

how to consider of it, you will perceive that nothing could be more purposely done."

But it was one thing for a scholar to think thus, and another for the average priest and pietist to tolerate the Jewish use of a form of prayer which seemed a parody of or parallel to their own principal prayer.

We have still to cite, however, one of the main and definitive proofs that the Christian prayer was really in Jewish use before Jesuism began, and that not merely in the form of the *Kadish*, but in the express terms in which we now have it. As we have seen, the Sermon on the Mount absorbs certain typical passages from the early and purely Judaic portion of the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, the Christian additions beginning only with the seventh paragraph, which suddenly prescribes baptism with a Trinitarian formula. But that there remain further portions of the Judaic document is made highly probable by the wording of the eighth paragraph, which would follow quite naturally on the sixth, if we dropped the seventh altogether. The sixth ends:—

"And concerning food, what thou art able, bear; but of that offered to idols, beware exceedingly; for it is a worship of dead Gods."

This is the language of Jews instructing fellow Jews living among polytheists. The eighth paragraph runs:—

"But let not your fastings be in common with the hypocrites; for they fast on the second day of the week and on the fifth; but do ye fast during the fourth and the preparation day. Nor pray ye like the hypocrites, but *as the Lord commanded in his gospel*, thus pray:—Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth; give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debt as we also forgive our debtors, and bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil [one], for thine is the power and the glory for ever. Three times in the day pray ye thus."

Then follows a fresh Jesuist (Ebionitic) paragraph, beginning "Now concerning the Eucharist, thus give thanks." But the words "as the Lord commanded in his gospel" are, be it observed, the very first allusion in the whole document to either the Lord or the Gospel. In the first paragraph we had a quantity of the matter which figures in the Sermon, but not a word of its being taken from the

Lord or "the gospel." It is conceivable, indeed, that the eighth chapter may be wholly a Jesuist addition; but is it not immeasurably more likely that it was in the original Judaic document, and that only the phrase "as the Lord commanded in his gospel" is interpolated?

There is reason to suspect that even the six earlier chapters of the *Teaching*, though still free of Jesuism, do not survive in their earliest form, but had undergone Judaic manipulation before reaching Christian hands; and Christian manipulators would certainly not hesitate to insert a phrase in one of the Judaic chapters, any more than to interpolate Jesuist chapters. Even as it is, the Christian patching shows different stages. The ninth chapter at first introduces only "Jesus thy servant," the formula of the early Ebionites, so that "the Son" of the seventh chapter is a later Trinitarian touch. The eleventh chapter, again, which might easily have followed on the ninth, has no mention of Jesus; and its "the Lord" may be purely Judaic, or may more probably be a Jesuist interpolation, for the sentences in which it occurs are extremely tautological. The name of Jesus does not once occur after the tenth chapter, though "Christ" and "Christian" do in the twelfth, and "the gospel of our Lord" again in the fifteenth. In the sixteenth (the last), notably enough, in the prediction of the end of the world, occur the words: "*then shall appear the world-deceiver as the son of God.*" Is this Judaic or Christian? Critically speaking, it may be either: that is, it may have been first penned by Jesuists protesting against new Messiahs; or it may have been part of a late Jewish edition of the *Teaching* designed to discredit the Jesuists, and may have been copied by Jesuists either wittingly or unwittingly. The former, however, is the more probable solution.

But however that may be, the Jewish origin of the "Lord's Prayer," as of the rest of the Sermon, remains certain. Even the Sermon, as a whole, or much of it, may have been circulated separately by the Jewish Twelve Apostles. Paul knows nothing of it: none of the Epistle-writers cites any part, or speaks of a Lord's Prayer. Is it

credible that Paul would have said nothing of the Prayer if it was current in his time? And if it was not, where was the report to come from later? Plainly there was no report, no sermon, no extempore composition of a prayer, in the case. The prayer was an officially promulgated Jewish formula; the Sermon was a documentary compilation, never preached by any man save as such. And it no more came from Paul's Jesus than it did from Paul himself. The orthodox scholar makes an admission which of itself makes an end of the orthodox doctrine:—

“The earliest reference found to it [the Prayer] as a liturgical formula in actual use, is in the so-called Apostolical Constitutions, which give the form entire, and enjoin its stated use (vii. 44), but solely by baptized persons, a rule which was afterwards strictly observed.”¹

The “Apostolical Constitutions” belong to the third or fourth century; and, as the American editors of the *Teaching* admit, is “largely indebted to the *Teaching*.”² The chain of evidence is complete.

