

gradually weakened by the upgrowth of deeply rooted love of the things of the present life; and that in these, even while they were professing to wait for the coming and Kingdom of Christ, there sprang up first doubt and then disbelief that the iron hand of death could be made to release its prey, and bodies once laid in the grave or reduced to ashes could participate in endless life. Such disbelief would assume the form of denial of the resurrection; for it would be prompted by the difficulty of conceiving the process of resurrection. But it would practically involve a denial of life beyond death; for this had been put before them only in connection with the uprising of the body.

Such is my reconstruction of the creed of those whom I venture to call the Corinthian Sadducees. In another paper I shall endeavour to support this reconstruction by an exposition of the arguments with which St. Paul refutes it. If I can shew, as I hope to shew, that against these opinions every argument of the Apostle bears with full force, I shall do something to prove that, at least in its main features, my reconstruction is correct. And among these arguments I shall pay special attention to that contained in the allusion to those who were *baptized for the dead*.

JOSEPH AGAR BEET.

THE HISTORICAL CHRIST OF ST. PAUL.

INTRODUCTION.

THE design we have here in view is an attempt to discover to what extent the facts of the Four Gospels are confirmed by the statements of the four undoubted Pauline Epistles. The field of research is by no means new. It was first suggested to us by Dr. Stanley Leathes in his Boyle Lecture for 1869, and it has since formed the subject of many essays

and articles. There are, however, some fields which become fresh and green in proportion as they are trodden. A narrative of facts loses its freshness after the first recital; but an account of the relation which these facts bear to one another will become more fresh with every recital. The relations of things cannot be comprehended at a glance; the bearings of those which have been comprehended cannot at a glance be seen. Every fact in the universe bears some reference to every other fact, and the study of all its meanings would be practically an infinite study. It is therefore so far an advantage not to be the first in such a field; the merit of its discovery belongs to its discoverer, but the extent of its boundaries and the possibility of its treasures are problems to be solved by the subsequent explorer.

To the Biblical student of the nineteenth century the importance of the present inquiry must at once be evident. We say to the Biblical student of the nineteenth century; to the student of any other century it might well appear a superfluous task. When Paley wrote his "Evidences of Christianity" he never dreamed that it would be incumbent on him to get back behind the Gospels. The Christian apologist was held to be in possession of four direct witnesses to the events of the life of Christ, who had each left a narrative of his experiences, and whose narrative had been attested by the testimony of the immediately succeeding age. The birth of what is called "the higher criticism" has made it no longer possible for the Biblical scholar to take these things for granted. The positions which the last century deemed impregnable have been subjected to a vehement attack, and a battle has been waged around them which is not yet decided. The school of Tübingen has professed to tear up from the roots the sources of Christian history. It has promised to shew that the Gospels of the Four Witnesses, so far from being the production of Christ's disciples and contemporaries, are the product of an age

later by a hundred years ; an age which had outgrown the memory of the earliest Christian impressions, and which had entered into a circle of thought where it was impossible to recall them. It has endeavoured to transform the narrative of the Acts into a legend of myths designed to exhibit the reconciliation of abstract principles which had hitherto proved a source of discord in the early Christian church. It has swept away most of those testimonies which were once referred to the men called *Apostolic Fathers*, to mark the fact that they were the immediate followers of the apostles. The Epistle of Barnabas has been proved not to belong to Barnabas ; the Letters of Ignatius have been reduced to a minimum ; the Shepherd of Hermas has been attributed to a later age ; one Epistle of Clement and one of Polycarp are alone allowed to remain as the probable patristic products of the first century.

In the midst of this disintegration one naturally asks where he ought to turn. The sources of information which he hitherto believed to be the original wellspring appear to assume the aspect of derivative streams, whose own origin is lost in the past. What should be the attitude of mind which under these circumstances the apologist ought to adopt? Shall he suspend his judgment until the researches of the age determine the value of the disputed documents? That is tantamount to giving up the argument. Shall he fall back upon internal evidences, and leave the historical facts to the tender mercies of the critic? That has, in general, been the modern tendency. The outworks of Christianity have been imperilled, and its defenders have retired within the fortress. They have entrenched themselves behind ramparts which they believe to be unassailable. They have taken refuge in those eternal principles of truth which they find expressed and implied throughout the Sacred Volume, and have sought to rest the evidence of Christianity on its indisputable adaptation to the deepest

