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## *STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST.*

### XVIII.—THE RESURRECTION.

THE Resurrection of Christ is in the Christian system a cardinal fact, one of the great hinges on which it turns. Certain miracles have only an accidental, while others possess an essential, value. The first are but incidents in the gospel history ; the second belong to its essence, constitute, as it were, its substance. The accidental miracles are those Christ did, but the essential are those constituted by his person or realized in it. The former enrich and adorn the evangelical narratives; while their loss would impoverish the setting of the evangelical facts, it need not abolish their reality. But the latter make the very matter believed—are the gospel. Then, too, the essential may involve the accidental, but the accidental do not necessarily involve the essential. So long as Jesus remains the risen Christ, the Child of Mary, but the Son of God, He is by his very nature so supernatural that his normal action can be hardly ordinary ; the miraculous to us must be the natural to Him. But were the essential denied and the accidental affirmed, it would be as if the trees were cut down to get at the fruit, or the main figure of a picture erased to let the background be seen—the creative source would perish, the end which required and determined the others' existence would cease.

The essential miracles may be said to be three—the

Birth, the Person, and the Resurrection. These all stand indissolubly together ; partition is impossible. A supernatural person cannot be the result of natural processes, or be the victim of a natural destiny. He is, by the very terms of his being, above what the forces of nature can produce, and above what they can destroy. Whatever, therefore, tends to prove the Person of Christ miraculous tends to make alike the supernatural Birth and the Resurrection more credible. On the other hand, whatever tends to vindicate the reality of the supernatural in these events tends to make the miraculous Person at once more conceivable and more real. We have already seen how the conception of the Person justifies the belief in miracles ; we have now to see how a miracle may justify and confirm the idea of the Person.

Of the two supernatural events just specified, the Resurrection alone is capable of distinct historical proof or disproof. The other, which culminated in the birth, is not. There we must believe, we cannot know. Where and when and to whom the Child came can be known, but into what lies behind sight cannot go, faith alone can. But the Resurrection, however extraordinary, can be dealt with as an historical fact. All the forces creating its opportunity can be traced, the witnesses for it examined, its evidence sifted, compared, weighed. By what we may term a Divine instinct its preëminent importance was understood at the very first. It was the fact which the oldest Christian testimony placed ever in the forefront ; it was everywhere confessed as the reality on which the Church was built, and which it could not afford to forget. The apostles were its witnesses, existed to preach it. Had it not happened

they would have had no mission, would never have been what they were. The Resurrection created the Church, the risen Christ made Christianity; and even now the Christian faith stands or falls with Him. The Resurrection is a *resumé* of historical yet supernatural Christianity. If Christ be not risen our faith is vain. If it be proved that no living Christ ever issued from the tomb of Joseph, then that tomb becomes the grave not of a man but of a religion, with all the hopes built on it and all the splendid enthusiasms it has inspired.

The story of the Resurrection is one of exquisite pathos and beauty. The crucifixion had created despair, had smitten the shepherd and scattered the sheep. The cry had gone forth, "Leave him alone; every man to his own." In loving secrecy and weeping silence the faithful few had removed the body from the cross and laid it in the new tomb of Joseph. The great feast came, and while Jerusalem held holyday the disciples had to bear as best they might their bitter shame and ruined hopes. But the women could not forget the marred visage, now rigid in death, but once so expressive of holy and beautiful life, and, with characteristic devotion, waited to seize the earliest moment to look on it once more, before the effacing fingers of decay had swept the lines of its lingering beauty, and in the little, yet to the living great and helpful, ministries of tender regretful affection, at once express and relieve the sorrow that burdened their hearts. So in the dim dawn of the morning after the sabbath they stole to the tomb, but only to find in it no buried Lord. They never thought of a Resurrection; thought only, "the grave has been rifled;" and one fled in an anguished woman's way, blind to every-

thing but her awful loss, crying, "They have taken away my Lord." But the angels within the tomb and the Lord without made the tear-blinded woman and the sense-bound men slowly awake to the strange glad fact, "He is risen, as he said." "God has not allowed his Holy One to see corruption." In that tomb, the gloomiest earth had known, because the grave of the Holiest known to earth, a torch had been lighted that made sable death luminous, and forced from him his dread secret, translating it into Resurrection and Life. And so there was set under the weak but wishful feet of hope, no instinct of the human heart, or inference of the human reason, but the strong rock of historical yet eternal fact—the Person of the risen Christ.

Before attempting to discuss the historical and critical questions involved, it may be as well to glance at the beautiful and exalted ideal truths which find in the Resurrection their fittest expression. For it is not an arbitrary and violent fact, standing in sharp contradiction to the spiritual, which are the true regnant forces of the universe; nor is it an irrational unconnected event, whose only right to be believed is that it happened. It is the sublime symbol, perhaps rather prophetic realization, of truths which the colder intellect of the world has doubted and criticised, fearing they were too good to be true, but which its warmer heart has everywhere victoriously striven to believe. Man is not born to die, and death, though universal, has not quenched his belief in his own immortal being. There is no fact of human experience so remarkable, so significant of the power of the reason to command, to conquer, and to defy the senses. The intelligible world is created from within not from without; what