§ 8. *The Woman Taken in Adultery.*

No Gospel teaching, probably, has better served to create an idea of Jesus as an original moral teacher (though it does not really warrant such a view) than the story of his rebuke of those who were about to stone the woman taken in adultery. It must therefore have been a shock to many English readers to find that in the Revised Version this story is given up as being absent from the oldest codices, and clearly an interpolation. There is reason to believe, however, that some such story occurred in the lost “Gospel according to the Hebrews”;³ and it is arguable that it may have been there told to the same effect. Is *this*, then, to be taken as biographical?

That such a teaching should have been given by a Jewish moralist is perfectly possible. It is indeed hard to conceive, despite the normal one-sidedness of the morals of sex, that

¹ Art. before cited.

² Hitchcock and Brown's ed. (Nimmo), p. xlvi.

³ Nicholson, *The Gospel According to the Hebrews*, pp. 52–58, and App. F.

the Jewish middle class were in general capable of the brutal iniquity of stoning a woman taken in adultery, while the man went scot free. And if we are to understand "the one without sin among you" as meaning "the one innocent of adultery," we are presented in the Gospel story with the picture of a group of men, all themselves adulterers, ready to stone an adulteress to death, if they were not shamed out of their purpose. It is paying no great compliment to Jewish ethics in the first century to grant that a Jewish teacher may have been capable, like an average Greek or Roman, of seeing the atrocity of such a code as this.¹ And the detail of the teacher stooping down and writing on the ground has a distinct air of circumstantial truth.

If, however, the story existed in its present form in the Gospel of the Hebrews *before* the compilation of Matthew, how came it that the latter Gospel, which embodies so many of the other fragments of the lost book, entirely omitted this? Was it that the compiler found the ethic too high for him? This is indeed conceivable, but only on the distinct understanding that the Sermon on the Mount is a late addition. A writer who gave the teaching "Love your enemies," the doctrine of non-resistance, and the precept "Judge not, that ye be not judged," can hardly have blenched before the teaching that sinful men ought not to stone to death their fellow-sinner, man or woman. But the first Gospel chimes with the Hebraic in giving the teaching of forgiveness "until seventy times seven"; and it is unintelligible that a compiler who would accept that would reject the story of the forgiven woman. Recognising the former teaching to be a late addition, we are still left asking why the story of the forgiven woman is not also added. Two hypotheses are framable: (a) That the story as it stood in the Hebrew Gospel had not the moral merit of that given in the latter MSS. of the fourth Gospel; or (b) that the story was *late in the Hebrew Gospel*. Of these,

¹ Mr. Nicholson writes (p. 57, *note*) that "it is not likely that they had any thought of really stoning this woman. They might not put to death without leave from the Roman Governor, who would hardly give it in such cases as this."

the second alone seems on reflection to be tenable. Whatever the original story was, the later editors of "Matthew" would hardly have set it aside if it had any moral significance whatever. But if we suppose the story to have been added to the Hebrew Gospel some time after the composition of the canonical one, the whole problem is solved.

And to this solution there can be no critical objection.¹ The earliest first-hand allusions to the story as occurring in the Hebrew Gospel belong to the fourth century; and though Eusebius cites Papias as having so mentioned it, even that statement would date the passage no earlier than the middle of the second century, when an early recension of Matthew is known from Papias' own evidence to have existed. Thus, then, there is finally no evidence that the story in question was told of the Gospel Jesus till at least a century after the date given for his death; and we are forced by the silence of the first Gospel to suppose that it really was not. But it does not even follow that the story existed in Papias' time. *His* book, mentioned by Eusebius, was likely to be interpolated like every other Christian writing of the period: indeed more likely than others, seeing that he had no canonical status. The whole story may be a product, then, of the fourth century; and that this was the case is made at least possible by the fact that it is so late to enter a canonical Gospel.

Even if, however, we credit it to the second century, it has no biographical value. It may be true of any teacher; and it presents Jesus as teaching with authority in the temple—an aspect which, by the admission of the school even of Weiss, does not belong to the early portions of the synoptics, and which is in no way countenanced by the Epistles of Paul. It is thus part of the Messianic myth. When all is said, too, it does but represent the teacher as passing a judgment which, by Christian consent, might have been passed in such a case by the Roman governor.

¹ It is noteworthy that the first fragment (Nicholson, pp. 28-30) of the Hebrew Gospel has clear marks of a later stage of growth than we see in the canonicals. Jesus is made to narrate in his own person, and we have the formula, "I will therefore that ye be twelve apostles for a testimony to Israel." Whether we put such writing early or late, it is blankly unhistorical.

It is part of the effect of the sacrosanct connotations of the whole Gospel story to make us overrate on the one hand the moral originality of its better elements, and on the other ignore the faultiness of the worse. On any view of the moral importance of the teaching, however, it is doctrinal myth in so far as it is ascribed to Jesus the Christ.