laws of human ethics. Yet the more the subject is studied the more evident must it be that, in this respect, Christianity does not stand alone. The morality which it inculcates is not announced to the world as a discovery, but is given forth as an appeal to experience. It is spoken for the most part to the natural instincts of unlettered men ; and it takes the precedence of theological teaching in order that the new religion may begin by addressing an old susceptibility. The morality of the New Testament is theoretically older than the New Testament, though it is practically the product of it. Before Christianity came men knew it ; after Christianity came they began to live it. Yet this is the very marvel to be explained ; the historical fact is after all the real puzzle. We want to know why it is that those truths, admittedly eternal and felt experimentally to have a reference to human nature, have yet come into full play only on so late a stage of time ; why it is that principles which, when recognized, are seen to have their root in our deepest humanity, have yet owed their recognition to the advent of historical circumstances which had their birth in the old world's death. There must surely have been in these circumstances a special power, a peculiar energizing influence. That which has succeeded in effecting what four thousand years of previous history had failed to effect is certainly worthy of historical investigation ; and all the more so if these past four¹ thousand years had potentially at their command the same materials of human nature. The question is : why did they not reach these elements of the human soul ? why did they not waken these principles which were really in existence ? why did they leave it for a later age to discover their own treasures ? above all, what was there in that later age which made it able to kindle into life those intuitions of the human spirit which the millenniums of past history had failed even to find ?

¹ We use the number only as marking the popular traditional Chronology.

It is, therefore, impossible for us to escape an interest in the question, What is the origin of Christianity? We are driven back in the last resort to a historical inquiry, and are forced to recognize the beginnings of the Christian manifestation as the ultimate object of research. Can we discover those beginnings? Do we possess any document contemporaneous with the primitive Christian age? Can we lay our hand upon any monument which undoubtedly and unmistakably belongs to that era in which Christianity had its dawn? If we can, we are in a position to answer the question: What aspect did Christianity present to its immediate followers? If we cannot, we shall be forced to confess that our historical information regarding the sources of our religion is at best but second hand. If we are no longer able to prove that the four Gospels belong to the first Christian century, we must either discover an undoubtedly earlier document, or be content to remain in suspense on a subject of vital interest.

Now let us imagine it were suddenly proclaimed to the world that an undoubtedly earlier document had been discovered, a document written by a contemporary of the first Christian age, who might easily with his own eyes have seen the marvellous dawn; a manuscript so indubitably genuine that the most destructive results of the most negative criticism had not ventured to assail it. The effect of such a discovery would be instantaneous. It would become the main centre of interest, the immediate object of scrutiny. The Christian consciousness would rejoice to feel itself in possession of a fifth Gospel which required no words of apologetic introduction, and which only waited to have its message unfolded. Men would eagerly ask what this Gospel said. Did it present to the world a Christ in any respect corresponding to the Christ that has been worshipped for eighteen centuries? did it reveal the portrait of a face and form whose features and whose lineaments were

congruous with the features and the lineaments of the old portrait which has been so long familiar? That would be the question we should naturally ask first of all, and the question in whose answer we should take the greatest interest. We should look to the new document to decide whether the object of our Christian reverence was or was not the same object which was revered by the primitive Christian age; and if we found in that age the image of a Christ in every sense identical with our own, we should arrive at an evidence of Christianity which would place our belief in its historical truth above the floods of Biblical criticism.

Now it is not always borne in mind that what we have here supposed as an imagination is a profound reality. We are actually in possession of just such a document. We have a manuscript professing to be written, not only by one of the apostolic age, but by one of the apostolic company; claiming to be the work of a man who had seen the earliest manifestations of Christian power, and who had himself been made a recipient of that power; bearing incontestable and uncontested evidence of being the product of a period not later than from twenty to thirty years subsequent to the alleged fact of Christ's resurrection; accepted by negative criticism of the extremest school as occupying an impregnable position, and received as authentic alike by the believer and the unbeliever. This manuscript is really a fifth Gospel, and not the less so because it is not in the form of a Gospel; its testimony to historical truth is an unconscious testimony, coming forth spontaneously and incidentally. It consists of the four Epistles of St. Paul whose genuineness is universally recognized: those to the Romans, the Corinthians, and the Galatians. There are other Pauline Epistles whose genuineness is nearly as undoubted; but in a research of this sort one should take the lowest ground, and accept only what is universally conceded. The Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians

