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Jesus and the Origins of Christianity

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CORVUS EDITIONS

Jesus and the Origins of Christianity

THE HISTORY of JEHOVAH AND OF THE MESSIAH HIS SON

I

RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT*¹

I was somewhat hesitant to write this book, because I envisioned it especially from the point of view of the interpretation of the Bible, and that labor is done by the Germans, who know, much better than I, antiquity and languages. I still hesitated, because that side, purely anti-Christian, anti-revelationist, seemed to me insufficient, at that hour, to give a true originality to my labor.

I am reconsidering that opinion. It is not a question for me of philology or of Voltaireanism. There is today, in France,² a sort of coming to terms between liberty and the Church: a self-styled religious movement, over which preside MM. Renan, Saisset, Simon, Cousin, Guizot, Thiers, etc.

It is necessary to combat this movement, by showing, through facts and analysis, what *religious sentiment* is, and what its role is in Humanity.

Religious sentiment is the exteriorization of the self, the personification of the conscience that takes itself for a superior being, which inspires the man.

Religious sentiment is finished, when it is recognized; its goal is accomplished when the sentiment of justice fills the soul of man. — All the rest is pure aberration, folly and crime; this is what it is necessary to show through the history of Jehovah, — an entire philosophy will focus on a *word*.

II

MONOTHEISM

The idea of the unity of God has appeared to the philosophers the most grandiose of ideas, and we have regarded as a unique, marvelous phenomenon,

¹ The chapter titles marked with an asterisk are not Proudhon's. — C. R.

² See the *Revue Indépendante*.

the act of the little population of Israel, who, surrounded by idolaters, alone affirmed, more than a thousand years before Socrates, the unity of God.

At first glance, indeed, things appear quite eccentric, surprising. One is tempted to believe in a special grace for the Jewish people, in an illumination, a revelation.

Examined more closely, the phenomenon is reduced to nothing.

All peoples are *monotheists*, in the sense that they have their individual, unique God: it is the city that is affirmed in its God; the contrary would involve a contradiction.

Thus some worship *Dagon*, and others *Baal*, *Moloch*, *Astarté*, etc.

As for the affirmation of the universal God, the idea is as foreign to the Jews as to the other peoples, up until the captivity in Babylon, that made them dream a *dream of ambition*, for Jehovah.

For, note it, *Jehovah*, king of all the earth, is always just the Jewish God become a conqueror. We must arrive at the time of the Maccabees in order to understand the absolute idea of God: the sovereign, supreme God, — who is not Jehovah nor Jupiter, who is no sort of Idol, — the one worshipped by Constantine, who vanished in 325 at the declaration of the Divinity of Christ. For there is no God without realization, without an idol.

The name of *Lord*, given to God, is proper to all the Gods; it is their common qualification, each city considering its God as its sovereign. — BAAL is *master*, *Moloch* king, *Adonai* lord, as *Dominus*, Jupiter is king, sovereign master, Juno queen, Diane queen, Astarte or Venus, queen;

Dagon, as they say *Fromenteau*, God of the wheat: an analogue of Jehovah, of *Ops*, of *Rhea*, of *Tellus* [Mater] the fertile, of *Plutus*, etc.

III.

JEHOVAH

The expression, *de Ure Chaldæorum*, which indicates the birthplace of Abraham, creates a geographical or at least a lexicographical difficulty, which must disappear before considerations of another sort, which are not subject to doubt.

That city of *Ur* cannot have been in Chaldea, towards the mouths of the Euphrates; there is some confusion here. Without mentioning the authors who have reported, north of Haran, a city of Ur and other Chaldeans cities, we must observe:

That the terrestrial Paradise is placed in the north, at the sources of the Euphrates, the Aranes, etc., between the Taurus and the Caucasus;

That such is, according to Moses, the fatherland of the human race;

That Jehovah is called *God of the mountains*;

That indeed, he loves the wooded country, the running waters, the valleys; that he governs the rain and the snow: attributes that are not those of the Arab nor Assyrian divinities:

That he is a *chaste* God, severe in this respect, who drowns the human species for having given itself up to fornication: a character that can only be found among the Druid gods;

That he forbids *robbery* (Bedouin mores);

That Abraham, before going to Canaan, would not have made this detour from Chaldea to Haran, which lengthened his route by 200 or 300 leagues;

That Abraham, of the family of Arphaxad, descends from the *north* toward the south; that he is determined in his choice by the very nature of the country of Canaan, a wooded country, fertile in excellent fruit trees, vines, cornfields, and rich pastures: everything that represents to him the mother country.

He knows that this beautiful country is almost unoccupied, surrounded as it is by peoples of the Cham race, Arabs, Egyptians, etc., and peopled with savages;

That he is called the man from beyond the rivers.

Add to that the other physiological characteristics.

V.

GOD.

GOD. — “God exists,” says E. Saisset. To prove this, it is not necessary to pile up syllogisms upon syllogisms; the best argument, and the only one that does not give rise to criticism, is in the intimate awareness of our contingency³ and in the clear view of the essential imperfection⁴ of everything that surrounds us. God is accessible to our reason; for if his essence is incomprehensible to us, because it is incommunicable, we can at least reach some of the powers of his being, because they have been communicated to us.⁵ God is not alone. First, it is a fact since the universe exists⁶ and then, God is sovereignly intelligent; he *must* therefore *conceive* the universe as a possible expression of himself;⁷ he is

³ Concept.

⁴ Concept.

⁵ Vicious circle.

⁶ That is the question.

⁷ Pure hypothesis, incomparable.

sovereignly free; he *must* therefore *want*⁸ to realize it outside himself, because he *cannot be indifferent to it*; he is sovereignly powerful, he must therefore realize it; in fact, he realizes the world *eternally* and infinitely, in order to give himself a suitable representation of his eternal and infinite essence.⁹ But he does not cease to be its *creator*, because he gives it and measures its being; and as he is its father, he is also its legislator, his power and his wisdom shine forth in the Universe;¹⁰ his justice and his goodness are felt in the heart of man.¹¹ He is everywhere present and everywhere sensitive.”¹²

This is how teachers turn in the eternal circle of their *concepts* and come to realize their dreams.

I have refuted all this forever, by an unanswerable argument: that the faculty of forming a *concept* does not give us the right to deduce it, to assert anything beyond the concept itself.

As for the specific fact of religious feeling, its universality, its spontaneity, its indestructibility, I explain it sufficiently, by showing that it is an *exteriorization of the conscience*, which will weaken indefinitely.

I conclude that if we make a God of our conscience, it is because our conscience is apparently what is *best in us*, and which we must respect even to the point of sacrificing our lives. — Here is my moral found.

As for religions and their history, we can show by their origin and their progress how this exteriorization takes place.

Est Deus in nobis, says the poet.

How wonderful that we suppose God present in us, when we see Him in thunder, lightning, sun, rain, wind, sea, trees, germinations, fertilization, madness, epilepsy, idiocy, magnetism, sleepwalking, etc.!...

Now, admire what is happening; As our consciousness develops, we do not fail to immediately endow our God with a corresponding quality.

DEMONSTRATION OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD. — Observation on the metaphysics of M. Vacherot and on the criticism of M. Renouvier.

Prove that we must come to an *anti-theism*.

⁸ Contradictions.

⁹ Words.

¹⁰ Fetishism: *coeli enarrant*.

¹¹ Mysticism: the conscience taken for other and personified.

¹² Naturalism (Extracts from the *Essai de philosophie religieuse*.)

Pure Reason gives God: *Universal Being, necessary, infinite, absolute, One, perfect, personal, intelligent, free and all-powerful.*

From this data, it is deduced that God acts in souls, just as in continuous creation. Hence, the religious feeling, the idea of respect for a superior sanction and for a human infirmity.

Hence, religious education and worship.

Hence, priesthood and Vicariate.

Hence, divine manifestation of all kinds: Incarnation, Redemption, etc.

Hence, finally, *preponderance of the principle* of authority over justice; and all the abuses, all the excesses of the ancien régime.

VI.

JEHOVAH AND JESUS

Current science denies final causes. I very much fear, for this science, that the time is not far away when it will be obliged to affirm them.

Final causes are only the counterpart of first causes. How is it possible to recognize ORGANIC causes or forces, and exclude their *finality*? How can we say that the climate influences the organism in such a way as to modify it, according to the conditions of the environment, and at the same time deny that the organism is calculated for this environment? Here, the agent will not be an intelligent agent if one wishes, but is it any less true that there is *finality* in the constitution?

What does Mr. Darwin call *natural selection* if not a natural *finality*?

A priori, the scientist, like the philosopher, does not understand that nature acts without a *goal*, without an *end*, any more than he can conceive of anything happening without a cause. This is finality affirmed.

It is asked for what purpose vipers, weevils, bats, etc. were created.

I answer that I don't know.

What I know is that the weevil is perfectly organized to eat wheat, the viper to devour insects, worms, mice, birds, and other animals, etc., the ox to chew the cud, the male and the female to mate, engender, etc.

This means that, in every organism, the first cause, the development and the end are one and the same.

What is the finality of each being in relation to the Universe?

I do not know; but if I close myself in the circle of the organic whirlwind, I see clearly that in the organism the teeth are made to grind, the eye to see and lead, etc., all finally to ensure the life, development and reproduction of the animal, in the environmental conditions given to it. All of this is really a matter of finality, or I no longer understand anything about the language. If

environmental conditions change, either the animal will perish, or its organism will modify by *natural selection*, in order to adapt to these new conditions. There is purpose in all of this; it is impossible to deny it: let us dare to say it, there is calculation, intelligence, foresight.

To whom can we relate this calculation, this intelligence, this foresight, more certain than reflective reason? I know nothing about it; but it is *finality* and of the best quality.

If I generalize, and if I ask myself what is, in relation to the universe, the end of man; and what is the end of the universe itself? I answer again that I know nothing about it. But it is no less true that if I study the organization of this man, I discover that everything has been planned to make him what I call a man; if I study more thoroughly the laws of his intelligence, his conscience, his industry, his economy, etc., I again discover that everything is given to make him live in a certain relationship with his peers; that if he lacks these social ends, he deteriorates, he is unhappy, etc.

Yes, there is finality there, and there is finality in society; it is in everything; from which I am inclined to conclude, by analogy, that there is an end to society itself, an end to the universe; but I do not know this end.

I conceive for the universe of which I am a part three ways of being, three states, and I cannot conceive of more or less than three:

1. Either I imagine the universe, all this visible nature, as an explosion, a whirlwind, a conflagration, a creation, an ejaculation, which had a beginning and which will end; an animated whole, which does not have its reason in itself, whose cause is external to it, which consequently must end because it is finite. This is the supernaturalist and monotheistic conception, which we find in all cosmogonies.