§ 9: *Gnostic and Cryptic Parables.*

If in the posthumous accounts of any ancient historical personage who had left no written remains we found ascribed to him two sets of teachings so different as those of the Sermon on the Mount and certain sets of sayings and parables ascribed to Jesus, we should without hesitation pronounce the tradition false. A man's teaching may indeed vary with years; but the Gospel Jesus is represented as having taught at the most for two years; the general tradition (which here significantly reverts to a mythological basis) putting the time at one year. It avails nothing, then, to suggest that a moral teacher of exceptional power passed in the course of a few months, or one or two years, from the attitude of a public instructor, laying down principles of universal application, to that of a communicator of occult knowledge. The contrast between the "Come unto me, all ye that are weary" and the "Ask and it shall be given you," on the one hand, and the sinister assurance to the disciples that the mystery of the kingdom of heaven is given unto them alone, the people being judicially blinded—such an antithesis of tone and feeling represents, not any one teacher's vacillations, but the countervailing interpolations of totally different schools or sectaries.

It is not hard to understand how certain sectaries, conscious of the general hostility of Jewry to the Jesuist cult, should retrospectively frame for the teacher a bitter doctrine of exclusiveness. "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even

that which he hath. *Therefore* speak I to them in *parables*; because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And unto them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah....."¹ This is obviously later doctrine than that which follows in the context, where, after a recital of certain cryptic parables about the kingdom of heaven, it is explained that "without a parable spake he nothing unto them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables....."² A teacher who speaks invariably in parables either in order to fulfil a prophecy or in order not to be understood, is a doctrinal myth.

But the cryptic parables in themselves, apart from glosses, represent no real teaching. They *are* obscure, and possess no moral value whatever. Nor are they conceivable as popular discourses. Mystic conceptions of the kingdom of heaven under various analogies could but mystify the populace to no purpose, whether the preacher meant it or not. A current phrase is in these parables used in a non-natural sense, standing only for the later mysticism of a sect conscious of possessing an exclusive salvation; and the interpolators reckon nothing of the fact that they are stultifying half the Gospel.

All the while, the cancelling of any one of the antithetic teachings counts for nothing in favour of the other. Given that the Sermon on the Mount is myth of doctrine, the cryptic parables do not thereby become more credible as historical utterances. They stand for a totally different kind of factor from the legendary teaching of Jesus. Given, again, that they are myths of doctrine, the Sermon on the Mount is in no way salved. The negative arguments in the two cases are finally independent of the antithesis, though the antithesis is fitly to be made a premiss in the research.

It is no part of the present undertaking to trace the origin of the cryptic parables. But it is historically

¹ Matt. xiii. 11-14. Cp. Mark iv. 11-12; Luke viii. 10.

² Matt. xiii. 34-35.

important in passing to take note that here in the Judaist, in the Gospel-making period, we find at work the essential spirit of Gnosticism, that claim to an occult and superior knowledge which Paul denounces or is made to denounce on the Gentile side.

§ 10. *The Late Ethical Parables in Luke.*

A glance at any "Harmony of the Gospels"¹ which exhibits synoptically the distribution of the various elements will show that a whole series of the higher ethical teachings occur only in the Gospel according to Luke. Thus (1) the parable of the Good Samaritan, (2) the story of Martha and Mary, (3) the parable of the covetous rich man, (4) the doctrine that sufferers are not special sinners, (5) the insistence that it is right to heal on the Sabbath, (6) the inculcation of humility, (7) the parable of the angels' joy over one saved sinner, (8) the parable of the prodigal son—these, as well as certain other teachings of less moral or literary value but of a similar individuality, occur in this gospel alone.² Since, then, the compiler expressly professes to redact previous narratives, we are faced by this dilemma: Had the compiler of the first Gospel deliberately rejected the teachings under notice, though they were current in written form, or are they additions made to the third Gospel some time after its compilation?

The first alternative seems out of the question; there is nothing in the ethic of these narratives that should have repelled the first editors of "Matthew." What is more, it is unintelligible that the editors of a comparatively late period should not have added these narratives if they were then available in Luke. There is reason to suppose that certain other narratives of good ethical quality which are found both in Luke and Matthew were really added to the first Gospel from the third, and not *vice versa*, belonging as they do to the ethical strain of the better parts of Luke.

¹ *E.g.*, that of the Rev. J. M. Fuller, published by the S.P.C.K.

² Luke x. 25-37, 38-42; xii. 13-21; xiii. 1-5; xiv. 1-11; xv. 8-32.

