

cisely equivalent to our use of "filthy" as applied to language, etc. That connexion of thought usually centres round coarse, sensual forms of evil, those associated with bodily lusts. Further, as we have just noted, *ἐσφραγίσθητε*, which occurs here also, inevitably suggests the cleansing of baptism, a cleansing which pointed to an ultimate purity of the whole nature. Putting those several facts together, it does not seem to us far-fetched to suppose that the bodily aspect of the final *ἀπολύτρωσις* is prominent to the Apostle's mind in this passage also.

Enough has been said to bring out the decisively eschatological bearing of St. Paul's teaching on the Spirit. To realize that the ultimate end of the Spirit's operation is the redemption of the whole human nature along the lines of Christ's own exaltation to glory is to possess a clue which will guide us safely along the obscurer paths of the Apostle's religious conceptions.

H. A. A. KENNEDY.

RECENT NEW TESTAMENT CRITICISM.

V.

THE SUPREME EVIDENCE OF THE HISTORICITY OF THE EVANGELIC JESUS.

IT is written in the opening chapter of the Fourth Gospel how Philip, in the wonder and gladness of his discovery of the Messiah, sought out Nathanael and told him of it. "Him of whom Moses in the Law wrote and the Prophets, we have found—Jesus the son of Joseph, the Man of Nazareth!" Nathanael would not believe it. A Galilæan himself, he knew the ignorance of that northern province (John vii. 52) and the evil reputation of that particular town. "From Nazareth," he retorted incredulously, quoting a common proverb, "can there be anything

good?" Philip did not attempt to argue the question. He answered simply: "Come and see." Nathanael went and saw, and presently his doubts were dispelled. "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God! Thou art the King of Israel!"

Jesus was "His own best evidence." It was difficult for a Jew to allow His claims, so inconsistent did they seem with the Messianic expectations of the day; yet He seldom argued the question. He simply manifested Himself in the wonder of His grace and goodness, and such as had eyes to see and hearts to understand the transcendent revelation needed no other evidence, and adored Him as their Lord.

Now, if the evangelic picture be indeed a faithful delineation of Him who dwelt in Palestine eighteen centuries ago, it ought to exercise, in some measure at least, a like influence over those who approach it with open minds and earnest hearts. It ought to silence their doubts and compel their faith. And such is indeed the experience of not a few in our day. They are confronted by serious difficulties. They cannot believe in Inspiration, Miracles, the Incarnation, or the Resurrection; nevertheless, they cling to Christianity, and are loath to let it go. What is the reason of their hesitation? It is simply this, that they cannot get away from Jesus. They would without a qualm reject Christianity, but they cannot reject Christ.

It may be that, in order to judge with absolute justice of the self-evidencing power of the Evangelic Jesus, it would be necessary that one should be entirely ignorant of Christianity and should approach the Gospels with a perfectly unbiassed mind, after the manner of the old shoemaker in Tolstoi's story,¹ or as one would some ancient manuscript newly brought to light. This is, of course, an impossible attitude for such as have been familiar with the Bible all their days; yet it may be attained to more or less approximately by resolutely dismissing the prepossessions

¹ *Where Love is There God is Also.*

alike of faith and of unbelief and looking with unprejudiced eyes at the picture which the Evangelists have painted.

It must be acknowledged that the first impression is by no means favourable. The story opens with a stupendous marvel, the miraculous Birth, and every succeeding page tells of some wonderful work. It is an axiom of modern philosophy that miracles are impossible, and we are disposed to dismiss the story as a legend of a superstitious age, no more historical than the Life of Apollonius. But something arrests us. This story has a singular beauty. It tells of One strangely unlike all the men we know or have ever heard of. *The Evangelic Jesus is a Sinless Man.* He is perfectly human. He suffers weariness, hunger, thirst, and pain; He is in all points tempted like as we are; yet He is never worsted by temptation and passes through life stainless and irreproachable. He is among sinners yet not of them.