man believes he believes in obedience to the laws of mind, often in rigorous opposition to the alien and inhuman forces of matter. And this is nowhere so vividly seen as when he stands throughout all the centuries of his history daring, in the very face of death, to believe in his own continued being. An experience as old and as universal as the race has not been able to compel the reason to regard the grave as its end, or physical dissolution as meaning annihilation of spirit. Death man can better explain as the result of his own wrong than as the rightful and ultimate lord of life, allowed to reign only that it may by chastising the more completely reform him, by dissolving the body the more perfectly liberate the soul. And so he has ever tended to believe that where man's sin is not, death's reign must cease, where his wrong has no place, its dominion can have no force. And thus when One is born into our common lot, not as a simple link to bind the generations each to each, but to become a Sinless Personality, to be the only holy Person of the race, then it would be but according to the nature which God animates, according to the spiritual ends for which all material things exist, that He achieve the victory over death. He must achieve it if the moral is to remain the supreme power, if brute force is not to become mightier than spirit and reason. By achieving it He becomes the symbol of what God is aiming at—the prophecy of what God will do. If death come to Him by wicked hands, what they do God must undo, that righteousness may not perish or human hope die wearied with the greatness of its way. Over the reason that remains Divine even while incarnate, death cannot be victor, may be allowed to seem to

triumph, but only that it may be the more utterly broken and defeated. The vitality of God can never fall before the breath of mortality. And so Jesus, while He dies upon the cross, dies only to issue from the grave, on the one side, a response to the prayers of mortals, conscious that they ought to be immortal, on the other, the victorious proof for all time that He who made our spirits will, when our spirits are what He made them to be, draw them out of cold and desolate death back into the light of his countenance, to their eternal home in his bosom.

The Resurrection of Christ raises many questions, philosophical, historical, literary, and critical. The philosophical question is general, refers to the possibility and credibility of miracles; but the others are particular, concern the reality and proof of this special fact, the authenticity, truth, consistency, credibility of the narratives, the veracity, qualifications, trustworthiness of the witnesses, the nature, validity, sufficiency or insufficiency of the evidences. The philosophical question it is not necessary to discuss; it would carry us too far into simple and assumed first principles. Miracles are supernatural and, indeed, impossible to a nature without God, but possible and, indeed, natural to a nature with Him. To Theism nature exists for God, God does not exist for nature. It is the arena on which He is working out his purpose, and the arena must be subordinated to the purpose, not the purpose to the arena. Nature and history must be interpreted through our idea of God, rather than our idea of God through scientific and empirical ideas of nature and history. Denial of the possibility of miracles is possible, then, only where there is denial of the being and per-

sonality of God, or, what is equivalent, where nature is made his God, and its laws the bars of the prison within which He is confined. But with this theistic problem we are not now concerned, and allude to it mainly to protest that, measured by our idea of God, the Resurrection of Christ is neither miraculous nor supernatural, but normal and natural, an event in finest harmony with his character and the attributes that determine his ends. Our immediate concern is with the particular questions, and we must endeavour so to conduct the discussion as to cover as nearly as possible the whole field.

The question may be discussed either from the subjective or the objective side. The men either did or did not believe that Christ rose from the dead. If they did not, the whole thing was a fabrication, the story an invention from beginning to end. There must have been falsehood of the most daring and deliberate kind, aided by the most credulous folly. The men who had the audacity to concoct the story would be audacious enough to steal and conceal the body, and so to tell their tale as to win the faith of the simple-minded people who are always only too willing to be deceived. This is the sort of theory against which Paley's argument of the twelve honest men is absolutely conclusive. Happily, it is not one that need now be argued against. If any hold it, it can only be the utterly illiterate. The man capable of believing it is a man incapable of being reasoned with, too passionate of nature to be either rational or just. A sane and honourable and informed spirit could never either conceive or believe such a theory. That a company of men could be confederate in evil for purposes of good;

that they could be throughout life a society of organized hypocrites without ever smiling to each other, or letting the mask fall; that they could preach virtue or live virtuously with a damning lie on their consciences; that they could nurse their souls, most of all in the very face of death, in the hope of being with Christ for ever in blessedness, while aware that He was rotting in an unknown grave—are positions that involve so many psychological impossibilities that any grave discussion of the matter would simply be absurd. Criticism must postulate the honesty of the witnesses; without it the history is not one any reason can handle, or out of which any good can come.

The witnesses, then, did believe that Christ rose from the dead. In this belief they were absolutely honest, were as certain that Christ had risen as that they themselves lived and preached in his name. But honesty of belief is no proof of the reality of the thing believed. The possibilities of mistake are almost infinite, and the honest belief of fictions is as common as the honest belief of facts. The honesty saves the character of the believer, but not of the thing believed. Modern criticism unreservedly accepts the truth and reality of the apostolic belief. *That* its historical sense is too sure and too keen to question or doubt for a moment. Baur's position was this:<sup>1</sup> the Church is inexplicable without the belief in the Resurrection; it supplied Christianity with a firm basis for its development. But what history requires is not so much the reality of the Resurrection as the belief that it was real. How the belief became real, whether by an ob-

<sup>1</sup> *Kirchengeschichte der drei ersten Jahrhunderte*, pp. 39, 40. English Trans. pp. 42, 43.

jective miracle or a subjective psychological process, is of minor importance; the grand thing is that the Resurrection became a fact to the apostolic consciousness, and had to it all the reality of an historical event.

