances of the risen Jesus, not as real facts, but as visions. Only, he substitutes for the word hallucination, of which the meaning is too much akin to madness, the more courteous expression *ecstasy*. Ecstasy consists, according to M. Réville, in a sudden rapture in which the mind gives an external reality to the subjunctive idea of the object which fills it. Altogether possessed with the thought of Jesus, the apostles, in

<sup>1</sup> Luke xvi. 29, 31.

their state of exaltation, really believed they saw and heard Him, whilst it was, in fact, nothing but an idea or image of Him which they figured to themselves.

M. Réville first finds proofs of this hypothesis in certain details of the narratives in which the appearances of Jesus are related. As, for instance, when it is said of the two disciples at Emmaus, that "their eyes were holden," and that for that reason they did not recognise Jesus.<sup>1</sup> Had He been really there in flesh and bone, how could they, who had lived with Him, have failed to have recognised Him? We will take this into consideration presently, and we shall see that it is precisely this circumstance which renders M. Réville's explanation absolutely inadmissible.

It is said that at the sight of Jesus some of the disciples *doubted*.<sup>2</sup> How could they possibly have doubted, had they seen Him in bodily form before their eyes? But were M. Réville to find himself in presence of so improbable a fact as that of the existence of a circular triangle, he would doubtless look twice at it before believing in its reality. Was it not allowable for the more thoughtful among the disciples to ask themselves for an instant, on seeing again one whom they knew to be dead, whether they were not the victims of an illusion,—consistently with their convincing themselves immediately afterwards of the full reality of the being who showed Himself to them alive?

Jesus appeared in the room where the disciples were assembled, *the doors being shut*.<sup>3</sup> "That proves clearly enough that we are dealing with a vision. A

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiv. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxviii. 17.

<sup>3</sup> John xx. 19, 26.

creature of flesh and bone does not make his way through closed doors." True, not a creature of flesh and bone. But St. Paul says that "flesh and blood" cannot enter into glory, because these are corruptible elements.<sup>1</sup> The body of Jesus had, by means of the resurrection, undergone a transformation. Resurrection had not been in His case, as in that of Lazarus or of Jairus' daughter, a mere return to the previous state of existence. This event is the entrance of humanity, in the person of its Head, into that state of glory and incorruptibility for which it is destined. "There is," says St. Paul, contrasting our present with our future body, "a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."<sup>2</sup> The former is only the masterpiece of the terrestrial creation, of animate organization; the latter belongs to that higher order of things in prospect of which we develop our nature here below; it is the free manifestation of the spirit. Thus it is that it will be possible for Jesus at the last day to be manifested visibly and simultaneously to the eyes of all mankind. Now, the state of existence of the risen Jesus was one of transition between the terrestrial condition, which had just been put an end to by death, and that celestial one into which He was about to enter by His ascension. His risen body might well therefore be already subjected—in a manner quite different from that in which our natural body is—to the will of the spirit. This difference between His present and His former state explains at the same time how it was that He was not immediately recognised by His disciples.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 50.<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 44.



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The two disciples at Emmaus said one to another, after Jesus had vanished from their sight, "Did not our heart burn within us?" Here we have, according to M. Réville, an indication of a state of ecstasy! But would you conclude, from the feeling of secret satisfaction which you have sometimes experienced while conversing with a friend upon your highest interests, that the presence of that friend was but an illusion, and that your conversation with him was nothing but a soliloquy?

But again, M. Réville draws attention to the fact that Thomas did not really touch the body of Jesus. It is true that it is not expressly stated in the narrative that he did so, and it is possible that the act of homage which he offered to the Lord was the result of the proof of omniscience He had just given him, in repeating the words uttered by the disciple in his state of unbelief. But that which is not positively affirmed of Thomas is expressly said of the women: "And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him."<sup>1</sup>

We find, then, that these arguments, drawn by M. Réville from the narratives themselves of the apparitions of Jesus, are of no weight. We are now about to oppose to them *proofs*—of which we have to show the force—*of the falsehood of this attempt at explanation.*

V. 1. And first, is it possible, by the help of this supposed ecstasy of the disciples, to explain the appearances of the risen Jesus—their origin, their course and development, and finally their cessation?

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii. 9.

The origin of them is not psychologically explicable. For, on the third day as on the first, the apostles were in a state of the deepest depression. "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" asks Jesus of the two disciples when He accosts them on the way to Emmaus. There was in them, then, at that moment no predisposition to raptures or to ecstasy. We are told, in reply, that the sight of the empty tomb had excited the imagination of the women, and by contagion that of the disciples. But Mary Magdalene, on seeing the empty tomb, had no thought of a resurrection. She explains the event in a much more simple and prosaic manner: "They have taken away the Lord, and we know not where they have laid Him."<sup>1</sup> And the two disciples at Emmaus were already aware of this fact of the empty tomb; they mention it expressly.<sup>2</sup> None the less are they still lost in sadness and depression. Some external and positive fact is needed to restore them to a joyous faith, to a lively hope. Without such an occurrence, visions have no psychological foundation; according to M. Réville's view, the ecstasy and the visions produced the faith, whereas in fact, nothing but faith could have produced these phenomena.

Notice next the following circumstance, which seems to me conclusive against the explanation which we are combating. Neither the women nor the disciples, on seeing the risen Jesus, recognise Him at first sight. Mary Magdalene takes Him for

<sup>1</sup> John xx. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xxiv. 22, 23.

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the gardener; the two disciples in the walk to Emmaus, for a stranger walking with them; St. Peter, on the Lake of Gennesareth, only recognises Him when St. John says to him, "It is the Lord!" St. Paul, on the road to Damascus, asks Him, "Who art Thou, Lord?" Now, according to M. Réville, the state of ecstasy makes us see as an external reality the person *the thought of whom fills our hearts*. But was it then the gardener who thus filled the heart of Mary? For it was he whom she at first thought she saw. Was it the image of a stranger which preoccupied the hearts of the two disciples going to Emmaus, and of St. Peter? Was it the apparition of some celestial being which the agonized heart of St. Paul demanded?

When ecstasy causes us to see as if he were present one whom we love, we know his name before we see him. For his apparition to us is but the effect produced by our having ourselves evoked him.

Neither does ecstasy account for the course of the appearances any more than for their origin. Let us at this point define accurately the nature of a state of ecstasy. The scientific definition given by Nysten's dictionary, edited and corrected by M. Littré,<sup>1</sup> is as follows: "Ecstasy is an affection of the brain in which the exaltation of certain ideas so absorbs the attention that sensation is suspended, voluntary movement arrested, and even the vital actions often retarded." Voluntary movement arrested, and yet

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionnaire de Médecine*, by P. H. Nysten; the edition amended and corrected by E. Littré and A. Robinson.

the disciples at Emmaus walk a distance of six miles with their companion! Sensation suspended, yet the disciples cast the net, draw it in, return to the shore with their boat, and, having drawn in the net, count the hundred and fifty-three fish!

Not only do these men in an ecstasy move about like other men, but they hold very detailed conversation. The two on the road to Emmaus enter into discussion with their companion. St. Peter hears the announcement of his future martyrdom from the lips of Him who addresses him: "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not."<sup>1</sup> He receives, with reference to his colleague John, that mysterious oracle which appeared inexplicable to the first ages of the Church, and which is still an enigma to us: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"

And we are to believe that all this was but the effect of inspirations of their own hearts, soliloquizing in a state of ecstasy! And that the Eleven gave themselves the command to go and baptize all nations, while yet their ideas were still so far from having reached the height of that sublime conception.

As Keim says, "The disciples had not yet penetrated deeply enough into the spiritual life of Jesus, and had not arrived at a sufficiently vivid consciousness of the task which they had personally to fulfil,

<sup>1</sup> John xxi. 18.

to enable them thus to draw from what would in that case have been but a passing vision, a certain and well defined solution of the great problem of their mission.”<sup>1</sup>

The propagation of such a condition of *waking dream* amongst the disciples is also very difficult to understand. The state of ecstasy must have communicated itself from Mary Magdalene to St. Peter, from St. Peter to the other disciples, from these latter to the whole community—to the five hundred. Here let us first notice a singular fact, that there is no mention made of any special appearance to St. John; and yet if there was one rather than another of the disciples who would have been predisposed to a state of mystic ecstasy, it would have been the disciple whom Jesus loved. Next, remark that the two Emmaus disciples, at the time when they are supposed to have fallen into ecstasy, had not yet heard of the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene. They announce it themselves, and they return in haste to Jerusalem to tell the good news to their brethren. There was therefore no contagion in their case. But is it possible for the state of ecstasy, from its very nature, to be caught by contagion? That a religious excitement manifesting itself in nervous affections—cries, cramps, convulsions, as has sometimes been seen in sudden “revivals” affecting a whole population—should take an epidemic character is conceivable. But the state of ecstasy is rather introverted; it is the effect of a profound concentration of the spirit upon

<sup>1</sup> *Der geschichtliche Christus*, 3d edition, p. 136.

one absorbing idea. It would be difficult, it seems to me, for such a state to become epidemic.

There were five or six hundred of us here the other day, listening to M. Réville speaking from this pulpit; what should we say to anybody who asserted that we were collectively under an illusion—together seeing a vision which was the effect of a vivid state of expectation, produced in us by the news of his approaching arrival, and by the state of over-excitement due to the *religious movement* of which our city is the scene?

How well I understand, in presence of such an explanation, that exclamation of a French *savant*: “In truth, I am not credulous enough to be an unbeliever!”

Another fact which the hypothesis of the state of ecstasy does not account for, is the cessation of the apparitions of the Risen One. This cessation took place not only very soon, but very suddenly. There was one appearance, designated as the last, and which is said to have occurred six weeks after the first—the one which is called the ascension. From that moment the appearances cease abruptly in the Church at Jerusalem. Only one other is mentioned, several years afterwards, granted to a single individual in an exceptional condition—that which was the means of converting St. Paul, and of which we shall speak presently. How are we to explain this sudden and abrupt cessation of such a phenomenon, if it were the result of a state of ecstasy? “Psychology,” says M. Keim, “would rather conclude that the action of that vibration, once set in motion

by the Twelve in the whole body of the Church, would continue with increasing intensity, producing a life of enjoyment altogether ecstatic, than that it should have suddenly stopped, and given place to a life of healthy, practical, moral activity."<sup>1</sup>

If at least it could be said that this cessation of the visions corresponded with a gradual weakening of the enthusiasm of the Church, one might then suppose that the visions ceased when the religious excitement began to decline. But the very opposite of this is shown by history to have been the case.

The moment when the Church set herself to proclaim her faith, must certainly have been that at which the spiritual impulse had reached its culminating point. But that day, the Day of Pentecost, is ten days posterior to that of the ascension—that is, to the time of the last apparition. The visions, therefore, stopped exactly at the moment when enthusiasm was at its height, and when we should have expected them to have increased in number, and to have continued for months and years.

The explanation suggested by M. Réville cannot therefore account either for their origin, contents, or progress; nor yet for the cessation of the appearances of Jesus.

2. We pass on to the appearance which determined the conversion of St. Paul. If Jesus appeared in a bodily form, it is asked, how was it that the apostle's companions did not see Him? (this particular fact is specially mentioned in the narrative). And if Jesus did not appear in a bodily form, then it was not a

<sup>1</sup> *Der geschichtliche Christus*, p. 136.

real apparition, but only a vision. And, moreover, does not St. Paul himself thus characterize the event, when he says, "I was not disobedient to the *heavenly vision* . . . when it pleased God to reveal His Son *in me*"?<sup>1</sup> And how, as a fact, even according to the orthodox opinion, could Jesus, once ascended into heaven, have reappeared in a bodily form on earth? Such are the objections that have been raised.

The first point to be noticed is, that St. Paul himself does not regard this appearance as a mere vision. He places it at the end of the list of those appearances to the apostles, which were certainly believed by the Church and by himself to have been bodily. He makes use of it to prove our own bodily resurrection, which he could not have done had he regarded it as only a spiritual vision. If it was, in his view, only a vision, the whole reasoning of 1 Cor. xv. collapses. The expression *in me*, in the Epistle to the Galatians, cannot then mean what it is thought to mean. What St. Paul surely intends to indicate by that expression is, that the external appearance of Jesus was *accompanied in him* by a spiritual revelation of the glory of the Son of God.

Granting that, in relating this event to King Agrippa and to the governor Festus, he uses the expression *heavenly vision*, yet the word made use of (*ὄρασις*) is not the same as that by which purely internal visions are designated in the New Testament (*ὄραμα*). The best Greek dictionary in German, that by Passow, translates it *sight, spectacle* (*Anblick Schauspiel*). And what sufficiently proves that St.

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxvi. 19 ; Gal. i. 16.



Paul did not intend by this expression to describe a purely internal event is, that he introduces the narrative by this question: "King Agrippa, why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?" To make this apparition a proof of the possibility of the resurrection of the dead, it was clearly necessary that it should have been in his view a bodily one.

And Paul was not mistaken in thinking of the event in this way. In this same discourse addressed to King Agrippa, in the presence of numerous witnesses, he declares that his fellow-travellers fell to the ground with him, struck down by the brilliancy of a supernatural light. In another discourse, that which St. Paul addressed to the multitude from the steps of the temple, he also mentions this fact of an extraordinary light, which was noticed by his companions.<sup>1</sup> There must therefore have occurred some objective fact. The event did not all take place in the depths of St. Paul's soul.

Doubtless, his companions did not discern the very person of Jesus Christ. But a glorified body is not an ordinary body; it does not fall within the cognizance of the senses, like a stone or a piece of wood; it is only perceptible so far as it allows itself to be perceived.

St. Paul expressed himself with the utmost circumspection upon questions of this kind, which stood in such close relation with the supreme interests of humanity. In 2 Cor. xii. he speaks of a vision in which he was transported into the third heaven.

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxii. 9.

And he declares that he does not himself know "whether it was in the body or out of the body." If he will not pronounce in a case in which he is not certain, must we not conclude that he is certain in a case on which he does positively pronounce, and when the subject is an event upon which his whole mission rests?

3. We have insisted, in our first lecture, upon a point which seems to us to involve an insurmountable difficulty with regard to the hypothesis which we are now combating:—If the reappearances of Jesus were only visions, what became of His body, which had been left in the grave? M. Réville reminds us of the answer made by certain Jews, in the early ages of the Church, who said that Joseph of Arimathæa's gardener had destroyed the body for fear the partisans of Jesus, in making pilgrimages to the sepulchre, should trample his borders. M. Réville himself would certainly not see in this suggestion anything but a bad joke. He himself inclines to the opinion that it was the Jews who, in order that the body should not become an object of worship, and the sepulchre a shrine for pilgrimages, either destroyed the body or threw it into the dust-heap. But in this case why did they not proclaim aloud what they had done? What would have been the harm of destroying the body after having killed the person? Why fall back rather upon a charge against the apostles that they had carried it away? Why, instead of exclaiming against the disciples, "Impostors! you have carried away the body," did they not say, "Visionaries that you are! we burnt it"?

M. Réville feels, indeed, the inadequacy of the explanation which he suggests. Even were I unable, he says, to account satisfactorily for the disappearance of the body, nobody would have the right to conclude that it had risen again. For to give such an explanation is to explain a difficulty by an impossibility. Suppose, he adds, a grave is found open and empty; an investigation is instituted to ascertain how the grave has been violated; someone comes before the judge and says, I saw the dead body rise up, and walk away on its feet. Who would believe him? says M. Réville. Yes indeed, we answer,<sup>1</sup>—who would believe him? Who would believe him without some stronger proof than a simple assertion? But the world has believed in the resurrection of Jesus! And the Greeks, the keenest-witted of the nations of antiquity, and the Romans, the most practical of the nations of the world, and a large part of the Jewish nation, the most scrupulous of all races on matters of religion, have believed that this dead body did come forth from the tomb, and walk away on its feet! They have believed the impossible! They must, then, have had some better reasons for their belief than the chimerical visions and vain assertions by which men pretend to account for this belief. The reappearance of this body risen again is the sole explanation of its disappearance which seemed satisfactory to those who lived at the time of the event.

VI. Lastly, M. Réville has cited some analogous

<sup>1</sup> With M. Rosselet.

stories in the religious history of the world to show the possibility of the explanation in question.

The early Christians, it has been said, were inclined to states of ecstasy, as is proved by the gift of tongues. But from the fact that a state of ecstasy may have followed upon faith, it does not follow that it could have produced faith. Besides, as M. Keim has remarked, we do not find, either in the history of the Acts or at Corinth, that this gift is ever brought into any special connection with a vision or an apparition of the Lord.

Again, men have cited the story of the disciples of St. Francis of Assisi, who assert that they saw him lifted into the air while praying. But it is only one of his disciples who declares he saw this event and related it to the others. These are the words of the contemporary history: "And as he continued praying, according to the narrative of brother Leo, who was present, he rose so far above the earth, that, almost touching the clouds, he was no longer visible."<sup>1</sup> It is easier to see the points of difference between this pretended event and the appearances of the risen Jesus, than those of resemblance.

To prove that it is possible to have hallucinations without mental aberration, M. Réville quotes the case of Luther, who thought he saw before him the devil, with flesh and bones, and was none the worse for it afterwards. But what similarity is there between Luther's circumstances, shut up alone in a cell in the ancient castle of Wartburg, and firmly convinced, like all the men of his time, of the possibility of

<sup>1</sup> *Gregory VII.*, by Delécluze, i. p. 352.

apparitions of the enemy of souls, and the circumstances, not of one man, but of two, walking in broad daylight in the open country, and fancying themselves conversing for two hours with a person who has no existence; or those of twelve, of five hundred, all believing themselves to have held intercourse with a person who was in fact but the offspring of their pious *rêveries*, and in the existence of whom on earth they no longer believed? Must we not distinguish between the effect of a momentary panic and the hallucinations of a persistent delirium?

Lastly, men have cited the case of those French Protestants who for some time heard psalms sung in the air above their closed or destroyed temples. I have read over again the stories, and I would ask you to read them over for yourselves, as you find them at the end of vol. ii. of *l'Histoire de la Réformation Française*, de M. Piaux. If, after that, you have courage to decide upon the question, you are bolder than I am. When one finds oneself face to face with documents drawn up in due legal form, and even with decrees of a parliament and of the provincial magistrates, it seems the best course to abstain from passing any judgment. At anyrate, in answer to what M. Réville said to us about the credulity of those times, and the progress of modern philosophy, I prefer to quote to you the following words from a writer of that time, who has handed down to us a portion of the facts to which allusion has been made: "He must be a bold man in this century"—it is not of the nineteenth, but of the seventeenth century that our author is speaking—"who has the courage to

speak of prodigies . . . There was a time when men believed everything; in our day they believe nothing. I think we should take a middle course; we should not believe everything, but we ought to believe some things. For this spirit of incredulity and of strong-mindedness answers no good purpose, and I have not yet discovered its use . . . There is a providence, we all confess. Nothing can happen without God. Is it possible that God has so hidden Himself behind the creatures of His hand, and under the veil of secondary causes, that He will never lift the curtain at all? . . . Let us conclude that the credulity of our ancestors caused many fictions to be received as good history, but also that it causes good history to pass in our day for worthless stories . . . I think it is for the public good that the truth should be ascertained as to all these events" . . .

What could be said more in conformity with sound reason by modern criticism?

VII. In bringing this discussion to a close, we have but one more consideration to set before you. It is the healthy and practical character of the religious life as seen in the apostles of Jesus Christ, and in the Church generally.

"It would be difficult to understand," says Professor Keim, "how from a society held together by over-excitement, issuing in visions, could have proceeded the Christian Church, with its lucidity of thought and earnestness of moral activity." The supposed state of exaltation is entirely inconsistent both with the calm practical character of the life and

teaching of Jesus Christ, and with that of the normal Christian life in all times; and a band of poor deluded visionaries could never have constituted the bond of union between the Jesus of the Gospels, who said, "Go, and do thou likewise," and that Christian Church which, in the course of history, has impressed a stamp so profoundly serious, moral, and judicial in character upon the most vigorous nationalities of the modern world.

You must feel, on reflection, that the hypothesis we have been considering is not the fruit of a fair and calm-minded contemplation of the facts. It is an attempt to elude them,—an attempt which those are obliged to make who begin by assuming the non-existence of the supernatural. By this method they are shut up to a negative result, cost what it may. But history holds its ground. The wave with its froth passes away; the rock stands firm.

VIII. Hitherto I have spoken to you only of the historical certainty of the resurrection of Jesus; permit me, in concluding, to call your attention to the deep-seated correspondence between this fact and the needs of our souls.

M. Réville has spoken to us in words unquestionably eloquent of his belief in personal immortality, founded upon the direct certainty felt by the religious soul of the existence of a personal God. But these thoughts,—personal immortality, a personal God,—do they speak of nothing but what is joyful to your hearts? Does not conscience, which proclaims within us with sovereign authority the moral law, also with

equal authority reproach us for our infractions of that law? Among those infractions, can we fail to perceive that a great number are purely voluntary, and constitute us rebels and criminals in the sight of God? With all this burden to carry with us into the next world, all is not, it seems to me, cheerful, in the thought of a personal immortality to be faced, and of a personal God to be met,—not at least unless we have another thought to add to it, that of a Saviour and of an assured salvation.

And, further, with regard to this twofold conviction of God and of immortality, which you affirm now with so much assurance, will it hold good to the end against the force of certain facts which from time to time oppose their brute negation to it?

“There is,” says M. Keim, “one prospect held up before us . . . that which foreshows for every living creature the absolute end of all things in the grave; and sometimes this prospect threatens to swallow up the hope of the perfect state in the future, and further still, the faith in the reality of the love of God for the world and for mankind, and the faith in the existence of God Himself. For this failing faith, which threatens altogether to faint away at sight of physical dissolution, the Lord’s resurrection is a spectacle of triumph. It opposes one sight to another. It is indeed true that Christ rose in a different manner from that in which we can ourselves rise; He rose as in the spring, and full flight of victory, while we on our part have to pass through dissolution. But there is nothing that need disquiet us in this difference between Him and ourselves,



because Jesus remains none the less *ours*; and we can easily understand that the career of the spiritual hero who has opened to us the way to glory, must be in advance of all others."<sup>1</sup>

This example is sufficient to show to the eye of faith that the gate of the sepulchre opens for the believer, not upon condemnation or annihilation, but upon life and glory.

Again, I was rejoiced to hear M. Réville declare that "the foundation of Christianity and of the Church is laid in communion with Christ." But with what Christ? With a Christ who left this world at His death upon the cross, and has never been seen in it since? Such a Christ would be dead—altogether dead. He would be but a man who perished like all others, and who would now be far away from us in those eternal worlds into which He disappeared from the moment of the close of His earthly existence. It is no more possible to be in spiritual contact with Him than with any others of the dead. Nothing of Him remains to us but His memory; and memory is not communion. Memory is absence felt; communion is presence felt. Memory leaves us an example, an obligation which imposes itself upon us. Communion is a power which supports us. Doubtless, if one believes, as M. Réville has somewhere said, that Christ in us is nothing else but "the upright heart, the loving spirit, the active and devoted will,"—in a word, our better mind, then, indeed, memory and communion are no longer to be distinguished;

<sup>1</sup> *Der geschichtliche Christus*, pp. 211, 212.

for the Christ in us is nothing more than ourselves, in whatever we hold to be good in us.

But when once our true moral nature has shown itself to us in its hideous unsightliness, this confusion is cleared away; we feel that the Christ in us and we ourselves are two very different beings. We then desire to have Him—Himself in His own person—living within us. Before we can claim to live *like* Him, we feel the need of drawing our life *from* Him. We cease making ourselves the vine; we become branches. Thus is formed in us a fellowship with Him worthy of the name. It rests, on the one side, upon His resurrection, through which He has been restored, and continues to belong to the world of the living; on the other, upon the sense of the profound void left in our hearts by the separation from God, which is the consequence of our guilt, and upon the feeling of our powerlessness in presence of the holiness which we have to realize.

There are facts which, however surprising and out of place they would be in an ordinary life, become quite natural in one of an altogether exceptional character. Realize to yourself the unique character of the person of Jesus, that life which was "sound right through, and which strikes so completely at the root of the perversity and moral feebleness of the whole race,"<sup>1</sup> and the resurrection will seem to you to be just as natural a close to such a life, as death is of ours. In a life such as that of Jesus, it is death which is against nature; the resurrection

<sup>1</sup> Keim.

is the return to the normal state of things which had been momentarily interrupted.

For the natural growth and flowering of holiness is life and power; whereas the end to which sin naturally leads is exhaustion and death.

As the resurrection of Jesus may be explained by the exceptional character of His past life, it also accounts for the future of the human race of which it was the inauguration. Christ risen became the spring of sanctification to the whole race. That holy life which Jesus had realized now flows, by virtue of His resurrection, in the veins of all believers. As Jesus Himself said in His sublime promise, "Because I live, ye shall live also." And the many who affirm that they have experienced, and still to this day experience, in themselves the fulfilment of these words, are nevertheless neither visionaries nor madmen. On the contrary, they were never completely masters of themselves till the day when they consented to renounce their own life in order that the risen Christ might gradually substitute His life for it.

Lastly, as His life on earth prepared for His spiritual manifestation in our hearts, and for the work of sanctification which He is now carrying on in them; so does this inner work, which He is accomplishing in the Church, prepare for His visible reappearance and His advent hither for the consummation of all things. Thus it is that everything is linked together in God's plan—"this purpose foreintended before the foundation of the world for our glory." The resurrection of Jesus is its luminous central point.

You who possess the risen Jesus, this living friend, could you make up your minds to lose Him? For that end it would be enough to deny His resurrection; then at once would the link be broken which connects you with Him; and nothing would be left you but to maintain existence before God, depending solely upon your own strength, and to save yourself by the power of your own soul! Do you think that a desirable fate?

You who do not possess Him, say is there not in your hearts any void that needs to be filled up? Will you not make one more effort? A living Christ, an all-powerful friend, if such exist, is not *nothing* during the course of life, or in the catastrophe of death. If you feel that there is something wanting to you, may it not be precisely this bond of connection with a living Saviour? Try to create such a bond. Grasp the hand of the invisible Risen One. He holds it out to you as He did to Thomas. And if you cannot yet say to Him with that disciple, "My Lord and my God," say only, "My friend! my brother!" and you will awake from the painful dream of your former life in the arms of a heavenly Friend, of the living Christ. There it is well for us both to live and to die.

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### SUPPLEMENT

THE lecture which M. Réville gave at Neuchâtel on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and to which I have replied in the above pages, has evidently been

modified before it was printed, in accordance with notes transmitted to him by someone who heard mine. These changes, suppressions, and additions compel me to add some supplementary notes.

#### NOTE I.—METHOD

What M. Réville says (Note A, p. 37) in justification of the method he has adopted, does not in any way attenuate the force of my criticisms. It remains true that the first necessity in the treatment of a question of *history*, is that it should be treated *historically*.

But what most surprises me is that M. Réville persists in making *miraculous* synonymous with *absurd*, and to identify the supernatural with the self-contradictory. We had hoped that this was but a sally of sauciness on his part; but he puts forward this view seriously, and adopts it in print. If one who denies the existence of any being whatever above Nature—a professed materialist—says, “From my point of view the supernatural is equivalent with the absurd,” he is logically within his rights. But that M. Réville, who denies that he is an Atheist, should reason like such a materialist, and say that the miraculous is the absurd, so applying, without observing that he is doing so, a materialistic conclusion to deistic premisses, this is a first slip in logic.

He falls into another. If he were really an Atheist, M. Réville would not have a right to impose this view of his upon his adversary, and

to impute to another as a logical contradiction the admission of the miraculous, which for him would be so. In other words, he assumes as proved precisely the point in question, and we all know the name given to that sort of fallacious reasoning. But other instances besides this show that logic is not among M. Réville's strong points.

Instance the first: The defenders of the resurrection ask M. Réville to explain how the vision of Jesus risen could have formed itself in the minds of men so prostrate, terrified, discouraged, as the apostles were at the time of the death of their Master. M. Réville's reply is as follows (p. 20): "In the first place, I might answer that the very fact that they had these ecstasies, these visions, so soon after that death, goes to show that this prostration, this state of terror, this discouragement, was not so profound as some would have us believe it was." One can hardly believe one's eyes in reading these words. The very fact which is in question—that of these visions—alleged as if it was proved, in order to show that the disciples might have had visions! It is evident that the "vicious circle" did not figure among the paralogisms indicated as such in the course of logic gone through by M. Réville.

Instance the second: M. Réville has to explain how the disciples could have been brought to hope that their Master was risen, when, without such an expectation, the visions would be inconceivable. Amongst the grounds for such hope, upon which the minds of the disciples might rest, M. Réville

mentions the following (p. 27): "The disciples themselves, if we accept the orthodox theory, had witnessed at least three resurrections." "*If we accept the orthodox theory,*" says M. Réville;— he does not, then, himself believe in these three resurrections. And, in fact, he has actually explained that of Lazarus (*Revue Germanique*, Dec. 1, 1863, p. 613) as a myth, the drift of which is to picture the pariahs of the Israelitish world rising again, under the preaching of Jesus, out of their spiritual death. And these three resurrections, which have no existence except in the theories of orthodoxy,—that is to say, in the thoughts of the ages which followed,—were, we are to believe, among the causes which predisposed the disciples to believe in the resurrection of Jesus! A false belief among the orthodox, which arose subsequently, formed a component element in the series of real events which took place on the morning of the resurrection! M. Réville believed himself to be here making use of a good *argumentum ad hominem* with which to puzzle the orthodox; he has only succeeded in furnishing an instance of a piece of reasoning. . . *miraculous* (in the sense of the phraseology of M. Réville), see p. 43.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> If M. Réville replies to us, that he *meant to say* that these three resurrections were in reality nothing more than simple cases of cures mistaken by the disciples for resurrections, we shall answer, in the first place, that he has expressed himself strangely, and then we shall ask what in this case we are to think of the moral character of Jesus Christ, who allowed this great delusion to exist in the minds of His disciples. Should we be able any longer to absolve Him of the charge of imposture brought against Him by M. Renan, and which M. Réville, unless we are mistaken, is not more willing than ourselves to accept?

And this is the logician who takes upon himself to throw contempt upon the logic of St. Paul, in the style of p. 18 of his lecture.

NOTE II.—THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

In the opinion of M. Réville, this book of the Bible is in such a sense a book of fables, that it would be an act of childish simplicity to pretend to prove a fact by the help of St. Peter's speech on the Day of Pentecost (Note B, p. 33). On reading these words of M. Réville's, a saying of one of the keenest-witted and most learned men of our acquaintance recurred to our memory: "What I can least understand anyone entertaining a doubt upon, is the authenticity of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles." But "*de gustibus non disputandum.*" I will only adduce on this subject two facts. 1. That, even after the severest criticism, it has been acknowledged in the latest rationalistic treatises (Zeller, *Apostel-Geschichte*, p. 516) that the most probable author of the passages in which the first person plural is used ("we," "us") is none other than St. Luke, the companion of St. Paul. 2. That the whole book is the work of one and the same author, who also wrote the third Gospel (*ibid.* pp. 387 and 414, etc.). We are aware of the hypotheses by which the consequences are evaded which seem to follow from these two facts, in favour of the credibility of the Book of the Acts.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> According to Zeller, some author of later date inserted these fragments of Luke into his treatise, modifying them so as to suit his own narration.



This is not the place to examine them. It is enough to have adduced these two results of criticism, which appear to us significant. M. Réville refers the composition of the Acts to a date subsequent to the year 100. M. Holtzmann, a learned free-thinker, assigns it to the year 80 at the latest (Schenkel's *Dictionnaire Biblique*, "Acts of the Apostles").

We see that the critical opinions of M. Réville are far from being generally accepted, even by writers whose views are closely allied to his own.

#### NOTE III.—THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOCALYPSE TO THE RESURRECTION

M. Réville (Note B, p. 38) presumes "that his opponents will not meet him with objections drawn from the visions of the author of the Apocalypse, which would give him too great an advantage." But, just because the Apocalypse is a book of visions, we can discern by it what were the ideas which occupied the mind of its author, and formed the articles of belief which he most valued. If, then, the author expresses, even in his vision, a firm belief in the fact of the resurrection, and if, as rationalistic criticism in our day affirms, this author is the Apostle John, we shall surely be allowed to allege, upon the faith of the Apocalypse, the testimony of this apostle in favour of the resurrection of his Master. Now, since the two passages which we have cited (i. 18: "I was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of death and of hell,"—or the place of departed spirits; and ii. 8: "He who was

dead and is alive") imply in the writer of them the conviction of the fact of the resurrection, we certainly have a right to cite them as records of the faith of the apostles in this fact.