If then additions could thus be made from Luke to Matthew, there is a double presumption that the ethical parables peculiar to Luke are specially late. It is with these as with the formula about the Son of Man coming not to destroy life, but to save it: the doctrine is inserted long after the period assigned to Jesus, and its ascription to him is a myth. The source is still proximately Judaic; but there is no ground for the belief that it originated with a teacher answering to the description of the Gospel Jesus, or that it was orally delivered at all.

To persist in crediting an ideal Jesus with such utterances because they have a more or less high moral quality is to persist in uncritical methods, and in a conception of ethical evolution which is discredited by comparative history. There is positively no reason to doubt that Jews unknown to fame, living in contact with other cultures, were capable of reaching the moderate ethical height of the parable of the Good Samaritan, which is partly predated in Old Testament teaching.¹ Such teachings, though the best in the Gospels, seem marvellous only in the dim light of the Christian tradition; there is nothing in them which could seem wonderful to a morally-educated Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Chinaman, or Hindu at the beginning of our era.² The contrast they present to normal *practice* is only that which always subsists between the higher current ideal and average practice, and which was never more flagrant than to-day.

§ 11. *The Discourses of the Fourth Gospel.*

The first step in the documentary criticism of the Gospel narrative as a whole was the separation of the fourth Gospel from the synoptics as being essentially alien to

¹ Deut. xxiii. 7—an interpolation. Cp. the book of Ruth.

² The Cambridge MS. Codex Bezae or D. inserts in Luke v., after verse 10, a story of Jesus telling a man who worked on the Sabbath that if he knew what he did he was blessed, but if not, cursed. Trollope (*Gospel according to St. Luke*, Rowlandson's ed. 1870, p. 35) notes that "some are inclined to receive this as authentic *on account* of its form and contents." And why should they not, on the usual arbitrary principle?

them in the theology of its preface and in the picture it gives of a mystical teacher. A certain poetic strain in these teachings and the touches of refined pathos in parts of the narrative have won for it all the special liking of many readers of literary tastes, who, however, have more or less consciously put aside the less attractive features of the concretely-wrangling Jesus and fastened on the mystic generalizations. Such minds resist methodical criticism in an unteachable spirit of self-assertion. Thus the late Mr. Arnold, who never made a scientific study of any part of the subject, settled the problem by mere arrogant disparagement of the "insight" of all who opposed his convictions, and praise of the "sure feeling and true insight" of those who agreed with him. In this simple fashion, without a word of relevant argument, Ewald is exalted over Baur, Strauss, and Renan,¹ and the whole complex critical problem is simply burked.

One of the ways in which Mr. Arnold ostensibly satisfied himself that the Johannine discourses must be genuine was to point to the explanatory comment on the saying of Jesus in the passage in John vii. 38-39, and to insist that the teaching is "great and free," and the interpretation "narrow and mechanical"; the teachings of Jesus being thus shown to be "clearly out of the reach" of the writer of the Gospel: This is pure fallacy. Mr. Arnold does not seem ever to have realised the conditions under which the Gospels were compiled and preserved. The "inadequate" comment is, in all probability, a late interpolation; and the original saying may perfectly well have been the invention of the first writer of the Gospel, or even of a later editor.

Taking by itself the saying under notice, we have an illustration of the complete arbitrariness of Mr. Arnold's critical procedure. The Gospel tells that "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow fountains of living

¹ *Literature and Dogma*, ch. vi. § 4.

water." It is extremely instructive to realise that a mind like Mr. Arnold's, claiming to work with a delicate tact and the insight of a ripe literary experience, should see in such a deliverance "sweet reasonableness" and intellectual greatness. The meaningless vaunt, the grotesque phraseology, the moral emptiness of the allocution—all are transfigured by the traditional prepossession, even as every sentence in the Koran is transfigured for the devout Moslem. Professing to apply the test of cultivated intelligence, of the "literary" spirit, the critic turns his back on that spirit, and fanaticises. Had any teacher of an alien cult been represented as thus preposterously crying aloud in the market-place, Mr. Arnold would, like any other educated man, have seen that the story, as such, was a myth, and the pretended utterance a concoction of a narrow and barren fanaticism. It was the moral and intellectual nullity of such utterances that led such a writer as Mill, convinced of the abnormality of the ethics of the synoptics, to protest that "the East was full of men who could have stolen any quantity of this poor stuff, as the multitudinous Oriental sects of Gnostics afterwards did";¹ and such a writer as Renan to defy whoever would to compose a credible life of Jesus, making use of the Johannine discourses—"ces discours roids et gauches, dont le ton est si souvent faux et inégal."²

Such deliverances may serve to countervail the mere dogmatism with which Arnold pushed his favourite views. But the decisive critical method is represented by neither of the judgments cited, valid as both are in themselves. The question is not whether the discourses peculiar to the Fourth Gospel have any value, but whether they are (a) at all congruous with any of the discourses in the synoptics, or (b) whether they are conceivably oral teachings at all. On the first head, hundreds of students have reluctantly answered in the negative. I say reluctantly, for it is from believers in the historic actuality of

¹ *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 254.