have escaped the flood of modern criticism, and remain to us as the undisputed monuments of the primitive Christian age. At first sight it might appear as if the concession were of little historical value, as if it were a possession chiefly valuable to the man who had conquered doubt of the facts and was in search of confirmation of the dogmas. In the days of Paley, indeed, these four Epistles of St. Paul were seen to have a bearing upon the historical narrative of the Acts; and the greatest work of that theologian is unquestionably the book called "*Horæ Paulinæ*," in which are traced the undesigned coincidences between the statements of the former and the records of the latter. The book of Acts however does not profess to be a narrative of the dawn of Christianity; it is a history which presumes the existence of a previous history, and brings us no nearer to the originating principle of which we are in search. It seemed, therefore, for a time as if the preservation of the four Pauline Epistles would prove a boon only to the advanced believer, and not to the historical inquirer. A deeper study has led to a different conclusion. There has begun to dawn the conviction that it may yet be possible to do for the Epistles and the Gospels what Paley has done for the Epistles and the Acts, to establish a congruity between them. It is increasingly felt that these Epistles imply an underlying history, that even their most didactic and abstract statements indicate the belief in certain historical facts. The simple question is, What are these facts? Are they in number sufficient to constitute, when united, a connected historical narrative? Is the historical narrative which they constitute compatible with that record of early Christianity which for the last eighteen centuries has been recognized as the Gospel story?

It is to the consideration of this point that we propose to devote ourselves. At the outset there are two courses open to us. We may either start with the conception in our

minds of that life of Christ which we now possess, and inquire whether it is borne out by the statements of the Pauline Epistles ; or we may come to our task with a mind unbiased by any conception, assuming that hitherto we have known nothing of the Founder of Christianity, and seeking to obtain that knowledge from the new document before us. Both courses, we say, are open to us ; but it is clear that the latter should come first. Analysis should precede synthesis. If we would approach the subject scientifically, we must try to discard our preconceived impressions until these have been confirmed by our present research. We ought first of all to examine the document in question, to read over seriatim its verses and chapters, in order to discover where any fact of history is either expressed or implied ; and to consider calmly and dispassionately what that fact amounts to. When we have gathered all our materials, in other words, when we have completed our analysis, we shall be in a position to begin our synthesis. We shall be able to put together the different elements we have collected, and to arrange them in the form of a life-picture ; and it will then become our duty and our province to compare the life picture of the new document with the historical portrait of the old. If the result of the comparison should be to establish an identity of nature between the Christ of the Gospels and the Christ of the Pauline Epistles, we shall be warranted in coming to the conclusion that the portrait contained in the Gospels represents the earliest Christian tradition. We shall be able to arrive at this conclusion quite apart from the question of their authenticity and genuineness. We are admittedly in possession of a document of unquestioned authenticity and genuineness. We profess to derive from this document a life portrait of the Founder of Christianity ; and we may be sure that *this* life portrait at least represents the earliest tradition. If we find, as a last result, that it is substan-

tially in harmony with the figure of the Christ delineated in the Gospels, the inference will be unavoidable that, to whatever age these Gospels belong, the Christ whom they depict is the Christ of primitive Christianity.

When we said that we should reserve till the close the comparison of the two life portraits, we did not mean to say that we should abstain from comparing analytically the historical statements in the Gospels with the historical statements in the Epistles. On the contrary, this is one main part of our task; the meaning of the Epistolary statements can only be brought out by comparison with those alleged facts so familiar to us in the Gospels. What we do mean to convey is, that neither in the Epistles nor in the Gospels can a life portrait be presented to the mind until the facts have been completely and exhaustively analysed; the preliminary comparison can only be one of isolated incidents. The truth is, we must expect this evidence, in the course of its evolution, to exhibit the characteristics of all evidence in the act of being taken. The peculiarity of evidence in the act of being taken is, that it has a tendency to appear much more trivial than it really is. The witness wonders at the simplicity of the questions put to him; he thinks them irrelevant, stupid, meaningless; he can see in them nothing calculated to throw light upon the case. Yet how often it happens that the answer to the seemingly most irrelevant question is the point on which the whole case turns. In all cases which do not rest on direct testimony the demonstration lies in the completed whole. The parts, taken separately and singly, may seem weak and inadequate; they derive their importance from the fact of their union. Even so in the present inquiry there will be found to be more in the whole than in all the parts taken separately; and circumstances which seem in themselves to afford little room for inference will assume a momentous import when seen in the links of a united chain.

