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ARTICLE VI.

RENAN'S LIFE OF CHRIST.

BY THE REV. M. N. OLIVER, TAPPAN, N. Y.

JOSEPH ERNEST RENAN is dead. While Summer was passing on her legacies to Autumn in 1892, and while Autumn was flinging a kiss to departing Summer, the gifted scholar laid aside his prolific pen, never more to be resumed by the living hand that drove it with so much vigor and elegance across the historic page. The writer of this article had hoped, while visiting Paris the past season, to see the gifted author. Unfortunately the lecture-room was closed for the summer vacation, and the learned lecturer had retired to his native Brittany for rest. It proved to be the rest of death.

He lived sufficiently long, however, to reap many of his early literary aspirations. He laid out a vast field before him, namely, "A History of the Origins of Christianity." He outlined his contemplated work into four divisions, the first of which was to embrace the "Life of Jesus." This work was completed with a polish and an erudition that won for him the foremost rank in authorship, and the privilege to subscribe himself *Membre De L'institut*, the highest literary distinction that can be obtained among the French people. This volume has found multitudes of readers and admirers, both in its original language and in its different versions. Its subtlety of thought, without being abstruse; its beauty of diction, preserved even in any fair translation; its warmth of feeling, breathing forth in every line; the peculiar tendency of an age in sympathy with the rationalistic sentiment

which is everywhere apparent upon its pages,—all combine to make it the most popular of those works which purport to exhibit, in historical sketch, the Founder of the grandest and the most blessed of religions.

As already intimated, the peculiar feature of Renan's work is his placing it entirely in the plane of nature, and exclusively in the human sphere. The supernatural is entirely ignored. Said a writer, years ago, in one of the numbers of *The Contemporary Review*: "He has done as much perhaps as any living man to destroy men's faith in the supernatural." His history proceeds in the regular flow of everyday occurrences. In following the footsteps of his German predecessor, David Friedrich Strauss, in this peculiar aspect of the question, he regards Jesus only as a noble specimen of the purely and exclusively human; and whatever pre-eminence he possessed was simply in a higher intellectual and moral grade of humanity, and in no endowment of the divine, except what all may participate in. However improbable it may be, yet the possibility of Christ's attainments is within human reach. Jesus is only our brother, Adam's son, nothing less, nothing more, beginning and ending an earthly life. The degree of moral and religious excellency to which he attained, is what all may aspire to; and if they reach it not, it is not so much from a want of a supernatural element, as from some defect in the accident of birth, or the advantage of culture. In fact it is the pronounced intention of Renan wholly to ignore what the Christian church regards,—the supernatural in Jesus. Wherever it appears in the Gospel narrative, he explains it away. He attempts to show that the divine which the piety of the church attributes to Jesus, was not inherent, rather imposed upon him by the enthusiasm of his followers, and by the credulity of the age; its only existence was in the imagination of man, not in the person of Christ; it was a parasitic growth, which deformed with its unnatural excrescence, instead of adding to the beauty of an

otherwise symmetrical character. This supernatural element, in the opinion of Renan, was entirely unnecessary; it was of no use in the true influence and the proper work of Christ. Everything which Christ accomplished, could have been done as well without it, as with it.

True, confidence on the part of his followers, in his divinity, may have aided the advancement of his religion, by begetting a courage and confidence born of faith; yet this confidence was based upon a delusion, instead of a reality, and was only a phosphorescent gleam which beckoned onward, a false light which shone ahead; false, in that there was no truth in it; yet true, in that it begat a hope and confidence in his followers which battled on, and secured success. Whatever permanent result the phantom secured, was not due to any truth in itself; rather that it evoked the energies in man which worked out the glorious results of history. Whatever is attributed to the supernatural, in the triumphs of the church, is due to human resources and human energies. All can be naturally accounted for. Renan attempts to show how all this could take place, and did take place, as an ordinary occurrence; or if extraordinary, it was only extraordinary within natural limits, governed and explained by natural law and the natural operation of the mind. He would eliminate the divine from Christ, and write his life as only swayed by those natural forces which influence, in greater or less degree, every being of human generation.