How did this great material whole come into being, and how did it emerge from the bosom of its unknown cause? I do not know. What will become of it when it disappears? I cannot even conjecture.

Everything I know is here. I see beings, emerging from nothing, develop for a time, then decompose and die; I was able to judge by the observations made on the globe that I inhabit that it did not always exist as it was slowly formed; that on this globe organisms that are now extinct were produced, etc.

And I conclude: by way of generalization, from the small to the large, and by analogy, that it is thus with the great whole, that its life is not eternal but that it is finite, created and perishable. The beginning and the end of the Universe will be, I grant, two mysteries: but everything in it denounces that its life is finite!... GOD alone is infinite, eternal. *Providential conception of the disadvantages of this thesis.*

2. Or else, I will deny that I have the right to conclude, regarding the universe, from the particular to the general, and while all the parts that compose it are finite in their evolution, it itself is eternal and infinite. It is a circle without limits, swirling for all eternity, which neither increases nor diminishes, neither loses nor gains, remains adequate to itself, in number, weight, measurement, shapes, etc. This is the materialist and fatalistic conception, the reign of pure necessity, of blind fatality.

In this universe, cause and effect are identical; the end, the means and the principle are the same thing; nothing is exhausted; movement, in its universality, is inherent to matter; it is not an *effect*, but a *state*, etc.

3. Or, finally, without affirming or denying anything about the eternity of matter, of the nature of God, leaving aside these unfathomable questions, and sticking to the phenomena, I conceive the great Whole in a perpetual and progressive transformation, and therefore the principle is in the force of *collectivity*, a force that must constantly renew and strengthen itself, and whose action cannot come to an end; if it is true, as I maintain, that the result of any collectivity is to produce new forms, new beings, greater values, which, adding to the old ones, create an ever new field of practice.

This is the progressive conception, from which neither intelligence nor finality are excluded, but which is explained by this word: *Liberty*.

It is *liberty*, in becoming, that gives itself an ever higher end. According to this: the end of the universe is the new progress towards which it tends; the end of humanity, to contribute to this progress.

VI

THE SUPERNATURAL

Most of the discussions of the rationalists against prophecies, revelations and miracles, in a word, against the supernatural, are sterile; they don't stand — I realized that early on — and here is why:

The supernatural is outside of time; outside of space, outside of the laws of matter and animal life, outside of the categories of reason.

How could reason touch it?

Everything that is alleged against it is false. It affirms itself by virtue of an indestructible, incoercible faculty of consciousness; it poses itself against a limited science, incapable of furnishing any answer to the questions that the human soul invincibly asks itself, while it claims to satisfy them. How could reason increase on such terrain? It can only be silent; if it speaks, it errs. Willingly or unwillingly, it remains confused. Much more, the supernatural, after having exposed the inevitable problems posed by religious consciousness,

after having solved them in its own way, with the aid of its hyperphysical conceptions, uses science itself and intellectual dialectic to give a sort of rational confirmation of its theses, and to make them penetrate reason, which does not even have the means to repel them!

The supernatural conceives God, an absolute being, consequently the summary of all ontological contradictions, with the same facility, perhaps with more facility, than the scientist conceives the world. This God, it affirms it to you. What will you refute it with? If the supernatural affirmed God either in the name of science or in the name of experience, we could reply, we would *verify*. But no: it affirms by virtue of the inner sense, to which metaphysics then only lends its formulas; but we would be gravely mistaken if we believed that the idea of God is a metaphysical idea.

The supernaturalist conceives with the same facility the creation of the adult Adam, by the infinite power, as we conceive or believe we conceive the formation of the human Being by the ordinary means of generation.

Now, singularly, while rationalists and believers struggle over this divine creation of our species, the materialist school affirms and proves *spontaneous generations*. But what is a spontaneous generation? A divine creation. What does the more or less advanced state of the created Being matter? Isn't the spontaneous formation of the *germ*, without a generator, without a father, just as marvelous, as incomprehensible as that of Adam could have been?

The supernaturalist conceives, without any difficulty, the transmutation of bodies, this transmutation that makes the whole miracle of the Eucharist.

Now, it is quite true that, up to the present time, chemistry has done nothing but split matter, distinguish the elements in it; it already has eighty. But, on the one hand, our metaphysical conceptions lead us to a conception of the unity of substance, which is a first step towards the supernatural; on the other hand, nothing proves that we will not one day decompose oxygen or gold, which would probably show the identity of all bodies, consequently transubstantiation.

The supernaturalist affirms three persons in God, two natures in Jesus Christ.

Now, not only can the rationalist not reply to this, since he reasons only by virtue of logic and science through observation; and because to refute the supernaturalist he should place himself on his ground, which is possible. But the antinomies of reason, those of political economy, are no less strange.

Did Hegel, who explains the world, religion, humanity, reason, everything in short, with this mechanism of antinomies, *thesis*, *antithesis*, SYNTHESIS, ever explain a single one of these so-called transformations?

The supernaturalist believes in angels and demons, as do the spiritualists; and he excites phenomena inexplicable by reason (somnambulism, animal magnetism).

The supernaturalist believes in transport by air; he affirms the ubiquity of God; he says that the risen Jesus passed through walls; and we see phenomena of physics, electro-magnetism, etc., which seem just as marvelous as these.

The conception of the Messiah is essentially a conception of a supernatural order, bristling with syntheses; the supernaturalist, relating it to human destiny, gives it a reason, an end, an explanation: what can the philosopher do about it?

Twelve apostles, four evangelists, the whole Church, the synagogue, the prophets, giving on this subject their particular testimonies, there remained variants, inconsistencies, contradictions, incompatibilities, a host of details, irreconcilable assertions. But, once again, what is all this for the religious consciousness, whose fundamental dogma subsists and which answers you that if it happens to contradict itself, to confuse itself, to be obscure, that results precisely from its efforts to explain in human, syllogistic language, according to the data of time and space, and the laws of reason, what is in itself outside of Space and Time, superior to reason and to categories. The contradictions of the evangelists are human infirmity; they come from the incommensurability that exists between reason and faith, they are not moreover articles of faith. They are, in truth, half-revelations, clues to unexplained mysteries.

Such is the situation of the two parties; the supernatural cannot be attacked by reason, whereas it is given to it to still avail itself of license and of reason.

As for me, I declare, I see only one way of escaping such an obsession with the supernatural. It is, like spiritualism, to await it in its works, to judge it by its fruits, *a fructibus eorum cognoscitis eos*.

I pass therefore all its premises to it; I admit all its hypotheses, its God, its Christ, its Providence, its mysteries; I close my eyes to the difficulties of the texts and I speak to it, no longer as a man of theory or speculation, but as a man of practice:

In the final analysis either religion serves us in absolutely nothing, and must be treated by us as curiosity or rather intemperance of spirit; or else its object is to support us, to direct us in our intellectual and moral improvement.

Now, what precept of justice and morality does religion furnish me that I do not find directly in my conscience, and of which my conscience is not the judge?

What *truth*, what positive *light* does it give me about the world, about myself, about my fellow men, that my reason is not enough to perceive?

I am willing for a moment to believe in your miraculous tradition; but I demand, and I have the right to do so, that it does not lead me astray, that, in

what concerns my temporal life, she reasons justly; that, in institutions, it is moral.

Truth and *Justice*, that is what I ask of religion; but if it shows itself to be uncertain, wavering, contradictory, then I condemn it without remission. Because, from the moment that it intervenes in the temporal, and places itself on the ground of human reason, of human law, it is bound to reason correctly and to do exact justice.

THE GENESIS OF THE MAN

I

CHRONOLOGY OF JESUS

Born in the year 2 before the Christian Era, which bears his name.

Year 15 of Tiberius, 28 of our era, preaching of John.

He is baptized at Bethabara, or Bethany, or the Ænon, on the other side of the Jordan, opposite Jericho.

Everyone hurries there.

Journey of Jesus in the company of Andrew, Peter, John, Nathanael, etc.; with Jesus, they are all baptized (before Passover); it was a preparation for the faith.

Jesus spends several days with the baptizer.

Immediately after his baptism, Jesus began to baptize; his disciples do the same; complaint of the disciples of Jesus, new testimony. — JOHN III, 22-23.

Arrest of John by order of Herod; it had to take place before Passover, there was fear of agitation.

Everyone disperses; return of Jesus to Galilee.

Along the way, adventure of the Samaritan woman. — JOHN, IV.

Three days after the return of Jesus, or Passover, which he had to celebrate in Galilee, the wedding of Cana.

THIRD PASSEVER OF JOHN. — A little later (JOHN), miracle of the multiplication of the loaves.

From Passover to the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus preaches in turn in Nazareth, Capernaum, Chorazin, Bethsaida; he pushes; a point towards the Decapolis, etc. It was during this time that he received a deputation from John the Baptist.

Then, he leaves for Galilee, according to John, around the Feast of *Tabernacles*, in *October*; — year 28.

SECOND PASSEVER OF JOHN. — Adventures of the Temple; paralytic; of Lazarus.

Year 29. — Triumphant entry.

Catastrophe: Death of Jesus, March 23, before *Passover*, at the age of thirty-one.

The disciples return to Galilee, where they claim to have seen him.

According to the precise testimony of John, and the three others, Jesus owed his credit to the testimony of John; it was following this testimony that Andrew and Peter came to him.

The three chapters of Matthew, V, VI, VIII, are the summary of Jesus' own ideas; ideas to which he returned many times, without a doubt, but which characterize him specifically, posit him as the destiny of Messianism, the destiny of John, different from what he himself became, when he engaged in his own messianic preaching.

The four Passovers mentioned by John cannot be sustained in the face of the unanimous testimony of the other three and the contradictions they entail.

All the facts told by John are interpolated.

According to this gospel:

The first Passover, which Jesus spent in Jerusalem during his ministry, was the one where he chased the *sellers out of the Temple*;

Now, this event happened shortly before the death of Jesus. The second Passover, which is only indicated by the word *dies festus*, is that characterized by the healing of the paralytic, or the miracle of the Pharisees; — adventure which is from the same period as the previous one.

The third Passover mentioned would have been close to the miracle of the *five loaves* and the *two fishes*. Now, this affair takes place in Galilee, far from Jerusalem; the Passover in question is therefore the same as that which followed the return of Jesus.

The fourth Passover, finally, is the one followed by Jesus' torture by twenty-four hours.

As for me, I only see two Passovers:

1. The one that he intended to celebrate in Jerusalem after his baptism, and which he had to pass through Galilee, after the arrest of John;
2. The one that followed his *crucifixion* by one day.

All the preaching of JESUS was accomplished in the interval of these two Passovers; it lasts a year, more or less; John's preaching had only lasted a few months.