But this position is unscientific and inconclusive. It can as little satisfy the claims of historical science as of Christian faith; both must equally strive after the truth of the matter and be contented only when face to face with it. Science can never be sure that it knows either Christ or Christianity till it has ascertained whether He rose or did not rise; and if He did not, by what psychological process so many honest men came to believe that He did, and so to believe it as to persuade the civilized world to be of their mind. Faith can never be satisfied with a theory that leaves it uncertain whether its most transcendent fact was an objective reality or the creation of a psychological process, which is but a euphonious paraphrase for the dream or delusion of a too credulous and visionary mind. It must ask, What is it that I believe, a reality or an imagination? The subjective thus necessarily falls over into an objective inquiry, each, indeed, when it becomes fundamental, involving the other. The question, then, in its objective, which will also be found to raise all the issues of the subjective form, is this: Did the Resurrection of Christ happen or did it not? Is it or is it not an historical fact? To the question so stated there are three possible answers. Either—

1. Christ did not die on the cross, only swooned, and afterwards reviving in the grave, issued from it and appeared to his disciples in his proper physical form; or—

2. He died and did not rise ; or—
3. He died and rose.

These questions we will now discuss in succession.

1. Jesus did not die on the cross, only swooned, and, reviving in the grave, issued from it, appeared to his disciples, and was by them regarded as having risen from death. Astonishing as it may seem, this theory has had its advocates, and may have its advocates still. It existed in two forms, a more and a less gross. The one made Jesus feign death for the express purpose of making his reappearance seem a resurrection, another made the swoon real, the result of exhaustion and agony, from which He was restored by the cool atmosphere of the tomb and the stimulating fragrance of the spices. But no conjecture could be more gratuitous, absurd, impossible. The mere physical difficulties are insuperable. That a person exhausted, wounded, half-dead, in need of delicate nursing, of quiet and rest, of choice and strengthening food, with bleeding feet and a pierced side and a body shaken and out of joint, should be able to steal out of the sepulchre, escape the vigilance and merciless malice of his enemies, represent himself to his disheartened and scattered friends as the victor over death and the grave, is conceivable only as a series of cumulative absurdities that would be merrily ridiculous were they not so terribly profane. Such an appearance had appalled the men that witnessed it, frightened out of them the little faith and hope that remained. And as on this supposition the half-dead Jesus did soon die, was dying all the while he was appearing to the men he had known, the only conviction He could have left must have been of a broken and vanquished life lingering into hideous death. It is impossible to

believe that from any such miserable source the faith in the Resurrection could have been derived.

2. Christ died and did not rise. This theory seems to have the merit of simplicity and definiteness, and may be said to be built on two positions; first, that history can recognize no miracle, and must regard the events it seeks to explain and describe as natural, happening according to known or discoverable laws; and, secondly, that the evidences in this case are entirely inadequate, the narratives inconsistent, the testimonies perplexed, confused, often contradictory. Now, for reasons already stated, the first position need not be discussed here. It is a question of first principles; it entirely depends on the philosophy of the historian whether miracles are or are not to him impossible. The best history is the history without dogmatic assumptions, that does not determine beforehand what must or must not be, but simply examines what has been or is. As to the second position, it will be discussed later on, and meanwhile we simply note that on one point there is perfect agreement, the reality and the sincerity of the belief in the Resurrection of Christ. No modern critic questions it, or doubts that without it the history of the Church had been impossible. But now, how is the origin of the belief to be explained? by what mental or psychological process was it created? The problem is very complex, and as delicate as complex. There is the question as to the first inception of the belief—how a notion so extraordinary as that Christ had risen or could rise first came to be entertained. Then, why was it that it did not remain singular, but became general—the faith not of one excited and credulous person, but of many sane and

doubtful men? And how was it that it exercised over the men an influence at once so sober and rationalizing, and so inspiring and determinative? Why, too, was the belief so primitive and, as it were, aboriginal, flourishing at the centre, on the very spot and in the very city where Christ had died? These and many similar points are so hard to resolve, and start so many difficulties, that Baur was content to leave the matter in a for him curiously nebulous state, certain only that the faith was real, entirely uncertain how it became so. But later inquirers could not rest where he did. An event that happens by an unexplained or inexplicable process is to history little better than a miracle; and so the criticism that denies miracles could not feel satisfied of having achieved anything scientific until it had discovered and described the psychological process by which a real belief in an unreal event was possible and became actual. Clearly this is the cardinal problem—granted the honesty of the witnesses and the reality of their belief, how, on the supposition that Christ died and did not rise, did they come by their belief? and how did it come to wield such a tremendous power over them, and through them over the Church and over mankind? This problem has been attempted to be solved by two dissimilar yet related theories, which we may name respectively the phantasmal and the visional. Let us see with what success.