NOTE IV.—THE GOSPEL OF JOHN, AND JUSTIN MARTYR

In order to prove the non-authenticity of the fourth Gospel, M. Réville adduces (Note B, p. 38), as certain, the fact that Justin Martyr, writing in the middle of the second century, does not quote from, or know, this book; which proves that this Gospel could not have been written by St. John in the course of the second century. But that which M. Réville here puts forward as an undeniable fact is positively denied by M. Keim, who, although he does not recognise, any more than M. Réville, the authenticity of this book, does nevertheless acknowledge with praiseworthy impartiality the use made by Justin of St. John's Gospel. Here are his words (*Geschichte Jesu von Nazara*, p. 138 *et seq.*): "It is easy to see that Justin Martyr had under his eye a series of the discourses in the Gospel of St. John" (here follows a proof in detail, citing each passage). But the case does not rest upon isolated instances; it is quite impossible not to see that the ideas of Justin, taken as a whole, are drawn from those of St. John. And to refute the suggestion which has been made, that perhaps the author of the Gospel was here copying Justin, he adds: "Who could seriously entertain the idea of making an author of such spirituality and originality as the writer of the fourth Gospel, a

disciple of one so mediocre, so unoriginal, and so poor in style as Justin Martyr notoriously is?"

M. Keim thinks the composition of the Gospel cannot be referred to a later date than A.D. 110–115. (M. Réville makes it near 160.) But this date of Keim's is itself inadmissible: if so much as this be once granted, one finds oneself compelled to ascend higher still, to the first century, according to the unanimous tradition of the Fathers. (See above, p. 12.)

#### NOTE V.—THE THEORY OF ECSTASIES

M. Réville's definition of ecstasy is different not only from ours, but also from that of physicians and of M. Littré. Be it so. But, even granting him his definition, I do not see how he will account for the facts he has to explain. He reminds us that a man absorbed in thought can walk for a long time without being conscious that he has travelled far. No one doubts it. But does it follow that *two men* could walk together, and both of them believe that they saw the same objects and heard the same words? as the two disciples going to Emmaus must have done, on his hypothesis. If each of them separately is in an ecstasy, they cannot converse; and how can they have in common *the same waking dream*? If they converse and argue, the glamour of the ecstatic state is dissipated, and the condition of mind of one in a waking dream is no longer possible to either of them.

But, we repeat, what always remains unintelligible in the hypothesis for which M. Réville pleads in this

discussion, is that these waking dreamers do not recognise at first sight the person whom their *exalté* imagination has conjured up. What! the thought of Him has so taken possession of their minds, that for the moment the external world has no existence for them; and when this being who so absorbs their attention incarnates Himself suddenly to their mind's eye, they have to ask Him His name! M. Réville, unless we are mistaken, has not even attempted to solve this difficulty. Will he be able to find in the annals of magic or of madness, ancient or modern, any case at all parallel?

M. Réville has cited (Note C, p. 39) as instances of the phenomena of ecstasy, apparitions of figures in the air, or of visionary cities pictured against the blue sky. But what have such still, unmoving apparitions, suspended between earth and sky, in common with those of Jesus risen, as they are described to us in the evangelic records? In the first place, in the latter, Jesus is in the midst of His disciples; He acts, He speaks to them, He gives them their instructions, He promises them some things, forbids others. Besides, what analogy is there between the artificial and contemplative lives of the saints in the convents of the Middle Ages, and the perfectly natural, everyday way of living of the disciples at the time when they see these apparitions of Jesus? They are in the midst of ordinary practical life; they make their preparations for embalming the body; they are sitting at their meals; they are walking in the high roads, and enter an inn; they are busy fishing. An ordinary matter-of-fact way of life

such as this is incompatible with the ecstatic state which would fit the hypothesis of visions. This contrast is especially striking in the case of Mary Magdalene. This woman, whom we are asked to consider as a visionary, is so little under the influence of the "propensity to the marvellous," that the first suggestion she makes to account for the disappearance of the body is simply this: The enemies of Jesus or some other persons have carried it off. Even the sight of the angels cannot lift her out of this incurably matter-of-fact turn of mind. We must suppose it is the counterpart of the case of St. Peter, whom his plunge into the water (John xxi.) did not, it seems, wake out of the state of ecstatic dreaming into which St. John's exclamation, "It is the Lord," had thrown him. No; either these stories are fables, and if so, let M. Réville no longer use them to establish his theory of ecstasy, but simply deny their reality,—we can then reason with him upon the ground of this hypothesis,—or else, if he admits their reality, let him give up an explanation which, just in proportion as it is realized, must wear the appearance of a poor jest.

With regard to the sudden cessation, from the day of the ascension, of the ecstasies relating to the Risen One, M. Réville attempts to account for them by saying (Note C, p. 40) that "the apparitions of the risen Jesus would, after a certain time, have given place to excitements of mind of another sort. When once the reality of the heavenly existence of Jesus had been authenticated by His resurrection from the dead, the disciples would naturally surrender themselves to an

inflamed state of mind, fired with inspirations of the new spirit, of which His person was the source and spring." So here was a second delirious attack grafted upon the first. We hold, on the contrary, with Keim, that a sound physiology would lead us to believe that when once the impulse to visions was given, it was sure to continue acting in the same direction. When once the belief in the resurrection had become firmly established, the visions of the Risen One were sure to go on increasing as the square of the belief itself, if I may use such an expression. If the visions had the power to create the faith, how much more might the faith have tended to multiply the visions! It is impossible to discover a *vera causa* of which the result would have been to substitute, at the end of six weeks, the visions of the descent of the Spirit for those of the glorified Son of Man.

#### NOTE VI.—THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE BODY

M. Réville says (p. 29) that the Jews perhaps cast the body of Jesus to the dust-heap, and he adds, as if he were appealing to a well-known fact, "as was generally done with the bodies of executed criminals." Where is this to be found? Such a custom was not in conformity with Jewish or Roman law. According to the former, the body was to be delivered up as soon as it was claimed (Ulpian, *xlvi. 24. 1*). Now, the evangelic records tell us expressly, both that the body of Jesus was claimed, and by whom. As to Jewish law, it gave express directions that the body of an executed criminal was to be buried before sun-

set (Deut. xxi. 23); and it appears from the Talmud (Sanhedr. vi. 5) that there was a difference between the ways of burying malefactors and honest people, which disproves M. Réville's bold assertion, that it was usual to cast the former to the dust-heap.<sup>1</sup>

NOTE VII.—THE ACTION OF THE APOSTLES OUTSIDE OF PALESTINE

M. Réville affirms (Note C, p. 41) that the twelve apostles did not effect any very great things in the pagan world: "The Twelve, or, at anyrate, Peter and John, the only ones of whom we know anything, remained in Judæa." Paul alone and his fellow-labourers travelled about the world to preach the gospel. The jealousy of the Jewish Christians in later times led them to attribute to the Twelve the conquests of Paul. Paul laboured, it is true, more than they all, as he himself says (1 Cor. xv. 10). But he himself speaks of the apostles and the brethren of the Lord as going on missionary journeys (1 Cor. ix. 5); and we have the facts required to prove the truth of this assertion of St. Paul in favour of the Twelve, whom it is here attempted to make his rivals. When, in the second century, the missionary Pantænus went into Judæa (perhaps the word here means southern Arabia), he found the Gospel of St. Matthew, which had been brought there by the Apostle Bartholomew. This apostle, then, had reached the southern extremity of Asia; he had not "remained in Judæa." St. Matthew,

<sup>1</sup> See Langen, *Die letzten Lebenstagen Jesu*, 1864.

according to tradition, wrote his Gospel "when the moment arrived for him to preach to other nations." Has anyone a right to relegate such an assertion by itself to the domain of fable? St. John, according to the Apocalypse and the testimony of ecclesiastical history (see Clement of Alexandria, Irenæus, Polycrates of Ephesus), exercised his ministry in Asia Minor, where he died, under Trajan, towards the end of the first century. Neither, then, did he remain in Judæa. St. Peter, according to Gal. ii. 11, was before A.D. 56 at Antioch — therefore in Syria. He was then travelling outside of Palestine. He wrote his First Epistle (of which the authenticity has been only disputed by one school of modern criticism, and that on grounds exceedingly weak) in Babylonia, and therefore at a great distance eastwards, or, if we take the name Babylon (1 Pet. v. 13) in a figurative sense, in Rome. According to traditions which it is not easy to explain away, he perished at Rome, a victim to persecution; and in the second century the members of the college of presbyters in that capital could still point out the place in the Vatican in which he was buried. Neither, then, did Peter *remain in Judæa*. When St. Paul arrives for the last time in Jerusalem, in the year 59, James alone is at the head of the Church (Acts xxi. 18). Not being an apostle, but only a brother of Jesus, he was free to accept the position of head of one particular flock; the apostles were absent; they did not therefore remain within the borders of the Holy Land.

But what then is the cause, in the interest of



which M. Réville maintains this thesis against the evidence of history? Only in order to give the lie to this saying which Jesus is said, according to the first Gospel, to have addressed to the Twelve, "Go ye and teach *all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." M. Réville wishes to maintain that this saying is a later invention of the Church, with the object of glorifying the Twelve. We have just demonstrated by facts that history is in harmony with this saying. We will go further, and affirm that had it not been so, no one would have ventured, on the supposition that they allowed themselves to forge sayings of Jesus, to attribute to Him one so evidently contrary to the real course of events. With regard to the baptismal formula, upon the authenticity of which M. Réville wishes in this way to cast suspicion, we will limit ourselves to the following remarks.

That it was the custom to baptize in the name of the Father, needs no proof. That they baptized in the name of Jesus, is clear from Acts ii. 38 and 1 Cor. i. 13. And lastly, that the name of the Spirit had its place in the celebration of baptism, is proved by Acts xix. 2, 3, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. Unto what then were ye baptized?" The word "then" in the sentence implies that the name of the Holy Ghost, as well as those of the Father and of Jesus, already formed part of the baptismal formula in the apostolic times. Together with the sacrament of

baptism itself, this formula must clearly have been derived from Jesus Christ. One cannot conceive a sacrament instituted without a sacramental formula. What would the Lord's Supper be without the words of its institution? It is certainly upon the basis of this baptismal formula uttered by the lips of the Master, that the numerous Trinitarian passages which we meet with in the apostolic writing rest (1 Cor. xii. 4-6; 2 Cor. xiii. 14; 1 Pet. i. 2; Rev. i. 4, 5).<sup>1</sup> The name of God, of which mention is so frequently made in the Old Testament, and which stands for the manifestation of the Divine Being, has been unfolded by Christ to the consciousness of believers in this threefold name, the invocation of which is made to rule the baptism of all those who enter His Church.

NOTE VIII.—THE JEWISH AUTHORITIES AND THE  
PRIMITIVE CHURCH

The Jews, it is asserted by M. Réville (Note D, p. 42), did not trouble themselves so much as has been commonly believed with that small and obscure sect, the Christians. That remains to be proved. The Acts of the Apostles do not produce that impression upon us. The Sanhedrim, on the contrary, appears to be much disturbed at what takes place in Jerusalem. The fervent Saul is sent to Damascus by the Sanhedrim, on a special mission to prosecute the members of this sect. Herod Agrippa, the last

<sup>1</sup> It is clear how false is the assertion recently cast at us, that the passage (really spurious according to the most ancient manuscripts) 1 John v. 7 is the only one in the New Testament upon which the doctrine of the Trinity can be rested.

great sovereign of the Jewish nation, thinks fit to put to death James the son of Zebedee; and, to please the Jews, he prepares the same doom for Peter (Acts xii. 3). Proof sufficient, one would say, that the progress of the Church was not a matter of much indifference to them. The fury of the people against St. Paul during his last visit to Jerusalem, the ambushes set for him by the Sanhedrim, the vow of the forty men to murder him, are, on the other hand, a proof that the progress of the obscure sect was lively occupying attention in high quarters in the Jewish world. But it may be said that I am overlooking the fact that, in the opinion of M. Réville, the history of the Acts is a mere romance. Well, at anyrate, he will give credit to a contemporary historian, Josephus, who tells us that after the death of the Roman governor Festus, and before the arrival of his successor, the high priest Ananias eagerly availed himself of that interregnum to cause James, the brother of Jesus, surnamed Christ, and after him some other supposed members of the Jerusalem Church, to be stoned. Whereupon the new governor, who was on his way to Jerusalem, addressed letters to him full of indignation, and threatened him with severe punishment. Shortly afterwards Ananias was deposed. Would this high priest have exposed himself to such consequences if there had been any truth in what is said by M. Réville (p. 43): "With the usual blindness of clergy . . . the religious leaders *felt nothing but contempt* for the obscure sectaries, who at one time had made them tremble!"

## NOTE IX.—THE SENTIMENTS OF JESUS RESPECTING HIS MIRACLES AND HIS RESURRECTION

M. Réville has suppressed in his printed lecture the inaccurate quotation of the passage in St. Luke into which he had fallen in its delivery; see above, p. 13. But he nevertheless still persists in contrasting as contradictory to each other, St. Luke xi. 30 and St. Matt. xii. 39, 40. And yet if once we accept the future "shall be" in St. Luke (and it is impossible not to do so, since all the manuscripts agree upon it), the interpretation of this expression, as referring to an event then future, which can hardly be other than the resurrection, is as good as forced upon us. With regard to the comparison of Jesus and Jonas, in which M. Réville finds no meaning, if the resurrection forms the principal point of the comparison (Note E, p. 43), the following is, it seems to us, the Lord's meaning: "As it was after he had escaped from death, and had received miraculously a renewed life, that Jonah brought about by his preaching the repentance and the salvation of the heathen inhabitants of Nineveh; so it will be as one delivered from death, and in His character of a risen man, that the Messiah will extend His empire beyond the limits of the people of Israel, and will make the preaching of the gospel to resound among the Gentiles."

M. Réville speaks (p. 44) of "the exquisite purity of the religious genius of Jesus, which enabled Him to rise to a height at which miracle becomes needless." Miracles needless in the eyes of Him with

whom the working of miracles formed, according to the saying of the learned Ewald, "a part of His everyday occupations"! Perhaps it will be said that He worked them from motives of compassion, not as a support to His preaching. But did He not say, "*If ye believe not Me, yet believe Me for the very works' sake*"? And He once exclaimed, "If the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." And yet we are to say He did not believe in the utility of miracles! Either let M. Réville write us a new gospel more trustworthy than the ancient ones, or let him acknowledge that the exquisite instincts of Jesus, upon which he lavishes his praises, needed still to make great progress before they could reach the level of his own.

#### NOTE X.—MISCELLANEOUS REMARKS

From the fact that Joseph recognised in two of his dreams inspiration from Divine Providence, it does not follow, as M. Réville insists, that he was so superstitious as to see a revelation in every dream. There are some thoughts which we cannot help believing come to us from on high. Does it follow that we believe all our thoughts to be divine inspirations?

M. Réville thinks the identification which we have suggested of the apparition of Jesus to the five hundred brethren (1 Cor. xv.), and that to the eleven disciples upon the mountain in Galilee (Matt. xxviii.),

improbable. We have adduced our reasons in favour of that identification, but we do not hold to them at all strongly. If Réville's opinion is accepted, we shall only have one apparition the more, and it is not to us that that addition can be a difficulty.

We think we have sufficiently refuted the assertion of M. Réville, that the ascension is made by St. Luke to have occurred on the same day as the resurrection.

As to his assertion, "Never did Jesus say that, in order to be saved, it is necessary to believe in the resurrection" (p. 32), what is the meaning of the warning of Jesus in St. John xx. 27? Jesus said that to be saved by Him, we must believe in Him. But when do we lay hold on Him as the supreme object of our faith, if not in His resurrection? Apart from that, we may have the faith of Jesus, as M. Réville wishes us to have, but not the faith in Him.

#### CONCLUSION

A rationalist, Charles Heinzen (in *Le Pionnier*), has lately reproached another rationalist, A. Ruge, bitterly, for having accounted for Christianity by the theory of ecstasy, and not by that of madness.

The hypothesis of madness is, in reality, the legitimate child of that of visions; and the daughter will soon, at least in France, where minds are logical, replace the mother.

Then we shall have a council of free-thinkers, branding, by a decree more infallible than those of the Pope, all persons who can believe in the resur-

rection of a dead man as out-and-out madmen; all those also who, in the course of history, up to our day, have maintained that they have felt Jesus living and working in them, out-and-out madmen!

This is what we are coming to, since the belief in miracles is absurd, and to believe in absurdities is to be mad: Christians, with the apostles at their head, and Jesus Christ at the head of the apostles, are therefore madmen. The Church is a society of madmen.

And holding this view, men claim the right nevertheless to class themselves with us, to worship in the same temples with us, to preach in our pulpits, to gather round the same communion tables, when a much more fit place for us would be a lunatic asylum! Come! manage your own affairs, and leave us to manage ours,—unless, indeed, seeing the impossibility of being *trees*, you have adopted the noble ambition of being *morbid excrescences in trees*.

III

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS CHRIST





### III

#### *THE MIRACLES OF JESUS CHRIST*

I AM not about, in what I shall now write, to offer a spontaneous challenge to Scepticism. Scepticism is an adversary from whom we may *accept* a challenge when it is offered us, but with whom it is never wise to take the aggressive. I only desire at this time, in which the atmosphere is saturated with doubts, and in which we are exposed to breathing them in, as we do particles of dust that fill the air, to induce my readers to realize to themselves more clearly what it is that they believe upon this particular subject.

In former times, the miraculous events recorded in the Gospels were considered the principal supports of the Christian Faith. In our day, many regard them principally as difficulties of faith. Both these ways of viewing the subject appear to me to be exaggerations, in opposite directions. I could not make miracles the principal support of my faith,<sup>1</sup> but I am still less able to see in them a serious difficulty which can be brought to bear effectively against

<sup>1</sup> I am not here speaking of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which, while it is indeed a miracle, and the principal miracle, is also something *different from*, and *more than*, a miracle.

Christianity. Miracles form a part of the riches of the faith; that appears to me to be their true character. It is their claim to that distinction which it will be the object of the following lecture to vindicate for these exceptional facts.

We shall first seek in history for evidences to the *reality* of the miracles of Jesus Christ. We shall then investigate nature, in order to discover in it the conditions of the *possibility* of such facts. Lastly, we shall ask of Holy Scripture to reveal to us their *purpose* in the divine plan.

The miracles of Jesus are *facts*; *how* and *why* do they exist? These are the three points of which I propose to treat.

#### I.—THE REALITY OF THE MIRACLES OF JESUS CHRIST

The more exceptional a fact is, the stronger will be the evidences required to prove its reality. Have we, then, sufficient historical proofs of the reality of the miracles which the Christian Church attributes to its Founder?

Outside of our Biblical writings, we have but one testimony bearing upon these extraordinary facts,—it is that of the Jewish historian Josephus, who commanded the Jewish army in its heroic struggle against the Romans, and who, being made a prisoner, was in that character present at the fall of Jerusalem, in the year 70 of our era. “At that time,” he tells us in his *History of the Jews*, “lived Jesus, a wise man,—if indeed He is to be called a man,—for He

worked wonderful works, and was the Master of those who receive the truth with pleasure." In addition, Josephus records how Pilate, yielding to the solicitations of the chiefs of the people, caused Jesus to be crucified; then he adds that the faith in His resurrection still prevailed among the Christians, at the time when he was writing.

M. Renan has not questioned the authenticity, on the whole, of this passage;<sup>1</sup> but he denies the supernatural character of these wonderful works. Josephus wrote his book about fifty years after the death of Jesus.

What is most notable here is that Josephus speaks also, and in still greater detail, of John the Baptist, of his ministry, his baptism, his influence, his death: he attributes a great defeat of Herod to the murder of that prophet, and all this without speaking of a single miracle as worked by John the Baptist. In this respect Josephus is in complete accord with our evangelists, as he is also with regard to the miracles of Jesus Christ. If we supposed that there existed, as has been asserted, in the spirit of those times, a disposition to attribute miracles to great religious geniuses, would not this tendency have shown itself above all with regard to John the Baptist, whose person and work produced, by its strange and novel character, an impression upon the popular imagination perhaps more considerable than did even those of Jesus Himself? But no documents ever spoke of a single miracle as worked by the forerunner.

Let us pass on to *the testimony of our Gospels*.

<sup>1</sup> *Vie de Jésus*, p. 10.

1. Critics have endeavoured, in these latter days, to discredit the authority of the evangelic records by maintaining that they were written at a date considerably removed from that of the events which they record. At one time it was even attempted to bring the composition of these writings as far down as to the second century of our era—to 120 years after the death of Jesus. This bold attempt has failed.

The writer who, in these last years, has treated with the greatest thoroughness the question of the origin of our first three Gospels, Professor Holtzmann of Heidelberg,—who is not suspected of partiality, since he is at the head of the free-thinkers in the Grand Duchy of Baden,—concludes his study by declaring the results of modern labours on this subject to be in perfect agreement with the traditions of the most ancient ecclesiastical writers, namely, in affirming the writings which form the basis of our first three Gospels—and these Gospels themselves—to have been drawn up between the years 60 and 80 of our era—that is to say, no more than from thirty to fifty years after the Lord's death.<sup>1</sup>

The fourth Gospel was composed later, towards the end of the first century—the term of the life of the apostle St. John.

At the time, then, at which our Gospels came into existence, a very large number of the contemporaries of our Lord were still living. Accordingly when, two or three years before the date just

<sup>1</sup> *Die synoptischen Evangelien*, pp. 412, 414.

given, St. Paul, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, written in the year 58, speaks of five hundred brethren assembled together to whom the risen Jesus had appeared, he adds, "*of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.*"<sup>1</sup>

In the presence of a whole generation of contemporaries, and of eye-witnesses still living, it is difficult to understand how accounts of miracles so circumstantial as those contained in our Gospels, accompanied with the proper names of places and of persons, could have got themselves accredited, if the facts had not been recognised as real. It is even impossible to conceive to oneself how men could have dared to publish fictions of such a nature, so soon after the supposed event. "To have made it possible," says Holtzmann, "for such narratives to have been put into circulation and generally received, if they were mere fictions, it would have been necessary for as many *decenniums* to have passed away as there did in fact pass *years*, between the time of the life of Jesus and the composition of our Gospels."<sup>2</sup>

The fact, then, that our Gospels were published under the very eyes of the generation which witnessed the events—this is the first plea we adduce. The second is the following:—

2. Which of us, when comparing the account of the same miracle as given in our first three Gospels, has not been struck by differences which mark the three narratives? The substance is, no doubt, the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Die syn. Evang.* p. 504.

same in all, but, generally speaking, how great is the difference in the details! The three narratives coincide perfectly only in regard to the words of our Lord and of those who speak with Him. One might fancy oneself listening to three messengers arriving from different directions, and recounting, each in his own way, some event which they have all three just witnessed. Imagine a case: A shipwreck has just occurred, in the presence of a whole population. Three eye-witnesses give an account of it: one heard the sound of the breaking of the mast under the blows of the tempest; another saw the sail fall upon the deck and envelop the ill-fated sailors in its folds; the third saw the waves force their way into breaches in the ship's sides. Each tells of the particular fact which happened to strike his own mind. The three accounts do not coincide perfectly, except when they report some energetic order of the captain, or some heartrending cry of one of the victims. In this case, do not even the discrepancies between the three narratives demonstrate the reality of the facts reported? Now, just such is the testimony of our first Gospels. Their harmony regards the substance of the narrative, and their discrepancies prove that this harmony is not of an artificial nature—not the result of calculation. They are first-hand, original narratives, which, complementing as they do and even at times correcting one another, are mutually corroborative.

3. A third argument may be drawn from the words, so eminently characteristic, with which Jesus accompanies His miracles, and which the three

evangelists generally report perfectly harmoniously. It is impossible to question the authenticity of such words; they are so original, so profound, so novel in character, that one might say that if they were inventions, Jesus Himself must be an invention.—*“Daughter, be of good cheer, thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace . . . Fear not, only believe . . . Go, and sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee . . . Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? . . . Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say?”*—and here Jesus, suddenly interrupting Himself, turns towards the sick man, and completes the unfinished sentence with this triumphant command, *“Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.”* Can one conceive such sayings invented? But they are inseparable from the miracle to which they refer; they form an integral part of it. They stand in the same relation to the miracle as the inscription stamped upon the coin does to the coin itself.

If the saying is authentic, the miracle, without which the saying would be unmeaning, is so too.

4. We draw a fourth argument from the close connection which exists between the teaching of Jesus as a whole, and His miraculous working. Attempts have of late been made to disconnect Jesus the preacher of morality from Jesus the worker of miracles. Men have offered to accept Him in the former, but only on condition of giving Him up in the latter character. It is upon this basis that the work of M. Renan rests.

But this hypothesis is unworkable. M. de Pres-



sensé observes with reason, in his *Vie de Jésus*, that as we follow the course of the gospel narrative, the teaching and the miracles are so interwoven, the one with the other, that, unless we mutilate history in the most arbitrary manner, we find ourselves compelled to accept or to reject the two together.<sup>1</sup>

Let us take a few instances. The Pharisees once took occasion, by the healing of a demoniac, to charge Jesus with casting out devils by the help of the prince of the devils. To this outrageous accusation He replies: "*A kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; if Satan cast out Satan, how shall his kingdom stand?*" In connection with this perfectly reasonable saying we have a discourse of some length, one of the most striking delivered by Jesus, and of which no one, not even Strauss, has questioned the authenticity. But what is the meaning of this discourse, if the charge said to have been made by the Pharisees against Jesus never was made? and what would have been the meaning of that charge, if the miraculous cures which are said to have given occasion to it never took place? It is evident that the miraculous act which serves as text to the discourse is inseparable from it. Plainly, one must accept or reject the two together.

Take another instance. Jesus is accused of having broken the Sabbath by healing the impotent man on that day of rest. He replies by this cry of His filial heart: "*My Father worketh hitherto, and I work*"—that is to say, "I cannot leave My Father to work alone; so long as a Father continues to work, it is

<sup>1</sup> *Vie de Jésus*, p. 373.

impossible for a devoted son to stand by with folded arms." Whereupon He is charged with blasphemy, for having made Himself equal with God; and He refutes this accusation by setting before us a picture of all the phases, present and future, of His miraculous working,—the complete representation of that work of raising to life from the dead, which He came to work out in the human race. How are we to sever the connection between this discourse, the accusation of the Pharisees, and the miracle which gave occasion to it? Suppress this miracle worked on the Sabbath day, and all this discourse remains suspended in air.

A third example. The Sermon on the Mount is acknowledged as the *chef d'œuvre* of the moral teaching of Jesus; to such a degree, that the adversaries of the gospel would wish to limit the whole of His teaching to this discourse. But what do we there read? In its concluding words Jesus says, "*Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name cast out devils, and done many wonderful works? But I will answer them, I know you not.*"

Had it not been an acknowledged fact that Jesus Himself worked miracles,—that He worked them daily,—would it have been possible for Him, without covering Himself with ridicule, to have spoken to this multitude of the miracles which His disciples should work in His name?

But someone may answer: If the case is as you say,—if the miracles and the discourses are indeed in the life of Jesus two elements so inseparable the

one from the other, we have a simple means ready to our hands for getting rid of the former—it is to reject both. But in that case what means will you have left yourself whereby to account for the greatest moral revolution hitherto witnessed by mankind? M. Renan, in his book on the life of Jesus, lays down this axiom: “Great events have always great causes.” Have we not, then, a right to demand some great cause for the origin of Christianity—of that fact which M. Renan himself in the first lines of his book declares to be the principal one in the religious history of the world?

Cut out of the life of the Lord Jesus His miracles; then, in order to defend this first excision, effect another—omit the discourses. To what will you thus have reduced the gospel history? To a single line, which a German critic wittily summarized thus: “At this time it happened, that *nothing happened.*”<sup>1</sup> Then we are to believe that out of this vacuum came forth the greatest event in the history of the world, that from which the human race took a new era whence to date its historic years! “Without the daily miracles of healing worked by Jesus Christ,” says Ewald, the author of the most learned history of the Jews which we possess, “there is no gospel history left.” But without the gospel history, how are we to account for the renovation of the world by the gospel, and for the history of the Church and of modern times?

We may conclude—and this is our fourth argument—by saying: The miracles are not, as they are

<sup>1</sup> Ebrard.

often believed to be, a mere embroidery upon the tissue of the evangelic history; they form a part of the tissue itself.

5. We draw a concluding argument from the nature of the miraculous stories contained in our Gospels. In respect of form, how great is their simplicity—their candour! An honest man bears upon his countenance and manner of speaking the stamp of his sincerity. Do our evangelists need a certificate of honesty or of good faith? Suppose in some evil hour you have seen, heaped up before you, mountains of objections—of difficulties— . . . open one of our Gospels, read over one or two lines in the book itself; these mountains will seem to you mere clouds which go off in vapour; you feel yourself in contact with the divine reality. When man invents a marvel, the excessive emphasis of the tone of his writing betrays the unreality of his facts; it is the prerogative of truth alone to be at once so grand and so simple.

And as to their substance itself, what a difference is there between the gospel miracles and those which fill the Jewish legends and the pagan mythologies! The contrast is so striking that it forced from M. Renan, in one of his first works, this confession: "The marvellous in the Gospels is but sober good sense compared with that which we meet with in the Jewish Apocryphal writings, or in the Hindoo-European mythologies."<sup>1</sup> We must add, "and even in Christian books composed at a later date than our Gospels."

<sup>1</sup> *Etudes d'histoire religieuse*, pp. 117, 203.

There are in existence some accounts of the life of Jesus called the *Apocryphal* Gospels, which were composed in the second century of our era, inspired by that love of the marvellous which is inherent in our nature: what is the character of the miraculous which we find in them? We are told of the child Jesus manufacturing, in company with other Nazareth children, birds made of ordinary clay, and by breathing upon them He conferred upon those which He made the power of flight; or, again, of the child Jesus when He had accidentally spilt upon the stairs the contents of a jug which He had just filled at the well, gathering it up in a handkerchief, and presenting it to the astonished Mary. Such are some invented miracles. One easily recognises their origin. And by what characteristics? By this—the element of miraculous *power* has been given to them; but that of holy charity, which is the stamp of works truly divine, has been left out. But it is just this peculiar stamp which marks all the miracles of Jesus reported by our Gospels.

Or if, in the second century, and in the Church itself, men were so unskilful at inventing fictitious history, even with the Gospels before them as models, what would the Gospel itself have been if it had been composed a century earlier, and had been inspired by the instincts of the natural man, without being fashioned after a divine and living model?

From the study which we have now given to this subject, it would appear that historic criticism cannot

refuse to recognise the reality of the miraculous works attributed to Jesus Christ; and we may conclude this first part of our task with the assertion that the miracles of Jesus are as deeply and inseparably embedded in His history, as that history itself is in the development of mankind.

## II.—THE POSSIBILITY OF THE MIRACLES OF JESUS CHRIST

But can we give any rational account of facts of this nature? Are they not in plain contradiction, as we are so constantly told, with the fixity of the laws which govern Nature? And if in former times events of this kind did really occur, why do they never happen in our day? And if such things did come to pass under our eyes, should we not have to believe the Creator to be a clumsy workman, who, after having finished His work, finds Himself obliged to meddle with it again, to correct its faults? Such are the questions which may arise in our minds as we contemplate the miracles of Jesus Christ. We are about to make an attempt to answer them, while at the same time reminding our readers that, in all that relates to matter and to Nature, we are met by obscurity and mystery to a much greater degree than in that which belongs exclusively to the world of spirit.

We must first notice in Nature, alongside of a system of fixed laws, an element of freedom. The very existence of matter rests upon a free act—at least it does so to the eyes of everyone who has not

broken with that fundamental article of our faith, the first word of Holy Scripture: "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*" It is true that, after having accomplished this creative act, God seems to have abdicated His sovereignty over Nature. This great whole, like a well-made clock, proceeds peaceably in the course that has been prescribed to it. But, even if we supposed that the orderly state of things which we see before us had always existed, and that Geology did not prove to us the mighty transformations by means of which it has come to be what it is, none the less should we detect in Nature, even in her present state of repose, a constant tendency to emancipate herself from the law of physical necessity, and to lift herself by degrees into the sphere of liberty. The lower domains of Nature are absolutely subject to the sovereignty of the law of gravity, the universality of whose power is visible even to our eyes in the spherical form of bodies. The singular phenomena of crystallization exhibit even in metals a tendency to set themselves free from this law. By the variety and multiplicity of the operations which constitute vegetable life, plants raise themselves into a mode of existence very much freer and more incalculable still. In animals with their free movements, regulated only by their will, we see the first glimmerings of the reign of liberty. The real sovereignty of Will over Nature makes its first appearance in man. Still subject in many respects to physical law, man is none the less able to act independently of it, and even, in very many cases, he is able to overcome and

defy it. In every act of free obedience, or of self-dedication, do we not see man tread under his feet the law of physical instincts in the name and in the service of a higher law, that of moral obligation, of duty, the law which Scripture calls by the fine name of the "*law of liberty*,"<sup>1</sup> because it is of its essence that it can only be truly obeyed by the deliberate and voluntary acquiescence of him who submits himself to it?