II

ANOTHER SYSTEM

Year 28. — August 19, death of Augustus; begins the year 15 of Tiberius.

John's preaching (it may have started earlier); the principle took place in the year 15.

Influx of neophytes in August and September.

Baptism of Jesus, etc.

October. — Arrest of John, before the Feast of Tabernacles, October 19.

Return to Galilee;

Four-month mission;

Return to Judea;

Year 29. — March 23. — Arrest of Jesus and death.

We can, it seems to me, to give ourselves a year of margin, either to postpone the beginning of John's preaching, by assigning the year 15 for the date of the arrest, which is that of the greatest brilliance, or to move back the mission of Jesus before his baptism.

Or we can count the first year of Tiberius, from the beginning of the very year in which he came to the empire, which would be the simplest.

Then everything would have happened as I said. Jesus baptized year 28 *before Passover*; himself arrested and put to death in the year 29, at Passover.

III

THE FILIATION *

JESUS, born according to all appearances around the year 2, before the vulgar era, in Capernaum or Nazareth.

Samaritan by nationality, but not by religion; belonging to one of those families of Israel who continued to worship in Jerusalem, and whom their compatriots in Samaria strove to hold back.

Son of a man named Joseph, a carpenter, and a Marie, or Miriam or Marianne, having himself very probably exercised his father's trade;

Brother in particular of one James, who after his death was bishop of Jerusalem, and martyr (Jesus has four known brothers);

Is baptized by John who bears witness to him?

Begins to preach in the year 28-29, against the sects and the priesthood of Jerusalem (Pharisees, Sadducees and priests).

Lays out a new doctrine (that of Hillel) concerning the so-called Messiah;

Accused of Samaritanism by the Jews, then of impiety and treason against the nation.

Maintains that the true revolution is a *moral* and *economic* revolution, which again is shown by his questioning by Pilate;

Denounces and condemns the casuistry of the Pharisees, the priestly avarice, the exploitation of the rich;

Is blamed and condemned by his family and his fellow citizens¹³ (characteristic trait), who later rallied to him;

Then arrested, condemned and executed suddenly, on Friday March 23 of the year 29, after a few months of propaganda in Galilee, around Lake Tiberias, and along the Jordan.

¹³ John vii, 5.

These are, more or less, the *facts* of the life of this man who only shone for an instant, like lightning, and who seems to have been endowed with extraordinary power.

All the rest, almost, are circumstances arranged and invented after the fact by the narrators, when the small Church formed by Jesus having grown, the ideas of social revolution gaining ground, significant men rallied to the tradition of the Nazarene.

Strauss's system must be rejected. There is no mythology there; there is only *invention* according to the Bible.

Jesus dead, the *news* remains weak, obscure, persecuted for a long time; it only seems to take on importance at the time of Paul's arrival, around the year 43, that is to say, twelve or fifteen years after the death of Jesus, and following the death of King Agrippa; it suddenly develops through the mission of the *Gentiles*.

To these main facts, which it does not seem possible to cast doubt on, we can add a host of *sayings*, *parables*, propositions, scraps of speech, whose personal character is palpable, and which were preserved in the memory of the disciples. These monuments are the intellectual work of Jesus, the truly interesting portion of his life, what enlarges him, all the more so since all the trivialities of his extraction, of his life, were dismissed as irrelevant.

At first glance, you can't help but to wish for more details, more light on this great event of the appearance of Christ, and the founding of Christianity.

A little reflection shows that we know everything we need to know; that everything unknown to us is truly superfluous, useless. Our biographical curiosity is unworthy of the majesty of history and of universal thought. What would be the use of knowing, for example, whether Jesus was literate or illiterate (he knew how to read and write), whether he was six feet tall or only five; whether he was blond or brown; whether his family was from the tribe of Judah or that of Joseph, etc., etc.; whether he had five brothers or only one.

All of this is without value.

Jesus, according to historical data, had to from the people, and he comes from the people;

He must belong to the working class, and he belongs to the working class;

He must react against the fanaticism of the messianists, say that the question is not there; and he does it;

He is so much the man of the situation, of the idea, of the masses, that he is immediately understood, and that his death follows.

Today, our intemperance does not know how to be satisfied with what is necessary, and this makes us childish, powerless. We must enter into the most secret details of a man's life, without thinking that these details, far from enlightening us, only serve to increase our doubts. Instead of judging the living being as a whole, we want to grasp

the atom. When we read the account of the Last Supper, we would like to know if there were forks, etc.

However, according to the documents, we can say of Jesus, that his was a conscience of the highest power, which never had an equal; ardent spirit, and yet self-possessed; ironic, insurgent, before which nothing could resist.

Any contradiction must be resolved in the direction of the greatest number of true facts, or the best proven fact.

Is Jesus from the tribe of Judah and the line of David? We can clearly see the interest that the narrators had in making this believed, since they posited him as the Messiah; but this interest does not prove that they lied.

But if Jesus is an anti-messiah, suspicion has a completely different force; we see that, fighting messianism and trampling underfoot this chimerical royalty, he had no interest in calling himself part of a tribe of which he was not; had he been a descendant of David, he would have been the first to mock the genealogy or to have loudly invoked it, etc.

Therefore, the passages that give the impression that Jesus is a Galilean, a Nazarene, like his peers, consequently that he is not of the tribe of David, these passages must be believed; any contrary assertion deemed false.

Now add the irreconcilability of the two genealogies, their uselessness, at least that of Luke, if Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, — the accusation of the Jews, who say that Galilee produces nothing good, etc.

Antequam Abraham fieret, ego sum. — What did he mean by that?

Probably souls exist from all eternity; or even that his doctrine is older than Abraham

IV

JESUS CALLED THE CHRIST

Born in a small provincial town, far from the capital. Half city dweller, half country boy. Enjoying all the frankness of an intelligence developed by nature within the family, at work, in the shadow of a synagogue, etc.

Witness to the misery of the masses, the intrigues of his time, the Machiavellianism of the parties, the hypocrisy of the priesthood, the fanaticism of the sects, and well aware that all this was zero before the Roman power.

Thus practicing every day to apply the invectives of the prophets to the situation of his country.

Sufficiently aware of new doctrines.

Worker at carpentry, tall, strong, graceful and serious face, ennobled by reflection and work; high and sonorous voice.

Born under Herod, says the Great, from his birth he heard only of the coming of the Messiah; but soon disillusioned by Hillel's opinion, and the lucidity of his own thinking.

Natural genius, innate eloquence, precocious mind, fertile in figures, parables, apophthegms.

Powerful character.

A very enlightened mind, for a worker and a Jew; all the more enlightened, even, as he took, as logic, the geometric method of his art, and that all his thoughts were figured from experience, stripped of philosophism, of refinement; finally, the equal of doctors, although not having studied them, and deserved the title.

Conceives, quickly, through the force of criticism, a series of ideas outside the Judaic current:

1. That for five hundred years the race of David has been eliminated by events and priestly usurpation, most recently by the Maccabees, Herod, and the Romans; by the Sadducees, Pharisees, etc.;

2. That the true Israelites are those who, like him, faithful to the law, have freed themselves from the follies and extravagances of Jerusalem.

(The Reformer could not be born in Jerusalem.)

3. That the Roman empire (4^o of Daniel) is the very realization of unitary hopes, and that there is no longer a role to play for Judea;

4. That religion must be expurgated, simplified;

5. Everything to be regenerated by the moral law.

He therefore preaches, as the only doctrine, love or charity, disinterestedness, simplicity of heart, frugality of life, patience, chastity, modesty, work, etc. It is through this, he says, and through this alone, that we will get the better of the old world.

6. Consequently and completely disillusioned with Jewish messianism, with the Jewish priesthood, and interpreting the law in a broad sense, he began to preach his morality.

7. He had seen that efforts had already been made to pass off as a Messiah, either Simon the Maccabeus, or John Hyrcanus, his grandson, or Herod the Great; and he no longer indulged in this fantasy;

Native political genius;

Sublime consciousness;

Exquisite good sense;

Outstanding power of intuition;

Incomparable domestic qualities, grandeur and simplicity.

All these traits of Jesus, called the Christ, must be presented, apart from the positive information which is almost always lacking, as a logical deduction from what is most certain about him, but without *romantic* color, and only as rational probabilities, indicated by the situation and life.

Imperceptible progress of this worker, in *strength, virtue, intelligence*.

(Many similar cases: Hoche, Marceau, Lantara, Laplace, Gassendi, etc.)

Silent for a long time, meditative, gentle and strong;

Nothing declamatory or enthusiastic; that's why it drives everything.

How, by mingling in the agitation during the trip to Jerusalem, he is finally induced to speak, then encouraged and trained.

Christianity is a reality, the existence of Jesus a fact.

A certain number of his sayings and gestures have been collected, preserved, and appear authentic; the personality is strongly imprinted there.

His very short (six months), lightning-fast and lightning-fast career cannot be cast into doubt. — His *passion* made enough noise to be known in Rome. (TACITUS.)

It is therefore a question of restoring this historical figure, without falling into fiction.

A character who was totally misunderstood, during his lifetime, completely, then eclipsed for forty years, and about whom we would no longer have spoken at all, if the fall of Jewish nationality had not brought him back into the spotlight, forty years after his death.

Until the year 79, in fact, the sect dragged on, vegetated in obscurity, division, contempt, to the point that even the essential details of life, kinship and character of Jesus were forgotten.¹⁴

For *forty* years, they reflect on what this man meant.

They seek to penetrate the meaning of the mission.

They understand, finally, that messianism, according to him, was moral reform.

That his Last Supper is the abolition of sacrifice (freeing of the priest).

That God can be worshiped elsewhere than in the temple.

That dogmatic theology is nothing, morality everything.

All things that were blasphemous, scandalous, incomprehensible, which only ended up obtaining credit when the city, the temple, the cult, the sacrifice and the nationality had been annihilated.

These were the causes of the obscurity in which Christ remained, and consequently his doctrine and his history.

¹⁴ Cf. for synchronisms, the *Tableaux d'histoire*, large folio.

Forty years after his death, there were almost no more witnesses to his life, except perhaps John, who was then sixty-five or sixty-six and who, instead of giving his story, began at eighty years of age, *rambling* about the Word or Logos, echoing madness born long after Jesus Christ.

V

DURATION OF HIS MISSION

Strauss, following John, combined with Luke, dating the beginning of this preaching from the year 15 of Tiberius, 28 of our era, contains it between the two terms of *two years* minimum, and *seven years* maximum. — From *two to seven years*, — Jesus would therefore have died between the year 30 and the year 36.

His reasoning does not seem at all conclusive to me.

