

they could not anticipate, and which now enable us with scientific certainty to assign dates to documents heretofore subjected to doubt, and to place ourselves more distinctly on the standpoints of their writers. Should life and strength permit, and should there be demand, nothing could give greater pleasure to the writer than to treat other portions of early Bible history in a similar manner, or to answer questions as to points unavoidably passed over. In the meantime he places these papers before Bible students in the hope that they may at least prove suggestive, and may thus not be without utility in present circumstances.

J. WILLIAM DAWSON.

THE SECRET OF JESUS.

It would be difficult to name men of finer, gentler natures than Renan and Matthew Arnold, and it is deeply interesting to observe how they are affected by Christ. For Renan Christ was an incarnation of infinite kindness, irresistibly lovable, and known always the better the longer He was loved. Renan's expressions of love for Christ became more fervent with every decade of his life, and it is hardly a metaphor to say that at last he died on his knees, invoking Christ by the name of God. And yet, in relation to the mightier teachings of the Jesus of the Gospels, and the mightier wonders of Christianity as a phenomenon of world-history, what is the Christ of Renan after all but a beautiful phantom, exhaled from the fountains and the blue mists of the Palestine hills in Spring? And there was a tenuity in the manhood of Matthew Arnold, noble and fine as his genius was, that incapacitated him too for seeing more than a very little way into the secret and the system of Christ. "Sweetness and light." A pretty phrase. An

exquisite bit of rhetorical sugar-candy. Small account will that give of the stable and tremendous elements in the religion and in the morality of Jesus.

It is true, however, that Christ has a secret,—a fundamental principle, a keynote, a determining method in all His teaching. He stands unique in world-history for the extent to which he trusts the spiritual forces. Spirit is His *mot d'enigme*; His clue to the unity of the creation, in heaven and in earth. "God is a Spirit"; the good Spirit, the eternal Spirit; and all progress towards perfection, all joy worth enjoying, all life worth living, on the part of man, results from and consists in doing the will of God upon earth as it is done in heaven. As Christian children used to be taught by persons whom enlightened editors have now left far behind as fanatical enthusiasts, "man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever." Christ and all the New Testament voices are at one in declaring the joy of man, temporal and eternal, to be God's will, and the promotion of joy among men to be, in a superlative sense, the service and worship of God. The specialty of Christ lay in this, that He claimed to have a closer connection with the Spirit of the universe in declaring His will to mankind, and offering to mankind salvation in His name, than any other teacher, lawgiver, or sage who has offered counsel and guidance to mankind. Virtue, in His view, consisted essentially in the working out by man, in obedience to God and to His honour and glory, of the will of God in human salvation. Salvation was of the body as well as of the soul; but He did not promise to save the body first and the soul next, or to save the soul for the sake of the body, but to save the body through the soul, and in a unity with the soul. And the precepts and rules of this saving virtue were not left as a vague illumination diffused throughout the social atmosphere. They were gathered into the Christian law of love, taught and enforced by

Christ, the Son of God and the Son of man. He made a unique claim to speak in the name of God; and the object of His life and death, and of the mission He committed to His followers, was to fill the whole earth with a kingdom or commonwealth of righteousness and peace, of well-being and consecrated brotherhood, ruled by Divine Humanity represented by Himself.

The secret of Jesus then is spiritual and Divine. His method of operation is always the same, always from within and from above; beginning with the spirit and the life, and acting upon the body and the environment through the spirit and the life. "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." Had these words been always applied, with intelligence and with candour, to the interpretation of the words of Christ, what masses of superstition, clouding the minds of nations and generations, what deluges of cant and imbecility, might have been escaped!

It was said just now that Christ stands unique in world-history as relying upon spiritual forces. No one has understood what the spiritual forces are, or how they act, so well as He. No one, in fact, has here come within measurable distance of Him. It is not too much to say that the most wonderful thing in the literature of the world is His prediction of the influence of spiritual forces as exemplified in the results of His own death. "I," He said, "if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me."

Those words are in the New Testament. If Christ did not utter them, then some other man uttered them respecting Him, and we shall have two problems to solve—both of them becoming by the doubling insoluble—instead of one certainly marvellous but indubitable fact to deal with. If He did utter them, it is placed scientifically beyond doubt that a homeless field preacher in Judæa, at the time when

the Roman Empire filled the world, foretold that spiritual forces represented by His death, as the sequel of His life, would "draw all men to Him," that is to say, make Him the central object of observation to mankind, the teacher and spiritual ruler of the human race.