The marvel of the picture is twofold. On the one hand, *Jesus claimed to be sinless.* He stood before the world searched by a thousand curious and critical eyes, and issued His fearless challenge: "Which of you convicteth Me of sin?" (John viii. 46). He often felt the pang of hunger, but never the pang of remorse; He was often weary, but never burdened with guilt; He often prayed, but He never uttered a syllable of contrition or a cry for pardon. On the eve of His Betrayal, when the shadows of death were gathering about Him, He could lift up His eyes to Heaven and say: "Father, the hour is come. I have glorified Thee upon the earth, having perfected the work which Thou hast given Me to do" (John xvii. 1, 4).

Now this is a singular picture. A keen and lively sense of sin has ever been a characteristic of saintly men. It is related of St. Francis of Assisi that an angry brother once loaded him with abuse, calling him a thief, a blasphemer, a murderer, a debauchee, a drunkard. The saint meekly con-

fessed that it was all true; and when the other asked in wonderment what he meant, he answered: "All these crimes and worse than these I had committed, had not the favour of Heaven preserved me."¹ Such has ever been the judgment of the saints upon themselves, but as for Jesus no word of self-condemnation ever crossed His lips, no lamentation over indwelling corruption, no sigh for a closer walk with God. It was not that He closed His eyes to the presence of sin or made light of its guilt, like Renan who, being asked once what he made of sin, answered airily, "I suppress it!" Such was not the manner of Jesus. His proclamation of the equal guilt of the sinful thought and the sinful deed has extended immeasurably the sweep of the moral law and infinitely elevated the standard of holiness. He was keenly sensitive to the enormity of sin, and the world's guilt lay on Him like a heavy burden all His days. His presence was a rebuke, and even now the very thought of Him has the value of an external conscience. His spotless life is a revelation alike of the beauty of holiness and of the guilt of sin.

Nor is this the sole marvel of the evangelic picture of Jesus. Not only did He claim to be sinless, but *His claim was universally allowed*. His enemies would gladly have found some handle against Him; yet, though they scrutinized Him jealously, they discovered only one offence which they could lay to His charge, and they never imagined that their accusation was in truth a striking testimony to His perfect and unique holiness. They saw Him mingling freely with social outcasts, conversing with them, and going to their houses; and they exclaimed: "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them!" It would have been no marvel had He associated with sinners, being a sinner Himself. What astonished them was that

¹ *Erasm. Colloq., Erseq. Seraph.*

He did so being Himself so pure; and their exclamation was a covert insinuation that for all His seeming holiness He must be a sinner at heart. The fault, however, lay not with Jesus but with themselves. They did not understand that true holiness is nothing else than a great compassion. *Dijudicantes Dominum quod peccatores susciperet, amenti corde ipsum fontem misericordiae reprehendebant.* The holiness of Jesus was a new thing on the earth, an ideal which could never have been conceived by any human heart. Had the Evangelists been setting forth their own conception of holiness, they would have depicted Jesus after the likeness of the Pharisees.

It is a great marvel that Jesus' claim to sinlessness should have been thus allowed and all unintentionally attested by those who were bent on disproving it. One said to Carlyle once that he could honestly use the words of Jesus, "I and the Father are one." "Yes," was the crushing retort, "but Jesus got the world to believe Him."

Another point to be noted in the evangelic account of Jesus is the assertion which He constantly made and persisted in to the last, *that He stood in a unique relation alike toward God and toward men.* He identified Himself with God. "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He said God was His peculiar (*ἰδιον*) Father, making Himself equal to God" (John v. 18). "He that receiveth you," He says in His charge to the Twelve, "receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me" (Matt. x. 40; cf. Luke x. 16). He sets Himself forth as greater than the prophets. They were servants; He is the Son, the Heir (Matt. xxi. 33-46 = Mark xii. 1-12 = Luke xx. 9-19). They had spoken of Him, had seen His day afar off, and had longed to see Himself; and He announces Himself as the fulfilment of their prophecies. "Beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He in-

terpreted unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself (Luke xxiv. 27).