We see that no principle guided him. He did not at first understand that Jesus' mission must have produced an effect as *vivid* as it was *profound*; that being addressed to the masses, it must, unless it was soon canceled by its very duration, arise with brilliance, immediately obtain immense success and have a tremendous impact; which everything proves to have happened.

It is only under these conditions that we act on the masses. The effect of popular propaganda is one thing; that of a doctrine in the school another.

Now, the more powerful, abrupt, instantaneous the success of Jesus' preaching was, the more it must have aroused the animosity of authority, already on the alert. We can only admit the Jewish authorities. Romans, Syrians, tolerated this preacher for a long time. That's a lot if you give it a year.

This impression of Christ's speeches must have been all the more formidable because not only was it addressed to the masses, but, like everything that is addressed to the masses, it related to questions dangerous for the upper classes and the powers. and authorities.

Strauss does not pay enough attention to it. He did not see the socialism of 1848. Jesus fulminates against the *rich*, the *powerful*, the *pleasure-seeking*, against sects, against self-righteous hypocrisy, against the contempt of the doctors, against priestly tyranny.

It is a *socialist* uprising that he provokes.

Added to these considerations is the fact that the sect of Jesus at first seemed completely stifled; the master had been prodigious, but he had barely shown himself; he had only appeared in Jerusalem: few peoples of the world had heard him, the multitude alone, in a few corners of Galilee, had followed him; his prompt torture had then turned the attraction of the upper classes away from him, so that we hardly find a memory of him in history. In short, Jesus, after some brilliant demonstrations in the countryside of Galilee, and two or three sessions in Jerusalem, had been kidnapped,

crucified, flouted, crushed, his disciples scattered, annihilated; his memory given over to ridicule and ignominy, he had left only a *germ* of himself.

This *germ* is the speeches that the Gospels have preserved from him.

It is his reforming moral zeal; it is the transfusion he makes of morality into religion.

It is his great idea that the Messiah is only a reform of worship and morals, and a liberation of people, through a change of spirit in institutions.

Without this *germ*, fortunately saved from torture, Jesus was lost to history, destroyed like Theudas, etc.

The evangelists, well studied, provide us with all the sufficient clues, and it is surprising that Strauss did not grasp this conciliation.

That Jesus went to Jerusalem several times in his life is beyond doubt; that, even before his public mission, he tried his hand at private conversations, it is probable; that Jesus confused all this with the facts and gestures of the campaign begun by him following John, we also understand.

But the public mission only included one year at most; it is made up of three parts, the comings and goings in Galilee, the journey to Jerusalem, the stay in Jerusalem and the passion.

The first three evangelists are precise in this regard, and conclusive.

As for John, the greatest disorder reigns in his narration, which consists only of a few mystical speeches and a few anecdotes; we cannot admit that, in a year, Jesus only received baptism and spoke to Nicodemus; that the following year was used to convert the Samaritan woman, the third to tell the story of the good shepherd, etc.¹⁵

¹⁵ All the difficulty in this relationship is in the preparation, the staging, and the *entry* of Jesus. We need a profound picture of the times, full of truth and reality; clearly establish the circumstances, clearly mark the meaning and scope of John's mission; make people sense the need for a higher mission and lead to the first speeches of Jesus Christ. Everything else follows by itself. All you have to do is frame the reformer's speeches, enliven them with a few remarks, etc.

THE LIFE OF JESUS

I

LIFE OF JESUS, ACCORDING TO E. RENAN

[Translation forthcoming.]

For those with an immediate interest, Kirk Watson has published translations of this section and the following section, "Jesus by Proudhon," under the title *Jesus AntiChrist.*

THE GOSPELS

I

SYSTEMS AND INTERPRETATIONS*

Christianity is the greatest fact of universal history. It rests entirely on a primitive, organic fact, surrounded by mystery, covered in obscurities, full of the supernatural: the life and preaching of Jesus, called the Christ.

It is a question of knowing what Christianity ultimately is, who its author was, what that author wanted and accomplished, what place they both hold in the history of the world and of civilization. For this, almost the only documents are the writings collected by the Church, and forming a collection called the New Testament.

These writings give rise to various systems.

1. System of the Church; it consists of admitting the gospels, etc., as authentic; recognizing Jesus as the son of God, etc.

This system is that of faith; it implies belief in celestial communications, revelations, prophecies, miracles, etc.

The supernatural admitted, this system is logical, and forms a very consistent system, an advantage that it has retained alone and to this day over all others.

But the supernatural is rejected by philosophy and history. The facts attributed to John, the consequences deduced from them, the dogmas, the system of religious practices, all this is outside the domain of ordinary reason; so that we have before us the problem of the greatest social fact, accomplished and sustained for more than eighteen centuries, which has become a prodigious historical reality, and which remains unexplained, unintelligible, unless we make of it, with the Church, a divine manifestation. So that, if we withdraw from the supernatural, we fall into nothingness, we have before us an illusory fact, an intense superstition, a sort of mental leprosy; or else we affirm a supernatural relationship between the finite and the infinite, the absolute and the transitory, etc.

What! Should we give up knowing anything about Jesus?

Therefore, we have sought to account in a purely human, exclusively rational way, both for Christianity and its author.

2. Among these exclusively rational interpretations, having to satisfy the laws of the possible, the philosophical conditions of certainty and the requirements of concrete truth, the first that presents itself is that which consists of seeing in Jesus an *impostor*, of roughly the same sort as Mohammed, and all those who admitted his belief as fanatics and dupes. This is the system that the *Jews* have always adopted; the one followed, in the Middle Ages, by the author of the book of the *Three Impostors*. It is this system that M. Renan's work ultimately leads to, despite all his efforts.

Such a mystification of the civilized world, sustained for almost nineteen centuries, is unacceptable.

A. — Contradiction between the *moral, social* goal of the gospel and the spirit of lying attributed to Jesus.

B. — That the belief in a god, in gods, in the immortality of the soul, in the coming of a Christ, in revelations, in the relations between heaven and earth, on which the new religion, that religious thought, in a word, is prior to Jesus, and that in this respect, he agrees with the human race and deceived no one.

C. — That Christianity has its antecedents in the previous state of society, and that such assertions do not come naturally from a man.

In short, that the deception here would be just as inexplicable and impossible as the miracle. M. Renan felt it: he admits in Christ a sum of good faith.

D. — Radical powerlessness of fraud to produce such a movement.

3. The hypothesis of a Mystifier, Imposter in Chief, deceiving his disciples, and passing himself off as God, Christ and resurrected, being discarded, another is made; it is that of a *pious fraud*, organized by the apostles and evangelists, after the fact, and, when the hero had disappeared, making the world believe the facts recounted by them, etc.

In this case, Jesus may have been a holy character, worthy of veneration and esteem, but one whose history was overloaded with marvelous, apocalyptic stories. It is no longer the man claimed to be God and Messiah who lied, it is his disciples.

Difficulties of another nature, or even the same:

A. — Moral, revolutionary and disinterested goal of the Apostolate.

B. — Devotion of the Apostles to their faith: false witnesses who have their throats cut, to support their false testimony!... This is repugnant.

C. — Support found in persistent opinion.

D. — Powerlessness of pious fraud to produce such effects.

4. Discarding this hypothesis again, it remains to assume that no one lied, neither Jesus, nor his apostles, nor anyone, but that the system was formed

spontaneously on the real data of Jesus and the reigning opinions, among the faithful multitudes; and that the legend, once *imagined*, was taken as truth by its own authors. System of Strauss.

But this dark system of mythical creation cannot be sustained in the presence of the texts. If it is easy to point out, in the gospels, accommodations of the Old Testament that have become *facts* in the new, there is also an element of positive reality, which no longer agrees with the fiction; alongside an incredible miracle, there are authentic speeches, certain steps; much better, by following this thought of Strauss, we arrive at conclusions opposed to his own. Indeed, if Jesus was such a prodigious character, and his work of such great importance, that, in order to give an idea of both the founder and the institution, we found nothing better than to attribute to him a divine nature, etc., etc., we ask at the moment: *Tell us then in what the work of Christ consists*, say what was his *character*, his *thought*, his *work*, because this is precisely what we seek; perhaps then we will be able to account for this deification, for all this supernaturalism, and we will have the answer to the enigma. However, this is what Strauss does not give.

These reflections therefore lead to a final and fifth hypothesis which is this:

5. There are neither deceivers nor impostors; Jesus was in good faith, his work eminently moral, excellent; the apostles, very honest people, convinced; their testimony sincere; the multitude neither crazy nor stupid, only prepared, by their previous mental state, by their opinions, by their aspirations, to believe in the God Messiah, waiting for him, even demanding him, and making him, the day they believed to hold him; moreover, not clearly understanding what they saw. The disciples and Jesus do not always understand this themselves; and all are willing to explain things by miraculous and supernatural reasons.

We must begin by investigating what the work of Jesus itself was.

Having done this, examine how contemporaries, disciples, apostles and faithful understood it.

Uncertainties and hesitations of the evangelists explained;

Jesus, cleared of all suspicion:

Methodical questions?

What can we know for *certain* about Jesus, independent of miracles, doctrine, etc.?

In what environment? In what time? How long did it last?

What of Christianity, compared to previous religions?

What *reigning* ideas?

What battles? What proposals?

Go from certain to uncertain; *establish degrees of certainty*.

Distrust *rationalist* interpretations, *probabilities*;

Proceed like an investigating judge.

Subordinate, for certainty, the *miracle* for the CERTAIN facts;

Subordinate, the contradictory hypothesis to the acquired truth;

Prefer, for all facts, the logical sequence, to discordance, whatever the cost sometimes.

FACTS OF THE LIFE OF JESUS. *A page from the biography.*

Career of twelve to fifteen months;

In these twelve or fifteen months, wandering from Nazareth, in Galilee, to the Jordan towards John; then return to Nazareth after John's arrest: propaganda around the lake; excursion to Syria, Tyre, Decapolis, Samaria; finally travel to Jerusalem, fight against the priesthood and Pharisaism, and death.

This is all very short.

But in this interval, a fearful work has been accomplished.

I. — Meaning and definition of Christianity: Problem.

II. — System of interpretation of the gospels.

III. — Specific character of the Church system.

IV. — Refutation of that of Renan.

V. — My system. — Rules of criticism.

VI. — Biography of Jesus.

VII. — Brief presentation of his work, and later additions.

The Gordian knot is what Jesus thought of himself.

GOD? — No; inadmissible. All the texts are rather contrary to this; the substance of the work does not tolerate it; reason, finally, and respect for the wise man turn away from it.

Son of God? Word? — Not that either; *Equivocal* on this subject; its origin in the very nature of the new religion; influence of figurative style; — enthusiasm of Jesus; later theology, or interpretation and gnosis of the apostles. — Jesus is *Word of God; unity*, etc.