To these preliminary remarks we have only to add that in this study of the Pauline Epistles it is *the facts* alone we are in search of. It would be very easy to elaborate from this study a colossal system of theology; but experience has clearly proved that out of the same materials men may elaborate very different systems. Our interpretation of doctrines depends on our principle of interpretation; and our Paul will be an Arminian or a Calvinist according as we ourselves are Arminian or Calvinistic. But where the statement amounts to a matter of fact, we stand on ground upon which all schools of opinion may join hands. The materials we are in search of in this inquiry are purely historical materials. We ask not what was Paul's system of theology; we ask only what was his Christ of history. We seek not to discover what were his special doctrines, or the points in which he was distinguished from the earlier Judaic party; we desire to find out what in him was not special, to discover that common substratum of historical fact which he held in common with all parties. We wish, if possible, to lay our hand on the earliest Christian tradition regarding the life, the acts, and the teaching of the Son of Man. If we can lay our hand upon it in these Epistles, we shall have reached something more than a tradition; we shall have approached the very confines of the primitive Christian age, and touched almost by immediate contact the last fringe of its vanishing garment. We shall have more direct evidence of the history of early Christianity than we ever could have had if the story of its dawn had been recorded by the pen of the Roman Tacitus; for we shall see the Christ of opening Christendom as He appeared to the eyes of a contemporary in whose character were singularly blended those qualities which made him an acceptable and a trustworthy observer—the liberal culture of the Roman, and the religious fervour of the Jew.

I. THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

We come now to consider in detail those passages which seem to us to point to the possibility of constructing a Christ out of the four undoubted Epistles of St. Paul. We begin with the Epistle to the Romans. In Verses 3 and 4 of the opening Chapter we are confronted by two historical references of a very direct kind; the one pointing to the beginning of Christ's course, the other to its close. The words, literally translated, are these: "Concerning his Son Jesus Christ, who was born of the seed of David, according to the flesh, and powerfully determined to be the Son of God according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead." The point which here first invites our attention is the belief entertained by Paul with regard to the ancestry of the Founder of Christianity; he calls Him the son of David. In the opening Chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke an attempt is made to trace the genealogy of the Christ whom we now recognize; and his origin is carried back to the same royal source. It has however been averred by some modern critics that these genealogies are nothing more than attempts. The line of thought adopted by these critics is something like this:—"There was a general expectation that, when the Messiah appeared, He would come from the lineage of David. As the mythical haze of time gathered round the person of Jesus of Nazareth, men sought to find in Him the fulfilment of the Jewish expectation. They tried to connect his person with the ancient hope of Israel, and to win the mind of the Jew by establishing a congruity between his life and their prophecies. Hence they constructed the two irreconcilable genealogies which form the respective overtures to the first and third Gospels, with the design to make it appear that the Christ, whose outward life was seemingly so unkingly, was yet the veritable de-

scendant of Israel's greatest king." These critics go on to tell us that in the course of the Gospel narrative itself we are accidentally reminded of a time when another Christ was recognized. In St. Matthew xxii. 42-45 we are confronted by what may be called the reminiscence of an earlier day. The Founder of Christianity is there seen in his true light. He is quite conscious that He is not the son of David, and that this fact alone is sufficient to invalidate his Messianic claim. Accordingly He seeks to alter the popular conception of the Messiah, endeavours to throw doubt upon the position that the Christ when He appears must necessarily come from the seed of David. He asks: "What think ye of Christ? whose son is He?" He does not mean of course: "What think ye of Me?" He is asking their opinion of the Old Testament Messiah, their interpretation of the words in which the Jewish Scriptures foretold the Lord's anointed. The answer naturally is that the Messiah expected by the nation and foretold by the Scriptures is to be one born of the 'seed of David. Jesus, knowing that He Himself did not fulfil this condition, endeavours to shake the evidence for believing it: "Why then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand; if David call him Lord, how is he his son?"