Moreover, He claimed to be at once the Saviour and the Judge of men. He had come "to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28); He bade the weary and heavy laden come unto Him that they might find rest unto their souls (Matt. xi. 28-29); and He spoke of a solemn day "when the Son of Man shall come in His glory and all the angels with Him, and shall sit upon His throne of glory, and before Him shall be gathered all the nations" (Matt. xxv. 31-46). How tremendous His claims upon His followers! He pointed to the dearest, tenderest, and most sacred relationships of human life, and demanded for Himself a prior devotion. "He that loveth father or mother above Me is not worthy of Me, and he that loveth son or daughter above Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. x. 37). "If any one cometh unto Me and hateth not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, moreover, his own life, he cannot be My disciple. And whoso doth not bear his own cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple" (Luke xiv. 26-27). It was not merely for God, nor yet merely for the Kingdom of Heaven, that He made those stupendous claims: it was for Himself. Conceive such language on the lips of a Galilean peasant! It would have seemed the language of insanity on the lips of Socrates or Julius Cæsar, and would have been greeted with ridicule and contempt. What was there about the gentle Jesus that made such language seem natural and fitting on His lips? It was not those who knew Him best and could judge most truly of the justice of His claims, but the blinded Jews, that said He was mad (John x. 20), and sought to kill Him, because He made Himself equal to God (v. 18).

Again, *how unique are the words of Jesus!* One cannot read them without echoing involuntarily the ancient con-

fession, "Never man so spake!" (John viii. 46). There are no words like them either in the Bible or in any other book. How they sparkle and glow on the pages of the Gospels! It is neither exaggeration nor irreverence to say that they lie embedded in the evangelic narrative like jewels in a setting of base metal. One knows instinctively where Jesus ceases and the Evangelist begins. It is like passing into another atmosphere. The writer remembers the late Professor A. B. Bruce describing how once during his ministerial days he was studying the miracle of the healing of the lunatic boy at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration, and stumbled at the verse: "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matt. xvii. 21). The mention of *fasting* seemed so alien to the Spirit of Jesus. He turned up his Tischendorf and found that the verse has no place in the authentic text of the First Gospel, having been imported into it by some copyist to bring it into agreement with the parallel tradition of the Second Gospel (ix. 29), and, moreover, that the words *καὶ νηστεία* should be omitted from the latter. A kindred example is Matthew xii. 40. This verse is absent from the parallel tradition of the Third Gospel (xi. 29-36), and on its own merits one would gladly dispense with it. Not only does it lack the savour of a genuine *λόγιον* of Jesus, but it spoils the argument. Jonah's adventure with the whale was no "sign" to the Ninevites, who knew nothing about it. It was his preaching that was a sign to them, and this is what St. Luke says. There is no documentary evidence against the verse, but it needs only a glance to recognize it as no word of Jesus. It is an interpretative gloss inserted by the Evangelist, who gives his own crude and prosaic explanation of the preceding *λόγιον*, attesting all unconsciously the divinity of the Lord's teaching and the utter inconceivability of its having been invented by His reporters.

The words of Jesus have a fragrance and a beauty all their own.

οὐδέ νιν
θνατὰ φύσις ἀνέρων
ἔτικτεν, οὐδὲ μάν ποτε λάθα κατακοιμάσει
μέγας ἐν τούτοις θεός, οὐδὲ γηράσκει.

While recognizing the grandeur and inspiration of St. Paul's teaching, one feels that his words are in no wise comparable with those of Jesus. He spoke as a Jew, and his teaching is cast in a Jewish mould and coloured by Jewish sentiment. One sympathizes with the judgment of John Colet, perhaps the most distinguished of our English humanists and the friend and hero of Erasmus. He taught awhile at Oxford ere his appointment by Henry VII. to the Deanery of St. Paul's, and his brilliant lectures on the Pauline Epistles inaugurated a new era in the study of the New Testament in England. "He set," says Erasmus, writing in 1519 just after Colet's death to Jodocus Jonas, the friend of Luther and Melancthon, "the greatest store by the apostolic Epistles, but such reverence had he for that wondrous majesty of Christ that in comparison therewith the writings of the Apostles became in a manner vile (*quodammodo sordescerent*)."¹ This is a just judgment. The words of Jesus are peerless. They are no lingering voices of a long-vanished past. They are as fresh and living to-day as when they were first spoken by the Sea of Galilee or in the city of Jerusalem. They palpitate with life and make our hearts to burn within us, reminding us how He said: "The words which I have spoken unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (John vi. 63).