Messiah. — This idea is prior to Jesus Christ; it does not come from him; it implies diametrically contrary data, he is *anti-messiah*;

New and fatal ambiguity: I am the *Messiah*, and I am suffering. We also admit that the Messiah is entirely *Spiritual*; that is enough said about that.

RESURRECTION. — Opinion prior to Jesus. — That the Christ was to be resurrected, according to the Pharisees.

MIRACLES. — Everyone does them; everyone heals. The high priest prophesies.

Rules of Criticism. — 1. To recall the various systems of interpretation, and to show their impossibilities.

2. To propose the last, which is mine, and which alone satisfies reason and sound criticism. This system, in fact, consists in:

1. Bringing out the culminating and certain points both of Jesus' own doctrine and of his mortal life; to present the framework, and to hold firmly to it, even taking them as a criterion;

2. Rejecting as *altered*, interpolated, apocryphal or false, everything that is contrary to these points recognized as certain; to separate as not being his, and of secondary importance, all the earlier and later dogmas;

3. Showing the cause of these alterations, interpolations, suppositions, in the prejudices of the time, and the poignant need that everyone felt to explain a fact as powerful as that of the foundation of Christianity;

4. Saving the honor of Jesus, the good faith of the Apostles and Evangelists, the reason of the faithful, and the sincerity of tradition and the Church, by revealing the source of the hesitations, contradictions, and ambiguities, in the radical impotence which we experienced then, and in which we remain until this day, to account, by natural and entirely human reasons, for the establishment of Christianity and the mission of Jesus, considered as a pure man.

That if this impotence is now lifted, the obscurity of the Gospels ceases; light is shed on the embryonic period of the new religion.

II

EVANGELICAL FABLES

They cluttered up apostolic preaching from a very early age, to the point that not only did all the apostles disagree among themselves, but they were also forced to be the first to protest against the *gnoses*, the *interminable genealogies*, and the *vain* and ridiculous *fables*.¹⁶

All were forced to constantly recall that the Gospel was limited to faith in the *risen* Jesus, to his *mediation*, his *redemption*, his *charity* and his *purity*. They protested against the superstitious additions, which they did not expressly name, but which were easy to discover; these were: the *virginal conception*, the adoration of the Magi, the genealogies of Luke and Matthew, walking on water, the thousands of men fed with one loaf of bread and two fish, the story of the pigs of Gerasa, the *Transfiguration*, the *forty days* of fasting, the bodily

¹⁶ Cf. Epistle to the Holy Scriptures, I, ad Timothy, c, 1, 4; II, 16 et seq.; II. Tim., 4, 4; — Tit., 3, 9; — Jacob, passim; — Peter, 3, 1, 18; — V. 1 et seq., II Pet., 1, 16; I, John, passim, and elsewhere, Paul, on *Science* or *gnosis*.

resurrection, the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, the tongues of fire, Paul's theory of *faith* and *grace*, John's regarding the *Word*, etc., etc.

All also accused each other. Paul rejected John's *λογος*,¹⁷ and he, in turn, rejected Paul's grace. They only seemed to agree on the end of the world.

They retain the healings of the sick, which are only ordinary facts, care given by charity and sometimes followed by success.

M. Renan has not sufficiently noted this. If the accounts of the *four* are invalidated by the protest of the authors of the Epistles, we are quite at ease; and there is no need to argue so much over miracles. We are at ease to sort things out.

Christianity is the doctrine of charity, of purity of heart, of the liberation of the poor, of the spiritual life.

Jesus said that such was the true messianism; that everything else was madness; by dint of saying it, he himself was taken for the Messiah, but a suffering and spiritual Messiah, whose glorious coming was still awaited, the saddest of fables, accepted by all the apostles.

Starting from there, the whole story unravels; we understand Jesus, his preaching, his oral polemic, his inventions; we follow him from the beginning to the end of his career, from the year 28 to the year 29; we become aware of the hatred of the Jews, we guess the strange mystery of his resurrection, we then discover him secretly directing his Church, from the year 29, the year of his torture, to the year 56 or 57, the time at which it seems that he definitively disappeared and ceased to exercise his influence. The Christian work continues thus after the advent which was to stifle it; it is explained, unfolds, clearly emerges, then becomes obscured again by fables and disputes.

III

THE WORD OF CHRIST*

1. THE PLAN OF JESUS. — It is said many times that Jesus' apostles did not understand him; the multitude even less so. On the day of his passion, they did not understand. After his death, they understood nothing.¹⁸

What did this lack of understanding bear on at first? It was the way Jesus interpreted messianism.

Now, who can guarantee that later, after the resurrection, they understood better, and that they did not go from one extreme to the other?

¹⁷ *Logos*, Word. — TRANSLATOR

¹⁸ Cf. *Les Disciples d'Emmaus*.

Healings. — Jesus and his apostles cared for the sick poor. (The parable of the Samaritan, and the Epistle of Saint James, where the treatment is indicated.) This was a pious duty in the Church, which later became the sacrament of *extreme unction*. These treatments were something of the era of cleanliness; a wound washed; the heart comforted without neglecting the magnetic influence. — Obvious traces of *exaggerations* at Jericho; a blind man, two blind men, etc.

Additions and alterations. — The canticles of Mary, Zechariah, Simeon; the genealogies, the stories of the *Magi*, incarnations, etc. The clumsy adaptations of the Old Testament; the details on the ruin of Jerusalem, the developments on the theory of the Word of John; the neat style of Mark. The growing progress of *realism* in the story of the Resurrection, which is first reduced to the appearance of a soul or shadow, then becomes a *body*: Eucharistic realism, which we also see born and develop, and become the dogma of transubstantiation; All this indicates that the Gospels should be believed with caution, not because the authors are dishonest, but because they continue to be in a period of unintelligence, and seek to understand, through transcendental considerations or hypotheses, what they do not understand.

From all these examples, there is reason to greatly reduce what the Gospels have Jesus say about his mediation between God his father and men. Certainly he is the author, founder, initiator; he has the right to claim to be animated by the *spirit of God*, to propose himself as an example, to oppose the ancient law. *It was said to the ancients: And I say to you!* There is in all this neither vanity nor usurpation. The truth authorizes it, and every man who speaks the truth enjoys the same authority with regard to others.

I also understand that he recommends his disciples to *gather in his name*, to *pray in his name*; his name thus becoming a sort of formulary of faith, and the sign of *worship in spirit and in truth*, a sign of regeneration, conversion and penance.

But we see the metaphor in those places where Jesus says of himself that he is the vine, the stock, the Way, the Truth, the Life, where he makes himself the *center of the new religious life*; and we are authorized, on occasion, to interpret his discourses in a less *personal* and less mystical sense.

Thus in these words: *It is through me that one goes to God; No one knows God except through the Son*, etc.; I will simply see this, which is already a very great thing, and which is unique: it is by faith that I teach you that you will go to God; God will only be known to you if you conceive of him as father, and you and I as his children, etc.

This interpretation goes without saying; it says everything.

Jesus, in this sense, is indeed the *son of God* and the *descendent of God*, for he revealed divine paternity to the world, and was the first to invoke this filiation for the benefit of humanity. The theory of the *λογος* has no place here; it is a self-explanatory hyperbole, which was inevitable, but ultimately, which nothing proves to be Jesus's, and which everything leads us to believe was one of his disciples.

Social Character of Jesus' Reform. — This aspect, with the progress of time, has been kept in the shadows; little by little the Orthodox Church abandoned it, veiled under cult practices and mystical phrases. M. Renan considers it bad, like a strange appendage, a product of the unfortunate influence of John the Baptist; he makes it a subject of blame for Jesus, in whose life he distinguishes two periods: the period of the pure moralist and the period of the revolutionary.

It will be easy to prove that Jesus' religious reform led to social reform, and ultimately to political reform; just as it led to a reform of religion, theology and worship. In Jesus' time, society was essentially religious; and Jesus did not found an association of *pietists* who, apart from their faith in Jesus, no longer had anything in common.

Equality before God led to equality before the law and the abolition of slavery; the precept of charity, or almsgiving, created institutions of relief and benevolence; the precept of work, energetically established by Paul, is full of reforms; the law of justice excludes prevarication, the plundering of the people, or exploitation by the rich; the *mutuum date* indicates a law of mutuality whose consequences are incalculable. Resistance to priestly tyranny, contempt for Herod, the decline of messianism, reveal a social aim higher than the reigning institutions, higher than the Roman Empire itself.

Jesus was in no way a supporter of revolt against the Empire; this was the thorny point of his teaching. He was right, a thousand times right; Judea could do nothing against Rome; it was even good for her that she submitted; it was not through arms that defeated nations could recover their liberties and rights. It was through a complete overhaul of religion, a renewal of mores and laws. Any other direction was absurd; it was a deception of the ignorant masses by the ambitious rich, the sectarians, the pretenders, and the priests.

Journey to Jerusalem. — Jesus had reasons to believe in success. What was it about for him? To detach the people, the masses, from priestly influence, to free the nation from the Pharisees, the Scribes and the priests, especially from its fatal messianic preoccupations, that is, with revolt.

Jesus had the right to count on the intelligence and tolerance of the Roman governor, without whose permission the priests, etc. could do nothing. If Pilate,

better enlightened, better advised, had understood Jesus' movement, the war of Titus could have been avoided, the first benefit for Rome. With this entirely negative support, Jesus, becoming inviolable, was all-powerful against the bigoted sect of the Pharisees, the aristocratic party of the Sadducees, Herod's faction, the pontificate. He changed morals, the law, worship, the whole of society; for the Romans would not have taken sides against a popular majority in favor of an aristocracy that hated them.

From this point of view, Renan's *life of Jesus* is pitiful.

He did not understand the first word of this plan. He did not see that Jesus, taking the rejuvenated religious idea for his point of reference, was to lead to a social revolution in Judea, under the cover of Roman authority, and then from there arrive at a political reform, at the liberty of the world. This was what Jesus called *Salvation, Redemption*; his plan failed; Christianity, that is, the Gospel of Jesus made messianic, was established in another way: but at what price! With what pains! And in what terms!

The plan of Jesus was not revealed by him to his disciples, who only ever half-understood it; he was too prudent to trust lightly. But it was partly understood by Judas, a faithful Jew, a zealous messianist, who saw in Jesus the enemy of his nation, and formulated the plan to deliver him.

Now, to demonstrate that an intimate link exists throughout the life of Jesus between morality and his religious reform, and consequently between this dual reform and social regeneration.

A unique situation; a profound combination; serious chances of success; immense consequences. This, for a rationalist historian, is of far greater importance than orthodox theology, with its sacraments and mysteries.