² *Vie de Jésus*, Introd. éd. 15e. p. lxxvii.

“the Gospel Jesus,” and usually from admirers of his supposed teaching, that the admissions have primarily come. It was in order to save what seemed a sound foundation that they withdrew from what they felt to be unsound, because heterogeneous. If the kind of personality broadly presented in the synoptics were real, that presented in the fourth Gospel, they felt, was wholly unreal. The last arguable plea for it was that John might be capable of retaining large portions of the Jesuine utterance which were lost by the other disciples for sheer lack of perception. On that view, the marvellous teacher spent himself in many elaborate discourses to twelve men, of whom only one understood him, or even cared to preserve his words—a conception which stultifies the cause on behalf of which it is framed. And Mr. Arnold stultifies even this plea by contending that the writer of the fourth Gospel was clearly incapable of appreciating most of the discourse he reproduced. Either way, the defence collapses in incoherence. No reasonable and scrupulous critic who holds by “the” synoptic Jesus, or any aspect thereof, can critically hold also by the Johannine.¹

While, however, critics who see solid ground in the synoptics must discard the mystifying and mysticising Jesus of John, those of us who recognise that the synoptics are but a congeries of myths of action and myths of doctrine are not *thereby* entitled to decide that the Jesus of John is a further congeries of myths. There is always the abstract possibility that a real Jesus may have arisen independently of the line of tradition which evolved the synoptics. The identification of a later real Jesus with the established mythic figure might occur later still. The Johannine Jesus *might* be Paul’s “another Jesus whom we

¹ Dr. Gardner (*Exploratio Evangelica*, p. 163), admitting the wide difference between the synoptics and the fourth Gospel, suggests that John had made the difference by his way of reproducing the speeches! As if any mere laxity of reporting could affect the general significance of such formulas as “I am the true vine,” “I and the Father are one.” So Mr. J. E. Carpenter (*First Three Gospels*, p. 55) makes the compromise that the Johannine discourses are “interpretations” of the Jesuine teaching. For all this there is no judicial justification whatever.

have not preached." But that hypothesis must be properly tested like another; and when the proper tests are applied it vanishes.

Let all the myths of action, some of which we have examined, be stripped away from the fourth Gospel; let it be disencumbered alike of its special miracles and of the mythic narrative which it shares with the synoptics, and we are left merely with palpable myths of doctrine. Its preamble—probably secondary, and visibly interpolated in its second sentence¹—stands for a new movement of doctrinal myth; and from the outset we have a new presentment of a fictitious Messiah, who claims (iii. 13) to have "descended out of heaven." Instead of a teacher who delivers a discourse of collected maxims, as in Matthew, or one who conveys sane ethical ideas in parables, as in parts of Luke, we have one who trades in mysticity. A would-be disciple, told by him that to enter the kingdom of heaven one must be "born again," answers like a good catechumen with a question as to how a man can re-enter his mother's womb; and the teacher answers with a formula about being "born of water and the Spirit." A modern inquirer can still affirm that "some of the sayings of the discourse [to Nicodemus] are so profound that we cannot easily believe them to come from any but Jesus"²—the old *petitio principii*, with even less than the old excuse. It is enough to answer that, even as forgotten men could frame the parable of the good Samaritan and the precept of non-resistance, so many forgotten men were capable of formulas about being born of water and the Spirit, about salvation

¹ Even the first sentence probably ran originally thus: "In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was next to God." (That *πρὸς* is not properly rendered by "with" is recognized by Dr. Paley, who translates it "in relation to." Compare the note of "A Layman" in the translation published by Pickering, 1840. "Next to" is the probable original sense.) The phrase "and the word was God" has every appearance of an addition meant to save the principle of the Son's equality: had the first writer meant to affirm as much, he would not have written the second clause, which is entirely incongruous with the third. But the further phrase, "the same was in the beginning *πρὸς τὸν θεόν*," is again an attempt to restore the Logos to a subordinate position. Certainly the passage has been tampered with.

² Dr. Gardner, *Exploratio Evangelica*, p. 163.

by an only begotten Son, about salvation by eating a God's flesh and blood, and about damnation for non-belief.