From mere matter, then, up to men, we observe in Nature an ever-ascending tendency towards freedom; it is, as it were, a return, step by step, to that principle of intelligent Will to which Nature owes its existence originally. Matter tends to spirit, because it is the creation of spirit.

Matter carefully studied appears by no means materialistic; we find it everywhere impregnated with intelligence and freedom, those two essential attributes of spirit. Nature is in truth spiritual by origin, spiritual by aspiration, spiritual by its everyday working; she is *from*, *by*, and *for* spirit.

Such is Nature. And upon this essentially spiritual and free character of its being rests the possibility in the abstract of miracles. Are we not all of us on this point possessed of a great fact of experience? Do we not know by our own personal experience, that, in virtue of this characteristic which we have now indicated as belonging to matter in general, it is capable of being so specially organized, as immediately, and without the use of any intervening means, to obey a purely moral agent—the Will? Is not

<sup>1</sup> St. James ii. 12.



this the phenomenon of the existence of which we become conscious within that special domain which we call our body? Your eyes are shut; you wish to see; you lift your eyelids, and you do see. Is it the law of gravitation which has produced this result? No; the physical law has been overborne by a different force. What is that force? The moral force of the Will. You have here repeated the first of the creative miracles; within your own small domain you have said, Let there be light! and light has come. No doubt, in so doing, you have not worked a miracle, and it by no means follows that you can operate upon Nature by the naked force of your will. It is the body only which is organized with a view to bringing about such direct obedience to the will of man; Nature is not so.

Here, then, we are met by a new question: Under what conditions will the human will be able to cross the limits assigned to its immediate action upon the external world, so as to act upon it as it does upon its own body? The condition of this possibility is evidently that of the miraculous, properly so called; the condition is, that by some means men should gain access to, and set in motion, that sovereign Will which has created Nature, and which rules it as completely as we by our will sway the movements of our body. By means of this creative Will man will govern matter in the same way as by the power of his own will he governs the physical organs given him by the Creator.

But will such a case ever occur? Will such access to the Supreme Will ever be granted to men? We

are here within the domain of freedom, of that of the divine freedom on the one hand, and of human freedom on the other.

And first, of the divine freedom. The axiom of the theology of paganism was this: "It is the characteristic of all Deities to be jealous." Jealousy, in fact, was natural in gods, who were always tottering on their thrones; but the God of the Gospel is a God for ever firmly seated upon His. And of Him it is written, *God is love*—which is as much as to say that His happiness consists in giving, and that without limit. And why so? Because He is secure of remaining sole master under all possible circumstances.

If, then, He has really created man to be sovereign over Nature, no sooner will the time have arrived when it will be possible without risk to admit him to a share in His omnipotence, than He will rejoice in doing so. Such are the conditions of the freedom of God in regard to the question before us. What, on the other hand, are those of the freedom of man? In other words, What must be the character of man's will, in order that God may be able to grant him the prerogative in question?

What would be the result, if to us—proud, jealous, vindictive, egotistic, as we are—were handed over, by the will of God, the sceptre of omnipotence? We should employ it in the service of our ambition, of our evil passions, of our spite. Consider the detestable use we so often make of the powers, physical and intellectual, with which we are endowed! You remember the day mentioned in the fable, on

which the god of the Sun, in a moment of weakness, agreed to give up the reins of the chariot of the Star of Day into the hands of a feeble child. The child, in his inexperience, guided it at one moment too high aloft, and everything froze on the earth; at another too low down, and everything was burnt up. A striking image of the use we should make of omnipotence, if, wicked as we are, we were made partakers of it with God.

But let there appear a man who wills that which God wills,—the perfect Good,—who wills it as God wills it, without diminution or reserve; might not God, in the case of such a being, give the reins to the *empressement* of His love, and, dealing with him as with a second self, give him a share in His own sovereign power over Nature?

And have we not here the secret of the miracles of Jesus Christ? The miracle of holiness having once been realized in Him, all others flow from it; and His will, made perfectly obedient, becomes, in virtue of that obedience itself, all-powerful; for by this absolute submission of the powerless will to that which is all-powerful, the union of the two consummates itself, and by this union the weaker becomes a sharer in all the attributes of the more powerful.

It is precisely this idea of the miraculous which Jesus Himself puts into shape, when He explains (in St. John v.) the healing of the impotent man by saying, "*Verily I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do.*" Here we see the perfect submission of the instrument; He can do nothing of Himself. "*For what things*

*soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.*" Here we see omnipotence granted to the instrument absolutely submitting itself. "For," yet once more continues Jesus, "*the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth.*" Here we see the ground and motive for this supreme gift; the complete satisfaction felt by the Father in this Being who has consented perfectly to identify His free will with His own.

And how should the great workshop of the hidden forces of the universe not be laid open to Him whom God so loves that He Himself brings Him into it? How should not Nature be subject to Him, with all her laws and all her forces? How should not this Being govern the universe with as much ease as we by our will govern our body? A man completely subject to His will, and associated with Him and His working,—this was what the Father waited for, that He might entrust to Him His power over all Nature.

That a miracle may be scientifically admissible, the following are, according to M. Renan, the requisite conditions:—The fact must be ascertained by a meeting of experts. The person who claimed to be able, for instance, to raise the dead, must be summoned before an assembly of doctors and men of science; a dead body must be laid before him, and he must operate upon it.—M. Renan in this case overlooks, just as the forger of the Apocryphal Gospels did, two things:—the first, that every true work of God is a *holy* work, and that to do holy work a man must himself be holy; a condition not to be met with

every day. And, secondly, the holy man, when he has been found, will only act in a holy manner, and therefore in dependence upon God; he will, just because of his holiness, refuse to work his miracles as acts of parade, as mere *coups de théâtre*, or experiments in physics; he will not consent to work a miracle except for the promotion of the work of God upon earth, and in obedience to a command from on high.—In the absence of such conditions he will make the same reply that Jesus made when He was asked for a sign from heaven.

If so understood, could we say that miracles were infringements upon the fixity of the laws which govern Nature? But in what respect can the continual intervention of acts of our will among the free movements of our body be said to be an infringement upon the regular working of our bodily organs? Does it not, on the contrary, conform itself to it with the utmost gentleness and ease? And could not God do, with regard to Nature, which He has created, and of which He has a perfect knowledge, what our will can so well do with regard to our body, which we know so imperfectly?

A physician introduces into the body a substance which gives to the course of a disease a direction altogether contrary to that which it would have taken without the action of this remedy. Has he, by this intervention of his, imported the slightest disturbance into the working of the laws of our physical organization? Not at all. This foreign element is no sooner introduced into the body than it behaves there in conformity with the laws of the body itself. And

we are to suppose that God could not so regulate His intervention in the machinery of Nature, as not to dislocate its wheels! A musician draws out of his instrument tones infinitively superior to those which its strings could have produced had they been left to their natural vibrations, without thereby in the slightest degree violating the laws of acoustics and of mechanics; are we to believe that God could not draw from that vast musical instrument, the material world, of which He knows all the secret springs, effects far superior to those which that instrument could have produced had it been left to itself, without at all violating its laws? "That is true," it will be said, "but this intervention is contrary to the idea which we ought to form to ourselves of the perfection of God Himself. Would it not be unworthy of the great Heavenly Worker to intervene in this way, to add touches to His work as after-thoughts?" There are, it seems to me, two cases in which a perfect workman might be called to retouch his work, *i.e.*, first, if, after he had finished it, a clumsy pupil had meddled with and spoilt it; or, secondly, if he had himself only intended to make in the first instance a rough model, destined to be perfected afterwards. Now, precisely these two cases meet in the great event now before us. When God, in creating, had planned harmony, man, His disobedient pupil, planted the seeds of disturbance, of division. Where God had planned normal development, growing freedom, life, man brought in disease, slavery, death. When then, God intervenes with miracle, He does not do so as an artist who corrects himself, but as one who

restores his work which another has spoilt for him— He brings back, by His miraculous acts, His world into the pathway of normal development from which the being who was created free made it deviate. What is there in such an act unworthy of His wisdom, of His power, of His goodness?

But could He not have so created this world as to make it from the first secure against all possibility of being spoilt? This is to ask whether God might not, instead of creating man free, have made him perfect? This demand is self-contradictory. For to have made man incapable of sinning, would have been to suppress freedom, and, by the same act, holiness also.

The free and deliberate acceptance of God by man is for him the pre-requisite condition of all real moral goodness. Man, then, could not have been created holy. He must himself co-operate in the production of a holy man. The transformation of a free man into a holy man was the first task of humanity. Accordingly, the primitive man could only have been a provisional man. The first Adam was but the rough sketch of the final man whom God planned. The appearance in existence of the true man, such as God had purposed, before He created the world, to call into being, could only be the crowning act of the development of the first Adam. This design was the only one worthy of the wisdom and love of God, even while it left this world exposed to be invaded by sin and suffering by the miseries of freedom.

And if you take your stand at this point of view,

it will become at last easy for you to understand why the prodigies which signalized the advent of Jesus Christ upon earth do not occur in our day. There was an hour fixed in the history of humanity for the advent of the second Adam—of the final man and the new mankind, who are His spiritual descendants, just as there was an hour fixed in the course of development of Nature for the advent of the first humanity. Such epochs have an exceptional character, and are signalized by phenomena which do not reproduce themselves in the same manner, when once the solemn moment of their occurrence is past. The appearance of the perfectly holy man was so trenchant a break in the life of humanity up to that moment, that from the shock it produced there resulted consequences which have not repeated themselves at any other period. As necessarily as the daily contact of riches with poverty in human society produces alms-giving, so equally necessarily, so to say, did the meeting between Jesus, the holy One, to whom the treasury of almighty power lay open, with sinful and suffering humanity, produce miracle. No doubt, since the departure of Jesus, His holiness and His power have not disappeared from the earth; the second Adam, in ascending to heaven, left behind Him a posterity like to Himself, a humanity sanctified; just as the first Adam, in descending into the grave, left behind him a race of descendants like to himself, soiled and mortal. But the present being of this sanctified humanity is but the continuation and development of the new state of things inaugurated by the pres-



ence in the world of Jesus. The advent of the second Adam was *the crisis of birth* of the new humanity. That is the reason why it is signalized by incomparable miracles.

Let us sum up. Miracles are possible, because matter is the work and the born instrument of spirit. If this possibility, in the abstract, of miracle was to be realized through the agency of a man, one condition was requisite, namely, that there should exist a man fit to be associated with the exercise of the creative Omnipotence—a man whose will should be at one with that of God. This condition, the advent in the world of the holy man, prepared for by the whole course of the Old Testament, only realized itself perfectly once in the history of the world, and that hour was, in the strict sense of the words, the hour of miracle.

### III.—THE UTILITY OF THE MIRACLES OF JESUS CHRIST

What is the object of these events, of which we have been just establishing the reality and analyzing the cause?

The *object* of the miracles is made clear by the name so often given to them in Holy Scripture—*signs*. They *signify* to the sight of the blindest the greatness of Him who works them, the pre-eminence of the work which He is come to accomplish, and the perfection of the final restoration in which this work is to issue.

Above all, they reveal to us the greatness of

the person of Jesus, the object of our faith. The miracles of Christ are the signs of His divine glory. Doubtless, a man may work miracles without being a divine personage, the Son of God. Elias raised a dead man to life; but he did not upon that ground claim the right to say, "I am the resurrection and the life." Moses called manna from heaven, water from the rock; but he did not therefore call himself "the bread of life," "the water springing up into life eternal." We go further; we have seen that it is not as Son of God, and by His own personal power, but as the Son of Man, and by the power of God, that Jesus worked His miracles. He Himself uses the expressions, "The works which the Father hath given Me to do;" "Father, I know that Thou hearest Me always."<sup>1</sup> And the multitudes were clearly conscious of this, when, at the sight of one of these wonderful works, they marvelled that "God had given such power *unto men*."<sup>2</sup>

But if the power by which Jesus worked His miracles was a borrowed power, the manner, on the other hand, in which He used it was not that of a servant, but of a son. "Father, I know" . . . Would Elias, the most perfect of servants, have spoken so? There was in all the miraculous action of Jesus a freedom, an ease, an overflowing power, an assurance, which manifested a more intimate relation, and, as it were, a kind of familiarity between Him who asked and Him who answered in this manner. Even in the life of a prophet, the working of miracles is a rare occurrence; in the life of Jesus it

<sup>1</sup> St. John v. 36, xi. 42.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. ix. 8.

is, according to the happy expression of Ewald, "an everyday occupation." Miracles worked by a prophet are accompanied by effort. Elias stretches himself three times on the body of the child whom he wishes to recall into life. Jesus brings Lazarus out of the grave, as we wake a friend, by calling him by his name. The characteristic of the working of the prophet is reverential fear. That of the working of Jesus is filial confidence. These are, to use the expression of St. John, the signs of "*the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father.*"

The miracles may be regarded, in this first connection in which we contemplate them, as a magnificent compensation granted to Christ by His Father for having divested Himself of His divine glory in becoming incarnate. Having been rich, Jesus "*became poor*";<sup>1</sup> in this condition of poverty God puts into His hands some gold pieces of incalculable value, which reveal that state of riches and of nobility out of which He came. Jesus had voluntarily exchanged the "form of God" for the dependent condition of a created being, the state of mendicity of human nature, possessing nothing, and unable to do anything except by prayer. The Father is pleased in return to place the treasures of His Omnipotence into His hand; He says to Him: Take,—draw from out of My treasures what you please, not as a servant, but as a Son! God forestalls by these miracles that which He will grant completely by the ascension, when, as a recompense for what He has renounced of His divine status

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. viii. 9.

He will cause to break forth, even through His humanity itself, "*the glory which He had before the world was.*"<sup>1</sup>

The miracles then are, in consequence of the unique way in which Jesus works them, the signs of a glory belonging to Himself personally; they are, moreover, the visible symbols of the work which He came to accomplish here below. They are the signs, not only of what Jesus is, but also of what He *does*. When Jesus opened the eyes of the blind, for what purpose did He do it? Did He purpose to put an end to physical blindness on the earth? Certainly not; had that been His intention, He must have gathered round Him all the blind, and healed them; whereas, for one whom He heals, there are thousands whom He leaves in darkness. What, then, is the object of such miracles? He wishes to make the world understand the moral work which He is come to accomplish. He says by these actions what He expressed in words when He adds, "*I am the light of the world.*"<sup>2</sup> He makes Himself known as He who is come to scatter the moral darkness into which sin has plunged mankind.—When Jesus raises the dead man to life, are we to think that the object of this work of power is to destroy here below the empire of death? No; for that it would be necessary to raise from the dead, not one dead man only, but all the dead. To this mighty undertaking He will one day give Himself, but later on in time. When He raised Lazarus, it was to manifest Himself to the eyes of men dead in trespasses

<sup>1</sup> St. John xvii. 5, 24.

<sup>2</sup> St. John ix. 5.

and sins, as He who was come to bring to our souls resurrection and life. Every miracle is the visible type, the speaking pledge and earnest of a spiritual miracle, greater and still more saving than the external one. These spiritual prodigies, of which the miracles were emblems, He intended to accomplish at a later period, by the instrumentality of believers, and by the action of the Holy Spirit; and therefore He does not fear to address to His disciples, during His earthly life, these astonishing words, "I say unto you, he that believeth on Me shall do greater works than these."<sup>1</sup> The saving of a soul, is it not a greater work than the raising of a dead man? After some years the grave claimed once more the prey that Jesus had rescued from it at Bethany. But a sinner converted by the Gospel—a prodigal, of whom the Father has said, "*He was dead, and is alive again*"—shall live for ever.

This consideration will completely explain why the miracles of Jesus were not to be continued to the end here below. These external miracles were, as we have said, emblems of moral works of still greater importance. The emblem once shown, its purpose was attained; it was to give place to the reality of which it was a figure. This was what Jesus sought to make the Jews understand the day after the multiplication of the loaves. The whole multitude came together to Him at Capernaum; and what are they seeking? More bread,—material bread,—only of a higher kind than that of the preceding day,—bread from heaven, like the manna

<sup>1</sup> St. John xiv. 12.

which Moses obtained for the Israelites. Jesus answered them, "You have then understood nothing of what I did for you yesterday. You come to Me, not because you witnessed a sign of what I am, and of what I am come to do for you, but only because you ate of the loaves and were filled." Is it, then, the belief of these carnal-minded men that the object of the advent of Jesus upon earth was to relieve men for the future from the necessity of cultivating the ground, of sowing their crops, and of eating their bread in the sweat of their face? His object in multiplying the loaves was to reveal Himself to their perishing souls as the bread that can give life eternal, through the holy agency of the eating of faith. They understood nothing of the miracle; they did not rise in thought to the true miracle towards which all the desire and all the travail of His soul was tending. In the sign they saw nothing but the prodigy; whereas they should have recognised the sign in the prodigy.<sup>1</sup>

This thought respecting the object of His miracles continually occupied the heart of Jesus. When the disciples returned from their first missionary expedition, they reported to Jesus with joyful wonder the works of healing, particularly of demoniacs, which they had worked in His name. Jesus, hearing their words, raises His thoughts to a higher subject of contemplation, and, recognising in these partial victories signs of the imminent fall of the kingdom of Satan, He answers, "*I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.*"<sup>2</sup> It was the coming destruction

<sup>1</sup> Lange, *Life of Jesus*.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke x. 18.

of paganism,—of that “*possession on a great scale*,” as it has been called, which, on occasion of these single acts of casting out of evil spirits, presented itself to His mind’s eye in all its grandeur.

Is there not here a consoling lesson for us? My body suffers, and Jesus is not present to heal me. Oh, how I am tempted to wish for His visible presence! But, in indulging such a feeling, should I not be following the example of the Jews, who, the day after the miracle of the loaves, prayed for—what? More loaves;—instead of rising to the wish for the living Bread. Let, then, the records of the miracles of healing which I read in the Gospel induce me rather to seek a healing of a higher kind; for that is the divine work intended by Christ, of which the bodily healings were but signs. That which Jesus did bodily, He did only with the object of making me understand the work He wishes to accomplish in me morally, and to induce me to associate my will with His. Touching the hand of the leper He cleanses him, and communicates to him His own purity. By that act He tells me what He wishes to do for my soul. His hand laid upon my heart will take away its hidden leprosy, and communicate heavenly health. Multiplying the loaves in the wilderness, He gives me this assurance: I come to nourish thy soul with Myself, in order to fill thee with My strength, and so to remove for ever that depression—that spiritual phthisis under which thou art suffering. By recalling from the grave him whose body was already the prey of corruption, He says to me, more eloquently than by any words,

Take courage, My son ; even though thy heart were already delivered over to the corruption of the worst passions, the deliverer of Lazarus is here, ready to lift thee out of this moral death, and to bring thee back to life, and to the light of God. Once He bid the winds be still, and the waves subside. My distress is at this moment great, my anguish mortal ; but I know,—I see it,—let Him but arise,—let His voice resound amid the trouble of my soul and the agitation of my life,—forthwith shall tumult give place to silence, and once more shall there reign within me a great calm.

So is it that faith finds in each miracle of Jesus a sign ; and that quite legitimately. This allegorical method of interpretation is not only permissible, it is intended ; it is the legitimate, authentic use of the miracle ; it is the very thought of Him who worked it. If each word of Jesus is an act—a miracle, each miracle, on the other hand, may translate itself for us into a word, and become to us a rich personal promise.

The miracles, again, are *signs*, in this way, that while they tell us what Jesus *is*, and what He is ceaselessly *doing*, they represent to us in figure what He one day *will do*. We await a renewal of all Nature. “*The whole creation,*” says St. Paul, “*groaneth together,*” and God will listen to these groans—grant these desires ; then will be a “restitution of all things.” Nature will share in the incorruptibility of the Spirit, which is its vital principle, and the Church of Christ will be introduced into the glorious sphere of the divine freedom, and of the perfect life, in that kingdom “*which God*



prepared for them that are His before the creation of the world"—that is to say, that of which the idea presided over that of the present creation.

Let us look once more at the miracles from this point of view. They are, if I may so express myself, samples of that final restoration and consummation.—“*The last enemy that shall be destroyed,*” St. Paul tells us, “*is death.*”<sup>1</sup>

It was as a prelude to this destruction of death—of death itself—that Jesus worked the three resurrections,—that of the daughter of Jairus, of the son of the widow of Nain, and of Lazarus. As Jesus, then, restored the son to his mother, the daughter to her parents, the brother to his sisters, so on the last day will He restore to one another, in the fulness of spiritual and bodily life, those beings whom love had united in Him on earth, and whom death had momentarily separated. What a waking! what an Easter! All the storms which overturn society, and families,—all the national and domestic wars which are the product of egoism, are one day to cease, and to give place to the smile of the Divine Love shining forth upon human society brought into peace. It is of this final harmony that the stilling of the tempest on the Lake of Gennesareth is the emblem and the pledge. This re-establishment of the universal harmony is to be preceded by a final sorting,—prepared for by a judgment, of which the object will be to beat down powers that oppose themselves, and to exclude wills which persist in rebellion. We see before us a sample of that awful consummation in

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 26.

the cursing of the barren fig-tree, and in the castings out of devils, effected by the Lord Jesus.—The whole life of humanity, set free from sin, will then by the power of the Holy Spirit become possessed of a new force, a savour hitherto unknown, a Divine efficacy; it will be pervaded by a celestial force and joy. Look at Cana,—there we see the pledge of that final transformation of our natural life into eternal glory.

Some miracles, such as that of the marriage feast of Cana, and that of the multiplication of the loaves, which do not bear the stamp of any actual necessity, have been called miracles of luxury.<sup>1</sup> I do not object to this expression. Luxury—splendour—is to be seen in the house of every great prince; could it be missing in the grand household management of the Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth? Is there not luxury even in Nature, as we see it here on earth? The thing *necessary* in the kingdom of God is holiness; that which answers to luxury—to superfluity—is glory. God be praised a thousand times for the fact that some “miracles of luxury” in the life of Jesus Christ prefigure the glorious magnificence which is to pervade the mansion of His Father and our Father!

From the point which we have now reached, we can survey at one glance the whole of that miraculous action of Jesus Christ, of which the miracles which He worked during His sojourn here below are but the first and least important phase. The view unfolds itself in three distinct and successive forms.

<sup>1</sup> Strauss.

There are first the miracles, properly so called, which marked His earthly career, and which culminated in His own resurrection as the greatest of all; we call it so, because Jesus was its object, not its instrument; and the more His personal co-operation was withdrawn from prominence in this great act, the more manifestly did the action of God display itself in it. Then follow, as forming a second phase, the spiritual miracles, which, since the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, are continually being worked in the Church, and which constitute the work of the spiritual resurrection and sanctification of humanity. This second form of the miraculous action of Jesus pervades the whole of the present divine economy. Lastly, at the close of this essentially spiritual work, we contemplate in hope the epoch of the supreme and definitive miracles;—our bodily resurrection, the renewal of nature, the apparition of the new heavens and new earth, the ascension of the Church into glory. That will be the crowning consummation of the work of Jesus, which will be at the same time the final accomplishment of the thought of God with reference to men: God in us.

This magnificent setting forth of the miraculous working of Jesus you will find drawn out by the hand of the Lord Himself in the fifth chapter of St. John, on occasion of a simple miracle of healing—that of the impotent man of Bethesda.<sup>1</sup>

There exists, we are told, among the Jews a superstitious belief. They imagine that the man who shall have the happiness of discovering the true

<sup>1</sup> St. John v. 19-29.

pronunciation of the name of Jehovah in the sacred language of the people of God, will possess in this word, correctly pronounced, the talisman by the help of which all things will become possible to him. Under this puerile fable there lies hidden sublime truth. The man who knew the true way of pronouncing the divine name has existed, and everything has been possible to Him by virtue of that name. Did not Jesus say, "*No man knoweth the Father, but the Son*"? and did He not upon that ground justify this other assertion, "*All things are delivered to Me of My father*"?<sup>1</sup> Jesus alone has known the true name of God,—"*Abba, Father*"; Jesus alone has understood the art of uttering it in the true filial accent,—that of tender trustfulness, of the complete self-surrender of love, of perfect adoration; and, accordingly, nothing was impossible to Him. This name, thus uttered, laid Nature at His feet, and mankind at His knees. The power of this name, filially invoked, at last awoke, in favour of this earth, Almighty Power, which had fallen asleep; reopened the channels of communication between heaven and earth that had long since been blocked up, and laid the foundations of the renewal of all things. Now the work which the only-begotten Son thus began must be continued, and it is the children of God adopted in Him who must accomplish this task. They, and they only, are capable of fulfilling it. Has He not revealed to them His secret? "*No man knoweth who the Father is, but the Son, and he,*" adds Jesus, "*to whom the Son will*

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke x. 22.

reveal Him." As He Himself, by His confident appeal to His Father, brought down healing into bodies suffering from disease, so is it for us, who have learnt from Him to cry, "*Abba, Father,*" to call down, by an invocation similar to His own, the pardon of sin and the peace of heaven into souls travailing and burdened, disquieted and suffering,—into our own, above all. As Jesus cleansed the lepers, cast out devils, raised the dead, by the finger of God, so is it ours to call down, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the new life, and holiness, into souls,—into our own, above all! Let us in this way become workers of miracles in ourselves and in our brethren, and we shall have no more difficulty in believing in those of Jesus Christ; for we shall find in the sacred records that which answers to something which we shall have actually experienced, or performed, ourselves. A single prayer answered, a single case of living contact with the power of the Father, a single exertion of the power of Christ over the weakness that is in us, will teach us more upon the subject of the miracles than all that I have been able in this lecture to say to you upon this great subject. Let us all lay hold of the talisman! Learn from Jesus and from His Spirit to say with the heart and with the tone of a son, "*Abba, Father*"! Then will greater works than those of Jesus be worked by you! May men able to do such works become among us a very great army! That is the most pressing need of our times.

IV  
THE SUPERNATURAL



## IV

### *THE SUPERNATURAL*

**T**HE question whether we know that God exists cannot appear a matter of indifference to any of us. God added to, or deducted from, the sum of existence: this, we all feel, is existence altered in character.

The question whether we know that God intervenes in the life of man is not less important. Of what importance, in fact, is the existence of God to me, if no direct relation connects Him with me, and if Nature, like a wall of separation which cannot be crossed over, rises between Him and me, and leaves me only the power of sighing after Him whom it conceals from me? Here, again, we must say, God added to, or subtracted from, the sum of life, is life altered.

In the present study of what in our day is called the Supernatural, we shall investigate the following three questions:—

I. Is an intervention of God in the history of the world conceivable?

II. Has such an intervention actually taken place?

III. What may be the part played by this element of the Supernatural in the history of humanity?

I. As soon as we begin to speak of the Super-



natural, the spirit of man raises this objection: Is not the universe a complete whole? and is not this whole governed by its own laws, which rule all that happens in it? Would not an interference from without be violence done to it? Would it not constitute a sort of faithlessness on the part of the Supreme Being to Himself? Was not Strauss right in saying, "To maintain that God does anything against the laws of Nature, is to maintain that He acts against His own nature"?

This great whole, which we call Nature, comprehends within itself beings towards whom we stand related through our senses, through forces which set them in motion, and through laws which regulate the exercise of these forces. The Supernatural, then, will mean any modification in beings in Nature which is not the effect of the forces with which it is endued, and of the laws under whose command these forces act. Is such a modification conceivable?

1. We become aware, in the first place, of the existence of two supernatural beings: the one existing in Nature itself,—man; the other above Nature,—God. That which characterizes both the one and the other as supernatural beings, is their freedom.

In Nature, each being has in himself the law of his development. The force which in the animal we call his freedom, is but the instrument of the law of his instincts; and in the plant we cannot even discover this phantom of freedom; accordingly, the august idea of duty is inapplicable to animal or vegetable life. Is that the case with man also? Are the decisions of his will nothing more than the products

of certain unconscious influences which determine his conduct, as by a fate, and without his being able to account for them? Only by consenting to erase out of our life everything which constitutes its dignity, its nobleness, its truly human character, can we maintain such a thesis. Conscience, which establishes so marked a distinction, and even contrast, between good and evil, which issues its imperious commands to us to choose the first, yet without forcing us to do so; moral responsibility—that heavy burden which is at the same time our crown of royalty, and from which we should endeavour in vain to free ourselves; remorse, which all our efforts fail in reducing to silence,—all these facts bear undeniable testimony to the moral freedom with which we are endowed. Make of these mere delusions, you by the same stroke destroy man; you have left yourself nothing but a sort of brute creature. Without moral freedom there is an end of moral obligation of duty; you can only talk of satisfaction, of gratification, of selfish interest, of pleasure.

If natural law rules tyrannously over the human will, the assassin who lodges a bullet in the head of another man is neither more nor less culpable than his victim; for in killing him, he, like the bullet itself, has but obeyed the law of his nature: Lincoln and Booth are on a par morally. We must no longer punish malefactors as if they were really culpable; we must confine ourselves to restraining them from doing mischief by depriving them of their liberty, like wild beasts we keep in a cage. The legislation of our day is already following this course.

The human conscience will never in the long-run accept these degrading decrees of materialism; and if it did so for a time, society would, before long, recoil in the presence of the practical consequences which would flow from these principles. The inner voice, which before each of our acts says to us, "Thou art free to do or not to do it," and which, after each of our acts, cries to us, "Thou art responsible for what thou hast done," may distress us and give us pain, it nevertheless persists as the spontaneous expression, not to be silenced, of our free nature.

Now, if man is free, he is superior to Nature, where everything moves in obedience to necessary law; he is a being in some sense supernatural. Each act he does, which, whatever be its motives, springs nevertheless from the free decision of his will, and all that world of existing things in which he is compelled to recognise his own creation, attest the sovereignty which he exercises over himself and over the forces with which he is endowed,—his freedom, and, as a consequence, his enfranchisement from the blind, lower empire of Nature.

To this supernatural ingredient in the midst of Nature,—free man, answers the Supernatural above and outside of Nature,—God.

The indications of intelligence and of goodness which strike us at every step we take through creation, bear witness to the Creator full of wisdom and of goodness to whom it owes its existence. But the existence of a free and personal God is only distinctly revealed by the presence, in the midst of Nature, of man, a person, and free. In an effect, there cannot

be that which is greater or better than is to be found in its cause. And if Nature ascends up to the free Being as her *chef d'œuvre*, it is because she springs from the free Being as her author. If the free God did not exist, neither could free man. For, in that case, the world, not having been created, would be eternal; being eternal, it would carry in itself the law of its own being, a law which would be sovereign and immutable, and which nothing could modify, because nothing would exist above it. And that which would be true of the whole, would be true also of each part. Everything in existence, man included, would obey, by an irresistible fate, the law of eternal Nature; there would be an end of freedom. Everyone, then, will see this,—human freedom rests upon the fact of the being of a free God as its basis. God, duty, freedom, these three ideas form an inseparable trinity, revealed directly to the human consciousness, and of which each member stands or falls with the two others.

The world is the creation of God; man is at the same time His image. God has placed man at the summit of Nature, as the *chef d'œuvre* at which He was aiming from the beginning, and as the sample of His own being. He made him capable of determining himself in favour of good, in the full light of his own personal conscience; and by so doing, He elevated him into the same sphere of moral life in which He Himself moves.

Thus soar, in a region above the blind domain of matter and its laws, these two supernatural beings, the one relatively supernatural, who gradually gets

himself free from nature, as a child does from his cradle; the other absolutely supernatural, out-topping Nature by the whole height of His spiritual being. As soon as, like a child awaking and happening to meet the eye of its mother, man lifts his head above Nature, and discovers and recognises God, the supernatural in him springs upward towards that from which it derives its being, joins itself to the supernatural which is divine, and enters into an indissoluble treaty of union with it.

2. These two supernatural beings, free man and the free God, can be in direct *rappor*t, the one with the other; for they are spiritual, and spirit can act upon spirit, as body upon body. No doubt, the spirit of one man acts upon the spirit of another only through the medium of the body. There must be a gesture, a look, a word which strikes upon the ear, —some written sign expressive of the sound, and which strikes the eye of the person with whom we wish to communicate. These material means are necessary, because the spirit of him who wishes to act upon the other is bound to a body, and the spirit upon which he wishes to act is enclosed in a body of the same nature. But, in the communications between the infinite and the finite spirit, this condition does not exist.