What do we behold, now that nearly two thousand years have passed since Christ hung, a dying form, upon the cross? The Roman Empire has crumbled into dust. The civilization of the world has been born again. The leadership of mankind is in the hands of the Christian nations. And the progress that has been made is indisputably due to the conceptions of man, his duties and his relations, that have emanated from Christ, and were symbolized by His death and His life. Christian ethics have become the ethics of all philosophical schools. Christian moralists have pronounced against slavery, and it is fast disappearing from the face of the earth. Already the Christian missionary has become a voice of justice and of mercy, pleading in every land for the afflicted and oppressed in the name of Christ.

He made Himself the main subject of His prophecy. "If I be lifted up." This would have been blasphemous presumption or maniacal folly in any one but Christ. The farther, however, we travel, by the count of centuries, from Him, the more clearly do we discern the altitude in which He towers over His own contemporaries and over each succeeding age. While the spiritual forces brought into the world's atmosphere by His death have been at work in historical evolution, civilization has passed through many phases of cyclic change. There was, to begin with, New Testament Christianity—the Christianity which expressed the inspiration of men who, as Renan says, were filled with Jesus. It is embodied in the New Testament, and all the languages in the world could not afford words strong enough to express the resultant value of that book. But this first Christianity was succeeded by a Christianity curi-

ously contrasted with that of the men who companied with Christ and His apostles. The Christianity of the early Fathers and commentators was, as has frequently been exemplified in the history of the world, a relapse into conditions of moral and intellectual feebleness. It was a singularly childish creed. It materialized the imagery which Christ had framed to express His own unique personality and His pervasively spiritual method, into a literalism almost incredibly babyish. Tennyson has treated of this faith, with its cups of Glastonbury and shrines in which "you scarce could see the Christ for saints," in a spirit of mild sympathy not untinged by kindly contempt. Innocent but not innocuous persons, whose artless logic reminds one of that of the figures set up in the Platonic dialogues to be bowled over by the arguments of Socrates, call themselves Christian Socialists, and bombard Smith and Mill on the strength of this Christianity. But it passed away, like dew from the grass, in the brightening day of Christian civilization. It was succeeded by the Christianity of the Latin Church. Far as this form of Christianity fell short of the New Testament ideal, it was memorably strong. It did great things for Europe. It wrestled with the flaming portent of Islamism, and rescued modern civilization from its scorching embrace. But it settled into the Papacy, and the Papacy could not be accepted as the fulfilment of the promises of Christ. Meanwhile Greek Christianity ran through phases of its own, and it will hardly be denied that its Divine fire gradually flagged, its missionary zeal abated, its power of realizing the kingdom of Divine humanity declined. But the full-grown mind of Europe in the sixteenth century, recurring to the New Testament and the Hebrew Bible, broke indignantly away from Pope, Patriarch, and patristic infantility alike, and reconstituted Christianity on the model provided by the men steeped in the inspiration of Christ.

The progress of civilized mankind since this last great branching of the Christian tree has been greater than was effected in all the previous centuries since the fall of the Roman Empire. And science has to give account of the fact that all the best elements in the civilization of to-day are by common consent associated with, or expressly derived from, the crucified field preacher who said that He would draw all men unto Him.

Will it be alleged that the words on which all this depends were a prophecy of the resurrection, and merely implied Christ's belief that, if the expected miracle took place, the rest would follow? The reply is that, whether the words were prophetic of the resurrection or were not, Christ could not possibly have meant that the resurrection, *viewed as a sign or wonder*, would perforce draw all men to Him. He had expressly, by way of example, specified this very miracle as powerless, in itself, to make men believe in Him. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if one rose from the dead." Christ lent no countenance to the crude error that miracles constitute an irresistible logic, compelling men to believe.

When we look with some carefulness we find that, in their own way, all the greatest thinkers and the greatest benefactors of mankind have taken essentially the same view as Christ on the primary importance of the spiritual forces. Aristotle notably placed the life before the organism, and on this point there was no discrepancy between him and Plato. But neither Plato nor Aristotle took upon him to *command* men, in God's name, to be spiritually whole and healthfully happy. Towards this, indeed, the reason of man, and the semi-articulate conscience of man, as represented by the philosophers of Greece, on the one hand, and the organizing and law-making genius of Rome, on the other, had tended. We may almost hear Plato and Socrates crying out for a God to command men to walk in