I. THE PHANTASMAL.—The theory so named we owe to the brilliant and fertile imagination of M. Renan. It is one no other modern scholar and critic is capable of conceiving, and unfolding in grave and graceful sentences. It is so strongly marked by his peculiar idiosyncrasies that it is fully as interesting for

the light it sheds on M. Renan as for its significance as a serious attempt to explain the origin of our belief. It starts from this position—the creative power of enthusiasm and love. They play with the impossible, and, rather than abandon hope, will do violence to all reality.<sup>1</sup> Heroes do not die, and God could not allow his Son to see death.<sup>2</sup> The immortality of the soul was a Greek idea, not clear to the Jews; their notion was the kingdom of God, which consisted in the renovation of the world and the annihilation of death. The disciples could not believe that He who had come to institute the kingdom could be the vanquished of the grave; and so they had no choice between despair and an heroic affirmation<sup>3</sup>—which is a very fine phrase for not so fine a thing. The heroic affirmation was chosen; the little Christian society worked the veritable miracle, raised Jesus from the dead in its heart by the intense love which it bore to him. The creative spirit was Mary of Magdala; she made the faith of the future.<sup>4</sup> She was an imaginative creature—had once been possessed of seven devils.<sup>5</sup> When she came to the tomb the stone was rolled away, the body gone; surprise and grief seized her, crossed, perhaps, by a gleam of hope. Without losing a moment she runs for Peter and John. They examine the tomb, and depart; she remains before it weeping, possessed by the thought, Where have they laid him? Suddenly she hears a light noise behind her, and thinks, "Tis a man, the gardener," and cries, "Where have ye taken my Lord?" For answer she hears the old familiar voice say, "Mary!" "O my Master!" she cries, and turns

<sup>1</sup> *Les Apôtres*, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 3, 4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 11.

to touch Him ; He forbids, and his shade gradually disappears. " But the miracle of love is accomplished. What Peter was unequal to, Mary has done." <sup>1</sup> " Peter saw only the empty tomb ; Mary alone so loved as to surpass nature, raise and vivify the phantom of the gentle and beautiful Master." In such marvellous crises, to see after another is nothing ; who sees first has all the merit. <sup>2</sup> And so the glory of the Resurrection belongs to Mary ; after Jesus, she has done the most for the foundation of Christianity, has, as became the queen and patroness of idealists, imposed on all the sainted the vision of her impassioned soul. <sup>3</sup> Ecstasy is contagious. What she has seen the others see. The society is conquered in detail. Each section, women and men alike, has its own separate vision, tells its separate tale, and swells the general excitement. As they are gathered together with imaginations made vivid by these weird tales, the wind breathed in their faces, and lo ! it became his voice murmuring " peace." " In these decisive moments á current of air, a window which creaked, a chance murmur, fixed for ages the belief of the peoples." <sup>4</sup> And thus was crowned and completed the achievement of the Magdalene.

Such is the theory stated, in all sobriety of spirit, with all his wonted brilliance of style by M. Renan. But we have here to do with it simply as a professedly scientific and veracious account of how the faith in the Resurrection came into being. Can we regard it as what it professes to be ? Well, then, its first and cardinal defect is evident—it does not save the honesty of the men. It reduces them to a society of fools, whose folly was all the deeper that it was so knavish. They

<sup>1</sup> *Les Apôtres*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 22.

behave like a circle of hysterical women, no one having sanity enough to ask whether their alarms or their joys were real. The men believed because they wished to believe, and by an utter suppression of reason and rational inquiry. Then, the body of Jesus was gone—whither? and by what means? It must have been removed; more than one must have been concerned in its removal—why were they silent? If foes had removed it, how they could have crushed the nascent belief! if friends, they could be silent in its presence only by conscious and wicked conspiracy. The enemies were too thoroughly bent on suppression to allow so dangerous a belief to take root while they had irresistible evidence of its utter falsity; the circle of friends was too limited to permit any single member to remain ignorant of the new belief and untouched by the new enthusiasm. In either case, therefore, knowledge of what had become of the body could not fail to reach the disciples, and only their silence could allow the fiction to be believed as fact. But connivance in a deception so enormous was at such a moment morally impossible. Enthusiasm was necessary to the life of the belief; but conscious deceivers, while they may imitate an old ideal, cannot create a new enthusiasm or form a new religious faith. Men, too, who are smitten to the heart, pierced through and through with a great sorrow, are too earnest to be insincere, to speak a cruel falsehood to their own and other consciences. This, indeed, is one of the many cases where the critic proves himself strangely destitute of moral sense and spiritual insight; and so but little able to read the transcendent moments of the history he has so long and so deeply studied.

But, further, M. Renan's first principle is false, quite opposed to the evidence. Enthusiasm and love are creative, but what of the love without the enthusiasm, with only the numbness and the dumbness of new and desolating loss? Enthusiasm is creative when living, impersonated, victorious; but how could it live in the face of the cross, the symbol of utter defeat, and of the tomb, the symbol of corruption and decay? Were the belief created it must have been early, while the sense of loss was deepest; but the sense of loss means simply the inability to create the belief. The further they got from the death, the less would they feel the need of the living Christ; the nearer they stood to the cross, the less able were they to imagine the Resurrection. And we gather as much from the narratives. They prove, if they prove anything, that the state of expectancy M. Renan's theory requires did not exist. Death had conquered, and before his iron hand and silent lips hope, now as always, ceased to live. The men who had lived through the agony of the last two days, who had seen the Roman spear do its work, and the grave receive its dead, must have been in no mood to be carried away by the tale of a possessed and frenzied woman who had seen a ghost. Expectant minds may be prone to faith, minds doubtful from despair, despondent from loss, are the most deeply incredulous.