“*The God of the spirits of all flesh,*” as Scripture calls God, the living God, can place Himself in immediate contact with the spirits which have emanated from Him. He can, without the instrumentality of any visible sign, bring them into fellowship with His thoughts, and reveal Himself to them;

He can, without any word outwardly spoken, communicate to them an impulse, and give them a direction.

And if such intercourse is possible, is it not probable that it will in fact take place? With what other object can the infinite Spirit have created finite spirits, but with that of entering into communication with them? Is a father satisfied with merely giving food to his children? Is it not his purpose to initiate them into the enjoyment of all the spiritual gifts which he himself enjoys? And if God is the absolutely free Being, and if His absolute freedom, as soon as we endeavour to form any concrete conception of it, takes the name, Love, how should He not enter into contact with every created spirit up to the measure of its capacity, and in such a way as gradually to enlarge that measure, with a view to that complete initiation which is the natural aim proposed to itself by His love in the act of creation?

So is it that between these two supernatural beings there is a possibility and probability of communications, and that God has an open door in the history of the world, by His direct action upon the spirit of man, who is the principal agent in that history. Revelation and inspiration are the two higher forms of this contact, which is altogether spiritual, and consequently supernatural.

3. Will it ever be possible for Nature to be involved in this direct relation of God with man, and to be acted upon by God in any way that will form a link in this connection between these two supernatural beings? With regard to this question, every-

thing depends upon the purpose with a view to which Nature exists. If it exists for itself,—if it constitutes a complete, firmly enclosed whole, having its end in itself, miracle has in that case no *raison d'être*, and it is impossible to conceive with what object God could bring about, in one part of this whole, any modification which should not be the result of its own laws.

But is it true that Nature contains its end in itself? Is it not evident that it leads up to man,—that the several beings who together make it up, form the steps of a ladder of which the highest, foreseen and foreintended from the beginning, was man? Does not experience confirm the truth, of which science has collected the proofs, namely, that Nature is but a means to an end, and that man is the being destined to benefit by it? In applying Nature, as he does, to his own purposes, man fits in with the destination of the several beings which compose it, in such a way that it is only under his care that many of them attain to the perfection of which they are capable. The horse trained by man reaches a higher perfection in all respects than does the horse in the state of nature; and every day we find by experience the superiority of the fruit-tree grafted by the hand of man, over that which grows wild in the forest.

As Nature has not its cause, so neither has it its end, in itself. Its cause is God, its end is man. Nature is but a means for the education of the latter by the former. Would it be conceivable that, under these conditions, God should have created Nature in

such a manner as not to reserve to Himself a means of access through which He might act upon it and by it, with a view to the object which He proposes to Himself, that is, the moral education of humanity?

Look at this powerful machine which draws a whole train of carriages after it,—it does not work for itself. This combination of various forces has been invented for the service of those whom it carries forward with lightning speed. Accordingly, man has reserved to himself certain means of acting upon it, of accelerating or retarding its speed, and even of making it move forwards or backwards at his will. Though this arrangement would be a violence done to the machine if that machine existed for itself, it appears no more than reasonable when it is viewed as an instrument existing for a purpose beyond itself, that is, for the good of the living and free creature, man.

Listen to the strains of harmonious sound which proceed from this organ. It is the hand of the player which sets its secret springs in motion. For in constructing it he has reserved to himself access into the interior of this instrument, a means whereby the blast which is to breathe the breath of life into it can penetrate into all its parts. There would be something in this inconsistent with the essential nature of this machine, if the machine existed only for itself. Such a manner of working is, however, reasonable, if this machine exists for the good of a superior being, to whose pleasure it is intended to minister.

Should we not expect the case to be the same with



Nature, since that, too, exists for the good of an object outside of and above itself? Would the artist who has constructed this vast piece of machinery have given it over entirely to a sort of self-guidance, —would he not have reserved to himself some means of making it minister in varying ways to the ever-changing needs of the free being for whom he has created it?

Nature, no doubt, must have her laws—her obedience to rule—her fixed path of progress. It must be so, as it is destined to the service of man; for, if the latter found himself in presence of a power absolutely capricious and irregular in its movements, how could he direct or systematize his work? If I did not know whether the sun would or would not rise to-morrow, what steps could I take to-day to prepare for that morrow? If I could not count beforehand with certainty upon the regularity of the march of the seasons, how could I set myself to the work of cultivating the ground? Human freedom would be suppressed just in proportion as caprice reigned in the life of Nature. Man has freedom in laying his plans, only on condition of his being able to count upon the regularity of the laws which govern the sphere in which he works.

But, on the other hand, man is a moral being, and as such called to realize good. Now, the realization of this, his destination, could not have been subjected to the fixed regularity of physical laws, since to speak of a being as moral is to speak of him as free. As a free being, then, man has the power of turning his back upon the destiny intended

for him ; and it is important that God, who is ever bringing all things back into the state to which they are destined, should have the power to make Nature—that great instrument for developing and educating, which He has interposed between man and Himself—concur in the work of bringing about that result. This new function of co-operating in the cure of moral evil did not enter, any more than did evil itself, into the original design, or into the normal organization of Nature. And in this way it becomes possible that God, with a view to producing effects upon the free being, should sometimes introduce modifications into the condition of the creatures existing in Nature which are not the results of the ordinary laws of their being, but which, at the same time, do not annihilate those laws. Regularity remains in force, but a superior power operates in such a way as to draw from the working of these laws a result of an exceptional kind, and which has no sooner made its appearance than it falls completely under their dominion.

4. But by what means can the divine power act upon matter so as to impress upon it a modification which is not the result of its own laws ?

I must here put the question, What is matter—the substance of which bodies are composed ? When one takes a body to pieces, one obtains from it smaller particles, which again can be divided into others smaller still, so that our minds can see no end to this process of decomposition. But, nevertheless, in order to put a limit to this infinite divisibility of matter, it has been agreed to give the

name of *atoms* (that is to say, indivisible particles) to the infinitely small corpuscles, which are supposed to be incapable of being further divided.

What idea are we to form to ourselves of these atoms? No one has ever seen or touched them. The hypothesis of their existence is nevertheless almost a necessity to our minds, if we admit the reality of matter. Are they material? But everything that is material is composed of parts, and everything that is composed of parts, however small it may be, can be divided. Are they immaterial? But how can an aggregate of things in themselves immaterial ever form a material whole—a body?

You see that Nature and the existence of matter present to every reflecting mind a problem absolutely unsolved and unsolvable, a problem far more impenetrable than the existence and origin of the simple being—the soul or spirit.

And can man, who is compelled to confess his absolute ignorance of the essential nature of matter, claim the right to lay down the law in this domain in which all is obscurity to him, and in which every assertion is found soon to lead up to a contradiction in terms? In a region in which our knowledge is *nil*, absolutely non-existent, should we allow ourselves to cry, "This or that is impossible—impossible to God Himself!" Men of science, too, have their dogmas, and before they mock at those of theology they would do well to get rid of their own, lest, offering to take the mote out of their brother's eye, they be met with the rebuke, "First take the beam out of your own."

Nature must be compared not to a bag hermetically sealed on all sides, but to a net open in all its meshes, and penetrable in every part of its surface. These meshes are the mysterious atoms which constitute the essence of Nature, and of which we cannot reasonably affirm the material, or immaterial, nature. Who can tell us that there is not here a door always open to the action of God? <sup>1</sup> And is it really conceivable that God has been in vital relation with Nature only for one moment,—that in which it came into being by an act of His will,—and that after that He withdrew, never again to make His appearance in it? This conception, which would relegate the action of God to a time absolutely past, will soon arrive at finding this action of His also superfluous, deny creation, affirm the eternity of the world, identify God with the creation,—in other words, it will deny the existence of God Himself.

<sup>1</sup> We find in the writings of one of the most eminent philosophers and severe logicians of modern Germany, Lotze, the following lines, which express an idea respecting the miraculous, perfectly in accordance with our own: "The power which works miraculously does not oppose itself directly to the law with which it deals so as to suspend its working; but it first modifies the interior condition of things by virtue of its intimate connection with them, and by that means it modifies indirectly the effects produced by the working of the law even while allowing that working still to be continued, and while still availing itself of its agency. No doubt, the domain in Nature which is subject to mechanical necessity is not immediately accessible to the miracle-working power; but the interior nature of the things which compose that domain, and obey that necessity, is by no means the product of that necessity itself; it is the result simply of the creative idea."—*Der Sinn der Welt* (Lotze). And this is the point which is, as it were, the open door through which a power working in the name of this idea can always assert its influence over the course of things. . . .

The logical connection which binds these propositions together is so close, that, willingly or unwillingly, the mind will have to surrender to it; and the final consequence, as we said at the commencement, will be that negation of human liberty and responsibility which would say, "God and the world are identified, and man is free!"<sup>1</sup>

If miracle is not conformable with the internal laws of Nature, so much the more is it so with the supreme law of this great whole, which is that of depending directly upon God only, and of ministering in His hands to the work of educating mankind.

By these reflections upon the possibility of the supernatural, I have only wished to clear the way in the minds of my readers, for the facts of experience and of history to find access to their belief. For the road along this path has been so barricaded, men have cried out so loudly, though without alleging the slightest proof of what they have said, that the science of the nineteenth century has made it impossible to believe in miracle, that it was needful to attempt to clear this prejudice out of the minds of my readers before I brought them to face facts and history. I hope that nothing will now stand in the way of their giving these an impartial hearing.

II. Does history prove the reality of supernatural events? Do not the stories of miracles and Divine interventions, which have come down to us, belong to dark ages, to uncritical times, in which the very

<sup>1</sup> Raphael Hirsch, *Der Pentateuch übersetzt und erläutert*, 2ter Theil, Exodus, p. 28.

idea of Nature and her laws was unknown? How can we put any confidence in testimony never subjected to any scientific tests, especially when it is contradictory to our own experience, which has never made us witnesses of any miracle?

1. The miracle of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which we have been studying in our first two lectures, is clear of all the objections we have now been citing. The age of Augustus and Tiberius, in which the advent of Jesus Christ took place, was the most enlightened of antiquity. It was the age in which, under the attacks of philosophy, the ancient pagan superstitions crumbled to dust.<sup>1</sup> It was the age in which Lucretius was writing his completely rationalistic poem on Nature, and identified its laws, as men are doing now, with the divine nature. The Epicuræans attempted to account for matter by atoms and the forces inherent in them, as do our modern materialists; and the Stoics, who affirmed that they found in their own moral goodness power sufficient to fulfil the law of duty in their own strength, without help from God, were not very different from our liberal Christians.

And it was in such an age that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was preached, and believed in the whole world! What! it was at the time when all the ancient superstitions were falling to pieces under the

<sup>1</sup> Mythology is only treated in the manner of Ovid in the *Metamorphoses*, by one who has ceased to believe in it. One feels strongly enough that Virgil has no longer any belief in that Olympian world in which the faith of the Homeric age moves so naively. As for Horace, when he makes use of mythological conceptions, it is merely an effort of rhetoric.

blows of the battering-rams of emancipated Reason, that we are to believe that that which of all others was the most repugnant to the way of thinking of the men of that age, lifted up its hand and conquered the world!<sup>1</sup>

What we have been now saying of the resurrection applies equally to the innumerable miracles attributed in the New Testament to our Lord Himself and to His apostles. That age is not the dimly-lighted dawn of the history of humanity, but much more truly its full mid-day.<sup>2</sup>

2. This miraculous character of the life of Jesus Christ is made all the more prominent by the fact that by the side of His figure there stands out another, closely connected with His, mysterious like that, and one which made an impression upon the contemporary Jewish imagination perhaps even more vivid and more universal than did that of Jesus. We mean John the Baptist, of whom a Jewish historian of that age — Josephus — speaks to us in a very circumstantial manner, whilst he has only devoted to Jesus a single short paragraph, of which many critics even question (either wholly or in part) the authenticity. The appearance of John the Baptist, by its similarity to that of the ancient prophets, and the sombre and threatening character of his preaching, produced an immense sensation in the heart of the Jewish people. His disciples spread

<sup>1</sup> See the reception given to the preaching of the resurrection in St. Paul's sermon at Athens, Acts xvii. 32.

<sup>2</sup> See, on the miracles of Jesus Christ, the lecture specially treating of that subject.

themselves in all directions; even in the time of St. Paul we hear of some of them in Asia Minor.<sup>1</sup> All the people were ready to take him for the Messiah;<sup>2</sup> and his adherents are still found in our day existing in the East, as a distinct religious community, very hostile to Christianity. And yet neither his disciples, nor the Jewish people, nor Josephus, ever attributed a single miracle to him. We find the inhabitants of Peræa, struck with this difference between John and Jesus Christ, making this remark in our Gospels: "John did no miracle; but all things that John spake of this man (Jesus) were true."<sup>3</sup> John the Baptist himself never put in any claim to the power of working miracles; while Jesus, on the other hand, professes it, and attributes it to Himself continually.

If the Jewish Rabbis of after-times are led to mention this marvellous personage, and are unable to deny His miracles, they are driven to account for them by His use of certain talismans, which they say He brought from Egypt . . .; but it does not occur to them to make any such assertion respecting John the Baptist. Could this be so if the records of the miracles in the life of Jesus were nothing but the product of the over-excited imagination of the people? If, as is asserted, that age had a bias towards crowning great men with the *aureole* of the supernatural, why should this superstitious tendency have concentrated itself upon Jesus, and Jesus only? There must surely have been something in His life which gave an opening for so doing. And let no one say

<sup>1</sup> Acts xix. 1 *et seq.*    <sup>2</sup> St. Luke iii. 15.    <sup>3</sup> St. John x. 41.



that it was only in passing over to the soil of paganism that the life of Jesus received the legendary accretions. St. Matthew's Gospel is purely Jewish in its sources, and it contains quite as many miracles as the others. Neither let anyone say that Jesus may well have had the power of effecting wonderful works of healing by the natural influence exerted by an elevated soul and powerful will over the nerves of the sick. The miracles worked upon Nature, such as the stilling of the tempest and the multiplication of the loaves, are in all respects as well attested as the miracles of healing. Our four Gospels record them unanimously and with the same words, characteristic of Jesus, which stamp with so undeniable an impress of reality the miracles of healing.

This contrast which exists between the life of Jesus and that of John the Baptist, may equally be discerned between that life and the character of the whole age to which it belongs. The four centuries which preceded the advent of Jesus are, according to the Jewish historians themselves, devoid of all Divine manifestations; they form an epoch absolutely without prophets or miracles. And it is upon this commonplace and prosaic background that history suddenly pictures the radiant form of Jesus. To the profound silence of Heaven there succeeds the most holy revelation; and to its apparent inactivity the richest development of all its benedictions and of all its powers. If it is true that there is no such thing as an effect without a cause, it is clear enough that something exceptional must have signalized the arrival of this personality into the world.

3. The contrast which we have just indicated between the person and the age of Jesus Christ leads us to remark a third point: it is that of the unequal apportionment of the miraculous events through the sacred history. It is the ordinary idea, that the miracles are uniformly distributed over the whole field of that history. But this is a mistake. You may perhaps be surprised when you hear the assertion made, and you will hardly believe it, but you may verify its truth for yourselves:—from the creation of the world up to the time of Moses—that is to say, during the first twenty-five centuries of the history of mankind—there is no mention of a single miracle, properly so called,—of a single instance of a modification introduced into a natural object by a supernatural cause; for I could not attribute that character to the disappearance of Enoch<sup>1</sup> or to the death of Lot's wife; secondary causes are suggested in the latter case by the history itself. The appearances of the Eternal to the patriarchs are not signalized by any prodigy. The first miracles, properly so called, are those which accompany the call of Moses. It was at that time that God, who had till then only revealed Himself as *Elohim*, — the invisible power which is above Nature, — glorified Himself in the sight of His servant and of His people, as *Jehovah*, the absolute Being, the absolute Lord of all creatures.

Suppose the records of miracles in Scripture were the product of the imagination of the first ages, still plunged in infancy, how are we to account for these

<sup>1</sup> The record says simply, "*He was not*," without defining the cause of that disappearance further than by the words, "God took him."

2500 first years of the history of the world being completely void of miraculous events? Is it not precisely that time, which corresponds to the mythological age of the pagan nations, that ancient legends ought to figure to us full of the marvellous?

After the Divine Power had, in the days of Moses and of his successor Joshua, displayed itself in Nature, the age of the Judges presents to us the spectacle of a falling off in this kind of manifestation. We do not find during this period more than a few miracles; and the age of Saul, of David, and of Solomon, in which it ends, is nearly, if not entirely, without them. And yet this is the culminating point of Jewish history, its period of splendour. If there is any age which should serve for a canvas on which should be worked the embroidery of miracle, it is, without doubt, that of the brilliant reigns of David and of Solomon.

Will anyone say that was an epoch too much under the light of history; that the age of fables had passed away, and that of plain prose had begun for Israel? So be it. But I come down two centuries later, and here I find a new period of miracles not less rich than the first—that of Elijah and Elisha. It is the time when the ravens bring flesh to the prophet, when the oil is reproduced in the widow's cruse, when a dead child is restored to life by the embrace of the man of God, when the fire falls at his call upon Carmel from the midst of a blue sky. And yet, with the epoch of David we were to have passed from the reign of fable to that of history!

Will anyone object that these prodigies belong to the history of the ten tribes, upon which we perhaps have not such secure information as upon the kingdom of Judah? I will accept the statement,—let us come back, then, to Jerusalem. A whole century has elapsed; we have come to the time of Hezekiah, to the age of Sennacherib and of Shalmanezar, to a time so completely historic, that by the help of modern discoveries we are perhaps better acquainted with these kings than with many personages of our own day; and here we find ourselves face to face with the most prodigious, the most inconceivable of all miracles, the retrograde movement of the shadow on the dial of Hezekiah! It is the last, or rather the only, miracle in the whole period of the kings of Judah.

The catastrophe of the ruin of Jerusalem takes place; the captivity, which had been foretold, becomes an actual fact. When it draws near to its conclusion, and the return is being prepared, the miracle-working power breaks forth for a last time in the person of Daniel, to disappear then finally till the time of the advent of Him whose whole Person is, according to the name given to Him beforehand by Isaiah, Miracle.<sup>1</sup>

So, then, we have indicated four prominent epochs of development of supernatural forces: the age of Moses and of Joshua, that of Elijah and Elisha, that of Daniel, that of Jesus and His apostles. And in the intervals between these we find either a few isolated miracles, few and far between, or else a

<sup>1</sup> Wonderful.—Tr.

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complete absence of the marvellous. We ask, in presence of these facts: Would the miracles be distributed in this way, if they were but the product of legend? Would they not have been sprinkled over the whole field of this history indiscriminately? Would they not occur in swarms, above all, in the ages of antiquity, and diminish gradually, and at last disappear, in proportion as we enter further into historic times?

4. But the feature which indicates perhaps in the most striking manner the perfect truthfulness of the miraculous stories contained in our sacred books, is the fact that these exceptional events stand for the most part in close relation with the sins of those who are either their instruments or their objects. It is the murmuring, and the obstinate rebellions of the people against the Eternal, and against Moses His servant, which give occasion to the greater part of the miracles of the wilderness, and especially to that humiliating and terrible plague of the fiery serpents, of which the removal was effected by the miraculous agency of the brazen serpent. Would the historian have invented this conduct on the part of the people, in order to make it the occasion of the miracle which was to follow? And if he had done so, would the people have accepted this calumny in contradiction with notorious facts, for the pleasure of adding one more miracle to his history? It is, then, impossible to believe that this story is only a myth sprung out of the national consciousness, or out of the imagination of some impostor.

The ministry of Moses, moreover, begins with an

act of unbelief. He refuses the call which God addresses to him in the wilderness, and, holding obstinately to his belief in his own want of power, he says, "Send him whom Thou wilt send." And it is in connection with this culpable act of resistance to the divine will that the two miracles occur of the rod turned into a serpent, and of the hand first smitten with and then cured of leprosy, which formed the starting-point of his ministry. But not even these miracles were sufficient to overcome the resistance of Moses; he persists in his discouragement, till at last the sacred history says, "And the anger of the Eternal was kindled against Moses!" And we are asked to believe that these two miracles were invented, either by Moses himself, or by one of his admirers, afterwards, with the view of bringing into notice—what? The unconquerable unbelief and obstinacy of Moses!

One miraculous fact only is recorded in the reign of David: the appearance of the Destroying Angel in the threshing-floor of Araunah, to smite Israel with a plague which destroys thousands of persons in the course of a few days. And for what purpose? To punish one of David's great sins, into which he had been led by pride.

The miracle by which Elijah is fed on his entrance into the wilderness, and the magnificent vision which is granted him on Horeb, are occasioned by a want of faith on his part, in his flight from Jezebel—an act of his which is spoken of in the history in these terms: "And he fled, giving way to the promptings of his own heart." It is in consequence of this act

of weakness on the part of the prophet that discouragement seizes him, and he cries, "Take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers,"—and God, moved with compassion to His servant, draws near to him, and comforts him by a new revelation of Himself. And we are to think that this flaw in the character of the most illustrious of the prophets was invented in order to bring in the miracles which are connected with it in the history!

Certainly, if these things are so, we shall have to admit that the Jewish character, or that of the writers of that nation, was of a strange nature. For the greater glory of God they draw up a fictitious history which is all to their shame. Where shall we find an analogous case in ancient or modern history?

5. Notwithstanding these reasons, we must allow that if the miracles in the history of Israel were only isolated facts, the doubts which had for a moment been overcome could not fail soon to reappear. If these extraordinary facts are to gain full credence from us, they must be rested upon a wide basis, durable and supernatural as themselves. The whole history of Israel must have an exceptional character. When I have got sight of the whole chain, I shall be able to believe that what appear to be grey mountain-tops on the horizon are so indeed, and not clouds. This postulate is legitimate, and does not seem to me difficult to meet.

An extraordinary revelation certainly underlies the whole Israelitish history. This idea of the God who is altogether distinct from the world, the source and

the absolute Master of everything that exists, and of His own being, which finds expression in this definition, "I am that I am," or, "that I will to be,"<sup>1</sup> must be the product of a supernatural communication,—of a direct contact between the Spirit of God and the spirit of Moses, not only because it entirely transcends everything to which the human consciousness could raise itself by its own power, but because he who cast this verity into the world, and who made it the foundation of the life of his nation, tells us that he received it directly from God; and the holiness of his character does not permit us to doubt the truth of his testimony.

Under the influence of this ray of light which fell from on high, Israel, notwithstanding its propensity towards idolatry, which was common to it with all other nations, took up an exceptional position in the history of the world; it became the vehicle of the religious progress which was to take place; and sustained in this work, in itself contrary to its nature, by a higher hand, it arrived in its entirety, and as a nation, at the firmest monotheistic belief.

This was its salvation. Many Oriental nations have, like it, been doomed to an enforced emigration into a foreign land. That was the fate of all the little nations which became the prey of those kings of the great monarchies of the earth, who are compared by Israelitish prophecy to wild beasts. But among all these nations it was not given to anyone to tread once more the soil of their native land. Israel, on the other hand, the bearer of the divine

<sup>1</sup> Hirsch, *Der Pentateuch*, 2ter Theil, Exodus, p. 27.



revelation, of which it is the apostle, receives the exceptional permission to return into its own country, after sixty years of captivity, and to reconstitute itself into an organized nation. Cyrus, the conqueror of Babylon, which had swallowed up Israel, compels this monster to cast up upon the sands of the sea-shore this prophet-nation, this new Jonah. No one can tell what passed in the mind of the young conqueror, or what induced him to restore to Israel its native land and its altars. But such was the fact—history attests it. Jerusalem rose out of her ruined state, which had seemed eternal. To Israel, this time of exile, which appeared destined to be a deadly blow to its national existence, proved as a crucible wherein it might complete the work of its purification. It returned to its mountain-home radically cured of that tendency to idolatry against which God had had to contend ever since the time of its call in Abraham—that is, for a period of 1500 years.

An exceptional illumination from on high, an exceptional restoration,—is that the whole of its privileges? No; to these we must add an exceptional spirit of aspiration in the national mind. The other nations are wrapped up in the present; Israel lives in the future,—a fixed idea, to which it is as it were suspended, attracts and draws it upwards incessantly. A higher religion, a new covenant, is one day to take the place of the present religion, the covenant of Sinai.<sup>1</sup> A second David, a descendant of the first, but greater than he, as the master is

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xxxi. 31 *et seq.*

greater than the servant, is one day to come forth from Sion to effect the conquest of the world at the head of a willing people, an army of priests arrayed in their priestly garments.<sup>1</sup> He will, it is true, be struck dead, smitten for the transgressions of mankind. But after He has offered up His life, interceding for the transgressors, it will be restored to Him, and the kingdom of God will prosper in His hands.<sup>2</sup> Thus did a religion, one only in the world's history, proclaim itself—and that at the time of its glory—defective and insufficient, and by the mouth of its prophets announced one superior to itself, pointing its disciples to that higher era wherein alone the ideal state shall be reached. If the self-abnegation of John the Baptist, voluntarily giving the precedence to Him whom he had announced as coming after him, is a fact not explicable psychologically, that of the Jewish religion in its entirety, inviting Israel to hope for something still better than itself, is equally inexplicable by the influence of any merely natural powers of religion over man.

Our progress in this history is from one surprise to another; one might have thought that this Jewish religion, while announcing that which was to succeed it, would have pictured the chosen people as throwing itself with a whole heart and with eagerness into this religion of the future. Far from it! Israel maintains to the last its character as "the stiff-necked people." Its instinctive desires after earthly greatness will come into collision with the humility of Him in whom this great future will be realized.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cx. 1-3.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. liii.

Only a small number will submit themselves to Him. A judicial blindness will prevent Israel from recognising Him, and, after "seventy weeks" of years of duration of the restored nation, the temple will be once more destroyed, and the land of Canaan smitten as by an interdict.—Such are the announcements of the prophets.<sup>1</sup> Is it so that any nation, speaking under the impulses of its own merely natural provisions, has ever pictured its future?

And yet, finally,—and this is the greatest marvel,—this singular foretold future is realized. After 400 years of waiting, the germ committed to the soil by the hands of the prophets at last shows itself above ground. A Being makes His appearance, who in an exceptional life realizes that ideal of holiness which had floated before the minds of the prophets. Rejected by His nation, He dies, and after death prolongs His days; and behold, He is seen going forth to the conquest of the world at the head of His redeemed, arrayed in a holiness like to His own.—This is surely the retinue of the priestly King, the army of the "willing people," foretold by the Psalmist. And while Jerusalem falls into ruins, the kingdom of God expands under the sceptre of Jesus, and the knowledge of the living God, of the God of Love, fills the earth, "as the waters cover the sea." And we are to be told that this unique result is not the legitimate fruit of this unique tree! that we are to see in this termination, compared with this beginning, no more than an accidental coincidence, a happy chance!

<sup>1</sup> Isa. vi. 13, liii. 1, lxxv. 2; Dan. ix. 26; Mal. iv. 6.

No; the impartial historian must confess that the supernatural flows in full stream through this history, from its beginning, through all its phases, to its termination. Note the exceptional call of Abraham; the exceptional monotheism of the nation sprung from him; the exceptional aspiration towards a sublime future; the exceptional restoration of the nation, after the first great catastrophe; the appearance of an exceptional personage; the exceptional terrible-ness of the fall of Jerusalem; and, finally, the exceptional preservation, up to our own day, of this people dispersed amongst the nations, and manifestly reserved for some further great destiny;—there occur surely in this history so many exceptional circumstances, that it must itself constitute a great exception in the history of the world. The true name of this people is that of its Messiah—*Wonderful*. Here we have that permanent foundation for which we were in search, and in accordance with which all the single miracles of its history become natural.

Before leaving this subject of the reality of the supernatural in history, I wish to offer a remark with reference to an idea sometimes thrown out by our rationalistic writers, namely, that the Bible cannot be a witness in favour of miracles, because it does not itself contain the idea of Nature and its admirable system of laws. Were this reproach cast upon the pagan mythologies—the Theogony of Hesiod, for instance—I could understand it. Were the deities of Olympus, or of Hades, the Titans, the Naiads, etc., substituted for the forces of Nature, then indeed the system of Nature would be suppressed to make room

for the reign of changeable, personal caprice. But to bring such a charge against the Bible implies a levity of assertion not easy to account for. Is it not the burthen of the story of the creation, that God made each plant and each animal "*after its kind*," in such a way that each kind contained its seed in itself? Have we not here the idea of a law, and that of the highest order? For what constitutes the basis of the laws of Nature, if not the distinctness and the permanence of species? And must not science revert in our day on this point to the principles of the first chapter of Genesis? Similarly, when God says after the Deluge, "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, day and night, shall not cease," is that, let us ask, the motto of a mythological history? Is not homage done in these words to the idea of that submission to order to which the march of natural phenomena is subjected? If the Deluge is attributed to the agency of God, yet is not reference at the same time made to its natural causes—to "*the windows of heaven, the fountains of the great deep*,"—in other words, to the floods of rain and the rising of the water of the sea, which produced this grand phenomenon? The Bible so completely recognises the reign of law in Nature, that miracle does not, according to the Biblical idea, deserve to be so called except on account of the exceptional contrast which it presents to the reign of law; since it is what it claims to be,—a sign of Divine power,—only as it is an exceptional manifestation, overruling the law of Nature.

III. What is the object for which God intervenes in this way in the history of the world, acting upon the spirit of man by His Spirit, and upon Nature by His almighty will?

There is a work of God going on in the world; a work of education and of salvation, of which Nature is the instrument and man the object, and in which man himself is to co-operate. On the one hand, we have to be led up to the highest point of our destined progress, and on the other hand, and at the same time, to be drawn out of the abyss into which we fell at the first step we took in that progress. The whole world is the subject of this working of God; Israel is the instrument called to effect it. The starting-point of this education of man is the knowledge of the living and free God.

It is upon this revelation of the only true God that His access to the heart of man rests. "Hallowed be Thy name," Jesus prayed, before "Thy kingdom come."

Man might well, by the religious study of Nature and of himself, have arrived at the idea of this infinite and free God. But in order for this, it would have been necessary that his heart and his intellect should not be under the dominion of covetousness and selfishness. Man as he is, instead of making of Nature a ladder by which to climb up to God, has made it a wall of separation between his benefactor and himself. In proportion as he learns to value his blessings and to be absorbed in their enjoyment, he becomes indifferent to the Giver of them, and even to be disturbed at the thought of

Him. It is this state of things which compels God, at the moment at which He is about to take a step towards the establishment of His kingdom here below by setting up Israel as a nation, to reveal Himself in a completely new way—by miracle. Miracle reveals to man, when the ordinary course of Nature no longer speaks to him loud enough of the Almighty Creator, and when he is tempted to identify Him with Nature itself, the God whose will and power are not bound to, or limited by, any one condition of things. It is not the miraculous event only, it is the order of Nature itself, of which the divinity is thus manifested to the eyes of the beholders; for miracle proves not only that God is the maker of the world, but also that He is its preserver and sustainer, since that maintenance depends from moment to moment upon His free will. As says the eminent Jewish commentator whom we have already cited, "To reveal the divine origin of the order of Nature, is the object of miracle."<sup>1</sup> Miracle is the reappearance of the divine will as such, in the midst of a natural world of which the regularity threatened to hide from view this supreme source of all being.

That is the reason why miracles begin here below with the ministry of Moses. They are, as it were, the illustration of that new revelation of which Moses is to be the bearer, "I AM THAT I AM. Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."<sup>2</sup> "I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob by the name of God Almighty,

<sup>1</sup> Hirsch, *ubi supra*, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Ex. iii. 14.

but by My name of Jehovah was I not known to them.”<sup>1</sup> “Jehovah” signifies He who *is*, or rather who *will be*, the Being who alone *is*, who holds all being in His possession, and who will dispose of it in the future as He does in the present. He is not only *El-Schaddai*, the Almighty God, the most powerful of beings; He is, speaking absolutely, *the Being*; all that we call being apart from Him is nothingness, and only participates in existence so far as He deigns to bestow upon it that participation. This sublime conception, after it was revealed, as we have just seen, to Moses in words, God makes clear to him by a fact, and that fact is miracle. What is the meaning of this rod turned into a serpent, this serpent turned into a rod, unless it be that no *being* exists *over against* God, that all beings are themselves the creations of His will, and have no existence save that which He is pleased to lend them; that every creature is only that which He who alone truly *is*, is pleased to make it?