the way of righteousness and in the pleasantness of virtue. Aristotle, the cooler, perhaps the stronger head, restricts himself more severely to knowledge, and therefore more explicitly exhibits the impotence of mere knowledge to save the world. Christ said clearly and calmly that the God whom He commanded men to love without limit was such a God as He, Christ, revealed. He never faltered in this; He drew no line of demarcation between the divinity of His Father and His own. He also drew no line of demarcation between His manhood and that of His brethren, except in that He called Himself the only begotten Son of God, and challenged any one to convict Him of sin. There is no trace of evidence that the challenge was ever accepted. Declaring Himself to be sinless, He described His hearers as "evil." But He did not apply this term to their natural and instinctive habitudes as men, for He frankly referred to human affection, exhibited by parents to children, as a touchstone of the feeling which they might count upon it that God would entertain towards His human offspring. His divinity, His immortality, were shared by Christ with the lowliest of His followers. There was no Godhead in heaven more Divine than His; there was no Godhead on earth more Divine than that of the disciple who laid his head upon His breast. Man as man rises or falls with Christ.

He raised civilization from the dead. The Roman peace was for the nations a sleep unto death. "Christianity" and "Europe" are used by Novalis as equivalent terms. The question of all questions for the world at this hour is whether He can still breathe life into civilization, whether Christian peace, bloodless yet not oppressed with *ennui*, can fill the globe. If He saves civilisation, it will be in His own way, on His own non-compulsory method. The age may reject Him if it will. If the decision of modern society—of men of light and leading in philosophy, science,

literature, politics—is, “We will not have this Man to reign over us,” then no miraculous blast of fire will burst open society’s door to admit Him. And if the Labour party, speaking by their darling orators, turn from Christ; if, like Mr. Burns, they brand as bigotry the desire of any working man to retire from class demonstrations on the day consecrated to Christian rest; if they take no better lesson from the Church than that intolerance by which she so long belied her Master, and must cast out from their godless synagogue every fellow-workman who dares to be a Christian; then they will not derive much advantage from rapid flourishes about Jesus of Nazareth.

Men, however, who live so closely in contact with nature and fact as do the great body of the labouring men of Great Britain, may probably turn out to be more sagacious judges of Christ’s secret than some of the demagogues who volunteer to lead them. They may be trusted, even when the sugared lead of poisonous flattery is under their tongue, to have an instinctive feeling that temptation would never tempt if it were not pleasant at the moment. They know at heart that, though the four hundred false prophets may be making a tremendous hubbub, and may be entirely unanimous in telling their sovereign dupes that they will put all other classes under their feet, yet the one true prophet who disdains to lie may prove their best friend. They have heard of David Hume, and probably recognise in him a shrewd and unimpassioned judge of life. “Mankind,” said Hume, “are in all ages caught by the same baits.” There is always to be some grand transformation scene, some Paradise produced off-hand by a Government extemporized for the occasion, some Medea’s bath, some Merlin’s charm, or, as Carlyle said, some Morrison’s pill, to cure all ills and make everybody rich. Now Christ has no such secret as that. His method is inexorably opposed to that kind of thing. It was part of His secret—it is a

secret that has been penetrated by all the wise—that nothing can be done by generalities. Forests must be felled or planted tree by tree. Society consists of individuals, and you can no more build a society from the whole to the part than you can build a house by beginning in the air and building from the roof downward. You cannot regenerate a world by sprinkling. It takes baptism by water and perhaps by fire.

Christ's method has been verified, negatively and positively, times without number, but there is supreme difficulty in getting it practically accepted even in the London of to-day. The mechanical method—the method of sweeping generalization and of putting a face on things—is so plausible, so bewitchingly easy, that, even in solving the slums problem, it is noisily hailed and applauded, while the real solution is by means of this partial and external solution evaded and lost sight of. Of course, in Christ's method, the mechanical and the spiritual are combined and harmonized. It is a prominent note of that method that it abounds in positive commands, comprehends all things, and has few negations. "This ought ye to do, and not to leave the other undone." If the mechanical and material conditions are obviously, glaringly wrong, there is not a shadow of suggestion on the part of Christ that we are to pause in setting them right—in doing what is clearly wanted—with a view to letting the spiritual method be applied. When dwellings are unfit for human habitation, they are to be cleared away. If money is wanted for this, the voting of money may be the duty of the moment, to be instantly proceeded with. It may be a useful and philanthropic enterprise to build blocks of comfortable dwellings of a high order for respectable working-class tenants. Build them. But remember that all this leaves the essential difficulty of the slums problem untouched. All this may have resulted in driving the genuine slums population into worse dens

than they had previously occupied. Miss Octavia Hill, however, and other ladies both in London and in Edinburgh, and doubtless also in other towns, have effectually solved the slums problem, and shown the *sole* way in which it can be done. They apply to it Christ's method—the method of spirit and of life. They bring to bear upon the dilapidated and disabled humanity of the slums exactly that quickening breath of Divine life and spiritual influence which awakens it into appreciation of cleanliness, wholesomeness, order, decency, and all that goes to make four bare walls into a home. This is precisely Christ's way—the spiritual-force way. And it is verified by success.