Such doctrines—with the possible exception of the last, which suggests a Judaic origin, though it is a natural sequence to the formula of salvation—were part of the stock-in-trade of current paganism. All baptisings stood for the beginning of a new life. The initiate of the *taurobolium* or *criobolium* in the Mithraic and other systems was *in æternum renatus*¹ by the blood of the slain lamb or bull, of which the literal drenching was to wash away his sins. The eating of the flesh and blood of the God was the standing mystery not only of the Dionysiak cult, but, as we have seen, of the typical theophagous cults of all antiquity. The sacrificed only-begotten son is an element in old Semitic myth,² of which the story of Abraham and Isaac is an Evemerized survival. And the abstract discourses of the fourth Gospel are as certainly myths of doctrine, put in the God's mouth, as these inculcations of dogma and ritual practice.

Let us attempt for a moment, on the plane of rational judgment, to imagine a teacher delivering the typical discourses of the fourth Gospel, and we are once for all repelled by their blank incredibility. "My Father worketh even until now, and I work"; "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner"; "For neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given all judgment unto the Son"; "I can of myself do nothing: as I hear I judge; and my judgment is righteous"; "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven"; "Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins"; "When I am in the world, I am the light of the world"; "All that came before me are thieves and robbers"; "I and the Father are one"; "I am the

¹ See the inscription in Orelli, No. 2352. Cp. Nos. 1899, 1900, 2130, 2199, 2322, 2326, 2330, 2331, 2351, 2353, 2361; also that in Boeckh, 6012, *l.c.* See also Dittenberger, *Inscr. Atticæ ætatis Romanæ*, Nos. 172, 173.

² See the extracts from Sanchoniathon in Eusebius, *Præp. Evang.* i. 6, 10; tr. in *Cory's Ancient Fragments*, ed. Hodges, pp. 16, 22.

true vine, and my Father is the husbandman"—such are the formulas set forth by creed-makers as the spoken words of a teacher, persuading human beings. What historically-trained student, finding them in any cult in which he had not been bred, would hesitate for a moment to class them with the pretended sayings of Krishna in the Bhagavat Gîtâ? Such sayings may or may not have been framed for dramatic delivery by the God in a mystery-play: they certainly were never delivered by a teacher in good faith to his disciples.

Discourses which were hopelessly intractable even to the facile undertaking of Renan, making a new pseudo-scientific myth out of the *débris* of the Gospel aggregate, must be recognized as unmitigated myth by any criticism that rises above the wilful assertion of an inherited prejudice. The fourth Gospel is but a fresh Hellenistic adaptation of the Jewish Messianic myth, embodying the Greek and Mazdean idea of the *Logos*,¹ making the God work the standing Dionysiak miracle, and compete with Mithra, "the light of the world," and with Dionysos, "the vine"; making him call himself one with the God-Father, and offer his body and blood as the mystic saving sacrifice, common to half the cults of the period; and giving a new help to the doubted doctrine of immortality by the fresh fable of the resurrection of Lazarus. Whether it be "truly" Gnostic or not, it stands for the fresh process of abstract myth-making of which Gnosticism is the general name. It matters little to what date we assign its composition. The question of the nature of the Gospel narratives is now seen finally to lie outside the question of the dates at which they first entered into circulation as documents. Be they as early as orthodoxy would claim, or as late as scholarly scepticism would argue, they are a

¹ M. Nicolas denied (*Des Doctrines religieuses des Juifs*, ch. ii. § 2) that the Jewish doctrine derived from the others; but his whole argument is that it differs from them in its application. This would only throw back the presumptive origination to the Babylonian system, from which the Mazdean and Egyptian systems alike borrowed. But the fact that for Philo the *Logos* is, like Mithra, "the Mediator" (*id.* p. 181) suggests a direct Mazdean influence.

baseless fabric of myths of action and myths of doctrine, leaving on scientific analysis "not a wrack behind," save the speechless crucified Messiah of Paul's propaganda, dubiously identifiable with the remote Jesus Ben Pandira of the Talmud, who died for some forgotten heresy a hundred years "before Christ."

EPILOGUE.

It will doubtless be charged upon the foregoing argument, as it has been upon every other process which discredits traditional beliefs, that it is "negative," that it "destroys without building up." But if the main positions be really valid, the charge is even more than usually false. I say more than usually, because it is nearly always false. It is psychologically impossible to destroy a religious belief, commonly so called, without putting in its place other beliefs: for it is only through the establishment of certain affirmations that a contrary affirmation, previously relied on, can be shaken. To prove that the world was not made in six days, it is necessary to show that it grew in another fashion. For the single false and ignorant belief there is thus given a complex of real knowledge, correcting and reacting on one's whole conception of the universe. It may indeed be possible to set up a metaphysic of negation that paralyzes all conviction; but that procedure, in modern times at least, has nearly always been that of men professedly bent on re-establishing the belief in a God on the ruins of belief in what formerly passed for "reality." No more strictly negative and destructive work has ever been done than by religionists of the school and type of Berkeley. And students have been known to declare that the latest development of the theistic argument, the Gospel of "the will to believe," has destroyed in them the very faculty of conviction.