Or what, again, is the meaning of the hand of Moses first smitten with leprosy, and then cured of it? The same truth, but with special application to human nature, which God is able at will to destroy or to save. There are words which are acts; there are acts which are words. The miracles are a course of preaching. They witness to the free and living God. They exhibit monotheism in action. The miracles of Joshua, of Elias and Elisha, have no other significance. They in a manner reinstall Jehovah in the Israelitish consciousness. That was

<sup>1</sup> Ex. vi. 3.



indispensable in face of the Canaanitish idolatry, which was but Nature deified, as well as in face of that of the ten tribes, which had taken the place, among this people, of the worship of Jehovah. Where ears can hear no longer, eyes must see—it is to the deaf that God speaks by miracle. And it was by that means that Israel itself was preserved as a monotheistic people.

And when the hour of the supreme revelation has struck, when God the Creator purposes to make Himself completely known, to reveal Himself as a Father, and to add to His character as the absolute Being, that of the infinitely good Being, then, too, it is by miracle that He speaks to this deaf and stiff-necked people. From the hands of Him who is Himself the living gift of the divine love, there falls a shower of miracles of beneficence and deliverance; and the revelation is completed. The name of the Father is hallowed on the earth; it only remains for each individual man to hallow it for himself, by reproducing it living in his own person. This final work is the miracle of the Holy Spirit; it begins with the consummation in Jesus of the historic work inaugurated by Moses. Where the external revelation closes, there the regeneration, the internal and personal work, begins.

We are asked why, if miracles were worked in ancient times, they are not worked now. The answer is to be drawn from the fact we have just been indicating. The miracles belong to the historic work, to the development of the revelation; they are *signs*, as Scripture speaks. Now, in Jesus the development

of revelation has reached its term; revelation is but the commentary upon redemption; and when once the work of redemption is consummated, revelation has but one task left to do—to give the interpretation of its last acts; it then ceases, and miracles cease also. Redemption, Revelation, Miracle—these are facts which are correlative and contemporaneous.

Again, we are asked what view we take of the miracles of the Middle Ages, and by what characteristic we claim to distinguish between true and false miracles. Since the Day of Pentecost, the real miracles are the spiritual ones; they are the internal workings of the Spirit of God, of which the object is to enlighten us on the divine revelations, to apply to us the salvation that is in Jesus Christ, and to associate us with His holiness. In fact, one consequence of the close connection of soul and body is, that when the spirit of man is in this way vivified by the power of God, it can sometimes exert upon the body which is its organ, and through it upon other bodies, an influence which is marvellous. This kind of miracle is therefore possible in every age of the Church's history; it was possible in the Middle Ages, and it is so still. That which would seem to be no longer possible, is the miraculous action of the divine power upon external nature. The age of such miracles seems to have closed with the work of revelation, of which they were but the auxiliaries.

It is, then, only miracles of one sort which it is still open to us to desire and to pray for. They are the miracles which belong to the spiritual sphere. "When the Comforter is come," said Jesus, "He will

glorify Me in you ; He will take of Mine and show it unto you." That is the miracle which is being worked in the earth, in thousands of hearts since Pentecost ; it is *our* miracle, if I may so express myself, which comprehends within itself thousands of special instances,—the whole work done by the Spirit, with a view to the revelation and application to each individual soul of Jesus, His work, His words, His sufferings, His glory.

I seem to myself, from the point of view which we have now reached, to see the history of mankind arranging itself in three successive stages,—that of Nature, that of history, that of the Church ; and it is when we understand the succession and interconnection of these three stages, that we catch sight of the true law of progress in humanity.

In the first place, in the work of the creation, God has man in view as the object at which He aims. This long and elaborate development, of which geology unfolds to us the picture, is but the mysterious embryonic evolution of man. The bowels of the earth contain the monuments of this divine *travailing in birth*. During myriads of ages, a succession of creatures, ever new, appeared upon the stage of this globe, and their buried remains only reveal themselves to us by slow degrees. The law which governs this procession of strange creatures is pointing from beginning to end towards man. The creatures become less and less strange ; as the process continues, they assume a character more and more distinctly human. When at last man appears, this process ceases ; the species of animals which are

already in existence continue to exist, but no new ones come into being. These facts are only to be explained by assuming that the object in view through the whole process from the beginning was man, and that this object has been reached. The first series of divine operations in Nature—that which was destined to produce man—is completed.

But no sooner has man appeared than a new object of pursuit, more remote, higher in its nature, reveals itself. The goal of all the preceding process of creation, the creature endowed with personal freedom, becomes the starting-point of a new one; the moral order superimposes itself upon the physical order. The free being is to become the holy being, and man created in the image of God is to realize completely that glorious likeness. From that moment there is no more progress, no more development, in the sphere of Nature. Like a wheel which revolves upon itself, she follows changelessly the cycle of her seasons and of her revolutions. Nature has the peculiarity of unfolding only to fold herself back again upon herself; she is not a spiral, she is a circle. The process of development has now passed over from Nature into history, from a blind life into one that is self-conscious and free. Nature is now only the soil upon which grows the tree of history; and the goal of history is the perfect man, the *God-man*.

In order to bring this about, God reveals Himself to man as a father to his child; and as soon as this development is interfered with by a criminal act which separates man from God, and would have plunged him, had he been left to himself, into in-

evitable ruin, the work of initiation, begun by God, transforms itself into a work of redemption. God no longer only reveals Himself; He works at saving; and His self-revelation is now but the commencement of that work of saving which He carries on with regard to man—a work of long duration in one sense, since it has continued through centuries, but which really is short when compared with the myriads of years occupied by the development of Nature up to man. The promise of the victory of the human race over Satan, on the threshold of Paradise, is its starting-point. The advent of Jesus Christ is its goal. It is to this second course of divine action, of which history is the theatre, that the miracles of which we have been speaking belong. In all the decisive moments of this great course, they are its auxiliaries. The miracles are like the pedal to the playing of the divine musician. God does not by these means correct His instrument, Nature; He makes it subservient in an exceptional manner to the superior needs of man.

This second phase of the progress of humanity reaches its goal in Jesus, who is, in relation to the historic development of humanity, that which the advent of man had been in relation to the development of Nature. As it was man whom God had in view during the creation and progressive development of Nature, so it was man, as we behold him in Jesus, whom He had in view during the creation and progressive development of man. The object up to which He was working was man made holy by freedom, and all-powerful by free obedience.

But this one Man is unique; He is but one, and

the existence of such a *One* is not the highest aim of a God of love. As it is true that Jesus is the perfect man, the ideal of man realized, so it is also true that the purpose of God is not attained in *one* Jesus; He desires many thousands of such. He desires as many as there are men. He desires a *Jesus-like humanity*—the reproduction of this perfect and glorious type in each believer, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Such is the high ulterior aim which comes into view, after the advent upon the earth of that One who cannot be surpassed. Each member of the Church, the spiritual body of Christ, ought to become like Him, in order that at last the day may arrive when He will appear but as the first-born among many brethren.<sup>1</sup> The coming into being of such a humanity begins at Pentecost. Its creation is a continuous miracle, a work of God, though implying the free self-oblation of man; a work as radical as is the evil which has to be destroyed in us; as profound as is the heart of man which has to be regenerated; as high as is that perfection of Jesus which has to be reached; as rich as is the love of Jesus which has to be unfolded! But this continuous miracle of the sanctification of humanity is a work altogether internal and individual. That which has to be effected is the realization in each individual of the type of character which was realized as a historical fact in the person of Jesus Christ. The scene, then, of this new series of miracles is the soul of man, not external Nature. Nevertheless, this series of miracles surpasses those of the sacred history, as much as

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 29.

these surpassed those of the creation. When Jesus said to His apostles, "You will work greater works than these (*i.e.*, than these external miracles which I am now working), because I go to My Father (and will send you the Spirit from the Eternal Throne)," <sup>1</sup> He clearly gave us to understand by this declaration that the smallest operation of the Holy Spirit, accomplished in us or by us, is, in the judgment of Heaven, a greater work than all the miracles worked in the world of sense.

Such is the third series of miracles ; it occupies the whole present economy ; it is destined to culminate in the complete incarnation of Jesus in His Church. When the heavenly Christ reappears completely in His body on earth, then His visible return will close that age of spiritual miracles which His first advent inaugurated. In this perfect state of things, progress will have reached its term, for unlimited progress is not God's idea ; rather it is one which destroys itself. In a sphere of being in which there is no such thing as an end, there may be movement, but there is no progress.

To create man, to realize the true man, to call into being the perfect man—such is the design, such are the principal steps, of the divine scheme. Each of these phases is marked by a series of miracles distinct from the others in their nature, and loftier in character as the work is which they accomplish. It is ours now to discover and to claim for ourselves those which are proper to the age in which we find ourselves placed, that so we may be fitted to enter into the perfect state in which it is to culminate.

<sup>1</sup> St. John xiv. 12, 13.

V

THE PERFECT HOLINESS OF  
JESUS CHRIST





## V

### *THE PERFECT HOLINESS OF JESUS CHRIST*

**T**HE Supernatural in its highest form is not the miraculous, it is holiness. In the miraculous we see Omnipotence breaking forth to act upon the material world in the interests of the moral order. But holiness is morality itself in its sublimest manifestation.

What is goodness? It has recently been said, with a precision which leaves nothing to be desired, "Goodness is not an entity—a thing. It is a law determining the relations between things — relations which have to be realized by free wills."<sup>1</sup>

Perfect good is therefore the realization, at once normal and free, of the right relations to one another of all beings; each being occupying, by virtue of this relation, that place in the great whole, and playing that part in it, which befits it.

Now, just as in a human family there is one central relation on which all the rest depend,—that of the father to all the members of this little whole,—so is there in the universe one supreme position which is the support of all the rest, and which, in the interest of all beings, must be above all others

<sup>1</sup> Ernest Naville, *Le Problème du Mal*, p. 17.

preserved intact—that of God. And just here, in the general sphere of good, is the special domain of holiness.

Holiness in God Himself is His fixed determination to maintain intact the order which ought to reign among all beings that exist, and to bring them to realize that relation to each other which ought to bind them together in a great unity; and consequently to preserve above all intact, and in its proper dignity, His own position relatively to free beings. The holiness of God thus understood, comprehends two things: the impartation of all the wealth of His own divine life to each free being who is willing to acknowledge His sovereignty, and who sincerely acquiesces in it; and the withholding or the withdrawal of that perfect life from every being who either attacks or denies that sovereignty, and who seeks to shake off that bond of dependence by which he ought to be bound to God.

Holiness in the creature is its own voluntary acquiescence in the supremacy of God. The man who with all the powers of his nature does homage to God as the supreme, the absolute Being, the only One who veritably is; the man who in His presence voluntarily prostrates himself in the sense of his own nothingness, and seeks to draw all his fellow-creatures into the same voluntary self-annihilation, in so doing puts on the character of holiness.

This holiness comprehends in him, as it does in God, love and righteousness; love by which he rejoices in recognising God and all beings who surround God as placed where they are by Him—

he loves them and wills their existence, because he loves and wills the existence of God, and, at the same time, of all that God wills and loves; and righteousness, by which he respects and, as much as in him lies, causes others to respect God, and the sphere assigned by God to each being. Such is holiness as it exists in God and in man; in God it is His own inflexible self-assertion; in man it is his inflexible assertion of God.

This supreme form of virtue was wanting to the heathen. The Divine Being was not so understood by them as to occupy so high a place in their consciousness. Their gods were not worthy to stand in such a relation to man. In Israel there existed a presentiment and imperfect realization of holiness. For Jehovah was recognised among them as the Being of beings, and man was able to annihilate himself in humility before Him. But it never was realized but in Jesus Christ, and it is indeed only from His person and life that we gather our ideal of holiness. It is in Jesus that human nature sees how man can assert God, and all that God asserts, not only humbly, but joyously and filially, with all the powers of his being, and even to the complete sacrifice of himself.

In Christ, man, by the voluntary annihilation and consecration of himself, became a medium so transparent that the glory of God could shine forth in it to perfection. It is in this way that the life of Christ was the advent of the kingdom of God.

But a question presents itself,—Did this self-consecration of Himself to God by Jesus Christ really

take place perfectly? Did no alloy of human imperfection, sin, egoism, evil desires, pride, impatience, mingle with it? Did it continue perfect through every moment of His life, from the cradle to the grave? Was the body of Jesus always kept completely subject to His soul? and His soul, with its various faculties, always completely subject to the spirit—that higher faculty through which man holds fellowship with God, and voluntarily subordinates himself to Him?—This is the question we have now to consider; it is fundamental for Christianity. If the answer is in the negative, Christ differs from us only in degree, and we are called to live *like*, not *by* Him. If in the affirmative, His condition differs specifically from ours; and in order that we may be able to be like Him, we must first be *in* Him, and derive our life *from* Him.

Three objections are raised against this fundamental point of the Christian faith:—

I. The perfect holiness of Christ is incapable of proof, because neither we, nor any of those who lived with Him, have been able to read His heart deeply enough to know if everything in it was always in perfect accordance with the law of right. The adversaries of our faith even cite some words and some acts in the life of Jesus, from which they think they can infer that He, like others, was not free from sin.

II. Granting that the perfect holiness of Christ could by some means be proved, it is objected that a state of being so sublime would be something superhuman, and that this perfect Jesus would no longer be a true man.

III. Such a holiness, specifically different from ours, were it real, would be unprofitable to us, since it could be no model for us to copy, being at a height inaccessible to our weakness.

In view of these objections, my task will be to inquire with you—

I. Whether the perfect holiness of Jesus Christ cannot be in our day perfectly *proved*.

II. Whether, perfect as it is, it does not still remain, none the less, a *human* holiness.

III. Whether, as such, it is not still, nevertheless, accessible to each of us.

I. Are we qualified, asks M. Pécaut, to pronounce upon the perfection of one of our fellow-creatures, when we do not know all the particulars of his life and cannot see to the bottom of his heart? . . . The difficulty becomes greater when the object of our examination is a historic personage separated from us by eighteen centuries.<sup>1</sup> M. Pécaut goes further; he affirms that we are able to establish, even in the small portion of His life which is known to us, the existence of real moral imperfections. For instance, at the age of twelve years, He pleads as an excuse for His having allowed His parents to leave Jerusalem alone, that He must be about His Father's business, which implies some want of obedience to His parents. At thirty years old He allows Himself to be baptized by John with the baptism of repentance, which sufficiently proves that He did not feel Himself completely free from the malady of sin under

<sup>1</sup> *Le Christ et la Conscience*, p. 237.

which we all suffer. Soon after, He drives the buyers and sellers out of the Temple with a scourge of small cords,—which, it is asserted, is evidence of a certain degree of passion. He refuses, on one occasion, to one of His disciples, permission to go and bury his father, saying to him, “Let the dead bury their dead.” Is not this a want of recognition of the sacred bonds of the family? When He allowed the Gadarene devils to precipitate the herd of swine into the sea, did He not dispose of the property of another? Is there not harshness in the way in which He answers the woman of Canaan, when He calls her a dog compared with the Jews, whom He classes with the children of the house? At Gethsemane it is difficult not to see in His words a certain deficiency of submissiveness with regard to the sufferings that await Him. In His cry, “My God, My God,” on the Cross, is there not something like a failure of faith? Did not He Himself answer the young man who called to Him, “*Good Master*”; “Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but One, that is God”?—a saying which implies that He did not feel Himself to be perfect.

We shall begin by examining these particular facts, before proceeding to the general question.

When Jesus found Himself for the first time in Jerusalem at the age of twelve years, it was easy for Him to become separated, by no fault of His own, from His parents;—for the children formed a sort of troop or choir by themselves, and did not always stay with their parents. Jesus, replying to His mother, who had just found Him again, did not say to her,

“I stayed here because I must be about My Father’s business,” but, “How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about My Father’s business?” or, more literally, “in My Father’s house?” This was His reply to this saying of Mary’s, “Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.” Jesus meant, then, “You would not have sought Me so long and with so much anxiety, you would have come straight hither, had you remembered that a child should be found in his father’s house.” One must not consider the saying of Jesus apart from that of His mother.

The baptism of Jesus was so far from a confession of sinfulness on His part, that immediately after St. John the Baptist had conversed with Him, as he was in the habit of doing with all those who came to Him for baptism,<sup>1</sup> John said to Him, “I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?” Was not this to say, clearly enough, that Jesus had at that very moment been manifested to him in all His holiness, and as worthy, on account of His own personal character, even as compared with him, to fulfil that office which he, John, only performed by virtue of a Divine commission, but of which he felt himself to be personally unworthy? And when, soon after the baptism of Jesus, the same John the Baptist cried, on seeing Him come to him, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,”<sup>2</sup> does he not then, too, bear witness to His

<sup>1</sup> “And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins,”  
St. Matt. iii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> St. John i. 29.



perfect personal holiness? How else could he think Him able to effect the purification of humanity? This salvation of the world is precisely the work to which He dedicates Himself by His baptism. In this solemn act He places in the hand of John, as God's messenger, the solemn engagement, not to purify Himself, but to purify the world, even at the cost of His death, of which that immersion in the water was the figure and the pledge.

Jesus in the Temple made a scourge of small cords; but, as the context shows, only to make use of it on the lower animals, not on human beings; He used it only as a symbol of His power and an emblem of judgment. Do, then, the objectors hold that He should have pushed the oxen out of the Temple courts with His hand? Jesus is so completely master of Himself, that in dealing with those who sold doves, instead of overturning their cages, He simply orders them to take them out of the sacred precincts. We cannot, as Keim remarks, find fault with this act, which might have been, and ought to have been, the inauguration of His reign, except by denying that holy anger is a divine attribute.<sup>1</sup>

There occur in human life decisive moments, in which the issues of eternity hang as it were on a thread. Such was that in which Jesus said to a certain man, "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." Jesus was then leaving Galilee never to return.<sup>2</sup> He saw plainly that for this man to hold back at that moment

<sup>1</sup> *Der geschichtliche Christus*, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke ix. 60 compared with ver. 51.

would be for him to perish. As one might say to a defender of his country, who, in a time of danger, should hesitate to go out against the enemy, "Run to the front at once;" so in the name of a cause higher even than that of patriotism,—that of the kingdom of God,—of salvation,—He calls upon this man to follow Him. When salvation is at stake, the saving of the soul must overrule "*convenience*."

By keeping herds of swine, the dwellers in the country to the east of the Lake of Gennesareth were adopting a way of living in flagrant contradiction with the law which forbade to Jews the eating of the flesh of those animals. The loss inflicted upon them was, therefore, only a just punishment of their disloyalty. Jesus appears here again in His character of Messiah, as Lord and Judge. If He has authority to send back the devils into the deep, so must He have authority to make use of that miracle of healing, for the purpose of reawakening, by a chastisement suited to the offence, the paralyzed conscience of a large part of the nation, whose salvation is committed to His care.

The harshness of Jesus to the woman of Canaan is but apparent. It hides, as so often do the refusals with which God meets our requests, the greatest love. This woman was by birth a pagan; and it would have been a direct infringement on the part of Jesus of the commission He had received from His Father to extend His ministry to pagans during His life on earth. It was not till after His death and resurrection that Jesus, no longer limited to His earthly nationality, was to give Himself to the whole world.

It was for that reason that from the first He made answer to this Canaanitish woman, when she prayed for a miraculous cure for her daughter: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." To heal was in His mind to preach. For His acts of healing were not with Him simple acts of mercy and charity. They always stood in the closest relation to the work of founding the kingdom of God. Now, Israel was that divinely prescribed sphere within which His ministry of preaching was to be confined.<sup>1</sup> But He soon found Himself forced to recognise in the faith of this woman a plant which the hand of His Father had planted. And then He determined to grant her prayer. Only, in order to make her understand the immense condescension of which she was the object, and in order that she might receive the gift of God with a gratitude as exceptional as the gift itself would be, He described to her in a word the true state of things. It was not, then, in order arbitrarily to humiliate her that He compared her to the dogs, but in order to make her feel that there was indeed matter for her astonishment and gratitude. God alters His course of action for her, a poor pagan woman!

Never was a profounder or holier expression of submission pronounced by the mouth of a man than that prayer in Gethsemane which scandalizes M. Pécaut: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me!" It is, in the first place, the simple and *naïve* expression of natural feeling. Was not Jesus truly man? Must not physical and moral pain have been

<sup>1</sup> St. John xii. 20 compared with vv. 24 and 32.

as repugnant to Him as it is to us? But such repugnance is not rebellion. It is simply the opposite of fanatical insensibility. Sin would begin from the moment in which the feeling of repugnance against this fearful suffering emancipated itself in the least degree from submission to the divine will, or in which the voice of Nature should allow itself to say, or to whisper,—not, “*I could wish,*” which is the cry of filial submission,—but, “*I will,*” which would be the cry of revolt.

But this limit Jesus did not cross. He, on the contrary, compelled His human nature, shuddering, as was permissible, at the work before Him, to submit itself to the yoke of obedience; and thus sets before us an example of submission the more complete in proportion as it is truly painful. The more Nature resists, the more is holiness manifested.

One saying of our Lord will probably occupy our thoughts often and through long periods in the future life, an expression which the angels, according to the words of St. Peter, desire to look into: “*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*” M. Pécaut sees in it a failure of faith. When we shall have explored to the bottom the mystery of atonement, of the Christ made a curse for us, we shall be able more fitly to judge of this point. Meantime, this “*why*” is rather a revelation of a consciousness which searches its depths in vain,—which cannot discover there the memory of any personal fault, which could afford a ground for so marvellous an abandonment. Such a “*why,*” asked in the midst of such a judgment, implies a conscience as pure as that of a little child.

Jesus refused to be called "good," and expressly reserved that title for God only. But when He used this language, Jesus was still in the midst of the battle of life; He had still before Him—and He knew it—the greatest of His trials. How should He have appropriated to Himself a title which, in its absolute sense, expressed for Him the goal which He had still to reach? The word "good" in its full meaning is not applicable to Him who has *not yet* sinned, but to Him who cannot sin. Now Jesus, according to the passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, was only *made perfect* by His last sufferings. It was at Gethsemane and at Golgotha that He learned *obedience* to perfection.<sup>1</sup> His holiness, therefore, full though it was of humility, saturated with the spirit of watchfulness, refused a title which it could not yet accept fully and securely.

It would be useless to carry further this discussion of matters of detail, which M. Keim well characterized when he said, "MM. Pécaut and Renan make painful efforts to extract from the records of this life some appearance of the stain of human imperfections."<sup>2</sup> No positive result can be reached by this road, because we are in part ignorant of the circumstances which, in each of these cases, may have influenced the conduct of Jesus. Let us ascend, then, to the general question. It may appear at first sight insoluble; and yet it seems to me that we possess, just on this point, some data sufficiently positive to enable us to reach a certain result.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ii. 10, vv. 8 and 9.

<sup>2</sup> Keim, *Der geschichtliche Christus*, p. 111.

Who could ever have believed that we should one day arrive at measuring the distances which separate the earth from the moon, the sun, the fixed stars, without leaving the surface of our globe? We have, however, succeeded in doing so. It has sufficed to measure upon the soil of the earth a base and two angles, and the problem has been solved with all the rigour of mathematical evidence. We shall be able to obtain a result no less certain with regard to the problem which is now before us, by analogous means. By the help of two undeniable facts and of a principle which connects them, we shall succeed in establishing the perfect holiness of Christ.

The first of the two facts to which we refer is the *relative* holiness of Jesus. Even those who dispute the perfection of Jesus, do not deny that He was one of the best, if not absolutely the best, among men.

We may here adduce the testimonies of the contemporaries of Jesus, which, though no doubt insufficient to demonstrate His absolute holiness, are nevertheless enough to prove His relative purity and goodness. The declaration of Pilate, His judge: "I find no fault in this man;" the confession of His companion on Calvary: "We, indeed, receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss;" the exclamation of the Roman centurion, who had presided at His execution: "Certainly this was a righteous man;" the cry of despair of the treacherous disciple who had delivered Him up: "I have betrayed the innocent blood,"—all these words tell us clearly enough the impression which

Jesus had produced upon all those who had been brought into contact with Him.

We know also the impression made by His life upon His nearest companions, who had observed Him closely during three years. One of them calls Him simply "Jesus Christ the righteous;"<sup>1</sup> another, "The Lamb without blemish and without spot."<sup>2</sup>

Their loyalty to Him, which they retain unto death, the place of Mediator and Advocate which they attribute to Him between the holy God and their sinful souls, prove that in their eyes Jesus was at anyrate the best of men, a man without sin. They had not seen all, it is true; their sight had not penetrated into the secret intents of the heart; but this impression, which was produced upon them all, does leave no room to doubt the eminent moral qualities of the life and the heart of Jesus. His teaching even, the ideal of purity which is therein set before us, the law of charity which it inculcates, are also a demonstration of the personal character of Him who can so speak. None but a good heart can reveal good in a manner so admirable. This is the acknowledgment made by Strauss himself, the greatest adversary whom Christianity has encountered in our time, and which he sets forth in the following words. After recalling that sublime passage in the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus portrays the heavenly Father making His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sending rain on the just and on the unjust, he adds: "This intuition of a God good to all, Jesus could only have drawn out of His

<sup>1</sup> 1 John ii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. i. 19.

own being; it could only have emanated out of that universal benevolence which was the fundamental characteristic of His own nature, and by which He felt Himself in perfect harmony with God. To be able, like God Himself, to stand firm against the irritation which is produced by wickedness, to conquer an enemy only by conferring benefits upon him, and to overcome evil only with good,—these were principles of conduct which He derived from the disposition of His own heart. He pictured God to Himself such as He felt Himself to be in the best moments of His life. The dominant feature of His character was the love which embraces all creatures, and He makes of that the fundamental characteristic of the Divine Essence.”<sup>1</sup>

The same author says again, in the chapter with which he concludes his work: “Every person of eminent moral character, every thinker who has occupied himself with the subject of the moral activity of man, has contributed, within a circle more or less extended, to purify, to complete, to develop, the moral ideal. Among the personages to whom humanity owes the perfecting of its moral consciousness, Jesus occupies, at anyrate, the foremost rank. He introduced into our ideal of good some features which were wanting to it up to His time. By the religious tendency which He imprinted upon morality, He endowed it with a higher consecration; and by incarnating goodness in His own person, He communicated to it a living warmth. In regard to everything which concerns the love of God and of

<sup>1</sup> *Leben Jesu*, 1864, pp. 206, 207.



our neighbour, to purity of heart and to the life of the individual man, nothing can be added to that moral intuition which has been bequeathed to us by Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

You see that if I call Jesus one of the best of men, I am not open to the suspicion of partiality. The avowals of Strauss, which I have just cited, could only have been extorted from him by the irresistible force of historic truth.

This is the fact which we take for our starting-point; for its truth is granted by the most decided adversary of the gospel: Jesus was eminently good. But between this quality and that of perfect holiness there remains still undoubtedly a vast chasm. This chasm—shall we be able to cross it? Yes, we shall; and it is a principle to which moral experience has led us, which will serve us for a bridge in so doing. The principle is this: The holier a man is, the clearer is his perception of moral evil. The nearer he lives to God, the more does he recognise, the more vividly does he become conscious of that which separates him from God.

At every step forward which we make in good, our inner tact becomes more sagacious in detecting sin, and our heart more honest in deploring it. You can, all of you, verify every moment this law of our moral life. A child accustomed to lying, lies without being any longer conscious of it, and without feeling any remorse for it; whereas, in the case of a truthful child, a first lie imprints itself like a red-hot iron on the conscience and leaves a deep scar. A girl who is light-minded, and thinks only of her pleasures, is

<sup>1</sup> *Ubi supra*, p. 625 *et seq.*

a disappointment to her mother all day long by her conduct and her talk; and yet she would be quite surprised if someone who observed her were to tell her at night that she had been blameworthy; whilst a conscientious girl who had fallen into some slight act of inconsiderateness, or a somewhat hasty word to one of her companions, which no one else would have even noticed, will shed bitter tears in solitude, and will not forgive herself.

The more honourable is a man of business, the deeper is the uneasiness he feels under the consciousness of the smallest act of injustice into which he may have been betrayed; whilst the most dishonourable speculations will not cost a sigh to the man who has begun to allow himself in transgressing without scruple the boundaries of common honesty. A man who has made progress in holy living will not fail to take notice of a sinful thought, or a movement of self-love, which may pass across his soul; whilst one at a lower stage of spiritual progress will live from morning to night under the inspiration of pride, of jealousy, or of some other criminal passion, without even a suspicion that so it is.

On a dress which was dirty to begin with, a thousand stains may escape notice; whilst on a perfectly clean one the slightest spot draws attention. Strauss has himself expressed this law in the following words: "In proportion as man makes progress towards moral perfection, the instinctive sense by which he detects in himself the slightest deviations from such perfection becomes more and more acute."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 195.

What would be the natural result of this principle with reference to the subject now before us? It would be, that if Jesus was one of the best, or actually the best of men, He must have perceived in Himself, more clearly than anyone else could, the smallest fault, if any fault really existed. In vain would sin have concealed itself within the deepest folds of His heart, in vain would it have been reduced in such a heart to the feeblest minimum; still that conscience, delicate and perspicacious above all others, would not have failed to have detected it as it passed, and that sensitive and filial heart would have suffered under that consciousness to a degree in which ours does not, even under the greatest sins.

Well,—and here we have the other fact upon which we rest our case: Do we find such a state of feeling revealed in the life and in the words of Jesus? Does He ever accuse Himself of the smallest sin? Do you ever see fall from His eyes one of those tears of penitence which have bedewed the cheeks of the greatest saints of the Old Testament times, and which to this day have not ceased to flow from the eyes of the most fervent Christians? Do you ever see Jesus smiting upon His breast, crying, like the publican, “God be merciful to me, a sinner”? I hear St. Paul exclaim with sorrow, “The good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do;—who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Can your ear catch a single note of this kind in the words of Jesus?

Socrates, the wisest and best of men outside the people of Israel, seeing his disciples deriding a physi-

ogonist who affirmed himself to have discovered in his face indications of all the vices, told him that he had in fact in his heart the germs of all these evil inclinations:—did ever any confession at all analogous to this break from the lips of Jesus Christ?<sup>1</sup>

No; the cries of a contrite heart are completely foreign to His being. Could it be that He was ignorant of that which His disciple, St. Paul, knew so well,—that sin exists in man chiefly in lust,—in the secret movements of the heart,—and that He allowed Himself to be caught in the snare of the Pharisees,—that of resting contented in a righteousness merely external? So far from it, that it is He who uttered those ineffaceable sentences, according to which a single impure glance is equivalent to a beginning of adultery; a movement of anger, a word of scorn, to a beginning of murder; a sacramental affirmation, added without necessity to the simple yes or no, to a first movement of perjury. Is it not He, again, who makes us recognise in an act of ostentation, of self-exaltation, an abomination in the sight of God, and in a lie an act of homage to the diabolic power? Or will anyone perhaps say that, understanding to the degree in which He did the goodness of God, He did not charge upon Himself as sins imperfections which He knew would be immediately forgiven Him? But if so, why did He blame others so severely for that which He blamed so little in Himself?

You see how Jesus judged of sin. He who unveiled it to the sight of the world in its most spiritual and subtile forms, and who, by so doing, has

<sup>1</sup> Cicero, *De Fato*, c. 5.

overturned once and for ever upon earth the throne of Pharisaism, never dreams of accusing Himself of it. He speaks of sin,—He is always speaking of it, —but never as of something which belonged to Himself. “If ye,” He says, “being evil;” not, “If *we*, being” so. Or again, “Ye”—not we—“must be born again.” Or consider this: “When ye pray, say, Our Father, which art in heaven, . . . forgive us our trespasses;” but never does He say, “Father, forgive Me,” or utter any exclamation at all similar to this. Further still, He once threw out this challenge to the Jews: “Which of you convinceth Me of sin?” No doubt the silence of His hearers under that question proves nothing; they might not know of the secret faults, the inward sins, of Him who thus challenged them. But the question itself asked by Jesus proves much—proves all. How, with a conscience so delicately sensitive as His, could He, if He had felt Himself burdened with the smallest sin, have, without hypocrisy, put to others a question which, as between Himself and God, He must have answered in a manner different from them, and triumphed nevertheless in their silence?

It is in the same sense 'of His own perfect sinlessness that, addressing the women of Jerusalem on His way to the Cross, He uttered this piercing saying, “If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” which can only mean, “If the judgment of God weighs so heavily upon the righteous, with what a weight will it not one day fall upon sinners!”