One cannot fail to observe *the complete absence from the Evangelic Jesus of distinctively national characteristics*. And this is the more remarkable inasmuch as He was born of a race notorious for its intense, exclusive, almost

¹ Erasm. Epp. xv. 14 (mihi).

ferocious patriotism.¹ The nationality of St. Paul was always prominent. He could never have been mistaken for a Greek or a Roman. He assures the Corinthians indeed that he had become "all things to all men, that he might by all means save some"; but, whatever sympathetic disguises he might assume, he remained always an Hebrew of the Hebrews, proud of his nationality (Phil. iii. 4-7) and overflowing with tender and passionate love for his people even while he pronounced their condemnation (Rom. ix 1-5). It is far otherwise with Jesus. He was absolutely exempt from national limitations; so much so that Renan, arguing from the name of the province, *Gelil haggoyim*, "circle of the Gentiles," that the Galileans were a mixed race, declares it impossible "to ascertain what blood flowed in the veins of him who has contributed most to efface the distinctions of blood in humanity."² This is a very precarious argument and flatly contradicts St. Paul's statement, ἐξ ὧν ὁ Χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα. Jesus was a Jew according to the flesh, and, save for His Egyptian exile in infancy (Matt. ii. 13-15), and one brief excursion across the northern border (Matt. xv. 21-28 = Mark vii. 24-30), He was never, so far as we know, outside of Palestine. He was purely human, recognizing all mankind as children of God, owning kinship with all, whether Jews or Gentiles, who did the will of His Father (Matt. xii. 50 = Mark iii. 35 = Luke viii. 21), and pronouncing Jerusalem not a whit more sacred than the mountain where the Samaritans worshipped (John iv. 21). He called Himself, not the Son of David, but the Son of Man, which means, according to the Hebrew idiom, the true or universal man.³ He was, to employ an exquisite mistranslation, "the Desire of all nations," the Saviour for whom the hearts of men of

¹ Tac. *Hist.* v. 5; Philostr. *Vit. Apoll.* v. 33.

² *Vie de Jésus*, ii.

³ Calv. *Instit.* ii. 13, 2: "palam est hebraico more vocari filium hominis verum hominem."

every clime had all unconsciously been yearning, and in whom all the families of the earth are blessed.

It is impossible, however, to set forth in detail all the manifold wondrousness of the Evangelic Jesus. To approach that peerless picture is to find oneself in the presence of a unique and transcendent Personality. "Jesus himself," says one so unbiassed by traditional reverence as Matthew Arnold,¹ "as he appears in the Gospels, and for the very reason that he is so manifestly above the heads of his reporters there, is, in the jargon of modern philosophy, an *absolute*; we cannot explain him, cannot get behind him and above him, cannot command him." Every other of the great personages of history may be analyzed and the influences which went to the making of him distinguished; but Jesus defies analysis. He was not made nor even influenced by His environment: had He been so, He would have been at every point the precise opposite of what He was. He was a debtor neither to Jew nor to Greek. His is the one perfectly original and absolutely self-determined life in history. He defies analysis and refuses classification. He will not be ranked under the common category of humanity.