Such is the ingenious argument by which it has been attempted to prove that the original Christ was not the son of David, and that the story of his Messianic descent was an aftergrowth. But now the question is, How much time shall we allow to enable this story to grow? Here is a document which beyond all question belongs to the apostolic age, and which dates from a period not later than twenty-five years after the time of the actual Christian Founder; a document which is confessedly written by one himself in the apostolic office and in familiar intercourse with the earliest disciples of the Master; and here it is distinctly stated, and

stated as a fact commonly recognized, that the Founder of Christianity was the son of David. It will not be denied, we presume, that, from an apologetic point of view it was Paul's interest to make light of the fact that the Christian Founder had a Messianic descent; that, if there had been any doubt about the matter, it would have been natural for him to have been silent on the subject. So far from being anxious to give prominence to the conception of the Jewish Messiah, he wanted as much as possible to divert the minds of men from that conception. He desired to let them see that there was a higher element in the Christ than that of a physical descent from the royal line of David; and it was, in truth, this desire which prompted the utterance of the very passage we are considering. If then Paul had known that the belief in Christ's descent was a popular delusion, or if there had existed in his own mind any doubt as to its historical reality, he would have deemed it an advantage to his cause to have remained silent on the question; he would naturally have felt that the best way to elevate the Christian consciousness to the worship of the true Messiah was to ignore those elements which had been conceived essential to the Jewish one. This Paul has not done; he has placed in the very foreground of his Epistle the acknowledgment of Christ's Messianic descent. He has placed it there in the manner of one who takes a thing for granted. It is his object to shew that the Founder of Christianity was more than the Jewish Messiah, and that there was a portion of his nature which could not be referred to any earthly lineage. In admitting that there was a part of his nature which could be traced to the royal line of David he simply accepted a notorious fact, which must be received alike by the Judaic and by the Gentile element in the Christian church. If the passage in St. Matthew xxii. 42 stood alone, it might perhaps have afforded ground for the conjecture of the modern critic; but when we find in a document which

is certainly earlier and unmistakably genuine, the statement that Christ's Davidic descent did not debar Him from an additional and yet higher origin, we seem to discover in the Pauline passage a key to the interpretation of the subsequent Gospel narrative.

Let us pass now to the statement of this higher origin. The physical birth of the Christian Founder is said to establish his Davidic descent; but the Apostle goes on to declare that the actual life of the Founder afforded proof of an element in his nature transcending any earthly lineage: "powerfully determined to be the Son of God by the resurrection of the dead." Our English version translates, "by the resurrection *from* the dead"; the Greek is more general and more suggestive. It implies that the belief in Christ's resurrection was not simply the belief that He Himself was raised; but that the principle of life in Him, which made his rising inevitable, was that which gave Him power to be the Resurrection and the Life of the world. The full force of the passage amounts to the statement that the Son of Man, by reason of his spirituality, possessed power to revive the human spirit; and that the strongest evidence of this power was afforded in the fact of his own resurrection, which was itself the first act of a great process of regeneration. If we turn now to St. Matthew xxviii. 18, we shall find a remarkable parallel to the view exhibited in the present passage. In these concluding verses of the first Gospel, the Christ whom we now recognize as the original portrait of the Founder is represented, after his resurrection from the dead, as saying to his followers: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth; go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations." It is here indicated that the resurrection of Christ was regarded as a powerful determination of his Sonship; it is spoken of as if it had brought to the Son of Man a fresh influx of the Divine energy: "all power is given unto Me." But there is more than this. The power