The sign of the success of Renan's attempt, or rather the method and criterion by which we may measure that success, he himself gives, in the following words:—

“In such an effort to revivify the lofty souls of the past [referring to Jesus, St. Paul, and St. John], we must be permitted to some extent to *divine* and *conjecture*. A great life is an organic whole which cannot be represented by the simple agglomeration of little facts. A deep feeling must embrace the whole and form its unity. The method of art

in such a subject is a good guide; the exquisite tact of Goethe would here find full scope. The essential conditions of art creations is to form a *living system every portion of which answers and demands every other*. In histories of this kind the *great sign that we have attained the truth is success in combining the texts so as to constitute a logical, probable, concordant narrative*. The intimate laws of life, of the advance of organic products, and of the toning down of shades, must be consulted at every step; for what we have here to find, is not the material circumstances, impossible to verify, *but the very soul of the history*; what we have to seek is not the petty certainty of the minutiae, but the justness of the general idea, the *truth of the coloring*. Each touch which violates the rules of classic narration, should warn us to beware; for the fact which we have to narrate was living, natural, and harmonious. If we do not succeed in rendering it such in our narrative, surely it is because *we have not attained to the right view of it.*"¹

We thank Renan for these sentences which afford us the gauge by which we may estimate the correctness or the falseness of his delineation and theory of Jesus, whom we have been taught to believe the Christ.

We accept Renan's standard of estimation, and take up the gage. At the first glance, however, we are staggered. He starts out with the intention of showing that Christ is only human, carrying with him his rule "the great sign that we have attained the truth is success in combining the texts so as to constitute a logical, probable, concordant narrative." He follows out his rule strictly. He takes that of Christ which relates to the human, and presents to us the history of a purely human being. He unfolds a human career, and fortifies every step, and justifies every assertion,

¹ Taken from the forty-seventh and forty-eighth pages of the translation of the "Life of Jesus," made by Charles Edwin Wilbour, and published by Carlton, New York. All the italics in this quotation are ours.

by scriptural texts. He makes an abundant use of texts, and he marshals them all in the interest of his hypothesis. Gradually and firmly he proceeds from the beginning to the end, and presents to us a human being. Every assertion so falls into its seemingly legitimate place, and is defended by such a successful appeal to the Gospels, that he presents, by his literary art, a man only. And, to first observation, the work seems to be so complete, so natural, so fortified by the Sacred Record, that he imposes on our credulity, and we are impressed with the thought, "After all, is not this the true interpretation? May not the author have sifted the true from the false, and from much rubbish extracted the reality of the nineteen hundred years ago? If he has not discovered the true theory, and worked upon the true plan, how then can this apparently symmetrical figure be presented to our intellectual view, surrounded with such a cordon of biblical assertions?" One of the arts of Renan is to justify every feature he presents of his subject by biblical references; and this impresses the careless reader with the thought: "How could the writer meet with such success, were not his view the correct one?"

This impression is, furthermore, deepened by the learning which the historian exhibits, and by his seeming complete acquaintance with every phase and feature of his narrative. He seems to be all the while treading upon familiar ground. All things connected with his subject seem to be familiar objects. Past and contemporaneous history; the various sects and societies of the day; the distinguished men who lived and exerted an influence; the peculiar appearance of every form of natural objects; the streams and rocks, the mountains and the plains, the hamlets and the villages, the localities of the cities and of the fortresses, the haze of the atmosphere, the hue of the flowers, the plumage of the birds, the foliage of the trees, the hanging and the ripening of the fruit; the spirit of the times and the form of the gov-

ernments,—are all described with a minuteness and exactness which evince thorough acquaintance, and which compel the conviction that this man is writing about what he understands. And now, he who writes with such accuracy and profound information of these mere accessories and incidentals, may he not be equally correct and exact in the supposition and treatment of the *main topic*? This show of learning and familiarity imposes upon the reader, and prepares the way for the more ready reception of the humanistic theory; and when this theory is substantiated by such a force of quotations and biblical references as the writer employs, the illusion becomes almost complete. We must confess, the arts of Renan invest his theory with a considerable degree of plausibility. As the perusal of the “Life of Jesus” is progressed with, and as fact after fact, and event after event, are woven together, and combined into a systematic whole, it is frequently felt that the writer has made good his sign of the truth, “a combining of the texts so as to constitute a logical, probable, concordant narrative.” Yes; we will accept Renan’s sign of success; and although we may be staggered at the first blow, yet what if the sign in the end should be turned against him, and prove destructive to his theory? What if he may receive a little staggering himself from the application of that sign which he considers, with so much assuredness, an evidence of the truth? What if the sign tells the truth, and, after all, the truth is found on the other side?