Such is the Evangelic Jesus, and the question is: What shall we say of Him? Must we not reverently acknowledge Him the Holy One of God, the Saviour and Lord of men? Immediately, however, objections start up. In the first place, it may be urged, *such a conclusion presupposes the historicity of the evangelic narratives*. If Jesus were indeed what they represent, then the conclusion might be inevitable; but are they reliable? Professor Schmiedel holds that they are utterly unhistorical, containing nothing that is "absolutely credible" beyond nine mutilated sayings. All that may be certainly affirmed of the historic Jesus is

¹ Preface to Popular Edition of *Literature and Dogma*.

that He was a teacher who made a profound impression on His contemporaries but who was neither divine nor sinless. Ere one can bend in adoration before the Evangelic Jesus, one must be assured of the reliability of the evangelic narratives, and this is at the best but problematic.

Now this objection proceeds from an entire misapprehension of the argument. It forgets the initial supposition. We set out with no prepossession in favour of the evangelic narratives and no prejudice against them, treating them all alike and making no distinction between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics. We examined them precisely as we might any ancient documents which should come into our hands recommended by no divine authority; and we have discovered in them a matchless picture—One who lived out in human condition a life which transcends humanity, realizes the ideal of divinity, satisfies the yearnings of our hearts, and commands the adoration of our souls. We do not say with Green that here we have the highest ideal of the relation between God and man, and it matters not how it has arisen. We say rather that it is too wondrous to be an invention of any human mind and must be historical. The Evangelic Jesus is self-attesting. It is He that attests the narratives, not they that attest Him.

It is incredible that that divine life should be a mere dream. The man who conceived it must have been himself divine. It would have needed a Jesus to invent Jesus. Pfleiderer has propounded the theory that St. Paul was the creator of Christianity.¹ He first ascertains from the recognized Epistles the great Apostle's conception, and then endeavours to demonstrate that it is reflected in the evangelic narratives. It is not the Jesus of history that the evangelists portray, but the Christ of the Pauline theology. The answer is simple and direct: If St. Paul were indeed the creator of the Evangelic Jesus, then St. Paul was im-

¹ *Urchristenthum*, S. 520.

measurably greater than we have ever suspected. Ere he could conceive such an ideal he must have been himself divine, and it remains that we should transfer to him the adoration which we have accorded to Jesus.

It is inconceivable that the Evangelic Jesus should be a creation, whether of some master mind or of the myth-forming genius of the primitive Church. Humanity cannot transcend itself. Surely scepticism has its credulity no less than superstition when it is gravely maintained that so radiant an ideal arose "among nearly the most degraded generation of the most narrow-minded race that the world has ever known, and made it the birth-place of a new earth."¹ The mere fact that there dawned on the world, and that in a land barren of wisdom and an age morally bankrupt, an ideal which has been the wonder and inspiration of mankind for more than sixty generations, is an irrefragable evidence that it is no mere ideal but an historic fact. The Divine Life which the evangelists pourtray, must have been actually lived out on the earth, else they could never have conceived it.

And thus the Evangelic Jesus is Himself the supreme evidence of the historicity of the evangelic narratives. "For me," says Ignatius,² "the archives are Jesus Christ, the inviolable archives His Cross and Death and His Resurrection and the Faith that is through Him." No criticism can shake this sure foundation. It may be that the Gospels contain inaccuracies and inconsistencies; though it were well for such as love to dwell on these to remember Rothe's warning against the perversity which, "in examining the sun-spots, misses the sun." It may be that the Evangelists were liable to err and were subject to the influences of contemporary opinion and personal prejudice; though the more one studies their writings the more is one convinced that, untenable as every theory of inspiration

¹ Hutton, *Theological Essays*, p. 290. ² *Ep. ad Philad.* viii 2.

may be, some singular aid must have been vouchsafed to those unlearned men who "carried so much æther in their souls."¹ It will hardly be disputed by any intelligent believer in the divinity of our Blessed Lord that He was imperfectly comprehended and inadequately represented by His biographers. What human mind could perfectly conceive, what human hand adequately depict, the vision of His glory? It may be impossible to gainsay such contentions, but they may be the more cheerfully allowed inasmuch as they furnish a singular argument for the historicity of the evangelic narratives and the divinity of Him they tell of. The fact that Jesus is "so manifestly above the heads of His reporters" is a conclusive evidence that, when they wrote of Him, they were not composing a work of the imagination but relating in all honesty and simplicity "things which they had seen and heard." And the very imperfection of their narratives is an involuntary testimony to His ineffable glory. When every deduction has been made, the Evangelic Jesus remains a wondrous picture. Blurred as it may be by reason of the unskilfulness of the artists, it is still a picture limned in light of One fairer than the children of men; and if a picture painted by weak human hands be so transcendently beautiful, what must have been the glory of the Divine Original?