But, again, the theory leaves unexplained the most characteristic thing in the belief—its remarkable and altogether unique form. The conception stands absolutely alone; there is nothing like it in the history of thought and belief. Many societies of men have been situated as the disciples were, and have created curious myths, but all the myths have had a generic character,

embody ideas radically unlike those embodied in the Resurrection of Christ. The Jews believed that Enoch and Elijah had not died, but been translated, vanished from earth into heaven. Omar might rush, sabre in hand, from the tent where the body of Mohammed lay, declaring that he would strike off the head of the man who should say, "The prophet is dead." The Roman world might live in the fear that the terrible Nero was yet to return to vex and disturb it. Mediæval Germany might believe that Barbarossa was asleep in his mountain cave, and would yet awake and come forth to restore the glories of the empire and the house of Hohenstaufen. Our own legends might tell how Arthur had sailed away to his island home of Avillon, whence, when happier days dawned, he would come to erect his table round, and open his chaste and chivalrous court. But all these rest on similar ideas, speak of the mythical imagination, as they speak to it. Death is in each case denied; the men can return because they have escaped death, and are only absent or asleep. But here it is altogether different. Christ dies—his death is real, absolute; He is buried, going down into the very grave. And his return is not an expected thing. He has escaped from the very hands of death, come out of the very grave, and has done so before the eyes of the men that knew Him best. In the other cases the contradiction of our universal experience is apparent rather than real, but here it is direct and absolute. In these, death is eluded; in this, it is endured; there, hope is because life is; here, the belief rises, as it were, sheer out of the tomb. Now, how are these characteristics to be explained? M. Renan never sees them, never feels

their meaning, yet till he does so he has not even grasped the problem he has set himself to solve. Where the problem has been so misconceived its handling may have an æsthetic or personal worth, but can have no rational significance.

2. THE VISIONAL.—This is a much more scientific and rational theory than M. Renan's. Its first and ablest exponent was Holsten. It found a genial interpreter in the late Heinrich Lang, was adopted by Strauss in the *Neues Leben*, and has been accepted by the author of *Supernatural Religion*. Its starting-point is this—Paul does not make any distinction as regards nature or kind between Christ's appearance to himself and his appearance to the first and earliest witnesses.<sup>1</sup> In each case the same term (*ὄφθη*) is used; in each the same reality, the same evidential and historical value, is attributed to the appearance. And of what kind was the appearance to Paul? It was a vision, *i.e.*, a state or process of his own mind, investing with reality what was not. While he maintains that he has seen the Lord,<sup>2</sup> yet in the history of his conversion he speaks only of an internal revelation.<sup>3</sup> His was a nature prone to ecstasy, and so visions were frequent and familiar to him.<sup>4</sup> In immediate connection with these visions he speaks of his "thorn in the flesh,"<sup>5</sup> just as if they stood in some relation to each other. Now, by an ingenious interpretation, this "thorn" is made out to be "epilepsy," or some form of nervous disease, which made him peculiarly liable to visions and hallucinations. To this physical tendency he owed his sight of Christ, which to him had all the effects of

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 5-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* ix. 1; xv. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. i. 13-17.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 1-5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* xii. 7.

reality while purely ideal. And from his language the other appearances were no more real, all belong to the same category, are subjective, not objective phenomena, were creations and visions of the mind.

Now this is a much more scientific and rational theory than M. Renan's. It deals with the matter gravely, is exegetical, psychological, careful in its analysis, and minute in its criticism—but is it historical? Well, then, the first dubious point is its interpretation of Paul. He was no diseased visionary, but a man of sane strong nature. His admittedly authentic epistles are full of the most radiant sanity. In things intellectual his reason reigns, in things emotional his judgment. No man was ever less governed by impulse, more by firmly grasped principles. When he speculates, there is no cloud on his intellect; when he reasons, his dialectic is dexterous, his logic sharp and swift. The ethical are, perhaps, the most remarkable parts of his epistles, they are so wise, so practical and practicable, yet they are so really magnanimous, so explicative of ideal relations between man and man. In his conduct to the men from whom he differs he is the very antipodes of a visionary. Nervous dislikes, hatreds without reason, behaviour governed by petulance or passion or states of physical disease are unknown to him. His difference with Peter at Antioch, his view of the Corinthian parties and mode of dealing with them, his most complex and perplexing, yet admirably maintained relations to the Churches, his power of work, his physical vigour and extraordinary recuperative energies—all imply qualities, bodily and mental, utterly incompatible with the notion that he was an imaginative epileptic. The Pauline epistles

are wonderful examples of unconscious autobiography ; but they are, perhaps, least significant of the man where he is most consciously autobiographical. There is a proud reserve in him which makes him dislike speech about himself, and he reveals himself least where he writes most under conscious restraint. The Paul of the visional theory is not the Paul of the epistles, but of a few texts forced into novel relations and ingeniously interpreted. The one is too sane to be a visionary, but the other is a vision indeed.

But the theory is open to other and graver objections. It fails to distinguish sufficiently between the mental attitude of Paul and that of the earlier witnesses. His was one of anticipation, theirs was not. He knew of the belief before he saw the Christ ; it was in his mind, even though only to be contradicted and denied. But the first witnesses did not find the belief ; it found and made them. Hence their belief cannot be explained through Paul's, his must be explained through theirs. We are, therefore, thrown back on the prior question, How did they come by the belief ? And it cannot be answered without a discussion of the evangelical histories. And on this ground the visional theory lies open to the criticism directed against M. Renan's. Once it comes to handle the facts, the explanation built on its Pauline psychology ceases to be applicable. Visions come only where there is distance, expectancy, and creative enthusiasm ; they come not to minds face to face with hard sensuous facts, desolate, despondent, irresolute, divided. The very reasons that render the theory applicable to mind, when once the belief has come into possession, render it inapplicable before the belief has come to be. The laws or factors that operate in

periods of ecstasy and exaltation do not exist in periods of desolation and dismay. Where there is an exultant belief in the Resurrection, visional appearances are not only possible but inevitable; but where there is no such belief, how are they to be explained? Where the creative conditions are absent, how can the creation arise?