It will not take a great deal of faith,—no, not faith, we are not ready for that yet, but thought, thought that leads up to faith,—it will not take a great deal of earnest thought to divest the art of Renan of its illusory power, and show that this plausibility induced by the success of consistent combination of the material afforded by the evangelists is by no means incompatible with the divinity, the superhumanity, of Jesus. After all, it is just what must be expect-

ed. It can be explained in a perfectly satisfactory way, leaving completely intact the part of divinity. The apparent success of Renan in setting forth Christ wholly in the natural plane is due to the fact that Jesus was in very truth a complete human being; and Renan is only giving us a proof of his humanity. While he was divine, he was also human; just as completely human as was any man among his contemporaries. He exhibited this humanity in every phase of his existence, from the beginning to the end of his human life. He came into the world, as a man, by human parturition; and he died as a man. As a man, he was conversant with nearly every form of human experience: he looked out upon the world with human eyes; he spoke with a human voice; he walked with human feet; he had human associations, human sympathies, human wants. His friendship was human; his love was human; his preferences were human; his body with its whole organism was human. He could enter into every phase of human action. When hungry, he ate as a man; when thirsty, he drank as a man; when tired, he rested as a man. As a man, he could approve and admire, admonish and rebuke. As a man, he stood in human relation with his fellow-beings: he had relatives, brethren, friends; he had an earthly occupation and an earthly home; he could change his residence from place to place. As a man, he could conform to human institutions, and be subject to human governments; as a man, he could render the things of Cæsar to Cæsar; as a man, he could engage in the temple worship and in the synagogue service. In all the thousand instances and many ways in which man could act, so could Christ act. We can hardly conceive of any possible natural condition, incident to human life, which might not fall within the experience of Jesus. Now many of these experiences and incidents are repeatedly and in various ways recorded in the sacred text. They must necessarily enter into and form a large part of Christ's life, as a human life;

that life which in its human phase dwelt in the natural plane.

With this condition of things, we need not be surprised at Renan's success in so weaving together facts as to form a seemingly complete whole; and the fact of his apparent success need not, and cannot, militate against the evangelistic theory of the divinity of Christ; for if the divine Christ was human, and as such came within the laws of the natural realm, then certainly he afforded a wide field in which Renan could rove, and gather his facts in proof of his humanitarian theory.

Additionally this field, wide as it is, is enlarged by the fact that this human Jesus exerted his divinity upon a natural plane. What we mean is this: While his human part was subject to natural laws, his divine was confined to the plane of nature for its exhibition. It is not the conduct of a spirit in a spiritual realm which the evangelists record; nor is it the conduct of Jesus in his essential glory, in the bosom of the Father, which Renan is called upon to depict—a pure spirituality existing among spiritual surroundings—but that of the Incarnate Spirit in an arena adapted to natural things. As such, the Incarnate One must employ the instrumentalities adapted to this realm, in a great degree. Although the Maker of the world, and superior to it, the manifestations of the Deity must greatly be in terms of nature. That is, when he comes in contact with nature, he must use nature in that way in which nature can be used. While the Divine has his own law of action peculiar to himself in the department of the purely spiritual, yet when the natural world is entered, the action must be adapted to the natural material. In this, Deity does not lay aside his omnipotency; he only gives a fuller exhibition of himself in his power to act upon spirit as spirit and to act upon matter as matter.

Now this divinity of Christ, being in action and appearing upon the plane of nature, must give many occasions

when the description of that appearance must be in terms of nature. The Gospel narrative must afford frequent evidence of this. This fact, also taken in connection with Christ's perfect humanity, furnishes an explanation of the plausibility of Renan's theory, produced by his apparent success in combining texts so as to constitute a logical, probable, concordant narrative. Why! he had an abundant material with which to do this: the material of Christ's humanity, and the material of his divinity acting in the natural plane. If Renan could not attempt and perform what he contemplated, he would betray a literary deficiency most lamentable indeed.