Jesus seeks popularity; we can see why. With Rome's neutrality making him inviolable, the support of the masses decided everything.

The thing accomplished, without the Romans being able to understand anything other than their own interests, a revolutionary force was ready, the empire was defeated, paganism and Mosaism successively ousted. Never would Christians have been accused of atheism as they were later. Jesus, without disputing Caesar's tribute or his authority, became master of the world and of Caesar... He would not have been made a God, a Messiah; he would not have been crucified; the conversion of the world would have followed a different course; the gospel would have been better understood, better applied, etc.

This is what neither M. Renan nor anyone else has understood, any more than the apostles, and what is evident in every line of the gospel.

Thus, through the true exposition of the Gospels, the work of Jesus becomes not only intelligible, but even vaster, more grandiose, and more astonishing; the

Church, as conceived by him, erases in its rational, entirely human context all the glories of the mystical Church of the apostles and fathers; the evangelical establishment appears like the sun, while Christianity, emerging from the defeat of Jesus, is only a pale comet, now without prestige and almost without influence.¹⁹

Jesus' plan was therefore only partially executed, and in an unintelligent and clumsy manner, by his disciples after his death. They had never been fully initiated into the thought of the master, who marched toward his goal without revealing himself to anyone, making circumstances and men serve his reform and leaving it to time and success to make him known. Messianism, after his death, invaded the Gospel, it is true, with a spiritual and mystical character that changed its meaning and brought it rather far from the Gospel of Jesus. The revolutionary and social aspect was abandoned; war on Judaism was declared in hatred of the priests who persecuted and murdered Jesus; on the other hand, one inherited the combined animadversion of the Saist pontificators and the empire. Quarrels ignited over questions of circumcision, Passover, millennia, *grace*, sacrificed meats, etc.

Parties formed; the person of Jesus alone became the subject of countless disputes. He gained by being made God, but his torture scandalized the world, creating fanatics and bitter unbelievers. All in all, if we consider that, whatever Jesus's personal success, even after his death, the general thought had to take up his work, modify it and develop it, it became impossible to say whether the world had gained or lost from the Galilean's crucifixion.

It is the characteristic of truth to be always more beautiful, greater than fiction. Conceived in its authentic whole, the plan of Jesus is more admirable than the dogma that replaced it: now, just as the work of Jesus surpassed the mystical Christianity of the apostles, so too does the social revolution undertaken today surpass that of Jesus.

The essential characteristics of this revolution are:

1. Immanent justice, the source and foundation of all morality;
2. Economic and social science;
3. A system of mutuality and federation;
4. The extinction of poverty and war;
5. General equality and balance, no more masters or rabbis;

¹⁹ Little information on Jesus' struggles against the Pharisees. — Part neglected by the Evangelists. But the plan continues with an obviousness that can now deceive no one.

John's relationship to Jesus. — The first *involuntary* preparer: if we are to rely on the evangelical account, a sincere messianist; but willing to rally, and who had already grasped the *penitentiary* aspect of the Reformation

6. Means of action: collective force or the power of association, right and science.

II. PREACHING OF THE APOSTLES*. — If Jesus' plan had succeeded, as it could succeed, as it was likely to succeed, his work, as a personal one, would have been incontestably more brilliant, more grandiose than it appeared during his lifetime and during the sixty or eighty years following his death.

But the thought of the masses, the speculation of theologians, was bound sooner or later to seize it and act in turn on the idea of the master. Jesus could not always live: who knows whether he would not have escaped a first struggle only to succumb to another more terrible one?...

Admitting, then, that his plan had received a more decisive development, it could not fail to fall prey to popular imagination and theological speculation. Religion, and a positive religion forming the basis of the new establishment, in an environment so exalted, so fervent, so believing, the ceremonial and dogmatic aspects would have received external reinforcements; the person of the master would have been incontestably idealized: it is possible that the title of *Messiah* would have been preserved for him for the reasons already stated, but it could also have happened that he did not perish from the last torture; in this case, he could well have been regarded as *savior* of the world, which he was in fact saving, but he would not have been considered as having *redeemed it by his torture*, he would not have been made an expiatory victim; but a *pontiff*, sent from God, to remit the sins of the world, as he did every day when he performed the healing of the sick, and as he orders his disciples to do; he would have *cured us of original guilt*, by virtue of his therapeutic and divine power, but not by putting himself in our place; our own penance, accompanied by true repentance and grace from above, would have been enough; Jesus would have had in his career a redoubling of work to bear, contradictions, calumnies, conspiracies, bitterness, his life would have been that of a Saint Paul; there would have been less of the torture of the cross, and this assimilation of Christ with the paschal lamb and the scapegoat.

Nothing would have prevented some from saying later, with the fathers of Nicea, that this man, animated by the spirit of God, had been the special organ of the Word, divine, another fiction could have been imagined in place of that of the *Incarnation* of Matthew and Luke; the Old Testament provided examples for this (the *Spirit of God* throws itself upon him; the *spirit of God* seizes him, etc.). In Jesus, recognized as a prophet, that is to say, a simple man, one would have said that the *Word* descended, spoke directly through his mouth; the Trinity of Athanasius would have been recognized and adored; the Eucharist would have taken another turn, while retaining its mystical virtue, etc. It is useless to

venture into this deduction, the eventualities of which everyone understands as well as the causes. What matters is to distinguish well what belongs to the initiative of the master from what has been added to it, of his own, the admiration, the recognition and the mysticism of the people; it is then to discern in this same work, the essential part, I would even say necessary, immutable part, from the contingent parts; what was there for Jesus to accomplish and which he did not have the time to accomplish, what would have become Christianity in consequence, and which it could not become. All this is necessary for the understanding of Christianity, as of all human creation; because every human fact, every historical fact is composed of two elements: a principal element, which I will call organic, necessary, reforming, and an accessory element, variable, conditional, dependent on circumstances.

Arrest, Trial, and Conviction of Jesus. — According to Renan, Jesus' trial was just, in accordance with the law; his torture, from a legal point of view, was beyond reproach. This strange assessment stems from the fact that M. Renan understood nothing at all about Jesus' mission and idea.

In my opinion, Jesus' torture was the fruit of a priestly conspiracy, proceeding through *slander* and *iniquity*.

Jesus could not be accused of destroying the law. His declaration was formal: *I do not come to abolish the law, but to give it a supplement*; his conduct was consistent with his declarations; he celebrated Passover and other festivals, respected the Sabbath, while mocking Pharisaic bigotry, prayed in the temple, etc., etc.

As for his religious ideas, as for his *supplement*, he did nothing more than what the *Pharisees*, the *Sadducees*, the *Essenes* were doing around him, all divided on capital questions.

No doubt a penetrating philosophy could have foreseen that the new doctrine would lead to the abolition of Mosaism; but the same could be said of other sects, especially since everything in the world is constantly changing — faith, religion, and worship, like everything else. Jesus demanded the same tolerance; he had a right to it.

Jesus could not be accused of pretending to be royalty; the nature of his teaching bore witness to this. He mocked messianism, replacing it with moral reform; his *kingdom was not of this world*; the *Christ*, he said, when that name was spoken, suffered and died like the ancient prophets, and more than once he had been abandoned for his *anti-messianic* ideas.

In this respect, neither the priests nor the Roman authorities had anything to reproach him with. Nothing was more contrary to the dreams of the Jews concerning the Messiah than what he, Jesus, called the *Kingdom of God*. It was a

completely moral order of things, above and outside the established political order, which he rightly defended himself from wanting to touch.

He paid the tribute, ordered it to be paid; he blamed the insurrectionary projects.

No doubt, an attentive observer could have foreseen that this moral reform would eventually result in a new political order; but far from blaming Jesus, he would have praised him highly. Did not the same thing result from all philosophical theories, from the Stoic doctrine, for example, professed by Marcus Aurelius, from that of the Neoplatonists? It is the condition of humanity that new seeds are in perpetual bloom, pushing society forward, modifying, changing empires, etc.

Jesus, it is true, vigorously attacked the priesthood, its tyranny, the pharisaical hypocrisy, the influence of the scribes, etc.

But here he was within his rights; it was school against school, party against party, democracy against aristocracy, heresy against orthodoxy, synagogue against synagogue. He was in *opposition*; but once again, he was within his rights as an Israelite, as an honest and free man. There is more: the ideas of his nation authorized him to pose as a *prophet*, as a *rabbi*; to criticize under this title the conduct and doctrine of the powerful: provided he did nothing against the nation and against the law, he was inviolable. Since when has it been considered a crime for a courageous man, in a country of at least relative freedom, to attack monopolies, the abuse of power, pious fraud, electoral corruption, judicial lies, the insolence of corporations, etc.?

Moreover, the iniquity committed against Jesus is flagrant: the story of the Passion proves it in every line.

In order to destroy him, they arouse both the people and the Roman authorities: the people, by proving that he is a false messiah, worse than that an anti-messiah, who fights the hopes of the nation, an enemy of deliverance or a secret affiliate of Rome, a traitor to nationality; the foreign authorities, by maintaining that this seemingly innocuous preacher is nothing less than an agitator who, by devious means, leads the people to insurrection against all established powers. Strangely enough, M. Renan shared this opinion; in this respect, even more than in any other, he can boast of having slandered Jesus.

So, the multitude once poisoned by priestly slander, the affair goes full steam ahead; the plebs cry: No, we do not want that one for king, he is not our messiah; let him be crucified; down with him! And Pilate, for his part, calls him, to have a pretext, the Jewish *messiah*, *rex judaeorum*. The contradiction between the people and Rome is the crux of the plot here.

Now, what was the cause of Judas's crime? M. Renan, who finds Jesus' condemnation just, has pleased to say that Judas was guilty of, at most, *indelicacy*. In this, he was consistent with his system.

If Judas had been content to do as so many others do, to abandon Jesus as soon as he realized that his master was not realizing his messianic ideal, one could pity him for his blindness: in any case, his opinion would be respectable.

But this is not the case. Judas is one of those cowardly souls that swarm in revolutions, and of which we have known many for twenty-five years; who float between the parties, seeking to foresee which way victory will lean, and ready in advance to follow the side of the strongest. He is a Jacobin who, after having been Robespierre's henchman, becomes Napoleon's courtier; he is a selfish *conservative*, who, like Fouché, a few months later, swears oaths against oaths; today a republican terrorist, tomorrow a doctrinaire, the day after tomorrow Caesar's minister, later a servant of the king, then betraying both the king and the emperor, and the republicans and everyone else. Look around you, at the Academy, the assembly, the senate, the courts, the army, the *press*, everywhere, the world is full of these Judases. r. Renan did not live in this political furnace, he cannot speak of it knowingly; Judas followed Jesus from the beginning of his mission; without doubt, before attaching himself to Jesus, he had followed John; he went everywhere he saw a movement being pronounced; he had had the leisure to reflect on the scope of Jesus' work; he knew, as much as an apostle could know, that the *messianism* of Jesus had nothing in common with that of the zealots; he accompanies him to the Last Supper; then, when he sees his luck change, he turns around and delivers his master, he delivers him for a salary, and receives the price offered to the informer. This circumstance, of the money received, indicates one thing: if Judas had accomplished the betrayal through an excess of Jewish zeal, he would not have received money. He would have said: I do not sell my opinion; I serve my country and my faith; this man has deceived me; I demand justice against him, and I deliver him. This is how, in political revolutions, men act whose partisan passion leads them to denounce the enemies of their opinion. They act conscientiously, and do not sully themselves with a mixture of self-interest.