Not only does He feel Himself guiltless of any

reprehensible act, of any culpable or even idle word, of every sinful feeling, of every evil desire, which may defile the heart, of every wish opposed to the divine will; but He has the certain consciousness of never having neglected the good which He was called to do, or been guilty of the smallest omission in the fulfilment of the task which had been entrusted to Him by His Father. "I have glorified Thee on the earth," He says, at the moment at which all other mortals breathe a sigh to heaven in memory of a life which contains so many moments, if not sinfully misused, yet at least wasted,—“I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.” At these supreme moments His consolation is this: “My Father has not left Me alone, because I do always such things as please Him.”<sup>1</sup>

As He draws nigh to Gethsemane, there to meet that invisible foe of whose approach He is already conscious in Himself, He utters the words, “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me.” Such was the consciousness which Jesus had respecting Himself. This consciousness of Jesus is indeed, as says Keim, the only one without a scar in the whole history of mankind. In presence of this unprecedented moral fact, we have but two alternatives open to us: either Jesus is in reality a perfect saint, as His consciousness testifies, or else He is the blindest and most hardened of mankind, since His consciousness has not made Him aware of the most elementary fact of moral life,—the fact of which every child is already inwardly aware, even before

<sup>1</sup> St. John xvii. 4, xvi. 32, viii. 29.

his attention is drawn to it,—the presence of sin in him. Between these two alternatives we shall not, I imagine, find it difficult to decide.

Do not free-thinkers themselves recognise in Jesus one of the most moral men whom the earth has produced? They themselves, therefore, absolutely exclude the second alternative, and in conformity with those laws of logic to which free thought, free though it be, holds itself bound to submit, they have no choice but to grant to us the first alternative, and to say with us, the morally miraculous is here before us,—Jesus was absolutely holy.

The result to which we are led by these testimonies of the consciousness of Christ is altogether in harmony with the nature of the mission with which He claims to be charged to the human race. He calls Himself the physician of humanity, sent to those who are sick; could He have been so had He been sick Himself? He calls to Him those who are “weary and heavy-laden,” and promises to give them rest; could He do so if He did not feel Himself free from the burden which was oppressing them? He came to seek and to save “that which was lost”; how could He fulfil that mission had He been lost Himself?—unless we will say that none are really lost, which would annul from another side the testimony of Christ respecting the moral condition of mankind.

He is not only the physician of sick humanity, He is the victim whose blood makes atonement for it. “He came,” He says Himself, “to give His life a ransom for many.”<sup>1</sup> Could He do so had He needed

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxi. 36.

to be Himself ransomed? A few hours before His death, He utters this sacramental saying, "This is My blood, shed for the remission of sins." The law would accept no victims but such as were without blemish and without spot. Would Jesus have thought it permissible to offer Himself upon the altar of atonement had He discerned in Himself the smallest taint of sin? To claim for Himself the office of a victim offered for the sins of the world, while not conscious of perfect holiness, would have been the extreme of madness.

But how can I say the extreme? There would have been in His life a height of madness stranger still. Jesus announces in many of His discourses that He will return to judge the world, and to bring all mankind before His bar. "Watch," He says, "and pray always, that ye may be able to . . . stand before the Son of Man."<sup>1</sup>

He claims for Himself this office of judge of the world in that very Sermon on the Mount which, the free-thinkers affirm, contains the whole of His teaching. It is there that we read, "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. . . . Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not done many wonderful works in Thy name? and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."<sup>2</sup>

And He who thus represents Himself as the representative of the holiness of God, and the organ of the perfect righteousness in the solemn scene of the

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxi. 36.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matthew vi. 21-23.



universal judgment, is it conceivable that He should not have felt Himself clear from all sin? Would not the sentence have died upon the lips of the judge whose conscience convicted Himself of sin? Taking His place once more in the ranks of the creatures from whom scarce a shade of difference distinguished Him, would He not, instead of passing judgment upon them, have rather said to them, "Let us together fall on our knees and pray for forgiveness!" Once more logic claims its rights, to which free thought is compelled to submit. Either, it affirms, Jesus must be insane, or He is perfectly holy.<sup>1</sup> Let us conclude this division of the subject with these words of Keim, the author of the most recent and most learned book upon the life of Jesus: "Anyone who has given himself to the contemplation of the words and acts of our Lord receives from it irresistibly this impression,—here we have before us a conscience which has never felt the sting of the sense of guilt. And this is not a case of a moralist of a low or easy standard of morality. Oh no! it

<sup>1</sup> We are aware of the attempts which have been made to explain away by critical devices and hypotheses the words in which Jesus declares Himself the Judge of all men. But when this has been done, we shall still have to get rid of the words in which He declares Himself the Victim, the Physician, the Saviour of mankind; and then those in which He testifies to His own moral perfection. And what will then be left to account for the faith of the apostles and the foundation of the Church,—to say nothing of the entire arbitrariness of the critical methods by which these excisions have been effected? An imaginary Jesus, such as is demanded by the hypothesis, is first drawn, then the documents are treated like a piece of cloth, to be cut and hacked to a required shape, and thus the teaching of Jesus is brought out in conformity with the desired pattern. And then men say, There is the history. Is not this a true feat of legerdemain?

is He who branded with the character of sin a bare look—an idle word—and, behind the veil of the outward actions, all impurity of the heart and motives. He sternly rebuked His age; He made His disciples blush for their weaknesses; He made them pray for the forgiveness of their sins. But He, the man of the most absorbing vocation, of the vastest mission, He who was called upon every day to make His sublime spirit bend to the requirements of the engagement by which He had bound Himself to a life of humility and of self-renunciation, of gentle endurance, and of silent submission,—He never prayed for pardon for Himself, not even at Gethsemane or Golgotha. He walks with perfect constancy in the sunshine of the paternal love of God; He compels other men to believe in His perfect goodness; He pronounces forgiveness upon sinners in the name of God; He dies for them, and ascends to heaven to take His place upon the judgment-seat of the all-holy God.”<sup>1</sup>

II. But would it then be true to say that, by thus establishing the perfect holiness of Jesus Christ, we break the limit which binds Him to our humanity, and that this characteristic which stamps Him with such greatness in our eyes, takes away another characteristic even more precious to our hearts,—that by that very fact He becomes no longer one of us, our brother, the *Son of Man*, in the complete sense of that expression?

By no means; for this holiness, perfect as it is,

<sup>1</sup> *Der geschichtliche Christus*, p. 109 et seq.

bears, none the less unmistakably, stamps of humanity such as distinguish it clearly from the holiness of God.

1. The holiness of God is unchangeable; it is incapable of growth. Like God Himself, it *is*. That of Jesus, on the other hand, rose step by step till it reached the final perfection. Is it not said of Him when a child, and again as a young man, that He "increased in wisdom, and in favour with God and man"? This apparent growth was not a mere illusion; it was a profound moral reality, since it is declared that this advance took place not only in the sight of men, but in that of God too.

Does the thought perhaps occur to you, that this idea of progress involves that of sin? No; it is possible to grow in pure good, to ascend, like the angels, without ever falling, up the luminous ladder which ascends to the divine glory. So was it that Jesus grew. He took possession, in the name of His Father, of the several domains of human life as they opened one after another before Him: first, of that of the family, which was the first to present itself to Him, and which He pressed to His loving heart, watering it with His infantine prayers and intercessions; then at the age of adolescence, when the sentiments of patriotism make their appearance in a young and noble heart, of that of His nation, which presented itself to Him in its entirety as His family. His determination to labour at realizing the great promises of which He was the depository, henceforth became the vocation of His heart.

Finally, at the age of thirty, at the time of His baptism, when He had reached the culminating-point of His life, He saw opening before Him a domain vaster still. The world itself was the field which He felt it His vocation to cultivate by His words, to water with His blood, and to fructify to the glory of God by His Spirit.

Thus did love grow in Him, thus devotion developed itself in the heart of Jesus, but without there having ever existed in Him any germ of hatred needing to be extirpated, any egotistic inclination needing to be rooted out. To open His heart, with ever-growing sympathy, to the ever-new creatures of God's hand, whom His Father presented to His love, till at last He felt the burthen of the whole human race laid upon His heart, conscious of having become its living centre,—such was the form of development of which He was the subject, one altogether positive, and of which the goal was marked by His title of *the Son of Man*, which He adopted in preference to all others, and which He drew out of the depths of the tenderest sympathy for that human race whom He had made His family.

In proportion as the mission with which He was entrusted for mankind revealed itself more distinctly to His inward eye, He consecrated to its service more and more exclusively His person and His life. And in this we see another aspect of the progress which was to take place in Him,—Jesus uttered in His last prayer this remarkable expression,—which certainly no forger, above all no forger putting arbitrarily into the mouth of his hero his theory of

the Logos, would ever have invented for him: "I sanctify Myself for their sakes."<sup>1</sup> How, it has often been asked, could He have been called upon to sanctify Himself had He been in no way defiled? The answer is, that to sanctify does not mean to *purify*, but to *consecrate*. Holy is not to be contrasted with *impure*, but with *profane*, ordinary, unconsecrated, natural. Jesus sanctified Himself by offering to God step by step all the elements of His being, as they successively unfolded themselves; all the faculties of His body and of His soul, as they came into play; every domain of His existence, as soon as He set His foot in it.

In His childhood He played, no doubt, like other children; for "as our children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same. . . . He became like to His brethren in all things, yet without sin."<sup>2</sup> But the sports of childhood, without being in themselves impure, at the same time do not reach to the nature of holiness. The sportive faculties disappeared, later on in the life of Jesus, as they generally do out of that of every earnest man, in proportion as the greatness of life's work opens upon him.

This is an instance of the manner in which all the activities of our nature, all the physical or moral forces of our being, set themselves gradually in Jesus to the service of that task into which He grew, and successively received by means of this free consecration the seal of holiness. It was by this His ceaseless and free working upon Himself ("*I sanctify*

<sup>1</sup> St. John xvii, 19,

<sup>2</sup> Heb. ii, 14, 17, iv, 15.

*Myself*") that He became, in the full sense of that expression, *the Holy One of God*.

In this holiness of Jesus all is, if you will, divine, —in this sense, that it is continually drawn from God, the alone Good. But all is nevertheless human too, inasmuch as that communion with God, which was the source from which it flowed, was entered upon by Jesus freely, and was maintained equally freely. In himself, and without the fall, every man might have developed himself in the same way.

2. The holiness of Jesus was human, not only because it was subject to the law of progress, but also because it had to submit to the still far heavier law of temptation and of conflict.

Conflict — effort — have no place in God—"God cannot be tempted of evil." But Jesus had a conflict to go through. The wilderness and Gethsemane were two fields of battle which the Church will not forget, and which were watered by His sweat. They are not the only ones.<sup>1</sup>

Men ask in what way Jesus could have been tempted, and go through a conflict, if He was without sin. Do we not, then, know of any moral conflicts save only such as are occasioned by sin? You have, let us suppose, a taste for study, or you delight in science. But being the elder brother in your family, and having lost your parents, you have younger brothers and sisters to educate. You are called to forsake your books, and, by labour of quite another kind, to earn a living for those whom Providence has entrusted to your care. There is

<sup>1</sup> Compare St. Luke xii. 50 ; St. John xii. 27.

a conflict to which you are called, but not between moral good and evil, but between one kind of good, of a lower order, and another of a higher order—that of duty. You delight in the fine arts, and you give yourself up wholly to the cultivation of the fine talents with which you are yourself gifted. But your native land is in danger from its enemies, and demands the help of the strong right arms of her children. You hear, in the distant country in which you have lost yourself in the world of art, your native land's cry of distress. You have to leave the scene of your first efforts and to rush to the field of battle. Is there here no conflict,—not between moral good and evil, but between two kinds of good, which occupy different ranks in the moral hierarchy?

It is in this sense that Jesus, though without sin, might be exposed to conflict, accessible to temptation. He had the most generous instincts, the most distinguished gifts of mind. As a philosopher, He would have surpassed Socrates; as an orator, have eclipsed Demosthenes. The substance and the form of His teaching both prove it. He had a heart capable of enjoying, more deeply than anyone else, the tender affections of family life; and the high inspirations of patriotism would have found in Him, could He have given Himself up to them, the most heroic organ for their exercise. It is enough to recall His last words to His mother, and to the beloved disciple, and His tears over Jerusalem, on the day of His own triumphal entry! He had to suppress all these innocent instincts of His nature, to hold in check these noble impulses, to sacrifice these legiti-

mate indulgences of lawful inclinations, in order to give Himself altogether to the task which had been assigned to Him from on high, to His work as Redeemer, offering, in His own person, to His Church a pattern of what the expressions mean,—“to cut off the right hand,” “to pluck out the right eye,” “to give His life that He might take it again;” and just as truly as ourselves, He felt physical sufferings, and the sorrows and woundings of the heart. For love to His work as Mediator, He had to submit voluntarily to all the sufferings from which our human flesh and heart most legitimately revolt. But this submission was made each time at the cost of a struggle. We see that clearly at Gethsemane. So was it, as says the admirable Epistle to the Hebrews, that He was *made perfect* and *learned obedience* by the things which He suffered.<sup>1</sup> Progress, conflict,—are not these the marks of a holiness truly human? In the wilderness, at Gethsemane, it was perfectly possible to be in the forecourts of heaven, but assuredly not in heaven itself.

III. And this is precisely the reason on account of which the holiness of Jesus, perfect as it was, is nevertheless accessible to man, to every believer who aspires after it; not, certainly, *apart from Him*, or in a manner parallel with His, as the free-thinkers imagine, who hold that it suffices for them to represent to themselves Jesus as their model, in order

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ii. 10, v. 8, 9. No book of the New Testament brings out so powerfully, together with the Divinity of Jesus Christ (chap. i.), His complete humanity (chaps. iii. and v.).



forthwith to be able to imitate Him. No; the distance between Him and us is too great for it to be possible for our sanctification to accomplish itself *in the way in which* His does. It must work itself out *by means of* His.

There is in us the germ of sin, which was not to be found in Him, as we have perceived. He had but to learn; we have not only to learn, but also to unlearn, if I may use the expression. He had but to grow; we have contemporaneously to grow and to diminish. He had to fill His heart with God; we have, at the same time as we fill ours with God, to empty it of ourselves.

This twofold task surpasses the moral power of man; whoever will seriously attempt it, will not fail to discover it to be so. It is necessary, then, that the holiness of Jesus should become for us something more than a model. It is necessary that this holiness, which He has realized freely in His own person, during His human existence, should become *ours*. Did not Jesus Himself say, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth" ?<sup>1</sup> ("in truth" or "in reality" in the French edition). In sanctifying Himself, it was human life, it was ourselves, that He sanctified. In preventing, each moment of His life, sin from being born within His own person, He passed sentence of death upon it in ours too. He thereby demonstrated that sin is an *intruder* in human nature, and He planted in the consciousness of humanity the germ of the possibility, and therefore

<sup>1</sup> St. John xvii. 19.

also the duty, of expelling it. By His life, perfectly human, and yet at the same time pure and holy, clear of every stain, and perfectly consecrated, He annulled sin, and laid the foundations of holiness, that is, of the kingdom of God, upon this sin-stained earth.

But before this kingdom could begin to spread, it was needful that the holiness which is its essence should pass from the King to its subjects. Such a transition presupposes some link of connection between the two; and this link Jesus described in the expression, "I am the Vine, ye are the branches."<sup>1</sup> It was by His ascension that He put Himself in the position to effect this work, and by Pentecost that He actually accomplished it.

The pure sap which flowed in the Vine was to pass from it into the branches, and to take the place of the poisoned sap which was flowing through them in abundance. By His elevation to the right hand of God, which signifies into the manner of existence of God Himself, to His omnipresence, His omniscience, His omnipotence, Jesus received the power to descend Himself into the hearts of believers, to come and live in them, and to realize in them that same humanity which He had already realized in His own person. Associated thenceforth with the sovereign power of God, He disposes of His Spirit, and can, by His instrumentality, reproduce in believers all the lineaments of His own moral physiognomy.

You know that art—one of the most marvellous

<sup>1</sup> St. John xv. 5.

discoveries of our day—by means of which we are all become artists of as great ability as the most consummate portrait-painter: our likeness, reproducing itself, down to its most delicate traits, on a plate suitably prepared and placed for the purpose, our lineaments multiply themselves in a thousand copies, facsimiles of their prototype. It even succeeds in communicating to them something of the life which vivifies themselves.

Just so, by the power of the Divine Spirit, Christ reproduces Himself in the hearts and lives of believers. If we place ourselves assiduously before Him, in the attitude of absorbed attention, the Holy Spirit, through whom He offered Himself without spot to God,<sup>1</sup> imprints upon us, as does the light of the sun, the characteristic traits of the model we are contemplating; He Himself begins to live in our soul. He promised it in the words, "The Spirit will glorify Me in you;"<sup>2</sup> and St. Paul verifies it in that saying which sums up his most sublime experiences: "We, with open face beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory" (*i.e.* from His glory to ours), "even as by the Spirit of the Lord."<sup>3</sup>

Under those conditions, it is possible to begin with success the great work of our moral renewal, and to spring forward upon the pathway of sanctification which leads up to heaven, without being troubled with the fear of succumbing in the middle, or even on the lowest step, of the ascent.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ix. 14.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xvi. 14.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 18.

By His death, Christ our righteousness and our peace; by His life on earth and in heaven, Christ our sanctification and our strength; thus we have salvation offered to the soul of man. To receive Christ in this twofold character by the mighty receptivity of faith, is what Jesus calls, in His symbolic language, "to eat His flesh and drink His blood."<sup>1</sup> You all know that it is to these two acts combined that He has Himself attached the possession of life.

<sup>1</sup> St. John vi. 53, 54.



VI  
THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST



## VI

### *THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST*

JESUS, at the end of His ministry in Galilee, one day taking His disciples into a solitary place, addressed to them this question: "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" The disciples had just completed their first missionary journey among the plains of Galilee. There they had heard the opinions expressed by various men respecting their Master, and they brought Him a true report of them. Some said He was John the Baptist risen from the dead; others, that He was one of the prophets, Jeremiah or Elijah; all held Him not a mere man, but an extraordinary personage. Jesus afterwards drew the apostles into an expression of their own belief as to His person; and Simon Peter expressed it in a saying which has lived on as the confession of faith of the Church universal: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This profession of faith Jesus received with joy, and gave it His sanction in the words: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee; but My Father which is in heaven."<sup>1</sup>

In the same way that these various opinions of the

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew xvi. 13-16.



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contemporaries of Jesus rose one above the other, and that the last alone reached to the full height of the subject, so also, in our day, the most diverse opinions stratify themselves, if I may so speak, over each other respecting the person of Jesus; and that one alone will have the right to claim to be recognised as the truth—at least within the Church—of which it can be demonstrated that it is the exact expression of the consciousness of Jesus Christ Himself respecting His own being.

Strauss, and the whole group of thinkers who gravitate around him, see in Jesus nothing more than the greatest religious genius who has appeared among men, the purest and most exquisite product of that moral consciousness of which we are all of us depositaries; which, however, does not amount to saying that He is its highest possible expression. From this point of view, the door remains ever open to still further steps of progress. Jesus has been *hitherto* the most excellent of men—that is all one could say; but at any moment another more excellent still might yet make his appearance. You are acquainted with this way of thinking; we have recently heard it expounded here.

Some scholars of the first rank, who at the starting-point of their career shared this view, have found themselves compelled by an irresistible moral logic to leave it, and to rise to a higher conception of the Person of Jesus Christ. Profoundly impressed with the contemplation of this singular moral life, sound in every part, and so completely contrasted with the corruption and spiritual *marasmus* of all other human beings, they have said to themselves:—There

exists between this man and ourselves a difference, not in quantity and degree only, but in kind. He is not only the best of men, He is the man,—the absolutely good man,—a man such as God alone could have conceived, and than whom He could not Himself have desired a better. It would be impossible to aim higher than at loving God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves; and it would be impossible to realize this twofold love more perfectly than did Jesus. How are we to explain to ourselves the existence of such a being making His appearance in the midst of a race scarred all over with the canker of sin? A special law must have presided over His birth; a phenomenon so exceptional must surely have had an origin equally exceptional. What if it be indeed the fact that this apparition among men was specially decreed by God: if this being was predestinated to a great mission to be fulfilled towards the whole race of man? This is the *elect of God*, chosen to accomplish the mission of missions in the midst of humankind.

Such is the conclusion to which the earnest examination of the facts has led many scholars of our day, specially M. Keim, who has expressed it in the following manner: "There has appeared amongst us a true man, in whom that divine seed which is deposited in the heart of human nature did, by a miracle of the divine power, blossom to perfection. The inborn communion of man with God reached its consummation in Him, in a manner that was unique and eternally valid. In Him we have the ideal man, foreseen and beloved of God from all eternity, as the

crowning fruit of the creation ; in the contemplation of whom all the loving desires of God the Creator were satisfied, because in the heart and in the countenance of this human person He sees Himself.”<sup>1</sup>

This conception is sufficient — is it not? — to justify us in embracing in Christ a Saviour, and even in our doing homage to Him as the Lord. And when I remember that it has been reached by the hard toil of personal labour ; that, in order to attain to it, it has been necessary for its author to shake off a thousand prejudices, natural and scientific ; that it has been gained at the point of the spear, in the face of all the dogmas of unbelief and all the assertions of proud reason, — my heart feels moved at the sight of this noble wrestler, who, with the sweat on his brow, brings me this profession of his faith ; I cannot resist the impulse to shake him warmly by the hand, and calling to mind this saying of our Master : “ He who is not against us is for us,” to hail him as a brother.

Nevertheless, have we understood that with this, and no more, we have all the fulness of that which is given us in Jesus Christ ? Have we measured the height and depth, length and breadth of that gift ? Whilst you are climbing a mountain, you can stop half-way up, on one of the landing-places which make a flight of stairs of the ascent, and even from there you behold an admirable picture. Is this as much as to say that one can climb no higher ? No ; begin your advance once more, courageous lover of the beautiful ! At the highest summit only will the

<sup>1</sup> *Der geschichtliche Christus*, p. 198.

whole horizon be clear, and you will behold in all their majesty the works of your God. It is the same with the believer. Many times over it is said of the disciples: "And they saw and believed." And each time the step thus gained became a stepping-stone from whence to ascend to some still higher point. Remember again the case of the man born blind. He at first recognised in Jesus a righteous man: "We know," he says, "that God heareth not sinners." "What sayest thou of Him, as to His having opened thine eyes?" "He is a prophet." But from this stage of conviction he soon mounted to a higher: "Dost thou believe in the Son of God?" Jesus asks him. "Who is He, that I might believe on Him?" "Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee." "Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him."<sup>1</sup>

When He whom we have recognised as a prophet Himself declares to us that He is *more* than a prophet, it is clear that we are then compelled to move from the position we have taken up one step farther, either forwards or backwards, to rise to the height of the new title which He claims for Himself, or to descend and withdraw from Him that title of prophet, and even that of righteous man, which we had at first conceded to Him.

In the subject upon which we are entering, everything therefore depends on the testimony of Jesus respecting His Person.

I. The testimony of Jesus respecting His Person—  
is it valid testimony?

<sup>1</sup> St. John ix. 38.

II. What are the real contents of this testimony? In other words: Did Jesus really affirm His own divinity?

III. Supposing He did so, is this divine character which He claims for Himself compatible with His human nature, as that is both proved by the facts of the history, and affirmed also by Himself?

IV. From the practical point of view: By discovering in Jesus a God, do we not lose a brother? And is not this another case of the *better* being an enemy of the *good*?

I. The testimony of a sinful man respecting his person could never be absolutely valid, since it may be falsified by two causes: the illusions of pride, and the calculations of ambition.

But take the case of a holy man, wholly devoted to the promotion of the glory of God and the good of his neighbour. Having this disposition of heart, he is neither exposed to the danger of over-estimating himself in his own estimation, nor of leading others astray by exaggerating his own merits in speaking to them. Such was Jesus; His humility and His charity are guarantees to us of the truth of His assertions respecting His person. This is the sentiment which He Himself expresses in this saying, at once simple and profound: "He who seeks the glory of him that sent him is worthy of credit, and there is no unrighteousness in him;" and in this other declaration: "My testimony is true, for I *know* whence I came and whither I go."<sup>1</sup> When a

<sup>1</sup> St. John vii. 18, viii. 14.

man contemplates himself in the full light of the communion with God, and in the mirror of a conscience perfectly pure, he runs no risk of being dazzled by the misleading reflections of self-love; and when one speaks of himself being actuated by the motive of the most disinterested charity, lying is naturally excluded. Looking, then, at the subject from the point of view of morality, the validity of the testimony of Jesus rests upon His profound humility on the one hand, and on His tender charity on the other; or, to sum up all in one word, upon His holiness.<sup>1</sup>

But God has stamped with a second seal the testimony of Jesus,—an external seal, and one still more visible to the majority of mankind: His resurrection. We believe that we have demonstrated upon the ground of history the reality of this event; we have established the fact that the witness which the apostles bore to it, and which formed the basis of their first preaching, is not explicable except upon the ground of the reality of the event which is its main subject.<sup>2</sup> If this be so, the resurrection is as certain as the founding of the Church itself by the preaching of the apostles. Now, God would certainly not have raised from the dead an impostor or a madman; and if the resurrection of Jesus is a fact, His testimony respecting Himself cannot be other than true.

We argue, then, the validity of the testimony from

<sup>1</sup> See, with regard to the perfect holiness of Jesus Christ, the preceding lecture.

<sup>2</sup> See upon this the first two lectures.

two facts: namely these,—their source is pure,—it is the pure heart of Jesus; their seal is divine,—it is the divine act of the resurrection.

II. What are the contents of the testimony of Jesus respecting His Person? They may be summed up in the two titles which Jesus often gave Himself: the Son of Man and the Son of God.

The first is a testimony rendered to His humanity, not only in regard to what it has in common with ours, but also to what it had that was exceptional in its nature. If Jesus had only entitled Himself *a Son of man*, as God so often entitles the prophet Ezekiel, He would have thereby declared Himself a member of the human race, true man, and nothing more. But He called Himself *the* Son of Man, and by so doing He takes up the position of the normal representative of that whole human race to whose welfare He dedicated Himself,—the true man.

If the title of "Son of Man" indicates the participation of Jesus in humanity, it is natural to think that, if only by virtue of the contrast of the two expressions, the title of "Son of God" indicates His participation in divinity.

This, however, is denied; we are reminded that this title is sometimes in the Old Testament applied to all the faithful; and it is maintained that when applied to Jesus it is, as we are told is the case already in the Psalms and in the Prophets, synonymous with the title of Messiah, that is, of "King of Israel."

Let us then examine, first of all, the precise signification of this designation, "the Son of God," in the first three evangelists.

It might doubtless be the case that this title should signify nothing more than a mysterious personal relation between the invisible God and the visible being who bears it. It is in this sense, more or less clearly defined, that it is applied to the angels and to the faithful. But observe, that as Jesus does not call Himself only *a* Son of man in general, but *the* Son of Man, so also neither does He call Himself *a* Son of God, like so many others, but *the* Son of God, and even, more briefly, *the Son*. From this in itself it follows that He knows Himself to be the Son of God in a sense which is exceptional, and superior to that in which any other personage can bear that title.

This is the conclusion which follows still more expressly from the following declarations: "But of that day" (that of His final advent) "knoweth no man, no, not the angels that are in heaven, *neither the Son*, but the Father only."<sup>1</sup> Is it not manifest that in this passage Jesus, by using this name, "the Son," in the context in which it stands, claims for Himself a position superior to that of the angels, and that consequently this term is taken in a sense different from that in which it is applied to these celestial beings? So also from the baptismal formula, "Go ye and baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost," does it not clearly follow<sup>2</sup> that by this title, *the Son*, thus interposed between the two terms, the Father and

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark xiii. 32.

<sup>2</sup> We believe we have established, against M. Réville, the authenticity of this formula in general.



the Holy Spirit, Jesus places Himself at a height incommensurably above all the beings who are to be baptized in this name of Son, as well as in that of the Father, and that He takes up His position in the very central throne of Deity ?

Jesus claims, then, for Himself the name of Son in a sense that is special, unique. What is this sense? Can this title designate, as we are told it does, His office of Messiah? Can it be synonymous with that of "King of Israel" ?

Make the attempt, in the two passages which we have just quoted, to substitute the title of "King of Israel" for that of Son: "Of that day knoweth no man, not the angels, neither the *King of Israel*, but the Father only!" "Go ye and baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the King of Israel, and of the Holy Ghost!" What do you think of this substitution? Let us add to it this third saying of Jesus, modified in the same manner: "No man knoweth the *King of Israel*, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, but the King of Israel, and he to whom the King of Israel will reveal Him!" That surely shocks our good sense. Why so? Because we instinctively understand that there is a close correlation between these two terms taken, each of them, absolutely: the Father, the Son. This juxtaposition of the two proves to us that the second title cannot here designate a mission, or any kind of office—that it can only refer to a personal relation, to a communion of life and being, like that which binds together a father and a son. If, as Jesus affirms, the profundity and intimacy of this

relation are unfathomable by any other person but these two beings, so closely united, who share it,<sup>1</sup> it is certain enough that the dignity of King-Messiah is something totally foreign to the significance of the word Son in this passage.

But some passages are alleged in which the title of Son is joined to that of Christ in such a manner that it seems to be its equivalent—as, for instance, in the confession of St. Peter: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;” and in the question of the chief priest: “Tell us, art thou the Christ, the Son of God?”<sup>2</sup> When one title is subjoined to another, it can only be for the purpose either of explaining the first, on account of some obscurity in it, by the help of a second, better understood and less ambiguous, or else of adding, by means of the second, a new idea to those which were expressed by the first. The first of these two alternatives is not applicable in this case; for the title of “Son of God,” which is placed second, is much more mysterious and obscure than that of “Christ” which precedes it, and which was much in use among the Jews, and perfectly intelligible to them all. The title of “Son of God” has therefore been added in the above passages to that of Christ, not in order to explain the latter, but to complete it, by adding to the ideas which it contains of itself one other. And the

<sup>1</sup> We beg to suggest to those of our readers who wish to know by what means one may get rid of an awkward passage, to read the explanation which M. Réville gives of this declaration (St. Matt. xi. 27, and St. Luke x. 22): *Histoire du Dogme de la Divinité de Jésus-Christ*, page 17, note.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xvi. 16, xxvi. 63.

gradation between the one and the other is easy to seize. The title of Christ is a title of office; it refers to the office of Jesus, that of Messiah. The title of "Son" refers to His person; it designates His special, personal relation with God, which is the basis upon which reposes His character as the Messiah. Peter, then, when he said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," makes not one assertion only, but two;—one, that Jesus is that *King-Messiah* whom Israel expects; the other, that there exists between His person and God a bond of a living and mysterious nature, which He does not seek to define. And so also the chief priest, in adjuring Jesus, before the Sanhedrim, to say whether He was "the Christ, the Son of God," questions Him not upon one point, but two: "As to thine office, art thou the Messiah? and as to thy person, dost thou claim to be anything more than a mere man, as many of thy words seem to imply?"

What sufficiently proves that such is the meaning of the question is the report of Luke, in which the two questions, which in Matthew are combined into a single one, are completely distinct and even separated from each other. "Art thou the Christ?" is first asked by Caiaphas. Jesus gives His answer, and finishes it by this declaration: "Henceforth thou shalt see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the power of God." And as this saying implies His participation in Deity, the high priest then adds this second question: "Art thou, then, the Son of God?" This word "*then*" clearly proves that this new question is called forth by the last words of Jesus in

the preceding question, and thus demonstrates the distinctness of the meanings of the two terms, "Christ" and "Son of God." What completes the proof of the true meaning of the title of "Son of God" in this passage is the burst of indignation which the answer of Jesus, "I am," calls forth, and the sentence of death which, upon the utterance of these words, is immediately pronounced upon Him as a blasphemer. There was no blasphemy in the act of a man who called Himself the Messiah; for this office of the Messiah was of divine institution, and the man who should hold it was expected in Israel. To claim it falsely would therefore be an imposture, but no blasphemy.

The charge of blasphemy could then only refer to the title of "the Son of God," and to the divine dignity which Jesus thereby claimed for Himself. That alone could have seemed to the Jews an infringement upon the majesty of God.

If, on His own part, Jesus had not attributed this significance to the title which He gave Himself, it would have been for Him a sacred duty to put an end, by a prompt and categorical explanation, to so serious a misunderstanding between Him and the representatives of His nation. Was it not on account of this title, "the Son of God," misunderstood, that they were about to condemn Him to death, and thereby to pronounce sentence of death upon themselves? Jesus ought then to have hastened, if not for His own sake, at least that of His judges, to have prevented the evil consequences of this false interpretation of the title which He claimed for Himself.