Again, his province for gathering material in substantiation of his humanitarian idea is additionally enlarged by the fact that the divinity of Christ, operating within the natural arena, was obliged to act among human beings: as God incarnate, it was with man he was obliged to live; it was to man he was called to speak; it was man he was called upon to influence—not angels, not spirits in heavenly places. The divine exhibition was not only among men, but for men. As such it could best be in human terms; may we not say, it must, under the circumstances, be in human terms? True, God can spiritually impress the spirit of man as spirit. When, however, the spirit of man is weak, and when it is greatly held in subordination to material forces, then duly to impress it, the Divine must conform to that subordination in which the spirit of man is held. If God speaks for the good of such a man, it must sound as a human voice; if God appears, it must be in some form which will appeal to the human sight. When God spake by the prophets for the good of man, the prophet representing God delivered his message in terms of man; and when God became incarnate in the man Christ Jesus, then the same law of action must be adhered to. Moses and the prophets acted for God among and for human beings; and when God himself, of whom

these were only the representatives, entered personally, by becoming incarnate, upon a work once committed to others, it must be, in some respects at least, in conformity with the human methods which marked the proceedings of those others.

Hence, from various quarters, Renan is furnished with material of his own selection, for constructing a history upon the purely natural basis. Since Christ was human in an essential degree, since he worked upon the plane of the human, since he labored for the human, it is far from surprising if Renan has constructed a history invested with a considerable degree of plausibility for the theory of the purely human.

We are now fast recovering from the staggering shock in which we were first placed by the perusal of the "Life of Jesus." We feel that we will not just yet give up the old faith. We are steady, and firm, and feel like delivering a blow upon Renan himself with the rule which he has given as a measurement of the truth. We will go cautiously, however. We will at least say this, That many of the allusions and facts made use of by Renan, in his own application of his rule, are by no means incompatible with the old idea of Christ's divinity, but are rather in full consonance with it; as, for instance, Christ's setting forth the law of love, the forgiveness of injury; his teaching of what defiles a man; his kindness to the Gentiles and the Samaritans; his declaration concerning the true worship of God; his deep spiritual idea of the kingdom of God; the antagonism which that kingdom will encounter; his sympathy with the distressed; "the consciousness of his moral force," as Renan terms it; the Sermon on the Mount; the apotheosis of the weak; the selection of the Twelve, and the instruction conveyed to them; his superior replies to those who would catch him in his words, as the casting of the first stone, and the giving to Caesar; his unmasking the hypocrisy of the scribes and the Phari-

sees; his idea of the universal Fatherhood of God; the infusion of a loftier meaning into the oral instruction of the synagogue, which Renan says Jesus adopted; his forbidding oaths, divorces, retaliations, usury, libidinous desires, and the motive which he assigns, "that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven;" his penetration beyond the letter to the spiritual meaning of the law; his demanding a purer morality, his teaching a purer worship;—all these, which Renan grants,¹ while connected with the human and the natural, are by no means antagonistic to the claims which take hold of the supernatural. If the God-man appeared,—God-man in a supernatural sense,—we should expect just these teachings from him.

We will make another assertion, and give another blow, in behalf of the old faith. We will say that any skilful manipulator of texts and events—those which Renan accepts and concedes to be reliable—could construct a history in which the divinity of Christ could be as consistently and prominently manifested as is that of his humanity by Renan. What if Renan himself in his admission of facts, unconsciously affords a basis for this assertion? Indeed, there are facts exhibited by Christ, and made use of by Renan, which can be justified only on the ground of that divinity to which Renan shuts his eyes, and which it is his predetermined purpose to exclude; such as, the commission of all power to him; his right to change the Sabbath, as Renan puts it, but as Christ expresses it, "the being Lord of the Sabbath day;" the knowledge of the Father through him; his power to forgive sins; his superiority to Abraham, David, Solomon, and the prophets; his right to judge and renew the world; his sitting on the right hand of God; his acceptance of the title of "son of David," knowing what this implied; the acknowledging that he was the Son of God, in a sense far different from any human appropriation of the title, for claim-

¹ Chapters v., vii., x., xi., xiv., xvii.

ing which he was condemned to death; his institution of the Supper, and the meaning which it conveyed; his superior claims upon the heart; the consequences of the confession and the denial of him;—all this, which Renan admits, but which he tries to explain away, is something more than a harmony with the divine: it is the divine itself in its own exclusiveness, unmixed with any human element.