itself is contemplated as something which is to be shared with the world: "Go ye therefore and disciple all nations." If we take the passage in the Gospel in connection with the passage in the Epistle, we shall get considerable light upon the significance of the little word "therefore." The resurrection *from* the dead is contemplated as the resurrection *of* the dead. The power which has raised the Son of Man is a power which is now at the root of humanity, and which therefore must raise humanity with Him: "Because I live ye shall live also." We are not actuated by any desire to foist the Gospel conception of Christ upon the earliest age of the Christian church. We are studiously endeavouring to ignore the fact that we are coming to our task of research with any such conception in our mind. But we cannot ignore the fact that there is a literary production before us professing to be a portraiture and a life of the Founder of Christianity. We do not assume that it *is* such a portraiture, we do not assume that it *is* such a life; we simply accept the fact that it professes to be one. We find another literary production which does not profess to be a life of Christ, but which incidentally alludes to circumstances which it declares to be well known historical facts of that life; and as there can be no doubt at all that this latter production belongs to the apostolic age, it is only natural we should ask if its statements of fact are congruous with or antagonistic to the statements of the historical document. The passage in St. Matthew xxviii. 18 is a special illustration of the advantage of such Biblical comparisons; for it has been thought by some to be a later addition to the other parts of the Gospel. It seems to exhibit Christ in an attitude of transcendent authority which, according to these critics, marks an age of greater theological development. The question then becomes pertinent: Is there any trace of such a Christ in the earlier document? If such a trace be found, it will be no longer possible to conclude that the Christ of the

closing verses of St. Matthew bears any internal evidence of being an anachronism. The earlier document bears on its very opening page the unmistakable impress of a Christ who, in all essential respects, is precisely similar to the Founder of Christianity recognized in the closing verses of St. Matthew. Within twenty-five years after the departure of that Founder from the earth we find currently associated with his name, throughout the Christian community, the idea of a power over all humanity, a power universal in its extent and infinite in its intensity. The universality of its extent is marked by the fact that it is said to be exerted over the dead, a word which potentially embraces all mankind as death is the condition which is awaiting all the world. The infinitude of its intensity is marked by the fact that it is said to reach to the accomplishment of resurrection; the bringing of life out of nothingness is an infinite act. It is further implied that the possession of this power was determined at a particular time in the life of the Founder, determined at that time when, by his own resurrection, He became the firstfruits of them that sleep. In all these characteristics there is an essential oneness between the statement of the Pauline Epistle and the statement of the first Gospel; and the oneness furnishes a conclusive proof that, whatever may be the external evidence for a late date of the Gospel passage, its internal evidence is in favour of the belief that it reproduces the Christ of apostolic days.

Before quitting this opening passage of the Epistle to the Romans, it may be worth while to view it in connection with the 25th Verse of the same Chapter. It will be seen that the general effect of the passage already considered has been to assign to the Founder of Christianity a higher place in the early Christian consciousness than He is allowed to hold by negative critics. He is contemplated as possessing such a dignity as entitles Him to be called

“the Son of God.” Now the school of critics here alluded to have not attempted to evade the fact that the Christ of Paul is so conceived; they have taken refuge in another fortress. They contend that the Christ of Paul, though undoubtedly belonging to the apostolic age, does not belong to the innermost apostolic circle. The ministry of Paul, they say, was an innovation on the original Christian ministry; it sought to import a Gentile element into the Jewish community; it attempted to graft into the conception of the earliest Christian Founder an admixture of conceptions foreign to the soil of Palestine. The Gentile consciousness of God was totally different from the Judaic one. The Jew saw a great gulf fixed between himself and the Object of his worship; the Gentile believed that, by a principle of emanation, the Divine Spirit could impart Himself to those who revered Him. This impartation of the Divine Spirit made him to whom it was given a son of God. The thought was so familiar to the Gentile consciousness that it became natural to explain by it the greatness of every illustrious man. When a man had distinguished himself by great deeds, when he had performed feats of heroism, when he had achieved prodigies of valour, he was believed by the popular mind to be the favourite of the gods. When the visible presence of the man was removed by death, when the form which had once been so familiar was hid from mortal eyes, and the voice which had once been so powerful was silent to the world’s ear, the sense of Divine favour which he had been supposed to enjoy was magnified a hundredfold. The distance and the mystery of death gave to his name that solemnity which alone was wanted to transform admiration into reverence; and men looked back upon his earthly career as one of those brief and golden emanations which the powers of heaven occasionally vouchsafe to the dwellers on the earth. Now the fact here averred by the negative critics is perfectly true.