If our analysis of the Gospels as a congeries of myths be broadly accurate, there has been set up not merely a set of more or less sound and tested propositions in place of an

aggregate of delusion, not merely a certain body of historic truth in place of much primitive error, but a sustaining and "constructive" conception of human history in place of one profoundly destructive and dispiriting. The champions of the traditional view of the Gospels are the truly negative teachers: they insist to the last that the records represent either a supernatural or a supernormal exhibition of moral greatness; that it needed either a God or a man beyond all compare to give forth such teachings; they imply that only by such moral cataclysms has humanity ever been bettered; and they further imply that there is either no chance or little chance of comparable betterment in the future. It is such teaching as this that peculiarly deserves to be branded as perniciously negative, in that it negates the moral faculty of all mankind. To apply the phraseology of the Christians of past time, it is a blasphemy against Man. It has cast a glamour of mystery round some ancient portions of men's handicraft, and has so taught later men to despair of their own powers. If our "negation" be just, it establishes the momentous affirmation that as Man is the maker of all Gods, so is he the maker of all Christs.

The Christian cult is literally the work of many generations; and though it may be arguable that certain men, as Paul, were specially active in promoting the mere external acceptance of it, it is here maintained that there is no ground for ascribing any of its special doctrines, any section of its Gospels, to any man whose name has been preserved. Alike the best and the worst are the work of men who elude our search; and both alike are clearly within the power of many nameless men of the ancient civilizations.

To say this, however, is to say that the best, on its merits, is no such prodigy of wisdom or insight as has been so commonly asserted. During the Dark Ages, indeed, the Christian world seems to present a relative paralysis of thinking, due largely to the very acceptance of the Gospels as a superhuman product; such acceptance, however, being primarily an outcome of the decay of the intellectual life which followed on a universal despotism.

But though the age of gospel-making was followed by a worse, the Gospels are not thereby vindicated as a great moral code. Had they been the moral marvel they are said to be, they should have prevented the decay which fell upon a world enlightened by them. In plain truth, they are absolutely devoid of the species of light which alone could have arrested that decay. Of political science they show no trace; they implicitly endorse slavery,¹ as does Paul;² and their doctrines of a speedy end of the world, and of salvation by blind faith, were the virtual frustration of all the better precepts they contained. If the scrupulous Stoicism of Marcus Aurelius, gravely bent on his public duty, could not arrest Roman dissolution, much less could the Gospels do so.

What is more, the wilder myth-mongering which followed on the gospel-making period is the due sequence of the myth-mongering of the Gospels themselves. Antiquity had slowly risen from a universal mythopoiesis to a measure of rationalism; but the Gospels, which contain some of the moral fruits of the higher thought of Paganism as well as of Judaism, preserve absolutely nothing of Pagan rationalism in the sphere of belief. Thus, passing into the hands of a new world of semi-barbarism, they put no check on mythopoiesis, but rather sanctioned every species of monstrous fiction. As we have seen above, the post-evangelical Christians multiplied their myths on Pagan lines step for step with the building of their Church. The Descent into Hades,³ the Seven Martyrs,⁴ the Trinity, the giant Christopher bearing the Christ-Child,⁵ the Assumption of Mary, the Immaculate Conception of Mary by *her* mother Anna, these are all as sequent from pagan practice as the myths of the Gospels, as the machinery of the priesthood. Lactantius⁶ makes Jesus

¹ Luke xvii. 7-10; where "servant" should read "slave," as in the Greek.

² 1 Cor. vii. 21, where the words meaninglessly rendered "use it rather" certainly mean "remain a slave."

³ Above, *Christ and Krishna*, § xvi.

⁴ *Id.* § xv.

⁵ Above, *Christ and Krishna*, § xiii. To the pagan types there cited should be added Orion, giant and child-bearer. See K. O. Müller, *Introd. to Mythology*, Eng. trans. App. pp. 336-9.

⁶ *Div. Inst.* iv. 7.

“twice-born,” like Dionysos; the Pope wears a mitre, like Dionysos,¹ in whose priest’s chair he sits, and like Mithra; even as the gospel-makers assimilated Peter to Mithra and to Janus. The machinery of the Apocalypse is simply a manipulation of the symbols of the ancient astronomy, as figured in its celestial sphere.² In the Acts of the Apostles, again, the Samaritan God *Semo Megas*, Great Sem or Semo, becomes Simon Magus, an opponent of Paul.³ The same human faculty for fallacy and fraud works in and after as before the framing of the Gospels.