But let us no longer simply stand upon the defence in repelling the attacks upon the old faith; let us "carry the war over into Africa." In explaining away the teachings of those records which he admits to be both authentic and genuine, and which most emphatically point to Christ's divinity, Renan is very lame: certainly, at least, his explanations are very jesuitical, the Jesuit shines through every part of them; they are lacking in that naturalness and directness which flavor of the truth, and which commend them to the candid and considerate mind. His explanations impress us with their untruthfulness, by their very inconsistency and weakness; in short, by their want of harmony with a "logical, probable, concordant narrative." In the defence of his humanitarian theory he becomes a special pleader to such an extent, that he is most illogical in his logic, most improbable in his probability, most inconcordant in his concordancy, making of his hero a monstrosity of knavery, fraud, and imbecility, which even his most subtle sophistry fails to conceal, the very logical tendency of his reasonings stamping his hypothesis with falseness. Let us see if this is not the case, carrying in the meanwhile with us his own boasted sign that he has attained the truth, "success in combining the texts, so as to constitute a logical, probable, concordant narrative."

I. In chapter xv., which treats of Christ's idea of his supernatural mission, Renan concedes that "the position which Jesus attributed to himself was that of a superhuman being, and he wishes to be regarded as having a more ele-

vated communion with God, than other men." Renan, however, seeing that this admission militates against his theory, hastens to add: "But we must remark that these words, superhuman and supernatural, borrowed from our narrow theology, had no meaning in the higher religious consciousness of Jesus." We answer, Did Jesus attribute to himself a position the true meaning of which he did not understand? Or was the meaning which he attributed to it different from that which we apply to it? Can Renan extricate himself from his embarrassment in this way? Surely his arts fail him here. If Christ claimed to be the Messiah, then he claimed all that belonged to him as such. That superhumanity so belonged, is evident from this recognition by his followers. Is it possible that the mind of Christ—so keen, so penetrating, so far reaching, so capable of understanding the meaning of every other thing—failed properly to understand the meaning of superhuman? It is absurd to suppose this. The explanation afforded by Renan is an intellectual prestidigiatory trick which fails to convince the candid reader.

II. Again, in this same chapter, Renan says that Christ "believed himself the Son of God, and not the son of David;" but "he submitted to receive a title"—the son of David—"without which he could hope for no success." Of this latter assertion—"the son of David"—we will not speak just now. We turn our attention to the admission that Christ "believed himself the Son of God." Renan attempts to destroy the force of this teaching of the accepted narrative, by saying, that the word "'son' has in the Semitic tongue and in the language of the New Testament the largest range of meaning. . . . He is the Son of God, but all men are so, or may become so in different degrees." But certainly when Christ considered himself the Son of God, he meant by it just what we mean in its application to him, a

sonship beyond anything natural, and beyond any ordinary conception of it in the Semitic mind. Had he only claimed it in this lower sense, the Jews would not have found fault with him in this respect; but because he claimed it in the higher sense, a sense which did not belong to any mere man, they found fault with him, and condemned him. By reason also of this higher sense, he exercised those offices which Renan admits that Christ claimed, and which no mere man could fill.

But, says Renan, in explanation of these superior offices which Christ claimed,—as “judge, the right to change the Sabbath, the participation in the supreme designs and power of God,”—“the admiration of his disciples overwhelmed him and carried him away.” We would answer, If anything is true, it is not that Jesus was so weak-minded as to be carried away by any admiration and enthusiasm of his disciples. Of all men, he is the most firm; at least not influenced by any appeal to vanity. He influenced his disciples, they did not influence him; he commands, they obey; he leads, they follow; he resists and opposes them whenever they attempt to have him submit to their will, and not they to his will. Jesus in this respect presents one uniform course of firmness and self-possession. To believe that he was so carried away by the admiration of his followers as to be betrayed, in any degree, into weakness and acts of imbecility, cannot seriously be entertained by any unprejudiced mind. It is so inconsistent with his whole career, so inconcordant even with that admiration of his followers which Renan alleges, as to be not only improbable, but impossible. How long would those followers admire one whom they could make believe anything, and make assume any position of absurdity? Why, were Christ such a character, instead of becoming the object of their veneration, he would soon be the butt of their ridicule. Nothing is more illogical, improbable, inconcordant.