The impotence of the other way—the mechanical way—when left to itself; the vanity of trusting the shell to make the organism instead of the living organism to make the shell; has also been abundantly verified by the scientific test of experience. The slum savage in France, ensconcing himself and his family in the spacious chamber of some mansion from which the Jacobin forerunners of our popular Gonzalos and Stephanos had expelled the owner, nestled down in the glorious emancipation of laziness, disorder, destructiveness, and filth, and was found in due time to have transmuted the place into a piggery.

If, however, the error had not been taking and plausible, it would not have imposed upon so many good-hearted people. That the environment makes the man, and not the man the environment, is a fallacy that flings wide the gates to devout sentimentalism and pious romance. It is so enlivening to think of Christ having gone away to build the new Jerusalem out of the rubies and pearls and diamonds of heaven, with celestial gold for pavement; and to look or the descent of this Jerusalem, Christian or Collectivist, to transform into its image the society of earth. It seems so commonplace, so trite, so disheartening, to say that, if Christ returned visibly to earth to-morrow, He could tell us

no better way of curing the ills that flesh and spirit are heir to than that of loving God beyond all measure, and loving our brethren as ourselves. This, however, is a fact. If any one can prove any other way to be better than this way, Christianity will be superannuated; at all events, there is not an iota of proof that Christ knew of a better way when he wept because Israel "would not" have the Divine Man to build their new Jerusalem for them. Ye must be born again, Christ said; born in the love of God and the love of man, renewed, each one of you, by the Spirit of God dwelling in you, forming Me, the Divine Bread, Me, the living Water, within you. He had no off-hand social New Jerusalem then. He has none now. He proposed then and He proposes now to transform the world by transforming individual men. He did certainly promise that, in some strictly scientific sense, some sense verifiable by experience, the new man in Christ, the man with Christ accepted into his heart and honestly made the model of his life, would be "a god, to change the whole world—earth, sea, skies, cities, governments." This may, at first glance, seem mystical. But it really is nothing more than the Christian form of the old doctrine that character makes the man, and man makes the world, or, to put it once more in Aristotle's form, that the life makes the organism, not the organism the life. Spurgeon was not a learned man, but strong in common sense, and Aristotle would have understood, and Jesus Christ would have appreciated and approved of Spurgeon's meaning when he said that, if Christ returned, he, Spurgeon, would just go on preaching as before. Spurgeon, it may be presumed, did not intend to say that his preaching was perfect, but only that he had no warrant to expect it to be reinforced by any such miracle as should compel men, would they or would they not, to accept Christ. That "the kingdom of God is coming down from heaven to earth," bran new, with accommoda-

tion benches for the poor when they change places with the rich, and a paternal Government, on the principles of Rousseau and the French Convention, to provision the planet, while "the toiling many," emancipated from labour, enjoy "the rights of man," is simply the last form of a very, very old fable. The beauty and plausibility of such fables, and not less the honest simplicity with which those who preach them sometimes believe in them, constitute, of course, the subtlest and most perilous element in their power. Nathaniels are often delightful people, but they are at their best where Christ, with characteristic sagacity, left their prototype—in the shade.

PETER BAYNE.

NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.

III. THE SYNOPTIST GOSPELS.

WE shall now consider the teaching of documents presenting a type of thought differing widely from that embodied in the Epistles of Paul.

The phrase "that day," already found in 2 Thessalonians i. 10, 2 Timothy i. 12, 18, iv. 8, occurs again in Matthew vii. 22, xxiv. 36, Mark xiii. 32, Luke x. 12, xvii. 31, xxi. 34, referring in each case to Christ's return to judge the world. Its use, without further specification, in this definite sense, reveals the definite place of the day of judgment in the thought of the early followers of Christ. The words "till the Son of Man come," in Matthew x. 23, recall at once Daniel vii. 13, "there came with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man"; and the similar teaching in the Book of Enoch, quoted in my first paper. This reminiscence is confirmed by the frequent use in the Synoptist Gospels of the term *Son of Man* in reference to His return to judge the