It is the easier to understand it all when we realize how the same imaginative impulse works in the quasi-scientific historiography of our own time. We have seen an acute analyst of the mythopœic faculty framing myths of ethnology and sociology.⁴ In the special sphere of Gospel origins, again, we have Renan dealing with his material very much as an ancient mythographer would, hardly disguising his consciousness that he is building with fables.⁵ A man of letters not given to meticulous criticism has pronounced his method “sheer lunacy. You can see him take up the block which he had just rejected and make of it the corner-stone; a maddening way to deal with authorities; and the result so little like history that one almost blames oneself for wasting time. But the time is not wasted, the conspectus is always good, and the blur that remains on the mind is probably just enough.”⁶ It is true that the time is not wasted: on stepping-stones of Renan we may rise to truer things: but closer students can hardly rest content with the “blur.” Dr. Weiss, like Dr. Pusey, has pronounced Renan’s work a romance;⁷ and such it really is. But Dr. Weiss, who after all his labours over the texts constructs a Life of Christ in which nearly every myth is

¹ Diodorus iv. 4.

² See this very clearly shown by Dupuis in his larger and smaller treatises.

³ See *National Reformer*, Jan. 29th and Feb. 5th, 1893. The theorem of Baur and his school (Baur, *Christenthum*, pp. 79–85; *Paulus*, p. 85, etc. Volkmar, *Die Religion Jesu*, p. 281, ff., Zeller, *On the Origin and Contents of the Acts*, Eng. tr. i. 250, ff.) is not shaken by the orthodox answers.

⁴ Above, pp. 33–34.

⁵ *Vie de Jésus*, préf. éd. 15e, p. xvi.

⁶ R. L. Stevenson, *Vailima Letters*, under date May 20th, 1893.

⁷ *Life of Christ*, Eng. tr. i. 205.

rehabilitated as biography to the general satisfaction of ecclesiastics, has only produced a German romance in place of a French one. If we must have romances, many of us would prefer the French to the German variety.

As against the always popular process of romance-making, an attempt has here been made to reach a conception of true causation by the methods of science. It will recommend itself only to the relatively small class with a strong concern for truth as such; and the ingenuity which has been spent on proving the "reality" of confessedly fictitious characters will not here find itself propitiated. What passes for a worship of ideals is too often a mere dogmatism which refuses to recast the ideals of the past, and is psychologically on a par with the worship of idols. Let anyone dispassionately seek to realize for himself the conditions of mind under which savages make fetishes, and civilized men adore images, and he will find that it consists first in a certain process of either wilful or lawless imagination, and secondarily in the contented pursuance of a psychic habit thus set up. Exactly so, on a different plane of culture, do men persist in framing or retaining notions of personalities which they call "ideals," refusing to ask with open minds whether the given ideal satisfies the full-grown moral and intellectual nature, determining to "make believe" that it does, and to disparage those who disparage it. This "ideal," in short, is just an idol, which must be transfigured by the emotions to make it pass muster with the judgment.

How religious minds dispose of the difficulties created for them by veridical methods is well seen in Browning's "Epilogue," where, after making David voice the creed of Israel, and Renan in strangely un-Renesque phrase express some untranslatable despondency of doubt, the poet proceeds to declare with similar obscurity his own pantheism, according to which

" That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Become my universe that feels and knows!"

If that were said in the good faith of prose, it might

stand for a practically true solution: the mythic Jesus being indeed but one of a thousand phantoms formed from the breath of universal humanity. But the practical fact is that in such hands the dream-face only too literally "decomposes but to recompose"; the poet's pantheism is but a figure of speech, which does not represent his normal thought; and readers for whom, as for him, truth is that which you like to trow, simply reinstate the myth and call it Master. In the Middle Ages, Christendom had its circumstantial descriptions of the "Face,"¹ all of them as authentic as any portrait of Apollo or of Peter and Paul. In all stages alike we have the same pretension, the pretension to impose fantasy on mankind as fact; and the final Mythology will have to reckon with Browning and Nicephorus Callisti, Renan and Weiss, as so many manipulators of traditionary error to various ends, æsthetic, poetic, and ecclesiastical.

Let it be added that every proved failure, in the process of criticism, to conceive the evidence aright, comes under the same category. Mistaken theories of myth, we say, are but myths with a difference; and such mistakes may well have been made here. Such mistakes, however, are properly to be graded in terms of the degree in which they stand for belatedness of method, for failure to live up to the general light of their age. By such tests, then, let the foregoing reasoning be tried. That it is on the whole loyal to the light reached by prior research is as much as any self-critical investigator will care to claim for his undertaking.

¹ See the *Recherches Historiques sur la personne de Jésus-Christ*, par un ancien Bibliothécaire, Dijon, 1829, pp. 11-29.

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