III. Again, Renan represents Christ as being influenced,

not by the dictates of truth, but by deceptive policy, and thus doing things, and submitting to things, which morality would condemn. Respecting the title "son of David," he says (chap. xv.): "He submitted to receive a title without which he could hope for no success;"—implying that Jesus received a title to which he knew he had no right, and even encouraged its application, simply for the purpose of advancing his interests. Again, Renan says in the last part of chap. xv., "The need that Jesus had to yield himself to the faith and enthusiasm of his disciples piled up contradictory notions." Here he alludes to those titles and pretensions which Jesus made—as Renan affirms—out of deference to the wishes of his followers, solely for the purpose of gaining his ends. Renan implies that Christ was forced to do this. Indeed, he says near the end of chap. xv., "All great things are achieved by the people; now the people are led only by yielding to their deeds." Renan admits in an adroit manner that there may be a want of sincerity on the part of Christ in doing this, and thus permitting the people to be imposed upon; but he justifies it by saying, "that history is impossible, unless we resolutely admit that there are many degrees of sincerity; . . . he who takes humanity with its illusions and seeks to act upon it and with it, cannot be blamed. . . . It is easy for us, impotent as we are, to call this falsehood, and, proud of our timid honesty, to treat with contempt the heroes who have accepted under other conditions the battles of life. When we shall have done with our scruples what they did with their falsehood, we shall have the right to be severe upon them."

In reply, we would say, that we do not believe that Christ ever employed a lie in the interest of what he thought to be the truth. Why, ever since the days of Christ, a lie has been branded with execration, and, too, so branded largely by the direct influence of Christ. Christ was the fountain of morality and truth. After a period of nineteen

hundred years, we go to him for instruction therein; yea, the age even yet, after an effort of so many centuries, fails to grasp that pure inflexible idea of morality reflected and taught by Christ; we are reaching up to it, and we draw near to it, by the Spirit of Christ; as we have that Spirit, we are enabled to make progress in morality. Surely that Spirit which he possessed in unbounded measure would have prevented every shadow of the conduct attributed by Renan. He who uttered the malediction against all liars would not have employed, under any circumstances whatever, a deception, in order to subserve his purpose. His acknowledged superiority in purity, in truth, in moral intuition, would have caused him to reject, with abhorrence, the views and motives which Renan assigns.

Renan, however, attempts to exonerate Christ from the open charge of falsehood, by implying that Christ, in his actions, must be judged by the rules of morality applicable to his times, and what would be wrong for us was not wrong for Christ. He says, near the end of this same chapter from which we have been quoting, "To us races, profoundly serious, conviction means sincerity with ourselves. But sincerity with ourselves has not much meaning among the Eastern nations, who are little accustomed to the critical mind. Good faith and imposition are words which in our rigid conscience are opposed like two irreconcilable terms. In the East between the two there are a thousand subterfuges, a thousand evasions. . . . Material truth has very little value to the Oriental; he sees everything through his ideas, his interests, his passions." And Christ, acting under this School of Morality, in the opinion of Renan, was guilty of no wrong; for, imbibing the sentiment of the times, he thought that he was acting in accordance with truth; and in the language of Renan, quoting from the same chapter, "an absolute conviction, or, to speak more properly,

enthusiasm, which deprived him even of the possibility of doubt, covered all this hardihood."

Now, in answer to this, in addition to what we have already said respecting the morality of Jesus, we would say, that truth and falsehood are not conventional. Climate does not make them; locality does not produce them; neither does time affect them. What they are, they are without any adventitious circumstance. They are eternal: good for all times; good for every people. When a people of warm blood and ardent temperament impose a lie for the truth, it is a lie for all that.

