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that the will to believe helps to create the facts, a result which is unattainable without such belief. Hence we should approach the claims of religion with the will to believe.

It is quite true, as we know from our everyday experience, that faith in a fact does help to create the fact. By trusting in another man's good faith, we may beget that very virtue in him. By owning that we are responsible beings and acting accordingly, we become more conscientious. Thus faith in a fact helps to create the fact, but—only so far as the fact is dependent on our own personal action. James, by omitting this limitation, seems in his essay to imply that our faith in the unseen world without us does in some way create this unseen world. But the will to believe cannot create that which was in existence before the act of belief, and is, and will be in existence after it, whether we will to believe or no.

And yet in respect of this spiritual world, the will to believe can render invaluable service. It cannot create that world, but it can create evidence attesting the reality of that world, and day by day can contribute fresh evidence. Faith in God finds its own verification through the influence it exerts on life and character.

The practical results of a belief provide evidence by which its truth or falsehood may be tested. By

its fruits ye shall know of what character it is. Thus, though the will to believe cannot create truth that is independent of us, it can create evidence of truth that did not before exist. Hence St. Paul writes to his disciples, 'Ye are our epistles'—that is, epistles of the Lord—'known and read of all men.'

So we cannot halt between two opinions of vital importance. If the ever-accumulating evidence of Christian lives attests the reality of the spiritual world, then neutrality is impossible and wrong; for it amounts to a decision against the claims of Christ. There are thus no neutrals in this never-ending strife between Christ and the claims of the material life. Instinctively or deliberately, here, there, and everywhere, the consciences of men are enrolling themselves and cannot help enrolling themselves on this side or on that. It is the inevitable law of this struggle that not a single, solitary soul escapes this moral and spiritual conscription, and such is the greatness of this strife that the whole universe is divided into two camps—for Christ or against Him—and even the most distant stars fight, and must fight, in their courses against those that reject Him. 'He that is not with me is against me.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R. H. Charles, *The Adventure into the Unknown*, 272.

## God's Purpose as Revealed in Jesus Christ.

### A PRELIMINARY QUESTION.

BY THE REVEREND ALFRED E. GARVIE, D.D., PRINCIPAL OF NEW COLLEGE, LONDON.

THE criticism of Harnack's *What is Christianity?* in Loisy's *The Gospel and the Church* has not only the immediate historical interest of presenting the contrast between Protestant Liberalism and Roman Catholic Modernism; it raises a more general and permanent issue: Is the distance, in time and space, with all the differences which this distance may involve, so great that Christ's mode of apprehending reality, intellectually, morally, and religiously cannot be ours, and must we acquiesce in an evolution which leaves little, if any, resemblance between His Christianity and ours? Would we not be at home at all in the

presence of the historical Jesus? Would He Himself feel an exile among the best Christians of to-day? The dogmatic interpretation of the Scriptures erred in treating the Bible as a placeless and dateless communication of Divine truth; and we do not need to-day to be warned of, or guarded against, the errors and failures of that interpretation. Is not the danger of what claims to be the *historical* method that for it the temporal and local form hides a permanent and universal content which each age and each land can still apprehend? If we misrepresent Jesus in thinking Him as like ourselves, do we not also miss His meaning and

worth for us when we see only how unlike He is to ourselves? There is in some critical writings an *antiquarianism* that narrows the range of the thought and life of the past, and a *modernism* that mistakes some of the tendencies of to-day for the whole movement of the age. If Harnack erred in representing Jesus as a Liberal Protestant theologian of the nineteenth century, Loisy surely erred even more in thinking of Him only as a Jewish visionary and enthusiast. Granted that eschatologically Jesus did not think as the commentary of history on prophecy and apocalypse has taught us to think, did He think so differently from us ethically and theologically that we cannot find a common moral and religious standpoint from which we can understand His hope? I am confident that we can; and this essay is an attempt to understand what the mind of Jesus as regards future destiny can mean for us to-day.

### I.

We must *first of all* recognize the fact that the Apostolic Church was dominated by the expectation of the speedy Advent of Christ in power and glory. Had there been nothing in the teaching of Jesus to awaken that hope, it would be difficult to find an explanation of that fact, as the Christian community would not be likely to accept the Jewish Apocalyptic literature, and make Christ Himself the centre of expectation, unless He had given some warrant for such an outlook. But granted the warrant, it is easy to understand how under the influence of that literature the hope would develop in detailed expectations, not found in the teaching of Jesus, and then without any dishonest intent would affect the transmission of that teaching. It is very probable that the Evangelists have given greater definiteness to the eschatology of Jesus than it originally possessed.