Judas, on the contrary, takes the money; he acts like a hired police informer; a mediocre mind as much as a cowardly soul, who tells himself that, after all, he is rendering power a service great enough to receive it. Judas is beneath the informer; he has neither zeal, nor indifference, nor disinterestedness, nor the order; cold, ambitious, dry-hearted and greedy, cowardly, false conscience, Tartuffe, he combines within himself everything that can make treason infamous and abominable. This species is difficult to penetrate: in prosperous times it is not to be feared, one would consider it excellent, so naturally does it

show itself in serving the party it espouses and which wins, but on the other hand, the secret corruption of the soul bursts forth, and you have the height of perfidy united with the height of cowardice. We have seen heroic betrayals, grandiose perjuries, courageous defections, apostasies full of audacity; we have seen, and this is only too common in France, changes of opinion full of naivety, not to say innocence; our *weathervanes* are rather souls without character, than true scoundrels.

The act of Judas is that of a man devoid of moral sense, in every respect, of a being endowed with reason, but who acts like a beast.

III. CONCLUSION. — New morality, superiority of the new era.

1. Confusion of religion and morals: bad.
 2. Precept of charity: dangerous and inadequate.
 3. Precept of authority, of obedience; tendency toward communism, if not privilege: undesirable.
 4. Moral sanction, through eternal rewards and punishments: inadequate.
 5. Regime of Faith, of Mysticism, of sacramental practice: incompatible with the Philosophical Spirit.
 6. Dogma of Providence: irreconcilable with science.
 7. Dogma of Grace: injurious, engendering inequality, theocracy, government by divine right.
 8. Charitable institution to repair the wrongs of grace.
- We want and we have:
1. A morality based exclusively on the principle of justice.
 2. Justice conceived, no longer as an order from above, but as an affirmation of conscience.
 3. The sovereignty of the human being and, following his example, of every human group, family, community, society, etc.
 4. Tendency toward unlimited liberty.
 5. Moral sanction placed simultaneously in conscience, in the consequences of action, in social reaction.
 6. All teratology subordinated to philosophy.
 7. Providence identified with the reason of things and the laws of social development.
 8. The federative principle substituted for that of grace and privilege.
 9. Renewal of property.
 10. Provident institutions in place of charitable institutions.

Follow, according to the principles set out above and in the preceding notes, the *Four Gospels*; carefully review the meaning given and to be given to the

parables, etc., both from the point of view of Jesus-God and that of Jesus the man; — carefully follow this distinction; further explore the necessity, meaning, and high scope of Jesus' mission; ruin it with a short exposition of the new doctrine, of NON-RELIGIOUS MORALITY.

1. RELIGION and *Morals*, separated: the latter very weak, the former intense.
2. *Religion and Morals* united, or *Religious Morality*: — Jesus Christ.
3. *Morals alone*, or *Immanent Justice*. Such is the historical movement.

These three great eras of moral history are striking:

1. Until Jesus, worship was more an act of submission, fear or solicitation than anything else. The Pharisee was proud, greedy, hypocritical and very devout. The Greek and the Roman guarded their vices with their devotion; the expiations of Eleusis, forming a secret, almost philosophical cult, had little force other than that which reason or terror lends them alternately. The moral sense, in a word, is weak; humanity is young. It needs fear or punishment.

2. The Gospel makes works of Justice, Charity, temperance, chastity, acts of devotion, and imprints them with a new character; it is religion fused with Morality. — Tenderness, ideal; delights of virtue. — Intimate joys of duty, pleasure of charity, happiness of continence; enthusiasm of devotion, supernatural hope, *love of God and neighbor*.

3. Since Luther, we have reasoned about morality. We have separated it from worship; we want it to exist in its own right; one can be an atheist and an honest man.

Will we have a Christ to preside over this new movement? No: if the union of piety and morality requires a representative, separation requires no one. — We all remain free.²⁰

There is no longer a Master, nor a priest, nor a Christ, nor an apostle. We are equal. The movement is accomplished without an actor, without drama, without twists and turns, or catastrophe.

M. Renan did not have a clear idea of the Christian religion at all. What he says about it is nothing: these are words, which sometimes signify Christianity in its quiet quintessence, sometimes seem to indicate humanitarian morality, That is, separated from all religion.

To attempt the life of Jesus is to explain the formation of Christianity, at the very moment of its conception. However, M. Renan is further from having done this than anyone else. He has degraded the person of Jesus.

²⁰ Cf. *Préface de la Justice*.

APPENDIX

MORALITY AND IDEALISM*

I

RELIGIOUS CONSCIENCE

How through its influence on imagination and judgment, it alters facts and changes reality.

I said that for the supernaturalist, nothing seems impossible:

Divine creation of the adult man;

Resurrection of the dead, or reintegration of the soul into the body;

Passage of a body through walls or penetrability of matter;

A man walking on water: reversal of the laws of balance;

Instant cure of diseases;²¹

Ubiquity: Apollonius seen on the same day, at the same time, in places five or six hundred leagues apart;

Rapture to heaven;

Faculty of making oneself invisible, etc.;

Particular dialectic: Countless contradictions, as in the Universe;

Changing ontology: the material and immaterial soul.

The story of Jesus, or his monograph, apart from a few milestones, can only be conjectural.

1. General expectation of a Messiah, among the Jews, and everywhere.

2. Preaching and death of John the Baptist, herald of this Messiah, and preaching penance, or public retreat; year 28.

3. Almost at the same time, preaching and death of Jesus, leader of a religious and social reform.

4. A few years after him, appearance of the sect of the Nazarenes, attesting that this Jesus is the Messiah, and that he is resurrected; giving a new meaning to messianism; and breaking with Judaism; Jewish persecution from 34 to 45.

5. Consequence of this rupture, the Gospel announced to the Pagans.

Paganism attacked; the Church founded in Antioch, and the disciples taking the name of Christians; Policy of Paul, *and in general of the Christians*, controlled by the situation, with regard Caesar and Rome: it explains that of Jesus; *coup de théâtre* of Jerusalem.

²¹ Homeopaths, through their clinical direction, save time on Allopaths and Expectants, as medical statistics prove. (Cf. Dr. Cretin.)

6. First attempt at unifying Christian communities in an apostolic council, year 36.

7. The Gospel texts.

These facts can be considered absolutely certain.

We could add a few others, but of lesser importance.

1. That Jesus preached in Galilee, Samaria, the Decapolis, along the Jordan, for *eight or ten months*.

2. That he was crucified in Jerusalem under Pontius Pilate, who shared in the condemnation.

3. That the *official* reasons for the condemnation were, for the priests, that he was a blasphemer and destroyer of religion; as for Pilate, who was content with this motive, he could have had two reasons: 1. that it was important to Roman policy to ensure respect for the established religion; 2. that ultimately, whatever Jesus thought, he was an *agitator*.

4. At base, Jesus being neither a blasphemer nor an enemy of Rome, we must think that he was slandered and that the real cause of his condemnation was: That interpreting messianism in a purely spiritual and moral sense, he tended to disillusion the people, and thereby cause the priesthood and the Philistine and Sadducean parties to lose all kinds of influence; that denouncing avarice, hypocrisy, the tyranny of priests and sectarians, the misery of the exploited masses, he tended towards a religious simplification and a social reform equally threatening to established privileges.

5. Stoning of Stephen and persecution of the brothers, forced to flee; martyrdom of James, around the years 34, 36, 42, etc.

6. Conversion of Paul, according to himself; his retirement in Arabia, etc.²²

7. That the Gospels are of an independent writing, diverse in authors, times and places: shortly after the year 70 for the first three, and perhaps a little later for the fourth, as well as the Apocalypse.

8. That the Epistles of Paul, the only ones whose date can be assigned approximately, were written from 57 or 58 to 66.

From all of these facts and the writings that form the *New Testament*, we can draw the *following conjectures*:

That, according to the Gospels and the Epistles, the mission of Jesus was accomplished in the years 28 and 29, and that it was completed by his death and resurrection;

²² Cf. *Annotated Bible*.

But that the facts and even the speeches cannot be explained rationally, that if the career of Jesus had been much longer, and if he would have led the movement after his death until 56 or 70, everything is told by the Evangelists as having been said, preached, announced in the time preceding the crucifixion;

But a host of things presuppose events subsequently accomplished, which Jesus naturally could not have known or foreseen before the year 29; there are so many things that those that can be related to this first period are reduced to almost nothing; that, however, these same things flow from the same source, are full of the same spirit, expressed in the same style, tend to the same goal; from which it follows that the split is not possible; that we cannot, in fact, recognize, in Gospel history, anything which denotes two different authors; while between the Epistles, the Gospels, the Apocalypse, the Acts, the difference is considerable;

From which it follows that if the same character is both the author and the hero of everything contained in the Gospels, as it does not seem possible to me to doubt, and if these facts and these speeches suppose a lapse much longer than a year, at most, it must be admitted that Jesus survived his torture; that he continued his work, hidden from everyone; so that what he said, so that his teaching, contained by the narrators, in the period that extends from baptism to crucifixion, actually occurred over a greater number of years.

Conclusion: That, if this is so, Jesus was the invisible leader of the primitive Church, for a time impossible to fix; but whose end it is permissible to mark, either at the assembly of the apostles, in 56, or at the fall of Jerusalem, in 70.

This main thesis stated summarily, demonstrate it, explaining according to it the new Messianism, etc., etc.

II

CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

It is composed by *centons*.²³

The centon is so much the background that it serves to shape events, and becomes the very material of history.

But that does not prevent this literature, born of pagan and Israelite decomposition, from sometimes reaching a sublime height.

We have the precepts, the words and the *sayings* of Jesus Christ.

There are many other things, like the *magnificat*.

²³ A centon is “a piece of verse or prose composed of passages borrowed from one or more authors.” — TRANSLATOR.