He did nothing of the kind; He therefore certainly took this title in the sense in which His judges took it, that is, in that in which we ourselves understand it.<sup>1</sup>

There is another saying of Jesus, reported uniformly by our first three evangelists, and of which we must here weigh the whole significance. It was uttered some days before His Passion, and probably it bore a relation, in the mind of Jesus, to the charge with which He knew He was threatened. It is the question which He addressed to the scribes: "What think ye of Christ? whose son is He? They say unto Him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on my right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool. If David then call Him Lord, how is He his Son?"<sup>2</sup> The scribes, with all their sagacity, were in difficulties in answering this question. Jesus evidently wished to make them understand that, though He was descended from David according to the flesh, and by virtue of the link which bound Him to human nature, His existence had, at the same time, a higher origin, by virtue of which He was the Lord of that David from whom He descended. This is the truth which the Apocalypse expresses in its symbolical language,

<sup>1</sup> Is it right that M. le Blois should have rested his argument precisely upon this passage of Luke in his attempt to prove the synonymousness of the two terms, "Christ" and "the Son of God"? No doubt in the passage which follows (xxiii. 1 *et seq.*) mention is again made of "the King of the Jews," but it is before Pilate. To a political judge it was evidently necessary to present a political indictment.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xxii. 41.

when it calls Jesus at the same time the "Root" and the "Branch" of David.<sup>1</sup> Jesus wished by this saying to plead in advance, from the point of view of the Scriptures, the cause of His divinity. For He knew well that that would be the pretext for His condemnation; and He made use of this time in which it was still open to Him to argue and discuss, foreseeing that in which He would be only free to make assertions and then hold His peace.<sup>2</sup> But, above all, He continually claims the right to be addressed in terms which, according to the whole of Scripture, it is only lawful to use when speaking to God Himself. So it is that He claims for Himself a greater love than that which exists between the beings who are bound together by the closest of bonds. "If any man love father, or mother, or child, or wife, or himself more than Me, he is not worthy of Me." Imagine a mere man interposing himself between a mother and her child,—between us and ourselves! Then, together with the highest love, He demands or authorizes absolute trust in Himself. He says, "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." He says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xxii. 16; cf. Micah v. 2.

<sup>2</sup> M. Réville (*Histoire du Dogme de la Divinité de Jésus-Christ*, p. 14) asserts, with some other rationalistic writers, that what Jesus wishes to prove by this manner of reasoning is not that He is the Son of God, but that as the Messiah "He is not necessarily the Son of David." There are some objections, to argue with which it would be to do too much honour. We refer the objectors to all the passages in the New Testament (Matthew, Paul, the Apocalypse), to the genealogies in particular, where Jesus is mentioned expressly as the Son of David. And yet we are asked to believe that Jesus meant by these words to prove that He was not so!

rest unto your souls.”<sup>1</sup> Have any of the greatest of the prophets ever said anything like this? They referred man to God; they would have considered it a blasphemy to call them to come to *themselves*.

Lastly, the *functions* which Jesus attributes to Himself are not less remarkable than the sentiment with which He claims to be regarded by men. He is in such sense the Truth incarnate, that to be persecuted for Him is equivalent to being so for the Truth itself: “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for the Son of Man’s sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.”<sup>2</sup> He is even more than the Truth; He is Good—Good, incarnate and personified, in such sort that every good action upon earth refers itself to Him personally. He is its real object; He constitutes Himself its debtor in eternity. The covenant into which Jehovah entered in the Old Testament, “He who lendeth to the poor lendeth to the Eternal, who will render unto him the good he has done,”<sup>3</sup> He takes without hesitation upon Himself: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.”<sup>4</sup> And when He formulates the judicial sentence which will separate for ever the wicked from the sphere of Light and of Good, how does He express it? “Depart from ME, ye that work iniquity!”<sup>5</sup> Could God speak otherwise?

<sup>1</sup> St. John xiv. 1; St. Matt. xi. 28.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. v. 11 and the parallel passages.

<sup>3</sup> Prov. xix. 17.

<sup>4</sup> St. Matt. xxv. 40, 45.

<sup>5</sup> St. Matt. vii. 23, xxv. 41. I owe this last observation to M. le Pasteur Louis Burnier.

Imagine a mere man making himself thus the intermediary between God and the human soul; a man posing as the Truth and the Good incarnated in the midst of humankind; a man pronouncing this sentence: "Depart from ME, ye that work iniquity!" In truth, I do not understand how the free-thinkers can hold for long the position they have taken up with regard to Jesus—that of a respectful admiration. There are two alternatives open to us—either (1) He is no more than man, and, being such, He has drawn mankind into a gross idolatry, and has but added one more form of paganism to those of antiquity. If so, He, apparently the humblest of men, has been in reality the proudest. Far from meriting our admiration, He ought to become the object of our indignation, our execration, as He did become to the Jews, who in that case quite justly condemned Him. And the only course open to us is to take their side against Him, not His against them—that is the new anti-evangelical alliance which is forming itself before our eyes. Or else (2) the position which He claimed is His—He is really what He claimed to be; and if so, it is evident admiration will no longer suffice; we must pass on to faith, in the religious sense of the word—to that faith which is due only to God; we must give ourselves up to a love of Him which is due only to God. We must advance even to adoration. From the mind of a Thomas who disbelieves, a Thomas who doubts, we must rise to that of a Thomas who, at a single bound, springs at once to the highest point, and has the courage to address Jesus as his Lord and his God.



We have been led to this result solely by the study of our first three Gospels. It is fully confirmed and corroborated by the Gospel of St. John. It is there that we find brought into relief, in the testimony of Jesus, the great thought which forms the substratum of all the sayings we have already cited from the first three Gospels: we mean the idea of the eternal pre-existence of Jesus Christ as the absolute object of the Father's love. "Father, glorify Thou Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was, . . . for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." "What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?" "Before Abraham was, I am." Jesus here speaks like Him who, in the Old Testament, says, "I am that I am."<sup>1</sup> These words are, I know, regarded with suspicion in these days; it is asserted that the author of the fourth Gospel has here put into the mouth of Jesus his own thoughts. Put his own thoughts into the mouth of Him who is the object of his faith! What a moral contradiction!

But, even if we were no longer in possession of any of the words of Jesus in which is expressed the consciousness that He had in Him of His divinity, none the less might we draw safe conclusions upon this point, by taking as our starting-point the idea entertained by His apostles of what He was.

There exists in every Israelitish heart an innate horror of everything which tends to identify the creature with the Creator. And before the apostles could have been brought to concede to their Master

<sup>1</sup> St. John xvii. 5, 24, vi. 62, viii. 58; Ex. iii. 14.

divine titles and attributes, they must have been driven to it by peremptory reasons, among which the only decisive one must have been the manner in which they had heard Him express Himself respecting His person. Nothing external to this His testimony respecting Himself could have brought them to cross the limit which separates docility and admiration from adoration. Besides, had He not lived familiarly with them for three years, and eaten at the same table? Had they not walked by His side as His travelling companions? Had they not seen Him fainting, suffering from hunger and thirst, asking questions, praying, weeping, groaning, dying . . . ? What amount of proof did it not require to bring these Jews, brought up in the purest monotheistic orthodoxy, to recognise in such a being Jehovah Himself, to invoke Him, to preach Him as such! Yet this conviction respecting Him we can prove to have been held by those of the apostles whose writings have been preserved to us.

The Apocalypse is in our day in favour among rationalistic writers. They almost all of them recognise it as the work of the Apostle John, written in the year 68.<sup>1</sup> What do we find in this book? Jesus is therein called "*the First and the Last, the Alpha*

<sup>1</sup> Rationalist criticism is not at ease with reference to this book. On the one hand, it has occasion for it in order to establish the supposed antagonism between the Twelve and St. Paul (though in fact this book by no means establishes anything of the kind). And, on the other hand, it is to them a source of perplexity; for, as we shall presently see, we find in it already the whole of the Christology of Paul, and of John himself. Accordingly, we shall soon see it rejected, together with the fourth Gospel.

and the Omega, the Beginning and the Ending." He is described as "He who searcheth the reins and hearts"; as "the Lamb who has the seven eyes and the seven horns," *i.e.* the plenitude of omniscience and omnipotence. He is there called "the Beginning (*i.e.* the source and spring) of the creation of God." The Lamb seated upon the throne shares with God Himself the worship of the celestial intelligence, and of the saints in glory; and that in the same book in which an angel says to John when he falls down before him, "Worship GOD." Finally, Jesus bears in the Apocalypse the same distinctive title as in the Gospel—that of "*the Word of God,*" which implies in the one book as in the other, His divinity.<sup>1</sup>

M. Réville replies that what is here implied is no more than an *acquired* divinity. As if Jesus was not called *the First* as well as the Last, *the Beginning* as well as the Ending! As if, again, these epithets were not the same by which Isaiah describes the glory of Jehovah! Besides, the idea of an *acquired divinity* is irreconcilable with the monotheistic intuition of the Scriptures. "A God become a man," says M. Gess with reason, "is a miracle; but a man become God is a wild idea" (*Abentheuer*, a magical event).

St. Peter, in the first verses of his First Epistle, unites Jesus with the Father and the Holy Spirit in a manner which expressly reminds us of the institu-

<sup>1</sup> Rev. i. 11, ii. 23, iii. 14, v. 6, 11-13, xix. 13, xxii. 3, 9, 13, 20 ("I come"), compared with i. 8 ("the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come").

tion of baptism, and which can only rest upon the same conviction of His divinity upon which that institution itself rests.

St. Paul expresses himself exactly like St. John in the Apocalypse. According to him, Jesus "*is before all things*: He is the first-born of every creature, or before all creation; He it is by whom and for whom are all things." He is that "Rock of Israel" who led His people in the wilderness. Before He appeared here below, He existed "*in the form of God*," that is to say, in a state of Deity; it was by His own will that He became man, after He had "emptied Himself,"<sup>1</sup> to take upon Him the form of a servant. It is by Him that all things, visible and invisible, subsist.<sup>2</sup>

The Epistle to the Hebrews, which must date from before the fall of Jerusalem, since it implies that the Temple is still standing, and announces as a coming event the fall of the theocratic constitution, dedicates an entire chapter—the first—to establishing the full and complete divinity of Jesus Christ. And this does not mean that it denies His humanity. No book of the New Testament, on the contrary, affirms it more energetically, or applies it with a consistency apparently more heterodox. These are testimonies, clear enough, to the conviction which prevailed within the apostolic circle from which these books came.

But it is objected that mention is often made, both in the Gospels and Acts, of Jesus as a mere man; as when St. Peter, in his denials, says of Him, "I know

<sup>1</sup> Translated in our Bible, made Himself of no reputation.—Tr.

<sup>2</sup> Col. i. 15-17; 1 Cor. viii. 6, x. 4; Phil. ii. 5-7; Col. i. 16.

not this man ;”<sup>1</sup> or when, in one of his first discourses in the Acts, Jesus is called “*a man approved of God* by the miracles, signs, and wonders which God did by Him.” But ought then St. Peter, when he was speaking to the servants of the high priest, to have said to them, and that at the moment when he was denying Jesus, “I know not *this God*”? And later on, when the apostles deliver their first discourses before the Jewish people, ought they to have begun by proclaiming His divinity? No; for this doctrine is that which has always most offended Jewish ears. And more, it is a truth which can only be accepted by one who has already received Christ as the Messiah or the Saviour. For it is only on the faith of His own testimony that His divinity is accepted; and before His testimony can be received respecting a truth so difficult to believe, He must have been recognised as One sent of God. This is the reason on account of which the apostles had to begin their work by the proclamation of the historical facts of His death and resurrection, which they could each of them attest, and which were sufficient to establish His Messiahship. So was the faith to be founded in Israel; the rest was to be reserved for later development.

Besides, the apostles themselves, even when they had attained to the consciousness of the fact, had not yet reached to its correct formula. The *feeling* of the divinity of Him who was the object of their faith filled their hearts; had it not been so, how could

<sup>1</sup> An argument seriously urged by M. le Blois in his lecture given at Neuchâtel upon this subject!

Stephen have prayed to Him for the forgiveness of his enemies? how could he have addressed to Him, with his latest breath, the same prayer which Jesus, in death, addressed to His Father? But the memory of the earthly life of Jesus, of His career as simply the *servant* of the Eternal, was still so vividly present to their minds, that the thought of His divinity did not as yet detach itself distinctly in their consciousness from that of His earthly manifestation, and presented itself rather to their spirits under the form of a glorification granted by God to His human personality. Nothing, then, could be more in conformity with historic truth than the manner in which Jesus is set before us in the first discourses in the Acts. Had they been composed at a later period, they would have presented a very different appearance.

It is interesting to compare, as counterparts of the thought of the apostles, the belief of the churches founded by them, as it is expressed in the most ancient Christian writings, composed in the age which followed immediately upon that of the apostles. We have but a very small number of these left to us, but these are sufficient to attest the faith of the churches on this cardinal point.

In the Epistle of Clement of Rome, written probably toward the end of the first century, or according to some authorities a little later, Jesus is called "*the sceptre of the Divine Majesty.*"<sup>1</sup> In one of the epistles of Ignatius, which have the greatest evidence of authenticity, and therefore date from before the year 115, we come upon such expressions

<sup>1</sup> Chap. xvi.

as the following: "the love of Jesus Christ *our God*"; "the blood of God."<sup>1</sup> In an epistle attributed, no doubt erroneously, to Barnabas, the companion of St. Paul, but which must have been composed by an Alexandrian Christian towards the end of the first, or the beginning of the second century, Jesus is spoken of as the being with whom the Father conversed when, at the moment in which He was creating man, He said, "Let us make man after our image."<sup>2</sup> In the *Pastor* of Hermes, written a little later, towards 140-150, it is said that the Son of God is anterior to every creature; in such sense that He co-operated with the Father in the creation of the world.<sup>3</sup> Lastly, in the Epistle to Diognetus, the *chef d'œuvre* of ancient Christian literature, we find these words: "As a king sends his royal son, so did God send Him to us as God."<sup>4</sup> Are we perhaps moved to ask if all these writings do not come from the same country, and express the belief of only one Church? We answer, not at all: Ignatius represents Asia Minor; the unknown author of Barnabas' Epistle, Alexandria and the Ægyptian Church; Clement and Hermes, Rome; the Epistle to Diognetus, probably Greece.

So, then, we find the same way of thinking about Christ in all parts of the Church. How are we to account for this general belief unless it rested upon the preaching of the apostles? And how are we to account for this preaching of the apostles, if it was not founded upon the teaching of Jesus Himself?

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i., Rom. i.

<sup>2</sup> Chap. v.

<sup>3</sup> Book iii., Similitude 9, chap. xii.

<sup>4</sup> Chap. vii.

Even a pagan, a man eminent in science and literature, Pliny the younger, born in the year 62, bears witness to the belief of the Christians on this cardinal point of faith. He had been appointed by the Emperor Trajan governor of one of the principal provinces of Asia Minor. There he finds himself face to face with a numerous Christian population; he is in doubt in what way he is to put into execution the law which condemns them. In a letter which has been preserved to us, he asks directions of his sovereign and friend, Trajan; and on this occasion he speaks of the lives of the Christians, which are at the time before him. In this description we find this remarkable expression, "They sing hymns to Jesus as God."<sup>1</sup>

Facts, then, disprove the assertion that the belief in the divinity of the Saviour only sprang up in the Church in the course of the second century as a consequence of the spontaneous exaltation of the ideas of the Christians.

The feeling of the Christian community upon this point was unchangeably fixed from the earliest times. But it took shape in various ways among those who were its organs. The formula of Peter is not that of Paul; that of Paul is not that of John, nor is this latter the same as that of the Epistle to the Hebrews. This diversity of forms of expression shows that they are not mere copies one of another,

<sup>1</sup> We must observe that this expression forms part of the confessions extorted by Pliny from the Christians when about to be executed; it is therefore the faith of the Church itself which is expressed in these words, *Carmen Christo, quasi Deo, dicere secum invicem* (to recite antiphonally a hymn to Christ as God).



but that one and the same consciousness of the truth expresses itself through all these forms, freely and independently. So it was also, later on in the history of the Church, with regard to the dogmatic formula, which it so laboriously sought to put into shape. In vain were disputes stirred up in the Council of Nicæa. Everyone in that council admitted the divinity of the Saviour. Such difference as existed had reference only to the way in which the doctrine should be stated.

M. Réville will have it, again, that the general law of the development of the doctrine is as follows: "Of the two parties to any controversy which arose, that which wins the victory is always that which most glorifies the person of Jesus."<sup>1</sup> This supposed law he draws from his imagination, not from history. The highest idea which arose respecting the person of the Saviour, was that of those called the *Docetæ*, who, as early as the last year of the first century, taught that the body of Jesus was no more than a mere phantom, and who upon that ground denied all objective reality to His human nature. But so far was this extravagant doctrine from establishing itself in the Church, that, on the contrary, it was energetically repudiated by it. We find it already condemned in the First Epistle of St. John, in the words, "He that denieth that Jesus the Christ came *in the flesh*, is an anti-christ." This sentence is cited by Polycarp, the disciple of John, in his Epistle to the Philippians. The Church expelled from her communion, in the course of the second century, the

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire du Dogme de la Divinité de Jésus-Christ*, p. 94.

followers of Basilides, Valentinus, Marcion, and all other partisans of this doctrine which attacked the true humanity of Jesus. A little later the Church no less vigorously repudiated the doctrine of Apollinaris, who, though he did attribute to Jesus a real human *body*, denied Him a human *soul*; and next, that which would only recognise in Him one *nature*, the divine nature (this is the *Monophysite* doctrine); lastly, that which attributed to Him but one *will*, the divine will (the doctrine of the *Monothelites*). All these facts prove how little the Church was disposed to give herself up, with regard to the person of Christ, to headlong impulses of speculation; how it remained, on the contrary, firmly fixed on the immovable rock of the witness of history, both with regard to the humanity and divinity of its Head. Springing originally from the consciousness of Jesus, the affirmation of His divinity was repeated by the apostles, reproduced by the doctors of the Church, embodied in the hymns of the whole Church, in the midst of the fires of persecution and martyrdom; and this testimony of Jesus is re-echoed to us to this day, reaching us from all the voices of Christian antiquity, to confirm us in our faith, and to make us conquerors in the great crisis into which we are about to enter. "Who is he that overcometh the world," says St. John, "but he that confesseth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

III. But is so great a prodigy as that of the union of the divine and human natures in one only person possible? Can the divine perfections dwell together

in one and the same life with human imperfection? the omniscience of the Infinite Spirit with the ignorance which belongs to finite beings,—omnipotence with weakness—omnipresence with that localization by virtue of which everything that is bodily can only occupy one place at one time?

The Divine manner of being, I must acknowledge, is not compatible with our present human manner of existence. But that is precisely the reason on account of which Scripture teaches two things: first, That Jesus had to lay down His Divine manner of existence—His “*form of God*,”<sup>1</sup>—in order to become man; second, That in order to regain His Divine condition, a glorious transformation was effected in His humanity by means of the ascension.

I say, a laying down, a stripping of Himself. St. Paul describes this supreme event in these words, “He who was in the form of God emptied Himself,<sup>2</sup> and took upon Him the form of a servant.”<sup>3</sup>

Nowhere is it said that, during His earthly existence, Jesus possessed omniscience. The gospel history attributes to Him a knowledge that was supernatural, equal, or even, doubtless, superior to that possessed by the prophets. We see proofs of this in the conversations with Nathanael and with the woman of Samaria, as well as in many other passages in His life. But omniscience He does not seem, to judge from the sacred narrative, to have

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Such is the precise meaning of the Greek words translated in our English version, “humbled Himself.”—Tr.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. ii. 6-8.

possessed. Did He not ask for information, and that sincerely, when He said, "Where have ye laid him?" "Who touched Me?" Finally, does He not declare that He does not Himself know the day of His second advent?<sup>1</sup> Now, omniscience is not partial. Either a person has it—and in that case he has it entire—or he has it not. That supernatural knowledge which Jesus possessed was then specifically different from omniscience. It might well be a divine kind of knowledge, in this sense, that it was constantly and freely derived from God; but it was not the divine attribute of omniscience.

The sacred record, again, recognises in Jesus during His abode here below, a miraculous power. But was this power omnipotence? Had it been so, would Jesus have had to obtain everything by prayer? Would He have said, "Father, I thank Thee, for I know that Thou hearest Me always"?<sup>2</sup> Or would He have said, "The works which My Father hath given Me the power to do"? No, His supernatural power, though superior to that of the prophets, does not seem to have been omnipotence.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus, during His earthly existence, could exert power at a distance; but, nevertheless, He did not possess omnipresence. He really bore His body from one place to another; He walked till He was exhausted with fatigue; and His friends could say of Him, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. John xi. 34; St. Mark v. 30 and xiii. 32.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xi. 41, 42.

<sup>3</sup> Compare the third lecture, "The Miracles of Jesus Christ."

<sup>4</sup> St. John xi. 21, 32.

We may even extend what we have here said further, and apply it to His moral qualities, His wisdom, His holiness, His love. Divine perfections neither grow nor diminish. But Jesus "*increased*" in wisdom as well as stature. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered."<sup>1</sup> He Himself does not shrink from thus expressing Himself, "I sanctify Myself,"<sup>2</sup> which no doubt means: I impress by degrees upon all that constitutes my human existence the seal of a perfect consecration. His love, again,—did it not grow from the time of His infancy, during which His affection extended no farther than to those nearest Him,—through His youth, in which His whole nation became the object of His fervent love,—up to His maturity, when His heart opened itself to the sense of the miseries of the whole world, and He voluntarily offered Himself to bear the sins of whatever calls itself by the name of man? This is not the unchangeable wisdom, holiness, love of God; it is the growing wisdom, holiness, charity of a man, which grows by trial and conflict, and advances gradually to perfection.

Even while maintaining the identity of His personality, Jesus so stripped Himself of His divine state of being, that in order to make Himself room to live a truly human life, He had to lose, during the first portion of His earthly existence, the consciousness of His divine life, and, if I may venture the expression, of His glorious past. Otherwise how could He have been really, as Holy Scripture says He

<sup>1</sup> Heb. v. 8.<sup>2</sup> St. John xvii. 19.

was, a child, a young man, like to all others, differing from them only in the absence in Him of sin? No doubt He must soon have perceived, by this very difference, that He stood in a quite peculiar relation to God; and it is in this sense that at the age of twelve years He could already call Him *His* Father. But if we carefully weigh the expressions used in Holy Scripture, we are led to believe that it was not till the hour of His baptism that, by a divine communication then made to His spirit, the consciousness of His eternal origination, and of the personal relation in which He stood to God, was given Him. The divine declaration, "Thou art My Son," was not a superfluous assurance. It revealed Jesus to Himself, and became the foundation of the revelation which He made of Himself to the world. He returned, at that moment, once for all, in regard to His personal *consciousness*, into the bosom of His Father. He was not yet, it is true, restored to the divine *manner of being*. But He entered into the clear perception of what He was to God, as the eternal object of His love, and of how God was to Him *the Father*, in a unique sense. And even while remaining in voluntary humility in the human condition, which He had freely accepted, He could from thenceforth utter such words as these: "No man knoweth the Son but the Father, nor the Father but the Son."<sup>1</sup> "Before Abraham was, I am."<sup>2</sup> I beg leave here to reproduce the admirable words of M. le Pasteur Verny, which M. de Pressensé lately quoted in the very interesting pages which he dedicated to

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xi. 27.

<sup>2</sup> St. John viii. 58.

him: "If every generation of men, conceived and born in sin, begets, and forms to live after it, a new generation tainted with sin; and if the Saviour came in order to break this chain of an evil tradition, He must have been Himself more than a link in that chain. That He might lay hold of it with firm hand, and break it off in the midst of its course, He had to take up a position, and to have a standing ground, outside and above it. That He might heal the diseased tree of humanity, it was necessary that He should be Himself more than one of its branches, or one of the fruits of that tree,—even the noblest and sweetest of those fruits; for even the noblest and sweetest still has within it a worm gnawing at its core. It was not enough that He should arrive, without deliberate purpose, borne upon those waves of time which bear upon their bosom the generations of mankind; it was not for Him to submit Himself to that state of life imposed upon us in virtue of which we are born in this or that age of the world's course, and are, whether we wish it or not, the children of that age. No, it was necessary that He should be a fresh spring, introduced from without,—the Head and Father of a new humanity and new history,—a second Adam, as St. Paul calls Him; that He should come freely because He willed it, and only because He willed it."<sup>1</sup>

This testimony He gave to Himself, not with a view to any vain pleasure in glorifying Himself,—on the contrary, He knew that it was the very thing which would cost Him His life,—but that He might

<sup>1</sup> *Verny et Robertson*, p. 16.

accomplish His mission, which was to glorify God in the earth. In order to make the world understand how good is God, He had to reveal Him in His character as a Father; and in order to reveal Him fully as a Father, He must reveal Himself as a Son. To make men understand how God loves them, He must make them appreciate at its true value the greatness of the gift which God was making them; and for that end it was evidently necessary to tell them *who* He Himself was, and what He was in relation to His Father: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son."<sup>1</sup> In order, finally, to make us appreciate what we are to God, and how precious we are to Him, it was evidently necessary to lift the veil which hides His own greatness, and to tell us that in His person mankind are become the family of the eternal Son, the dwelling-place of Deity itself. The revelation of Himself was the sole means of completely revealing God to us.

But this putting off of His divine manner of life was not to be for ever. Destined to give place to a real human existence, it was to come to its end as soon as the latter had reached its perfection. For this humanity, brought to its maturity in the person of Jesus Christ, was becoming fitted to be raised in Him into the possession of that glory which He had enjoyed before He became incarnate.

This return into His divine manner of being we see before us in the ascension. Already in the moment of transfiguration the elevation of Jesus into glory was nearly consummated. But He would not

<sup>1</sup> St. John iii. 16.



accept it then. He had still a task to fulfil,—that which was the subject of His conversation with Moses and Elias upon the mountain-top. He was indeed willing to mount up again into the heavenly life, but not so that He should leave the human race behind Him, as would have happened had He re-entered heaven at that time.

This was the reason why He refused to return with Moses and Elias to the Father, who seemed to be calling Him from out of the cloud. He descended from the mountain in order that He might go and “*die at Jerusalem,*” as He said to the heavenly messengers. This painful necessity interrupted for a moment the progress of His glorification, upon which He had entered; but when once this condition of our salvation was fulfilled, His upward journey began once more. The resurrection and ascension were its two decisive moments. Jesus was restored to that divine manner of life which He had quitted. This is that for which He prayed in these words: “Father, glorify Thou Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.”<sup>1</sup>

But do not believe that, in order to recover the divine condition, He had first to put off His human nature. Rather than separate Himself from that, He raised it into a higher condition, and rendered it capable of being elevated in His own person to the throne. Was it not as the *Son of Man* that Stephen saluted Him from the threshold of the kingdom of glory? Was it not as “*the Lamb that had been slain*” that St. John contemplates Him, seated on the throne

<sup>1</sup> St. John xvii. 5.

of the Divine Majesty, in the Apocalyptic vision? Did not St. Paul know, in his own personal experience, and by virtue of having seen the Lord Himself on the way to Damascus, that it was indeed "*bodily*" that "the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him"?<sup>1</sup> Lastly, does not Jesus Himself say that it is as the *Son of Man* that He will return to judge the quick and the dead?<sup>2</sup>

How can our human life be in this way raised in Christ to the dignity of an organ of the divine perfection? Behind the veil of that cloud with which God enshrouded Jesus at the moment of His ascension, there passed over Him a transformation, by virtue of which it became possible for His humanity to be associated with the divine glory. Not till then was the Creation of Humanity completed, and God's plan respecting man realized. He had, no doubt, created him in His image; but this first man was but a sketch in outline. The true man, whom He definitively willed to call into being, was born at Bethlehem, was growing into the perfection of moral stature up to the crucifixion, and was consummated in the ascension. "Ye shall be as Gods," the Tempter had said. Such was indeed the divine intention; but the object of the Tempter in holding out that prospect was but to make man turn aside from the true path. Jesus rediscovered that true path—*obedience*; and by faithfully following it, He realized for us the divine purpose. Holiness was the condition of glory.

<sup>1</sup> Col. ii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. St. Matt. xxvi. 64; St. Luke xxi. 36; St. John v. 27.

God's plan once realized in *one* man, what remained but that which had been effected in the One should be accomplished in all? Now that is precisely the work which began immediately upon the elevation of Jesus. It opened on the day of Pentecost, and it lasts throughout the economy in which we are living, which in the purpose of God is but a permanent Pentecost. The Spirit of Jesus associates us with His holiness, and thereby prepares us to share His glory. He communicates to each believer that sanctified and glorified humanity which was realized in the person of Jesus, and He substitutes it for our own which had become soiled and corrupted. Thus the Spirit creates in Jesus, upon this earth, a spiritual body, an *ensemble* of living organs — the Church. And when this body shall have reached the amount of spiritual growth which is proportioned to the celestial greatness of its Head; when it shall have come, as St. Paul said, to "*the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*,"<sup>1</sup> then this its Head will raise it up to Himself, and will associate it with Himself in His divine manner of existence. It is to effect this that Christ is to return. His advent will be for the whole Church what the ascension was for His own person.

We ask that the self-contradiction with which this plan is charged should be pointed out to us, and the supposed internal inconsistencies between the elements of which it is composed should be stated. When once it is granted that God is love,—that a love truly *divine* cannot but be admirable in counsel and

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv. 13.

magnificent in the means which it employs,—that the essence of love is its self-sacrifice to the utmost degree possible,—and that the measure of possibility for God is infinite, what is left to object to? Humanity has only to humble itself and give thanks. What floods of light does this view shed over our earthly existence! How holy, how grand, it becomes in the light of that final result which is held out to it,—God *wholly in us*, as He had once grown to be *wholly in Christ*! God became man in One man, in order that by faith in this One all others might be raised into the closest and most direct union with God Himself!

IV. The purpose of God, then, in the incarnation of His Son is no longer a mystery: and we can now grasp the practical side of this great fact, the cardinal event of the history of the world.

In establishing the truth of the divinity of Jesus Christ, we are told we lose a brother. The truth rather is, that by establishing this fact of the divinity of our Saviour, we gain God Himself for our brother, and that by our union with this brother we become fit to share in the state of Deity.

One man added to the sum of humanity like all the rest,—could we account that a great gain for mankind? One branch more added to a tree already crowded with similar ones,—could that effect any change in the nature of the tree? But, on the other hand, a graft inserted into it,—that might transform both the sap and the fruits. If Jesus was no more than one other man added to the sum of

those that had been born of woman, whose body was brought in as a new contribution to earth's clay, I do not clearly see what this life should have contained that could be in any way decisive for the destiny of mankind, or for my own. But if in Him a being of a superior order, and even divine, assimilated Himself to us in nature, then the great thought of God with regard to humanity and to myself discovers itself to my sight.

What was the purpose of God in creating Nature? It was to arrive ultimately at bringing into existence the free being, man. What was His purpose in creating man? To produce at last the *holy* being,—capable of standing in a moral relation to Him, to become the organ of His will, His visible representative, His free and glorious living agent. And in whose interest did He conceive this His purpose? In the interest of one man only? No, but of all men. There has existed a God-man, in order that in Him we all, becoming His brothers by His incarnation, might be transformed into a family of creatures in whom the paternal love of God might shine forth in its glory;—even in a certain sense a family of God-men. I should not dare to use such an expression, if St. Paul himself had not, in speaking of the Son, written the words: “That He might become the firstborn among many brethren.”<sup>1</sup>

Ah! we cannot, any more than “liberal Christianity,” sell to men this title of “Son of God,” at a price. No, but yet it is a title which seems to us too sacred to be given away or thrown heedlessly to the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 29.

first comer. We could not find it in our heart to address the first man we met, with great words used in a vague, indefinite way, to flatter his pride: "You are a Son of God!" But yet, with humble and profound gratitude, we can say to each one of you, in the name of the Word made flesh, God calls you to *become* His children—His sons and daughters. That which you all are by calling, you may all become in reality. Only, if your sin is not to put an obstacle in your path, and if your glorious destination is to be actually reached by you, you must suffer Him who by right of His own nature is in truth the Son of God, to be born and live in you; and for that, all that is required of you is to apprehend Him by faith, by whom you have been apprehended as members of the human race.