We reach, then, the conclusion that, on the terms fixed and defined by modern criticism, there is, on the supposition that Christ did not rise from the dead, no sufficient explanation of the origin of our belief. It is impossible to account for it and yet save the honesty and rationality of the men. We must, then, seek the explanation along another line, and this brings us to our next position—

3. CHRIST DIED AND DID RISE.—Let us see, then, whether there be evidence to sustain this position; in other words, whether the belief necessarily leads back to this as its only and sufficient cause. Here, indeed, a plea may be entered in bar of argument or further proof. The witnesses do not always agree; their testimonies are often inconsistent and discrepant. But to what extent do they disagree? Of what nature is their discrepancies? Do they extend to cardinal or essential matters? or do they concern simply points of detail? On details they are discrepant; on the cardinal matter there is absolute and emphatic agreement. Independent testimonies are, where thoroughly independent, made more not less credible by differences in detail. They prove conspiracy or concoction impossible; each new witness is a distinct and independent voice, not a mere echo of his neighbour's. Standpoints differ, and where the same thing has been seen from

many and dissimilar standpoints, their concurrent testimonies are strengthened by the varieties in their respective narratives. Instead, therefore, of seeking to minimize the discrepancies, let us acknowledge their existence to the full, and proceed at once to examine the evidences for the historical origin of the belief.

Let us start, then, from this point—the Resurrection of Christ is the most prominent, the most distinctly emphasized, fact in the New Testament; one, too, as regards which there is, amid almost every possible variety of detail, on all hands the most absolute agreement. No one denies it; nor is there in the oldest literature any hint that at Jerusalem or among the Jews there was any attempt at denial, or inquiry, with a view to disproof, into the facts of the case. The Christian writers are unanimous in setting it forth as the one fact which gives Christians the right to be and to be believed. This agreement is the more remarkable that it exists amid the most pronounced differences. Parties existed, opposed schools and tendencies, each zealous for its own men and doctrines. But though they differed in their views as to the person of Christ, his work, his relation to the old economy, his authority and place in the kingdom of God, they all affirmed most absolutely his Resurrection from the dead. The Petrine and the Pauline tendencies, the Hebraistic and the Hellenic parties, the men who held that Jesus had respected and observed the law, and the men who held that He had utterly abolished it, were at one in the belief that He had risen, that without his Resurrection faith in Him were vain. And what does the unanimity so remarkably emphasized signify? That every Christian writer and every community they represented

believed that the Resurrection was their grand creative fact, the event to which they owed their existence, what entitled them to live and claim man's faith. This fact lies behind their doctrines, is their common source, was before their differences, and exists amid them as their one bond of union. Their faith is a witness to the action of the event, testifies that before it they were not, after it they were, and without it they had entirely ceased to be. And this testimony history corroborates in a wonderful way. Christianity, as the oldest documents prove, was not a secret but a public faith, singularly outspoken and aggressive. Its career began in the very city where its Founder had been crucified; and there, where the hate to Him was deepest, where the memory of his fate must have been most vivid, the faith in his Resurrection lived a fearless and victorious life, challenging an exposure which never came, invincible before the combined interests and passions of priests and rulers. Grant the Acts of the Apostles a late and untrustworthy book, yet here is a fact no criticism can touch—ten years after the crucifixion a fierce persecution was raging at and around Jerusalem;<sup>1</sup> one which implied that the Christians had utterly broken with Judaism, and were working within and against it with extraordinary daring, activity, and success. Not only was no charge of deception or imposition attempted in that persecution, but its most distinguished leader became a Christian convert. And the ground of his conversion was the belief that Christ had risen from the dead.

Now, the testimony of Paul is of singular force and value. It is twofold, verbal and historical, consists of

<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 13, 22, 23.

what he says and what he becomes and does. The verbal is mainly valuable for the light it sheds on the historical and personal. Let us put the case. A new religion has risen in the heart of Judaism, denying its authority, renouncing its most honoured customs, depriving the Jew of his most exclusive privileges, and looking kindly on the Gentiles. Its warrant is the resurrection and exaltation of the Christ the priests had crucified. Now, there is no hate like religious hate, and religious hate is deepest where the kinship is most near and the division most recent. But though the new religion is hated, the old cannot suppress it. The priests have the will but not the power, and the most eminent of the Pharisees is significantly hesitating in his attitude, does not assail the Christians as his party had assailed Christ, but leaves them alone, as if half convinced, even against his will, that God was on their side. In this man's school there is a strong resolute spirit, a young man fresh from Tarsus, full of glowing enthusiasm for the city and faith of his fathers. Apostasy is to him a hateful thing, and the Christians seem apostates, daring even within the very holy city to deny Moses and be unfaithful to God. He sees them through the prejudices of the school, and holds that they ought to be dealt with as if the law were no dead letter, but a living power. The law commanded that the man who denied Moses should be stoned; and Saul, with the courage of his convictions, was prepared to obey Moses. The first that fell was Stephen; but the success in this case only made Saul the more anxious to do more. He "made havoc of the Church," haling men and women to prison, and, Pharisee though he was, asking help of the chief priest. But now a