True, their blunted moral faculties may prevent them from regarding a lie with the abhorrence which it deserves. But were Christ's faculties thus blunted? The question is answered in its asking. His soul was sensitive to the truth, and was ever loyal to it. Though the world was offered as a reward, Christ would not fall down and worship Satan. His whole ministry was a protest against hypocrisy and deception. Nothing excited his abhorrence as did the manifestation of hypocrisy. His ringing words, "Woe unto you, hypocrites," will ever awake the echoes of the eternities. Whether the first or the nineteenth century had witnessed his advent; whether that advent took place in the Orient or in the Occident, there would have been the same cordial, correct, and warm adherence to the truth. As with his keen, sensitive, moral faculties, so also with his mental ones. His clear eye could distinguish the illusory from the real, and could divest the true from the accidents of an immoral age. Christ was not only true to his moral convictions, being faithful to what he believed was right, but he was also correct in his intellectual intuitions; what was true and right, his mental power enabled him to determine. Thus being correct in his mental discriminations, and being faithful to his moral yearnings, we reject the representations of Renan, as false, sophistical, and without the least weight. Even his

“great sign” of attaining the truth, “success in combining the texts so as to constitute a logical, probable, concordant narrative,” decides against him with a vehement emphasis.

IV. Again, Renan's explanation of the raising of Lazarus, in chapter xxii., is most absurd, and the weakness of his humanitarian hypothesis is betrayed by his being obliged to resort to such an unsatisfactory exposition. The raising of Lazarus bothers Renan. He is unable to dismiss the account as a fabrication of the evangelical historian. He acknowledges that something did take place on that occasion. He denies, however, that it was anything tending to strengthen the belief in the divinity of Christ. What then was it? Why, according to Renan, it was a mere trick on the part of the friends of Jesus, to re-establish his waning reputation among the Jews. They thought that, if one well known were supposed to be restored from death to life by the power of Jesus, it would have a strong effect in exciting belief in him; and so they combined in a plot to make it appear that such an occurrence actually took place, in the resurrection of Lazarus, Jesus, however, not being privy to the trick. Lazarus, pale and emaciated from recent sickness, should personate a dead person; he should be placed in the sepulchre, arrayed in the habiliments of the grave; and when Jesus, having been sent for, approached the tomb, then should Lazarus come forth, making it appear that he had been wakened from death by the marvellous influence of Christ, in order to impress the Jews, who were hitherto unbelievers.

Now, of all explanations, this one of Renan is the most puerile, illogical, improbable, inconcordant. In the first place, respecting the Jews, just consider the improbability of concealing the deception from the unbelieving Jews who were intimate with the family, and hence acquainted with the true condition of affairs. Had a trick been attempted, they would have detected the deception at once. The

preparation would not have proceeded far, before the true condition of things would have become known. They would have known all about Lazarus. If he had been sick, they would have known it. If there were favorable symptoms during the illness, they would have known it. The unfavorable ones would be known. Neither the convalescence nor the sinking could have been kept concealed; and the feigning of death, and the mockery of preparation for burial, would have leaked out, and destroyed the attempt at deception.

In the second place, respecting the friends of Jesus, if they had confidence in the power of Christ, as Renan intimates that they had, they would have felt that Christ could really have raised the dead, and they would not have endangered his reputation by the possibility of a disclosure of a deception; for, had the deception become known, it would have made matters worse, and injured the reputation of Jesus, instead of adding to it. Acting on the belief of his divine power, in which they had full confidence, they would have procured one really dead, on whom Jesus could have exhibited his marvellous power. Therefore their confidence in Christ shows the illogicalness, the improbability, the inconcordancy of Renan's narrative.

In the third place, did they attempt the imposition, and had they succeeded in it, the result would, in the end, have been disastrous to their own faith. For, had this been a deception, his friends who concocted it, would certainly have known it as such. But if a deception in this supposed miracle, why not a deception in other supposed miracles? Why could not some one, unbeknown to them, have worked out the plans for a deception in each instance, and thus every supposed miraculous act be an imposition? This thought, so probable, so logical, so concordant, would have weakened their own faith in Christ, and, instead of being faithful to him and his cause after his death, in the face of persecution and the

loss of every earthly prospect, they would have denied his claims, and Christianity, established on the fact of his divinity, would not have had a single adherent.