Father, Thou understandest the art by which to lift Thy child to the level of Thine own moral life; that is, by Thyself descending to the level of his, and by so humbling Thyself as to share his thoughts, his interests, his pleasures. So dost Thou gradually raise him into moral fellowship with Thyself. It is love which has taught to thee the secret of that art. It is that which God exercises towards thee. He humbled Himself to thee, in order to raise thee to Himself. Aim not then at *being* a son of God, but at *becoming* such. Aim at becoming so, not *as* Christ did,—as if thou couldst climb up with Him, and on thy two feet, the steps of the divine throne! No, become so *in* Him, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; in Him who wills to realize in thee the union of the divine and human natures as He

has realized it in Himself. Jesus summed this up in these words: "Thou in Me, Father, and I in Thee."<sup>1</sup> Such is the Christianity of Jesus Christ. Christ is the living ladder which carries us up to the throne. In His incarnation, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, there is offered to each of us the power of reaching to where He is. Go thou, and let the work of thy life be to change this glorious possibility into a sublime, an eternal reality! Accept Pentecost, and thou shalt reach the ascension.

<sup>1</sup> St. John xvii. 23.

VII

THE IMMUTABILITY OF THE  
APOSTOLIC GOSPEL

WITH REFERENCE TO THE PERSON OF CHRIST

BEING A REPORT PRESENTED TO THE SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE AT BASLE





## VII

### *THE IMMUTABILITY OF THE APOSTOLIC GOSPEL*

WE read in St. Mark iii. 32 the following words: "And the multitude sat about Him." It is just in this light that I like to consider the present assembly. I see in spirit the Lord sitting in the midst of us, and the representatives of the churches, at once one and diverse, who make up His Body here below, gathered around Him, ready to receive all that He will have to say to them. And the watchword which He seems to me to be giving us at this moment is this: "*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.*"

My colleague, M. d'Orelli, has just been speaking to us on the Immutability of the Apostolic Gospel with reference to the *work* of Christ.

But, in this redemptive work, there is one point of cardinal importance to which the thesis of the immutability of the Gospel as preached by the apostles applies more especially, and that is, the doctrine of the *person* of the Redeemer. From the first, that which Christ was personally to the apostles determined the idea which they formed to themselves of the importance of His mission. This point

was, however, at first wrapped up, as it were, and involved in His work as a whole. But by degrees it was brought out distinctly, and it at last stood out as the culminating point of the Apostolic Gospel in such sort, that the absolute worth of the Christian salvation never fully shone forth upon the eyes of the world till the moment at which Christ was presented to it as "the Word made flesh."

To deny this central verity, the essential and personal divinity of our Lord, is therefore, *ipso facto*, to condemn oneself to modify the Apostolic Gospel in two important particulars; it is to run the risk of lowering the level of its religious and moral efficacy, if I may so express myself, *along the whole line*. And if so, this will in fact be—even though many affirm the precise opposite—to deliver Christianity, weakened, and, as it were, disarmed, into the hands of the hostile powers which are at this moment more than ever threatening it.

And yet this is what, nevertheless, a great number of very earnest thinkers and writers are doing. I am not thinking of those who recognise no difference but of degree between Jesus and ourselves,—who see in Him no more than a man, holier than we are, whose beneficent appearance amongst us has served to perfect in our consciousness the moral ideal, in such a way that those who come after Him, and even His contemporaries, could arrive at confounding this ideal with the personage in whom it had been manifested to them in a more radiant light. No; I am now thinking of those men, whether theologians or others, who, in ever-increasing numbers, recognise in Jesus

the predestined Saviour of the human race, the elect of God, the central Man, raised up to lead mankind to the realization of their destiny, but who, notwithstanding all this, think of Him as no more than a mere man who had no existence, any more than we had, previously to His coming to earth. So that if they accord Him the title of *God*, it is not as a God made man that the Church adores Him; it is as a man whom God has associated with Himself in His universal sovereignty. Here is the limit beyond which men have determined not to pass. As to the opposite conception, that which has prevailed in the Church up to our day, men see in it only a metaphysical theory of Alexandrian origin which has broken into Christian theology in the wake of a great movement of thought stirred by the appearance of the Christ amongst us. Men declare this dogma of the divinity of the Christ to be entirely without importance for the religious and moral life, whether of individual men or of the Church. It would even, it is affirmed, be advantageous to clear away this importation, foreign to the mind of Jesus Christ Himself, out of the Apostolic Gospel. For it is but a weight hampering the progress of His religion in the world and hindering its action, especially in a generation such as ours, which is far less disposed to receive superstitious elements into its faith than were former ones.

With reference to the declarations of the Bible, the procedure of the adversaries of the essential and personal divinity of Christ has gradually modified itself. Formerly, their efforts were directed rather to

the work of bringing down the meaning of the apostolic expressions to the level of their conceptions. But now they show themselves rather disposed to acknowledge the true sense of the Biblical terms, but to deny all binding authority to these declarations.

Our task, in presence of this great contest, will be, in the first place, to sum up the teaching of the apostles upon the person of Jesus Christ; then to inquire whether the thesis of the essential and personal divinity of the Lord Jesus is in reality a notion of which it would be beneficial to disburden Christianity; in order, finally, to examine what would be the position which we should have given to the Gospel, thus transformed, in the world as it now is.

I. Though we did not ourselves hear the apostles declare what were their thoughts respecting the person of their Master, we possess their writings, in which they express themselves more or less explicitly upon this subject; above all, those of St. Paul, which are the earliest in date.

In his first Epistles, those to the Thessalonians, and then in those to the Galatians, the Corinthians, and Romans, this apostle treats rather of the *work* than of the *person* of the Redeemer. This was a result to which the then condition of the Church naturally led. But yet, even while setting forth the work of salvation and its effects, he cannot help travelling upwards in thought, from time to time, to the person of Him who carries it on. Thus, in the Epistle to the Romans,<sup>1</sup> he declares that "God

<sup>1</sup> viii. 3.

has sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, to condemn sin in the flesh." All these expressions: *His own Son*, to *send*, to *send in the flesh*, leave no room for doubt respecting the thought of the apostle. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians he attributes to Christ the work of the creation of all things, and that of the leading of the children of Israel through the wilderness;<sup>1</sup> all which evidently implies that Christ possessed antecedently to His earthly life a real existence, and one divine in nature. In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians the following is the way in which he draws the picture of the *charity of the Christ*: "He who, being rich, made Himself poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."<sup>2</sup> Riches, then, in His case preceded poverty, and the fruit of His charity was a voluntary laying aside of His riches. He renounced the divine state of existence that He might with us share in the indigence of our human condition, so that by this union with our poverty He might raise ourselves into participation in His divine riches.

This way of looking at the person of Christ is still more clearly seen to have been entertained by the apostle in his subsequent Epistles, those to the Colossians, the Ephesians, and Philippians. As these Epistles are addressed to more advanced Christians who had to be sustained in the way of sanctification, the apostle directs his attention and that of his brethren more profoundly to those "*unsearchable riches of the Christ*"<sup>3</sup> which he had but superficially touched upon in his former letters. Even in these

<sup>1</sup> viii. 6, x. 4.

<sup>2</sup> viii. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. iii. 8.

he had made allusion to that higher kind of teaching, a proof that he was already in intimate possession of its whole contents. Thus he spoke to the Corinthians of "wisdom which he preached," but only "among them that are perfect," that is, among the more advanced Christians. He compared this *wisdom* to the meat with which full-grown men are fed, and he contrasted it with the simple teaching of the way of salvation and justification by faith, which he called milk for babes.<sup>1</sup>

Wherein, then, consisted this higher wisdom of which he thus spoke in covert words even in his earliest letters? We can make this out by these Epistles, written at a later date, which we have just mentioned. It relates to the full knowledge of the dignity of the Christ, the Author of salvation, the Head of the Church. In the Epistle to the Colossians he exhibits to us, in the person of this redeeming Christ, the Creator of all things, of things visible and invisible, heavenly and earthly; He by whom all things consist even at this moment, in such sense that the foundation of the Church is but the crowning act of the creation of the universe, and that these two works of one and the same Author make up, in fact, but one continuous whole. In Philippians, exactly as in the passage in 2 Corinthians quoted just now, he speaks of Christ as having by nature "*the form of God*," the divine manner of being, and then, at the moment of His appearing here below, renouncing this equality with God to which He had the right, taking upon Him, voluntarily, "*the form of*

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 6, iii. 2.

a servant,"—that is, the human condition, and then continuing still further the process of self-humiliation, and of putting off His divine manner of being by rendering Himself, as man, *obedient*, and obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

By this we learn the impression which St. Paul had retained of the apparition of Christ as he had for a moment seen Him on the road to Damascus, and of the internal *revelation which God had given him of His Son*, as a sequel to that apparition.<sup>1</sup> The effect of this double revelation had been so great, that St. Paul had been led by it to sacrifice, without hesitation, all the prejudices and all the repugnances with which his Jewish monotheism must have inspired him against the deification of a man.

We see the same thing in the case of St. John, and that in a still more striking manner. This disciple had spent two or three years in intimacy with Jesus, who had deigned to call him His friend. It was not, then, only the severity of the Israelitish monotheism, it was also the very familiarity of this daily intercourse with Jesus Christ, which must have opposed itself in his mind to every self-willed apotheosis.

And yet in memory of the life of his Friend, and particularly of such words as these, which he had heard from His lips,—“*I am the Resurrection and the Life. . . . I am the true Bread which came down from heaven. . . . What if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before? . . . Before Abraham was, I am. . . . He that hath seen*

<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 15, 16.



*Me hath seen the Father. . . . Father, glorify Thou Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was,*"<sup>1</sup>—in memory, I say, of such declarations, he cannot prevent himself from recognising in Him a being completely exceptional, of divine origin and nature,—“*we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father,*” or from calling Him “*the Word which was in the beginning . . . which was with God, and was God.*” He describes Him as “*the Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*”; as “*the Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us*”; as that “*Adonai*” whom Isaiah had beheld in vision, when he had heard the Seraphim crying before the throne, “*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts.*”<sup>2</sup>

The teaching of the other apostles has not come down to us in so detailed a way. But we can still perceive clearly the sentiment of adoration which they, with the whole primitive Church, entertained towards the person of their Master. Do we not find the Christians of those early ages designated as “*those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus*”?<sup>3</sup> If we recollect the austerity of the Jewish monotheism in that age, this belief, according to which at the sound of one only name men are called upon to fall on their knees, one only can be uttered in adoration without blasphemy—this simple expression, “*those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus,*” will suffice to reveal to us the feeling entertained towards the

<sup>1</sup> St. John xi. 25, vi. 51, 62, viii. 58, xiv. 9, xvii. 5, 24.

<sup>2</sup> St. John i. 9; 1 John i. 2; St. John xii. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Acts ix. 14, 21; cf. Rom. x. 12, 14; 1 Cor. i. 2; 2 Tim. ii. 19.

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person of Jesus by the Apostolic Church. And, besides, we know what this feeling was from the pen of a pagan who wrote at the beginning of the second century, the governor Pliny, who, from a province of Asia Minor then already full of Christians, wrote to the Emperor Trajan, describing their worship: "They sing a hymn to Christ, as God."

The personal divinity of Him through whom God has accomplished our redemption is then clearly the doctrine that was taught by the apostles; it is the faith which the Church received from their lips, and it is by this faith that she has conquered all the powers leagued against her. Has the time arrived, as some thinkers of note would persuade her, for her to give up this faith as an unprofitable or even mischievous extravagance of belief, and to cast it from her like an old rusty sword? This is what we must now inquire into more closely.

II. Every time that I consider this question before God, three convictions seize me, laying hold at the same time of my mind and heart.

First, that it is impossible to detract anything from the doctrine of the essential and personal divinity of the Christ, without at the same time infringing equally upon the belief in the intimacy of the relation between God and man.

Secondly, that whatever detracts from the essential and personal divinity of our Lord, detracts equally from the horror which we feel at that which separates us from God, that is, sin.

Thirdly, that whatever we detract from the essen-

tial and personal divinity of our Lord, detracts *ipso facto* equally from the glorious reality of Christian holiness.

I will now attempt to justify in a few words this threefold conviction.

1. The intimacy of the relation between a superior and one below him depends even more upon what the former is to the latter, than upon the converse. So is it in regard to the relation between God and us. This depends primarily upon what God is to us, and only secondarily upon what we are to God.

But now cut out from the Gospel the gift which God bestows upon us of Jesus *His own Son*, in the full and apostolic meaning of that expression, and you will by so doing have blotted out the revelation of the perfect—the *infinite*—love of God for us. We can no longer exclaim, "God so loved the world!"<sup>1</sup> The real, the perfect, gift of God is that of *Himself*. But deny to Jesus His essentially divine nature, and the gift which God makes us in Jesus is no longer the gift of Himself. The argument of St. Paul, in Rom. v. 7, 8, is thenceforth without validity: "*Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us!*" But if Christ was not God, what parallelism is there between the act of God in giving Him for us, and that of a man who offers for another his own life? And how in that case could one draw from this gift the magnificent conclusion, which the

<sup>1</sup> St. John iii. 16.

apostle draws from it in chapter viii. of the same Epistle: "He who spared not *His own Son*, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Suppose Abraham had offered upon Moriah only one of the sheep of his flock, or even the most faithful and most valued of his servants, could the angel of the Eternal have said, "Now I know" . . .<sup>1</sup> I know that thou art mine,—thou thyself and all that thou hast! And in the case of God and ourselves, would the gift even of the holiest of human beings, or even of the highest of the angels, suffice to draw from our hearts, ever troubled and anxious, and in which the "yes" and "no" succeed each other so ceaselessly, the unhesitating cry to God: "Now I know" . . . !—Thou art mine, and with Thee all things.—If Christ is not personally God, it may indeed still remain true that a man, the perfect man, the central man, as the phrase is, has so loved his race as to sacrifice himself for it, in order to bring it to its highest destination. But in what way is the love of the Father properly implied in the sacrifice of Himself made by one of ourselves? What of *His own* (*ἐκ τοῦ ἰδίου*) does God offer for us, in such a case? I see indeed then in the Gospel a brother man who loves his brethren; but I no longer see in it the Father who loves His children. It seems to me that in such an act man would outshine God! And God, who puts nothing of His own into the gift, nevertheless avails Himself of it to claim all in return for Himself! Was, then, the servant in the

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxii. 12.

parable right who charged his master with reaping where he had not sown?<sup>1</sup> Jesus, on the contrary, gives Himself, and asks nothing in return but for God. Whose is the noble act? Where the generosity? Such a scheme of salvation binds me to the creature, if Christ is only a created being, more than to the Creator. It is in that case man who issues in triumph from the drama of redemption. Thus our human nature is not then so bad as it is represented, since out of it can grow so admirable a fruit. Do not talk to me of faith as the link which binds man to God. It is to man that my faith binds me.

And it is not only the love of the Father which pales in the light of this method of interpretation. The charity of Jesus Himself loses all that is most striking and pointed in the picture of it, as it presented itself to the minds of the apostles. When St. Paul wishes to extirpate from the heart of the Philippians the last remaining roots of the self-conceit and vanity of the natural mind, what does he say to them? "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, . . . made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man.*"<sup>2</sup> This voluntary putting off of His glory by Him who, being in possession of the divine splendours, made Himself man from mere love,—that is the point of the arrow which the apostle drives into our heart, naturally so egotistic and full of vanity, in order to put an end to the reign of self in it. "Self,"

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt, xxv. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. ii, 5-7.

it has been said, "can only be dethroned in the heart of man by a revolution."<sup>1</sup> And this revolution,—the hardest of all that are worked in the history of the world,—a prodigy,—there is but One who has the power to effect, He whom St. Paul places before the eyes of the Philippians. Blot this out,—this prodigy,—the life of the Christ, and there is, indeed, left to you a Christ, who passes out of nothingness into existence, who out of ordinary existence raises Himself into holiness, and, finally, out of holiness into universal sovereignty; who, through a course of agonized struggles through many a—no doubt, painful—phase of human existence, mounts and ever mounts . . . ; but I do not find in this a principle of movement powerful enough to overturn the idol in my heart. I have in me a man whose aspiration it is to make himself God. And if this proud one is to be struck dead, it can only be by the right of the God who makes Himself man, a man who worships, who obeys, who serves with me,—a man to draw me with Him into the self-annihilation which He Himself practises.

He, then, had reached to the truth,—yes, to the utmost depths of the truth,—our revered brother, present in this assembly, from whose lips I once heard this saying: "No man ever gave himself to God, independently of the gift which God has made us of Himself in Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup> Ah! do not call this assertion, I beseech you, a metaphysical subtlety!

<sup>1</sup> The periodical, *L'Église libre*.

<sup>2</sup> Words of M. le Pasteur Fisch addressed to the students of the Faculty of Theology of the Free Church of Neuchâtel.

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Do not call it a mere assertion!—it is a *fact*,—the cardinal fact in the history of our race,—it is the perfect revelation of the divine, paternal and fraternal, love. It is the foundation on which rests our eternal adoption, at the same time that it is the overturning of our spurious and unreal greatness. It is the ultimate spring which God has set in action in order to replace the moral universe on its true basis, to restore Him to His sovereign place in the universe, to bring back the creature to its own place, to its own nothingness, to make love triumph over pride, God over Satan.

2. I have asserted, in the second place, that everything which infringes upon the doctrine of the pre-existence of Jesus Christ, infringes equally upon the degree of horror with which we feel bound to regard sin.

Assuredly the death of the Redeemer, looked upon as no more than the death of an innocent man, might to a certain degree reveal to us the depth of human perversity, and inspire us with horror of it. The sight of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, and of ambition combined with laxity, allied together to accomplish the greatest crime of history, is something too revolting not to exert a certain influence upon every human heart endowed with any moral sensibility. A deeper feeling will not fail to be stirred in me, and to this general and merely human feeling there is added the more personal one of humiliation and repentance which will be called forth in my heart by the mysterious “I for thee!” of which Holy Scripture speaks to me,—even if I see in Him no

more than a man. He, my sinless brother, given for my sinful self! Catching, then, some glimpse of the mercies of God towards repentant mankind, and of His future judgments upon those who continue in sin, I shall feel in my heart, as it were, an echo of the indignation of God against moral evil. But if, receiving into my mind the whole fulness of the apostolic teaching upon this unfathomable fact, I finish by recognising in this brother, so full of love, in this sinless victim, in this Lamb of God, "fore-ordained before the foundation of the world,"<sup>1</sup> the Son Himself—the eternal well-beloved Son, the Word through whom I received my being, who will ere long return to be my Judge; if I see this Divine Word in Him in whom God has chosen to give me, by the death upon the cross, the living exhibition of the punishment I merited,—of what will infallibly await me if I continue in my sin,—then trembling seizes my soul. I understand, then, that the God who has thus acted, on no account makes any terms with sin; sin ceases to be in my view a pardonable weakness; I see in it a deadly enemy, and there is no choice but that one of us, he or I, should perish! A rending of the heart takes place in me like that between two friends of whom one breaks for ever with the other. The mysterious expressions of St. Paul, *to die to sin, to be crucified with Christ, to be baptized into His death,*<sup>2</sup> become to my mind mighty realities. It is the faith in the Son of God sacrificed for me, and it is that alone, which could produce that effect in

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. i. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. vi. 2; Gal. ii. 20; Rom. vi. 3.



me! Nothing less could have had the power to snatch me out of the unclean embraces of sin.

3. The believer dies in Christ to sin, to his own individual life; but he dies, like Christ, not to remain dead, but to rise again. Holiness, the holy life of Christ Himself, lays itself open to him as the sanctuary through which he passes, by this grave and gate of death, to Himself. "*I am crucified with Christ,*" says St. Paul, "*nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*"<sup>1</sup>

These words of St. Paul express in incomparable language the substance of the third of those convictions of which I spoke just now; namely this,—that whatever we detract from the essential and personal divinity of the Christ, detracts also from the reality of the holiness which constitutes your glorious distinction. Two expressions strike me in the words I have just quoted, and their correlation is instructive to me: "*The Son of God loved me,*" and "*the Christ liveth in me.*" I see here two inseparable things—*the Son of God*, and *Christ in me*. One man could not live in another. A man leaves us a legacy of his memory, his example, his teachings. But he does not himself live again in us. If Jesus is no more than a holy man, a perfected man, the normal man, the Christian sanctification will be reduced quite naturally to the sincere effort to follow and to imitate Him. And then the Church will be

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

nothing more than an association of well-disposed persons, who combine together to do good in the common contemplation of their pattern, Jesus Christ. Such is the level to which immediately descend the highest and most glorious ideas of what the Gospel is, as soon as men have struck away from off the head of the Christ His crown of divinity. But—trust Scripture and experience—the true Christian holiness is something other than an effort, an aspiration of man; it is a communication of God to man; it is Christ in person who comes to dwell in us by the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, St. Paul calls Christ not only “*our righteousness*,” but also “*our sanctification*.”<sup>1</sup> And, in St. John, Jesus expresses Himself thus: “*I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you*”; “*In that day*” (that of the coming of the Holy Spirit) “*ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in Me, and I in you*”; “*he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, . . . and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him*”; “*because I live, ye shall live also*.” Who must he be who not only comes to dwell in us by the Holy Spirit, but whose dwelling in us is at the same time the indwelling of the Father! “*Without Me ye can do nothing*,” continues Jesus; “*I am the Vine, ye are the branches; he that dwelleth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit*”; “*the Spirit will glorify Me*.”<sup>2</sup> The Divine Spirit does not communicate a man to other men. The Divine Spirit does not glorify a man in the heart and in the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i. 30.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xiv. 18, 20, 21, 23, and 19, xv. 1, 5, xvi. 14.

life of other men. The Divine Spirit glorifies a Divine Being, the Son, who in turn glorifies the Father. Such is the requirement of the Christian monotheism, summed up in the Baptismal formula. And that is at the same time the secret of the Christian sanctification: Holiness *is* Christ, and God in Christ, dwelling in us by the Holy Spirit. And the Church, what is that? It is not only a voluntary association of sincere followers of Jesus Christ. It is *the body of Christ*, the living organ which He fills with His fulness, — His “in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead.”<sup>1</sup>

Oh, how God’s thought overpasses the poor narrow limits within which man’s thought tries to crib and confine it! A few days before his death, the man in whom above others Switzerland glories, and who made to shine into this same city the first beamings of that light which he was afterwards to make to break forth upon the world with so great a brilliancy, — Vinet, — said to one of the brethren here present: “There is a strange baseness on the part of man in his refusal of the gift which God makes us of a Christ-God.” This word “baseness” here has in it a great severity. It expresses what such a refusal would have been for him who uttered this sentiment, when looked at from the point of view of his own convictions. It would be unfair to make use of it to condemn any individual person. There may exist — facts prove it — a sincere piety, an earnest love of Jesus Christ, an enthusiastic admiration for His person and His work, even in a man who cannot

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i. 23; Col. ii. 9.

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bring himself to see in Him more than the perfect man. There are even many men who only refuse Him any higher dignity, because they fear to lose Him in His character of true man, perfect man. Wherever such a loyal devotion to Him exists, it cannot fail to produce beneficial impressions. When Jesus was living on earth, was it not enough to touch the border of His garment, in order to experience a virtue coming forth from Him? Every contact of the heart with the person of Jesus communicates to the sincere soul some holy power.

But observe particularly that we are not now treating of the conditions of individual salvation. We are just now speaking of the conditions of Christianity itself,—of the maintenance of its function as a humanitarian religion. We are thinking of what would become of the gospel if we imported into it so considerable a modification as that of reducing the dignity of the Christ to the level of merely the normal representative of mankind. Could Christianity then still retain for any length of time that position of the universal religion which it has conquered for itself during, now, eighteen centuries?

From all that I have been saying, it seems to me to follow that, from the moment in which the Church should give her consent to this lowering of the Person of her Head, would infallibly date the darkening of the revelation of God on earth, as well as the setting up again of the pride of man, a marked enfeeblement of the dread called forth in the conscience of man by sin, and, as it were, a vaporization of the sanctifying power of the Gospel; and, consequently, a decline,

in all respects, of the moral and religious influence of the Gospel upon society and the Church.

In conclusion, it only remains for me to inquire what would be the inevitable fate of Christianity when thus deprived of a large part of its internal force, and cramped in its effectiveness. Could one reasonably entertain the hope of seeing it reigning still for any length of time as the leading power of civilisation, retaining its moral supremacy, and victoriously resisting the enemies it has in former times conquered, but who would rise again then from the battlefield, and threaten it with one final wrestle—even that unto death?

III. Who are these adversaries? They are, it seems to me,—for I beg you to notice that here, since throughout this discussion I am speaking in the name of no one but myself, I alone am responsible for the judgments to which I am about to give utterance,—these adversaries are, it seems to me, on the one hand, pagan materialism, on the other, Jewish Deism.

Assuredly the greater part of those who see in Jesus Christ nothing more than the normal man, morally perfect, are entirely free from all sympathy with modern materialism. It is not the less true that if one looks, not at their own personal beliefs, but at the drift of the ideas by which they are possessed, there exists a closer connection than they imagine between their point of view and the tendency which is at present swaying the thoughts of this age.

There are—is it not true?—two ways of conceiv-

ing of the manner of development of the universe. According to one of these, everything rises to higher levels,—grows,—progresses, by its own inherent force. From this point of view the whole process is summed up in a course of *becoming*. According to the other view, the only cause why all things ascend, is that they all first descended. And according to this, the idea which governs the whole is that of *being*,—being as the governing principle of *becoming*.

From the first point of view, the highest term of the progressive development of all things—at least hitherto—is man, the perfect man, if he exists. This consummate man makes his appearance, on this view, as the perfected fruit of the tree of humanity. The human race itself, again, is viewed as the culminating point of organized life upon our globe. And what else is organized life itself but the admirable product of a happy combination of the physical and chemical forces? And these, again, can only be the manifold manifestations of the force that exists in Nature, inherent from the beginning in matter. This view, one can see, forms a whole firmly bound together. It is a history of the universe in which all things ascend, nothing descends. Its starting-point is matter, considered as eternal, and its terminal product is man,—first, man simply, and then the perfect man, the Christ.

How, then, can such a conception of Christianity contend successfully with the materialistic conception of the universe, since, as we have just seen, it is—or, at least, it may be—only its last expression. Once more, let me here say, I am pointing out what seems

to me the drift and tendency of the theory, not a deliberate conclusion which I have any idea of imputing to anyone.

According to the opposite conception of universal development, everything proceeds from a Being, not who *becomes*, but who *is*, God. And it is only by a series of communications proceeding from Him that everything *becomes* and progresses. By a first act of His will, He calls forth matter with its various attributes. When this matter has been sufficiently elaborated, He Himself deposits in it the germ of life; for life is the product only of a living being. From that moment, the organic molecule works out its development through all the successive spheres of growth, both of vegetable and animal life. Then when the hour of a new movement of ascent has struck, in the heart of organic life, God, by a new communication from Himself, causes to bud forth that higher principle of free and intelligent existence,—spirit,—a breath from Himself. Man appears upon the scene with a will, self-conscious, and mistress of itself,—an image of that of God Himself. And when, at last, this free will, instead of making progress in the direction of holiness, by supporting itself upon the will of God, takes up a position of complete rebellion against its Creator, God draws new resources out of the inner treasures of His love, and brings forth yet one supreme gift, which He doubtless would not have refused to humanity had it remained obedient and faithful, but which in that case would have taken a different form. He gives to the world a second Self; He grafts Him upon the

stock of the fallen race; and by His life, death, and resurrection, He not only lifts humanity out of its fallen state, but by the same act He raises it to its sublime destination by lifting it into personal and perfect union with Himself, first, in the person of the Christ, and then, through Him, in ours.

This was the goal foreseen and intended from eternity. The incarnation of the Son of God is the last word of that monotheistic idea of the universe, according to which each of the great phases of progress has been called forth by the divine initiation.

On one side we see a Man who becomes God: such is the Christ who corresponds with the spirit of this age. This has been well called a bold assertion.

On the other side we see the God who of His own will makes Himself man. Such is the Christ of the living monotheism. It is the prodigy of love.

But supposing that the former of these two conceptions succeeds in liberating itself from its alarming "solidarity" with the modern spirit, it will have immediately to encounter a second enemy still more formidable to it—the Jewish Deism.

On hearing this word, *Jewish*, many of you perhaps smile. That which bears that title does not seem to them very dangerous for the Church. They do not say, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" but, "Can anything dangerous to us come from thence?" To this contemptuous smile I will oppose another, that of the Israelites themselves,—I mean, the intelligent Israelites,—when they see us Christians bestirring ourselves for the propaga-



tion of the Gospel, founding societies and building houses for missions, sending preachers of Christianity to the Mahometans and the heathen, and carrying the religion of the Bible to the ends of the earth. This religion, they say quietly, is our religion. All these pains you take are taken for us. These sums of money laid out, these lives sacrificed,—it is ourselves who will reap the fruit of them. For the God of the Christians is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of the Jews. The doctrine of Jesus is none other than that of our prophets. One thing only separates us from these Christians: the worship of the Christ. Let this absurd dogma of the divinity of a Man,—one that is contrary to the most elementary principles of monotheism,—let this last remnant of the ancient paganism living on in Christianity fall to the ground, and the Gospel, thus purified, is Judaism! Christians, we are waiting for you! It is not we who are coming to you; it is you who are coming quietly over to us. Not so quick, my friends! —So think, and so sometimes speak, clear-sighted Jews. What is it, then, that those among our teachers who labour to lower the person of the Christ to the level of a mere man, of the normal man, are doing? They are fulfilling, without being conscious of it, the expectations and fervent wishes of Judaism; they are labouring, without intending it, to give over Christianity to it. And that would indeed be the right way to pacify this ancient enemy; but not to triumph over him. Proceed, ye blind leaders of the blind! Undermine, amongst our populations, the faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ,

and the ground will soon be cleared for the advent of the final monarchy,—of the Israelitish Empire,—and for the appearance of the carnal Christ in whom it will personify itself.

IV. At the end of the first century of the Church, St. John, witnessing the first acts of hostility of the pagan power and the first successes of heresy, addressed to the Christians about him these words: "*Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*"<sup>1</sup> This watchword, coming to us from the apostle who had leaned on the breast of the Lord,—can it have lost its value in our day? Can the secret of the victory of the Church have ceased to lie in the faith in the divinity of its Head?

The eminent writer who has just been retracing in France the story of the first three centuries of the Church,<sup>2</sup> was saying to us recently: "If Arianism had won the victory, there would have been an end of Christianity." This saying applies as much to contemporary Socinianism, as to the Arianism of former days.

The moment you deny to the Christ His divine nature, you take away from Christianity its definitive character. Christianity becomes then, according to the expression of a French philosopher,<sup>3</sup> no more than "one of the days of humanity"; it becomes only one of the stages on the onward march of the world's progress, which cannot fail to be followed, sooner or later, by another stage. You thereby open the door

<sup>1</sup> 1 John v. 5.

<sup>2</sup> M. de Pressensé.

<sup>3</sup> Lerminier.

to that "Other" whom the carnal heart of man demands, and whom Jesus foretold in these words: "*I am come in the Name of My Father, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive!*" (ἐκείνου λήψεσθε).<sup>1</sup> An ominous saying, pregnant with a dark future!

We are warned, dear brethren,—warned by our Master! Let us then watch!

We have already been reminded that this city, which receives us all hospitably in our day, witnessed in former times another assembly which, speaking officially, was of greater importance than ours. It was convoked with the object of driving back within its proper limits that usurping power which was tyrannizing over the Church, and of restoring to the latter her immemorial right of self-government.

Representing, as we that are here gathered together do, the different Churches which form the body of Christ on earth, our task is more modest, and very different. We have no official decisions to arrive at in order to impress a different direction upon the onward march of Christianity. We are not called to depose, or to emancipate any man. But we have a work to do, a work purely personal to ourselves, an inward work, to be done immediately, and to which I invite you at this moment; it is to place ourselves, each one of us, individually and all together, before the Head of the Church, and to say to Him, "My Lord and my God! Behold me here at Thy feet! I adore Thee! Make use of me in the work of maintaining this Gospel which Thou

<sup>1</sup> St. John v. 43.

hast given to Thine apostles, and which they have transmitted to Thy Church! Make use of my voice, of my life, of my whole person, to render homage to Thy supreme Love, by proclaiming till the end Thine eternal divinity!"

To Him, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, be glory in the Church, as in the past, so now, and to all eternity!

### THESES

1. The immutability of the Apostolic Gospel holds especially with regard to the teaching of the apostles respecting the Person of Christ.

2. It is impossible to attack the doctrine of the personal divinity of the Saviour, in the form in which the apostles teach it, without bringing about the result of an enfeeblement of the religious and moral power of the Gospel.

3. Thus enfeebled, Christianity would be powerless to contend victoriously against its ancient enemies, pagan Materialism and Jewish Deism.

4. The pressing duty, then, of evangelical Christians is to bear open testimony to the personal divinity of the Head of the Church.





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