It may be objected again that, *even if the historicity of the evangelic narratives be allowed, Jesus may be accounted for on naturalistic principles.* He is simply the Perfect Man, the first we know of and perhaps the only one who has realized the ideal of humanity. He was a man with a unique genius for religion, and stands pre-eminent in his department precisely as Michelangelo and Shakespeare in theirs.

Surely, however, it is fatal to this theory that Jesus appeared when He did in the course of human history. Were He simply the Perfect Man, He would still present an in-

¹ Philostr. *Vit. Apoll.* iii. 42: τοσοῦτον ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ φέρων αἰθέρα.

soluble problem. According to the law of Evolution the Perfect Man must appear late in history as the consummation of humanity's long development. His appearance midway, and that in a decadent race and a period of universal corruption, were wholly inexplicable. It were strangely premature. His advent should be still far off, the goal toward which upward-aspiring humanity is still tending and ever more nearly approaching. Were He but the Perfect Man, Jesus would be as one born out of due time, as the ripe ear in the season of the green blade.

Neither is He simply the supreme religious genius. Though Michelangelo and Shakespeare stand unrivalled in art and poetry, others also have been great, though in lesser measure, and have not owned them as their masters. But all the saints during these sixty generations have looked up to Jesus, have derived their holiness from Him, and have confessed that it was His grace alone that made them what they were. He is not simply the supreme religious genius, but the Saviour Who, on their own confession, has lifted sinners out of the mire and transformed them into saints. It were indeed rash to affirm that but for Jesus there would have been no saints during these eighteen centuries; nevertheless it is a fact that every saint who has lived upon the earth and made it sweeter by his presence, has owned Jesus as his Lord and found peace and hope in Him alone.

And thus we may turn aside from the strife of criticism and, with strong and quiet assurance, rest our souls on Jesus as on a sure foundation which stands firm amid the removing of the things that are shaken. "For another foundation no man can lay than the one that hath been laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. iii. 11). The recognition of Jesus as the manifestation of the Eternal God is the end of all controversy.

I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ
 Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
 All questions in the earth and out of it.¹

It settles every dispute. Is it the existence of God that is disputed? Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, *Dei inaspecti aspectabilis imago*. Is it miracles that are objected to? Jesus is Himself the Miracle of miracles; and, in view of the transcendent miraculousness of His sinless life, it were foolish to cavil at the lesser miracles which the Evangelists record. It is no marvel that Jesus should have wrought miracles: the marvel were rather if, being what He was, He had not. Once He is seen in His wonder and glory, faith is absolutely inevitable.

The truth is that the objects of faith do not admit of demonstration. "All first principles even of scientific facts," says Romanes,² "are known by intuition and not by reason. No one can deny this. Now if there be a God, the fact is certainly of the nature of a first principle; for it must be the first of all first principles. No one can dispute this. No one can therefore dispute the necessary conclusion that, if there be a God, He is knowable (if knowable at all) by intuition and not by reason." So long as faith rests on demonstration, it can never be more than a probability, and must lie at the mercy of every subtle logomachist. That is a significant confession of one of the interlocutors in Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, that, while he was reading Plato's *Phædo*, he felt sure of the immortality of the soul, but, whenever he laid the dialogue aside, his belief slipped away from him. And this is the priceless service that Jesus has rendered to our souls, which were made for God and can never rest until they find rest in Him, that He has lifted faith for ever out of the domain of reason into that of intuition, and has made it sure and abiding for every one who has eyes to behold His glory and an heart to understand His love.

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¹ Browning, *A Death in the Desert*. ² *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 146.