*Secondly*, we must recognize that much of the terminology was traditional, derived from the prophetic and apocalyptic writings; and Jesus used it, not with prosaic literalness, but as the prophets and apocalypticists had used it, as figurative and symbolical. Surely, with the parables before us, we cannot assume that Jesus meant that what He said should be taken *verbatim et literatim*. It is moral and spiritual reality He is presenting under cover of all this imagery.

*Thirdly*, as to the prophets of old, there were present to His mind the immediate and the ultimate

future. He had the certain conviction that His rejection by the Jewish people meant, and could only mean, its doom. That He anticipated the destruction of Jerusalem as God's judgment is a conclusion which cannot be avoided. Surely His distress in death was partly at least due to this, that He knew that it involved such a disaster to the city, which He had striven to bring to penitence. It is to this He is surely referring when He limits the fulfilment of His predictions to this generation. As His rejection by the Jewish people involved this condemnation, the fulfilment of that judgment would be His vindication by God. Just as the prophets of old saw just behind the immediate future of God's judgment or deliverance the ultimate future of God's final fulfilment of His purpose, so would Jesus connect His manifestation in power and glory with that judgment on His foes. But He is not so confident of the second as of the first event in respect of time at least. It is surely to His Second Advent He is referring when He disclaims the knowledge He might have been expected to possess of that day and that hour. If the incarnation did involve a limitation of knowledge, if the consciousness of Jesus in regard to the future had the same characteristics as the consciousness of the prophets, it is in no way derogatory to His authority as moral and religious teacher to recognize that He set forth His hope of vindication and triumph in figurative, symbolic language, in poetry, and not prose, and that for Him as for the prophets of old, the action of God in human history was so certain and adequate that He did not realize the long and slow process in time between the immediate future which He so confidently dated, and the ultimate future of the time of which He so humbly confessed His ignorance.

*Fourthly*, there are parables of the Kingdom, e.g. the mustard-seed, the leaven, etc., which recognize the historical process, the activities of men which are involved in the fulfilment of the purpose of God. His teachings about God as Father, and man as child, of God's forgiveness and favour, and man's penitence and faith, of the better righteousness than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, of the greatest commandment of all, love shown in forgiving wrong, and ministering unto need even unto sacrifice, show that His outlook was wider than the eschatological school would have us believe. For it is not at all probable that the Christian Church, dominated as it was by the apocalyptic expectations,

added such religious and moral teaching. A moral and religious genius, to use the lowest term, is necessary to account for so harmonious a message; it cannot be explained by a composite authorship. This teaching is so congruous to the personality of Jesus as presented in the Gospels that thought and life confirm each other. Had the core of His message been a prediction which was not fulfilled, had that prediction not been quite a subordinate element, then undoubtedly He would have appeared as a visionary, and His authority in religion and morals would be by so much depreciated; but a sound literary and historical criticism does not justify such an assumption.

*Fifthly*, if this theological and ethical teaching is authentic, then the eschatological must be interpreted in the light of it. Even if He emphasized the activity of God in human history as we do not habitually, unless we have learned to think as He thought, He did not ignore that God's action is *conditioned*, limited, and delayed by man's. He summoned men to repentance and faith, and believed that God's grace was restrained by disobedience and unbelief. This consideration has force added to it, if we accept the theory, which I must regard as inadequate in view of all the data, that Jesus submitted to death in the hope that that death might accomplish what His life had failed to do, to bring about such a change in the attitude of men as would make the full coming of the Kingdom possible. He did not conceive of His second advent as merely a supernatural event brought about by the Divine omnipotence. For if, as we are entitled to assume, He believed that the Kingdom had come in promise and potency in Himself, and that the historical process by which it should fully come had already begun, He could not have thought of the consummation as in character incongruous with its commencement and its course. That Jesus thought of that consummation as God's act we cannot doubt; that He thought of it as an act unconditioned by man's actions we have no reason to believe; that His confidence in God's sufficiency on the one hand, and His inability on the other hand to realize how much man's sin and unbelief could hinder and delay God's action, led Him to anticipate a speedier consummation than the event has proved, is the best explanation we can offer of the, to our minds, seeming inconsistency of His faith in the present and His hope for the future of the one Kingdom.

## II.

These considerations, which a study of the New Testament without the modernist assumptions justifies, lead us to a conclusion from which our further discussion may make a start.

*Firstly*, Jesus was not so apocalyptic, supernaturalist, catastrophic in His outlook as the modernists make Him out to be; He was not so remote from the way in which a modern man may think. He was more theological and ethical in His teaching than the modernists allow; and here the modern man may find himself on common ground. What is there in the brief summary of the teaching of Jesus which has been given in a preceding paragraph, that we cannot accept to-day with a clear reason and a clean conscience? If a difference remains, is it altogether to the advantage of the modern man, and the depreciation of the truth and wisdom of Jesus?