It is undeniable that the tendency of the Gentile world was to bridge the gulf between God and man, by recognizing in certain men those emanations of the Divine life which made them the sons of God. But, admitting the fact, are we prepared to admit the conclusion sought to be derived from it; that Paul was led to assign to the person of the Christian Founder a greater dignity than He possessed, by reason of that Gentile consciousness which permeated the Apostle's own mind? Was the Christ whom Paul revered nothing more than a poetic embodiment of those inward hopes and aspirations which had been awakened within the soul of the Apostle by his contact and intercourse with the Gentiles? That is the question which here invites an answer; and, singularly enough, the answer is supplied in the very Chapter which so powerfully reveals the Pauline sense of Christ's dignity. In that Chapter Paul is considering the condition of the pre-Christian world which made necessary the advent of Christianity; and he finds the condition of that world to have been as bad as it could well be. It is remarkable, however, that he surveys its badness from a Jewish standpoint; indeed, if we had no other passage of St. Paul than the Chapter before us, we should be apt to conclude that the writer was a zealous partisan of Jewish ideas. His main charge against the religion of the heathen is the Jewish one of idolatry. To the Palestinian religious consciousness the most sacred of all prohibitions was this, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image." The God of Judaism was the self-existent incommunicable Personality, whose messages might be conveyed by heavenly ministrants, but whose form could not be represented either by heaven or earth; no man could see Him and live. Accordingly the attempt to represent Him was, of all other things, to Judaism the most impious; it would have held in abhorrence the Gentile doctrine of apotheosis, the belief that a man could be taken up into the life of divine beings. And the point

to observe here is that, in whatever other respects Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, he retained in this the natural bent of his nation. In ascribing Divine glory to the Christian Founder, so far is he from being actuated by enthusiasm for a poetic idea that at this very moment he is animated by an anti-Gentile impulse, an opposition to creature worship. To him the main ground of heathen corruption consists in the fact adduced in Verse 25, where he says that the Gentiles "change the truth of God into a lie, and worship and serve the creature more than the Creator." His mind is in an attitude of repulsion towards creature worship; and, in so far, it is in a thoroughly Jewish attitude. It is opposed to the reverence for the image; it is inimical to the adoration of the form. It is uttering a protest against the Gentile tendency to bend the knee and lift the eyes to an object which could be seen and touched and measured. Such a mental attitude on the part of Paul was naturally highly unfavourable to the acceptance of a doctrine of Incarnation. A doctrine of Incarnation demands, by its very nature, the association of a human form with the object of Divine worship; and a mind which is animated by a Judaic animosity to creature worship would not naturally be led to imagine such an association. If the natural development of Paul had never been arrested, there seems, from the 25th Verse of this Chapter, every reason to believe that his Jewish antipathy to the reverence of forms would have prompted him to oppose the belief in the Incarnation. If, in point of fact, he has not opposed it, if in this same Chapter, side by side with his Jewish prejudice, he has recorded his conviction that the Founder of Christianity was the Son of God, the conclusion would seem to be that there was something in the historical atmosphere diverting him from his normal inclinations, and something in the events and life of the time compelling him to recognize what his original instincts would have rejected.

Had he been constructing a mythical religion, had he been weaving a creed out of his own poetic fancy, it would have been a creed which expressed the distance of the Divine from the human. The fact that his actual faith is a union of the human with the Divine constitutes a certain proof that his strong mind was dominated by an influence in the historic air.

G. MATHESON.

THE SUPREMACY OF LOVE.

1 COR. xiii. 13.

AMIDST the flood of doubtful disputation which prevails respecting the first principles of religion and of duty, the supremacy of the virtue which St. Paul exalts in this passage is, in general terms, universally admitted. It might, indeed, be questioned whether this supremacy be consistent with the principles of a philosophy which would explain the progress of mankind, as of all other creatures, by the operation of a mutual struggle and a mutual antagonism. But at all events, whether consistently or not, philosophers and moralists of almost all schools of thought combine in inculcating love to others as the most important principle and guide of practical life. It is perpetually emerging, like the solid ground, from every deluge of speculation which sweeps over the moral world. In the forefront, for instance, of the chief expositions of the Positive Philosophy, love is described as the principle of life, while order is said to be its basis, and progress its end. In the growth of this virtue, in its exaltation to an enthusiastic height, we are constantly bidden to recognize an adequate pledge for the security of society, notwithstanding the overthrow of ancient creeds, and the disturbance of ancient order. The language,