This hymn, attributed to the mother of Christ, is of the Christianized Jew, who sings of the redemption of Israel, the exaltation of the new Church, and the fulfillment of the promises of Jehovah. These are couplets, in the ordinary form:

1. — *Magnificat anima mea dominum*, etc.

9. — *Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros, Abraham et semini ejus in secula. Gloria*, etc.

These odes cannot fit into the French language. Anyone who tried to translate or imitate them would inevitably fail. You must know their meaning, and sing them in an ancient idiom, Latin or Hebrew.

Hebrew poetry consists of movements of lightning and and claps of thunder. Its style usually consists of a redoubling of the idea, or antithesis. The chain of speeches is in the ideas themselves, but almost never indicated in the style.

No transition; it is not developed, nor wordy, — the stanzas of the *magnificat*, rendered in French, become cold, the mixture of a completely primitive chant in the tone of lament, and ideas so condensed, so lofty, forms in the original, in the situation of the writer and in his time, a sublime contrast.

In French, this is no longer felt. I imagine the Greeks must have judged the same.

The French poet could not help insisting on the thought, he would retain it, delight in it, feast on it; — the Hebrew strikes the idea, and passes. So many memories evoked in the last verse: *Sicut locutus est*. — These long promises of Jehovah, this long wait through the centuries, from *Abraham to Simeon*. Feeling here is moved; the tears come: a French poet could not help but make this point. This is all the stuff of an ode. — All messianism, the religion of emancipation breathes in the words: *Represit humilitatem*, etc.

III

LITERATURE AND MORALITY

Origin of evil, replacement of religions by the worship of oneself.

Nature, in all of its creations, and in each of its creations, is logical; it therefore tends towards order; it wants order; it seeks harmony, beauty, perfection.

And this is because nature, or the physical and visible universe, is logical; it is because by virtue of this logic, it tends towards the perfection of order, that man, who is nothing other than the universe become alive and sensitive, having acquired consciousness of himself and feeling, is intelligent, an animal following logic, seeking order, worshiping beauty, and obeying Justice.

But the *matter* or the elements implemented by nature seem incapable of achieving this *perfection*, the final goal of universal tendencies. Thus, it is evident from experience that, in the system of worlds, the sphere is conceived, so to speak, as a figure of which all the exterior points are equally distant from the center; the circle, likewise, etc. — And, yet, there is no perfect sphere; nature is incapable of *realizing* it.

Hence a distinction between *real* and *ideal*.

The gap between the real and the ideal constitutes disorder, sin, evil.

(Abyss between *mind* and *matter*: two extremes of nature. The *idea* and the *fact*.)

Thus disorder is only a fact of impotence or inferiority of the substance with regard to the IDEA, or the WORD, or WISDOM.

In other words, *God cannot produce his equal*, which he should have done, however, if he wanted to prevent sin.

Thus, like the ideal and Justice, *sin* is inherent in the human being, and in all creation. To free ourselves from it, we have only our idea of the right and the beautiful, which, served by an energetic will, constantly repairs in us the inevitable, and more or less shocking, defect caused by the inferiority or the refractory nature of matter.

This role of *conscience* and *intelligence* in us is precisely what Christian mythology has called effective grace, redemption, reparation for original sin through the merits of Christ. — Here only, theology has made a divine personification of what is in us a faculty of the first order; as matter or the senses tempt us and damn us, so conscience, the *pure idea* of Justice, beauty and order, lifts us up and saves us: it is the consolation of all our miseries, the paradise of our souls.

The conception of the *glorious body*, that is to say of a perfect creation, adequate to the idea, is here a proof of the truth of our interpretation; it is a testimony of theology provided against itself.

If therefore the Justice that is immanent in us, if the intelligence with which we are endowed, form our beatitude, if they are our redemption, our medicine, our salvation, we do not have to look elsewhere for the fulfillment of our destiny. It is within us; it depends on us.

He who purifies himself and cultivates his soul is saved, as happy as he can be; he has seen God, or the Gods, and has nothing more to wish for. He who lives in sin, in infamy, is miserable; he is the slave of death, he lives in terror, anguish, remorse. If he does not mend his ways at the last moment, if he ends up in impenitence, he is a damned person, an unworthy creature, a failed man, who would have done better not to live.

Jehovah dooms and resurrects, does good and evil, etc.;
That the world was made for man;
That the question of the origin of evil, or original sin, is the same for the believer as for the atheist.

IV

IDEALISM

What is an IDEALIST, as opposed to a *justicier*?²⁴

He is a man who, instead of taking *Justice* and *truth* exclusively for his conduct, forms himself an idol, to the service of which he subordinates everything else.

Thus the theist adores GOD and *loves him* above all, making his respect for right dependent on him and his will.

Thus the Church has created an idealist system, where God, the Trinity, Christ, the Angels, Paradise, etc., worship, the mysteries, and ultimately *morality*, appear.

Thus the French people put political *Unity, glory*, before liberty, guarantees, equilibrium, etc.

So, one wants to be Mirabeau, the other Vergniaud, etc.

All our opinions, at present, are *idealisms*.

Principle of nationality.

Principle of free exchange.

Principle of natural frontiers.

ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY. — We live by ideals; abuse and consumption of novels and dramas; *lottery, stock market gambling*, etc.

It is by the *ideal* that we conduct ourselves in all our relations with the sexes; every young girl dreams of a handsome boy, a brave knight, etc.; every young man wants a nymph, etc.

The pleasure-seeker is led by the ideal; the gourmand by the ideal; the miser, the proprietor, the ambitious individual, by the ideal.

The poet, the painter, the writer, whose occupation is to produce idealities, to remake nature, are above all eager for idealities, that is to say, for the ideal.

Why did the city of Paris give Lamartine a chalet in the Bois de Boulogne? Because it loves the ideal, and rewards it; then, because it believes that it honors itself.

²⁴ Cf. *On the Principle of Art*, ch. III, p. 28.

JESUS, IDEALIST. — M. Renan slandered Jesus, by making him an idealist, by making him profess transcendental disdain, and dare everything, do everything for the success of such a plan.

When I make the distinction between Jesus the man and Jesus-God, I must therefore be careful to add that the blame falls mainly on the *idealist*, but that, as for the Jesus who is *weak* in character, although the facts remain the same, nevertheless he remains less odious, given this very weakness.

There was neither calculation nor premeditation on the part of Jesus; he is not a systematic imposter, serving his ideal, that is to say his personal glory and his fantasy; he is an excellent man, devoted, but improvident and weak, who falls from precipice to precipice, and drags us there with him.

Thus there are definitely, according to the gospels, three ways of explaining Jesus, and his preaching, and his results.

Either he is Messiah, Word and Son of God, as the Church says: in this case everything is explained, and all that remains against this thesis are the objections of general philosophy.

Or, if he is a simple man, he is an idealist, in this case, an ambitious man and an imposter.

Or, finally, he is a moralist lost in an unfavorable environment, who is overwhelmed by events, and who, compromised by popular superstition, after having devoted himself to an excellent cause, dies for an absurd idea.

In the latter case, we can forgive him all the more, save him, since philosophy and experience teach us that the establishment of Justice is long and difficult; that it requires centuries; that the reform meditated by Jesus could not be accomplished in such a short time, like *a flash of lightning*; that the masses still needed religion; and that, superstition for superstition, the one to which he was given birth by his *resurrection* is as valuable as any other.

JESUS RESURRECTED. — It was a principle in the time of Jesus that the Christ could not die: *christus non moritur*; that he would not taste of death, *non gustabis mortem*.

According to this, Jesus, who foresaw his torture, could, in a sense, predict his resurrection.

All men, according to the Pharisees, and according to himself, *had to be resurrected*. All the more reason for the Messiah to be put to death.

It was he who had to give the signal. When would this resurrection happen? They know nothing about it; only, they thought it was close. Jesus, reasoning according to this general hypothesis, had nothing to fear.

All that distinguished him from the Pharisees was that, according to him, the Christ had to *suffer, turn pale*, and even be put to death, *occidi*, before being raised to glory. All of this was in Daniel.

What is curious is that for more than three hundred years, the Church has been busy getting rid of primitive Christianity, and all the gnoses it gave birth to:

Millennialism;
Communism;
End of the world;
Coming and general resurrection, etc., etc.

RELIGION OF THE IDEAL. — Sometimes one would believe that by this word M. Renan means the religion of pure right; but we are soon undeceived. He has little faith in Justice, in reforms, in political action; he likes to withdraw into himself, to live from his ideal, solitary, to disdain, etc.

Idealism, fundamentally, is egoism;
The religion of the ideal is also only Egoism.
Here is the progress of this ideal:

First, man believes in higher powers, which he seeks to make favorable. This belief is an idealism.

He offers them sacrifices, perfumes, all the *best* he has and what he judges most capable of testifying to his devotion, and of honoring the gods.

Another idealism.

Later he said: God does not eat... What shall I give him?

Genuflections, unemployment, music, songs, prayers; he will fast, macerate, etc. There are some who kill themselves for their idol.

Or else, he wants to unite with God, and eats him! Eucharist = Idealism.

Others, finally, refining further, eliminate the rite, sacraments, masses, songs, prayers, communions; uniting oneself in thought intimately with God; detaching oneself from society, esteeming nothing, neither business, nor power, nor wealth, nor opinion. It is a transcendental and disguised selfishness. A devotee of this type like Madame Guyon, Saint Thérèse, is like a *lover*, for whom the possession of the loved object takes the place of everything, who would like to be in secret, hidden, with him alone, who is ready, in order to follow him, to abandon everything, labor, study, family, friends, duties, etc.

In this high union with God, in this absolute egoism, we come to regard all things as indifferent, so much that sin itself seems indifferent, one of the necessities of the body, one of the inconveniences of matter. Drinking, eating, giving in to sleep, are indifferent things; likewise committing adultery, consuming the goods of others, etc., all is indifferent.

Thus Jesus, according to Renan, ate, in turn, at Peter's, Lazare's, Simon's or elsewhere. He didn't pay attention to it. He sends his disciples to Jerusalem to prepare the Passover for him without money.

Religious idealism and absolute egoism in him are therefore synonymous.

Last term of the Religion of the Ideal.

Once he has reached this egoism, the idealist, who no longer has either God or religion, creates an idol for himself, to which he sacrifices everything:

Homeland, family, friends, etc.

It will be his *system*, or his *idea*, or his ambition, his pleasure, his delight; he makes everything serve himself; he makes himself center and God.

Idealism is therefore the instrument of all seduction, the principle of all the mystifications and abominations of the earth. It is through it that we deceive men, that we *refine* them, that we exploit them, that we fool them, that we push them to crime (*Séide* in Mahomet), and that we make them drink their own infamy (all the lost girls and women).

A piece on *idealism*, as a conclusion to the life of Jesus, is therefore essential especially to refute Renan.