*Secondly*, there is a difference between the outlook of Jesus and the assumption of modernism; and I am confident that the Christian Church must choose between them; and if it is to live, grow, and endure, it must prefer the truth and wisdom of Christ to much of the thought of to-day. While in the controversy between Harnack and Loisy, I find myself in more general agreement with the former, yet Loisy does emphasize an element in the teaching of Christ which Harnack virtually ignores. The preceding discussion has been directed mainly against Loisy's exaggeration of this apocalyptic element; now we must seek to correct the error of Harnack's neglect of it.

*Thirdly*, the danger of the modern mind is to think that Evolution is a substitute for Creation, that God's activity must be limited by Nature as it is known to science, and that there can be no action of God in and through nature, which is not so explicable; that the human process in history is self-enclosed, and self-sufficient; and that God is only a spectator of and not an actor in the world drama. The crude conceptions of a supernaturalism which gloried in the shame of making faith appear as unreasonable as could be, e.g. that miracles are contrary to Nature, a violation of natural laws, that God intervenes in, and interferes with, the course of Nature, we must certainly abandon. Nature is not alien to God, so that He shows Himself God by suspending its operations, and disregarding its laws; this is a prejudiced belief, and not a

reasonable faith. For faith God is in all, and through all; in the physical forces there is a finite exercise of His infinite will; in the natural laws there is a finite expression of His infinite wisdom. The uniformity of nature is a token of the constancy of His purpose, and His fidelity to His promises. We should be plunged into mental confusion, and physical disaster, if God acted as capriciously in Nature as this supernaturalism represented Him as doing. But on the other hand to ignore God's activity, to limit God by Nature and man, to lay all the stress on the human process in history, to rely on man's resources and to neglect the resources in God which faith can reach, to summon men to work out their salvation without giving them the encouragement that it is God that worketh in them, is to challenge all religion as an illusion and a deception.

*Fourthly*, over against all such tendencies stands Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of faith, who proves all that faith can do in making God real, active, potent, dominant in the life of man. God was so real to Him that He always and everywhere found God; in Nature and History the Heavenly Father had worked hitherto, and He was working with and as God. God can direct the course of human history because He can influence the thoughts and lives of men; if there were only more faith in God, more confidence in His sufficiency, more submission to His authority, God could and would do greater things for men by men. The historical process, in which His purpose is being fulfilled, could be speeded beyond men's brightest hopes if faith were more confident and courageous. As Jesus did not find in Himself those hindrances of faith which so abound in other men, He expected great things from God as He attempted great things for God; and He expected men to share both His hopes and efforts.

*Fifthly*, the attention which is being now given

to the teaching of Jesus regarding human duty is all to the good; but the promise this movement holds will be disappointed, if the fulfilment of human duty is regarded as itself sufficient, and the faith that relies on the resources of God is left out of account. There is no need to acquiesce, as many do, in the assumption that the process must be slow, since men move slowly in religion and morals. God can and will by His own Spirit speed the process, if only men are willing to suffer Him to be their sufficiency. It was not only that Christ had this confidence in what God could and would do; Paul, to whom to live was Christ, knew himself more than a conqueror, able to do all things through Him who strengthened Him. God's omnipotence will not, and in this moral and spiritual progress cannot override man's activities, since here men are and must be fellow-workers with God, and it is their development unto perfection which is the end. But the aspiration and the effort which are sustained by faith in God's will and power to fulfil His purpose in and with men will command more Divine resources, and cannot therefore measure the promise of the future by the possibilities of man alone. Two convictions the Christian mind to-day, if it is not to be misled by modernism, should learn from Christ. (i) There should be confidence in God's abounding resources, which man may claim according to the measure of his faith; and (ii) there should be confidence also that if only men can be brought to exercise faith, the fulfilment of God's purpose may be much speedier than now appears at all probable, and so the consummation, glorious and blessed, may lie, not in the dim and distant future, but nearer far than those dare to hope who reckon only with men, and leave out God. Faith can hasten, and unbelief can hinder the coming of the Kingdom, which, although in a human process, comes by the power of God's love, truth, and grace.

## Contributions and Comments.

### Christ's Resurrection as Evidence to Itself.

THE Resurrection of Jesus, as shown to us in the New Testament, whatever may be its ultimate

purpose, is, in the first place, a resurrection to life upon this earth. As such it may be compared or contrasted with other returns, real or supposed, of dead men to the world; we need not now concern ourselves with 'the resurrection at the last day' or