curious thing happened—actual contact with the persecuted worked a change in the persecutor. Once he confronted them in the flesh, came to know their actual belief and behaviour, he was so moved as to be shaken out of his old faith and made ready to receive the new. Now, what was it that so worked on him? There can be no doubt that it was the Christian belief in the Resurrection. It was this belief that predisposed him to the heavenly vision. This belief became the centre of his system; round it his ideas all crystallized. It revolutionized his notion of Jesus, of his mission, death, cross, his relation to the law, his notion, too, of God, of his purposes and relations to the Jews and to mankind. There never was a completer conversion, a more radical and penetrating change. And he was not a man to whom change was easy. His was not a flexible nature, must have resisted long, yielded reluctantly and with a tremendous shock. And his words shew that he had not believed without anxious searching and sifting. He had evidently questioned Peter, as evidently inquired of the five hundred. He speaks like a man who knew the survivors, who had known those fallen asleep, watching them as a man will watch those to whom he owes his highest spiritual good. Here then is the point: can this man who stood so near the event, who was certainly the keenest-eyed and loftiest-souled of all the men who did stand near it, who hated it with passion, who came to it with the most rooted prejudices, yet was, by the sheer strength of evidence, compelled to belief in it, to the entire change of his spirit, his objects of faith, his purposes and aims in life, to the absolute renunciation of his dearest ambitions, his kin, his fame, his home—

can this man, I say, with all the splendid reason and reality that were in him, and the work he achieved, be explained as the child of delusion, the dupe of illiterate enthusiasts, who were themselves the dupes of their own excited fancies and morbid nerves? Were he so, he were a greater miracle in the region of the spirit than the Resurrection in the region of nature.

But now, turning from Paul, let us look at the other apostles. They share his certainty, his, indeed, being the creature of theirs; but it is not their words, but themselves, we wish to cite as witnesses, their testimony being strongest where it is unconscious and indirect. We know what they are in the Gospels, fishermen, like their class, ignorant, superstitious, weak, impulsive. Their ideas are Jewish; not as refined in the schools, but as vulgarized and conceived in the village. The only kingdom they expect is the ancient commonwealth restored. Their notions of the future world are the shadowiest; what is not realized here and in the old political forms they cannot understand. They hardly know that there is a great world beyond Judæa and Galilee, or know it only to hate the foreigner who has conquered, or despise the Gentile because he is no Jew. But now these men experience a twofold change: (1) they believe what before they had shewn no capacity even to conceive, that their crucified Master had risen from the dead, and (2) they become, because of this belief, the apostles of a new religion, the agents of the most splendid change that was ever worked in the faith and conduct of man. It was an altogether wonderful thing—the change, the exaltation of spirit was simply miraculous. We know what the fishermen on our own coasts are capable of; we know what these

Galilean fishermen have achieved. In their original state the latter had a narrower range of ideas, more limited ambitions, grosser notions of religion, of God and man than even the former; yet these Galileans were so transformed and inspired as to conceive and proceed to realize a scheme of conquest far sublimer than had ever dawned on the mind of Alexander or Cæsar. And what caused the change? If they themselves are to be believed, the Resurrection and the ideas it worked in them. If they had created the faith, they had remained unchanged; if it created them, the change is explicable, and finds an adequate cause. Without it they remain the greatest riddles in history; with it they and their achievements become alike natural. The Resurrection is a sufficient reason for the men; but without it the men are no sufficient reason for Christianity.

But there is another line of indirect evidence quite as significant as the last—the attitude of the Jews to the belief is quite as remarkable as the change marked by the belief in the apostles. The Jews hated Christianity even more than they had hated Christ, and scrupled at no means that promised its suppression. They were then, as now, an ubiquitous race, living in all lands, trading in all cities, a separate community, touching the Gentiles everywhere, mingling with them nowhere, yet remaining in their dispersion Jews still, bound to Jerusalem by subtlest affinities, familiar with her story, with all that concerned her present and her past. They had then, as now, a wonderful faculty for searching out profitable secrets, knew how to make their way into the heart of social mysteries, and how to use them for what they esteemed the best. Much of

the dislike they then awakened was due to this special gift of theirs, and their skill in working it so as to accomplish their own ends, without too much delicacy as to the means. Now it was to the Jews the apostles first went, and from the Jews their troubles came. They raised riots, fomented the ignorant passions of the Gentiles, persecuted the Christian preachers from city to city, poisoned the atmosphere around them with insidious slanders, and even dragged them before magistrates who cared nothing for the subtle points of Jewish law. But one thing, so far as can be discovered from the oldest literature, they never did—they never denied the reality of the Resurrection, or even questioned it. If they could have proved that Christ had not risen from the dead, his religion would have died before the proof. And if such proof was possible to any one, it was possible to them. The scene of the Resurrection had been their own capital; its rulers had been the authors of the death, and were certain to be most suspicious and watchful of the disciples in the days that followed their loss. The children of the Dispersion lived everywhere in communication with Jerusalem, and every feast would bring fanatics to the city determined to put down this new and spreading apostasy, each eagerly demanding of the chief priests how it was to be done. But here is the extraordinary matter—this adroitest, most dispersed, yet most concentrated, of peoples, urged by the strongest of human hates, willing to gratify it by means party passion can always justify, daintily leave untouched and unquestioned the creative and cardinal fact of the religion they abhor. How can this be explained? The fact was not concealed; the men who declared themselves its witnesses testified