Respecting Renan's explanation of Christ's own resurrection, we have, on a former occasion, examined it, and given it a publication.¹ We do not wish to insert here what has been already printed. We will only say, that the explanation Renan gives it is a more illogical, more improbable, more inconcordant, narrative than is his narrative respecting the resurrection of Lazarus.

Yes; Renan's great sign that he has attained the truth, everywhere speaks against him. Again, we thank him for giving it. We apply it, and arise from the task with a greater confidence in the old faith than ever. We must give Renan credit for unintentionally establishing the faith evermore; for no one can bring more polished and sharper shafts than his for assailing it; and if he fails, the failure is complete. Christianity will not only evermore have its Galilee, but will never cease to adore the Divine One, who once, in human form, appeared there to lighten human burdens, to heal human woe, to cure human sin, and to bring heaven and earth so near that the one will enshrine the other. While memory has its Olivet, faith will continue to associate it with the Divine One, who once glorified it by his human presence.

As we close this article, evidence comes to us, that Renan has done something more than irrefutably to establish the divinity of Jesus, by the futility of his attempts to construct his history upon any other basis; he has also indirectly prepared the way for the acceptance not only, but the conviction of his own countrymen, of that divinity. In a recent article² Raoul Allier, professor of Protestant Theology at Paris, says, that repeatedly there have come to him the con-

¹ *Christian at Work*, 1884.

² *The Independent*, Dec. 22, 1892.

fessions of young men expressing belief in the divinity of Jesus. On being questioned as to the initial cause of this belief, the answer has often been this: "It is to the reading of the 'Life of Jesus' that I owe it to-day that I am a Christian." This same answer, seemingly paradoxical, would come "in the most diverse circumstances, and in very different surroundings." Professor Allier gives us in his article the successive steps of this remarkable phenomenon.

In the first place, Renan was popular with the young students of Paris. They admired him. His shining qualities impressed their minds, and drew them to his lecture-room.

In the second place, Renan strongly insisted upon the validity of the religious sentiment in man. He exerted all his power to bring this idea from the contempt into which it had fallen. The crude materialistic scoffer and the coarse atheistic reviler found no toleration with him. Such sentiments as these came from his pen: "We say boldly that religion is a product of the normal man; that man is the truest when he is the most religious and most assured of an infinite destiny. Man is most religious in his best moments. It is when he is good, that he says that virtue must correspond to an eternal order." In this respect he openly combated the teachings of the school of Voltaire, and successfully created a reaction against it. Says Professor Allier: "When people spoke to him of this reaction against Voltairean impiety, he loved to let it be understood that he had done everything in order to provoke it." In a preface to one of his books he says, "Little have I dreamed of diminishing in this world the amount of religion that remains in it."

In addition to the popularity of this man, using his great influence in behalf of the religious idea, making it popular with his young countrymen, Renan, in the third place, recalled the young intellect of France to a subject which for years had not only been neglected, but entirely

ignored, namely, the problems of religious history. For years religious history had been treated with less respect than a page of fiction. Renan stopped this. He made religious history popular; so that many a young soul, with his religious sentiment awakened, being led to the study of religious history, when confronted with the central figure of that history, overpowered by the divine effulgence that shone forth from it, fell in adoring prostration, exclaiming, "My Lord and my God." Such a result certainly is by no means in harmony with the humanitarian theory of Renan. Elsewhere, speaking of the unique character of the four Gospels, Renan declares his belief that they are "all stamped with the same character of sobriety, simplicity, grandeur, and plain truth." "Jesus," he declares, "is unique and nothing can be compared to him." "Emerging from a little district, very exclusive as to nationality, and very provincial as to mind, he has become the Universal Ideal. Athens and Rome have adopted him; the barbarians have fallen at his feet; rationalism dare not look at him at all fixedly, except when on its knees before him. He will not be replaced except by a superior ideal; he is King for a long time yet. What do I say? His beauty is eternal; his reign will have no end. The church has been surpassed; she has surpassed herself; Christ has not been surpassed. Whilst one noble heart shall aspire to moral beauty—whilst but one noble soul shall start for joy before the realization of the Divine, Christ will have his adorers. Behold the living God! Behold that which we must adore!" As has been well remarked, "Renan never attempted to reconcile himself, but frankly confessed that he was 'double.'"