everywhere concerning it, offered themselves for examination, asked that their narrative be compared with the events it professed to describe. Yet the men who heard their testimony, and were most interested in discrediting it, never attempted to do so, but allowed it to go throughout the world unchallenged and undenied. Why? In the attitude of Gamaliel there is a suspicion that the apostles may be right, that God may, after all, be on their side. Put his suspicion alongside the avoidance by the Jews everywhere of the main issue, an issue they had every opportunity and inducement to meet openly and directly, and does not the conclusion seem inevitable that the Resurrection was left unquestioned because it could not be disproved, and because discreet silence was at least better than a dangerous inquiry? So interpreted, the silence of the Jews is as significant as the speech of the Christians.

But now there is another point that must here be emphasized — the speech that was unchallenged by the Jews was most offensive to the Gentiles. For a resurrection from the dead was not a credible thing to the then world, did not harmonize with its prejudices and superstitions. Such a harmony has turned many a happy fancy into a trusted fact; but though the contrary has often been assumed, it did not exist here. To preach the Resurrection was not to make faith easier, but rather more difficult. Experience seemed to give it emphatic contradiction; no man had any associations that could explain or suggest it. The unheard of event was contrary to experience, was twin sister to the impossible. And so at first it was a burden weighing down the gospel rather than a wing favouring its flight. The attitude of the Sadducee

was typical; the very mention of the Resurrection raised his anger or his scorn. The Pharisees, indeed, believed in it, but it was under conditions and with limitations that would make them only the more utterly incredulous as to Christ's. His was solitary, unattended by a renovated earth and a restored Israel; an event altogether too spiritual in its nature and results to find a place among their gross ideas. When Paul named it to the Athenians, they greeted it with a mockery that brought his speech to a sudden and undesigned end.<sup>1</sup> Festus when he heard of it thought Paul mad.<sup>2</sup> The greatest intellectual difficulties of the primitive churches were connected with the belief, and what it involved. Indeed, so insuperable were these that Paul had to invoke the evidence and authority of the other apostles in its behalf. It is the one case in which he does so, and his doing so in this case alone shows the strength of the prejudices against which he had to contend. Now what does this signify? That only the absolute certainty as to the reality of the Resurrection can explain the persistence of the belief; that without the reality of the event the apostles could have been under no temptation either to imagine or stand by the belief. Take a parallel case—the crucifixion. It rests on no ampler evidence than the Resurrection; the one is no whit better authenticated than the other. Yet no man has ever questioned it. And why? Because it is so unlike what any one would consciously or unconsciously invent as the kind of death suffered by a person he loved as a Saviour and believed in as the Son of God. Yet it is hardly too much to say, the idea of the Resurrection is as

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii. 31, 32.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xxvi. 24.

alien to the then reason of the world as the idea of the crucifixion was abhorrent; and so the tenacity with which the apostles held by their belief was due not to the favour with which it was received, but to the strength of their own convictions—the invincible consciousness that the Christ had risen and had, as risen, spoken to them and been with them.

These still remain but a fragment of our evidences. The power of the belief is made manifest by the place it occupied, the system that crystallized around it. All Christianity confesses the belief, runs back into it, and what is most ancient is here most strong. On this point institutions, customs, doctrines, hopes, and fears are alike unanimous and emphatic. Remove the Resurrection from primitive Christian theology and its speech, and they would cease to be coherent or intelligible. There is nothing older in Christianity than the Lord's day, nothing more universal than the Supper and Baptism; yet without the Resurrection, its ideas and associations, these are utterly inexplicable—without any historical source or significance. On it, too, hope lived—all the conceptions and reflections of what was to be grew out of it and stood clustered round it. Approach the question from any side, and it only the more appears that without the risen Christ the Church is without a source or a cause. If historical evidence is sufficient anywhere, it is here; for the written testimony of the evangelists is our weakest testimony, almost perishes before the mightier witnessing of those splendid facts that marked the birth of the new religion, the building of the City of God. If men object to it as a stupendous miracle, too immense a departure from the ways of Nature to be believed by men who

observe Nature and mark the operation of her uniform and inflexible laws, let us say to them, "Look above Nature; there is a higher and diviner order. Nature is not an end, is only a means: she expresses her Maker's Mind and exists for her Maker's ends. What is necessary to his ends is according to his nature, though it may seem opposed to man's. Interpret the universe through the idea of God, place God and man in living relations to each other, let the conditions necessary to the realization of these relations be fairly conceived, and there will be the consciousness of an order sublimer than any Nature reveals; an order which not only has room for the Resurrection, but demands it, to the end that eternal grace may reign through righteousness unto the glory of the Eternal."

A. M. FAIRBAIRN.

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*THE WISDOM OF THE HEBREWS.*

## THIRD PART.

A GENERAL view of the principles of the Hebrew Wisdom was given in the First Paper, and some illustrations from the oldest literature of the Wisdom of the way in which these principles were applied in the Second. It remains now to look at some of the particular problems of the Wisdom, and after this to advert shortly to that highest generalization of it which appears in Proverbs (Chap. viii.), where, being abstracted from its empirical manifestation in the laws of life and providence, it was elevated into the region of transcendence and acquired a subsistence of its own, being personified as the counterpart of the Divine mind and fellow of Jehovah.