

A CHURCHMAN'S RETROSPECT.

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OF few men is as little known or has as much been written. To learn of him first-hand, as of any man passed away, we must go back to what was said of him by his contemporaries or near-contemporaries. The contemporaries of Jesus who have left us written words concerning him are Matthew and John (two of his associates) and Paul, Mark, and Luke (associates of many who knew him personally during his life). Near-contemporaries who have left us written words concerning Jesus are the historians of the succeeding generation Josephus and Tacitus; their mention of him is, however, very brief and adds nothing to our knowledge of him, serving merely to establish the existence of followers of Jesus.

The written words of his contemporaries reach us as the New Testament. Modern versions of the New Testament are based on Greek manuscripts, the oldest of which appeared about the close of the fourth century. Evidence of the existence of earlier similar manuscripts is, however, contained in versions of it in other languages, now extant, chiefly in the Syriac, Latin, and Coptic, dating as early as the second century; also in quotations from it by Origen and Cyprian in the second century and by Aphrahat in the fourth century. None of the New Testament writers were historians; Paul was a preacher, the others probably what might now be styled historical novelists.

The first of these writings to appear may have been Paul's letters to the churches or Matthew's gospel in the Aramaic language. That the first of Paul's letters appeared about 20 years after the death of Jesus is generally accepted. The case with Matthew's gospel in the Aramaic is, however, uncertain. What we have of Matthew's gospel is a composition in Greek of the gospel according to Matthew. Papias and Irenaeus, writing in the second century,

state that Matthew wrote in Hebrew. If by this is meant that Matthew wrote in Aramaic what we now have as his gospel, this writing may have appeared as early as 15 years after the death of Jesus. The Greek gospel according to Matthew it is not thought could have appeared earlier than about 30 years after the death of Jesus, at least 10 years after the first appearance of letters from Paul.

With regard to Paul's letters to the churches, they are essentially moral exhortations. They tell their readers practically nothing of the life of Jesus, but of the significance of that life they state that Jesus is their lord and the Christ; that he was crucified and buried and returned to life and appeared to many (including Paul) after his resurrection; and that he will come again to resume his leadership on earth. To the Greeks to whom Paul's first letters were addressed the word lord must have meant sovereign, commander, ruler, or governor. The word Christ must have meant one especially anointed to perform priestly duties. This is the human Jesus of Paul's. From the absence from Paul's writings of actual incidents in the life of Jesus, we infer that Paul did not know Jesus intimately. We first meet Paul as a persecutor of the followers of the crucified Jesus. Soon he joins these followers and his life ever afterwards is devoted to the preaching of the leadership of Jesus. His message is a stressing of the divinity of Jesus, and he makes no attempt to dwell on the humanity of Jesus. The opinion is expressed by some authorities that in order to make amends for this deficiency of Paul's did the other New Testament writings appear, and that thus their purpose may be understood as to support the teachings of Paul's. Be this as it may, it is difficult to conceive how the four writers of the gospels could have agreed so closely in their narratives of the life of Jesus unless the events described were essentially historically sound.

About 10 years after the appearance of the first of Paul's letters to the churches, as is generally believed, the first of the Greek gospels appeared. This was Mark's, probably written at Rome approximately 30 years after the death of Jesus. The last of the four gospels to be written was probably John's, believed to have been written at Ephesus possibly as late as 60 years after the death of Jesus. Two views prevail with regard to the dates at which the Greek Matthew's gospel and Luke's gospel were written. Some authorities believe that both of these gospels appeared in close contemporaneity with Mark's, others that they appeared as late as pos-

sibly 50 to 55 years after the death of Jesus, Luke's first, then Matthew's. Many of those who hold to the latter view are of the opinion that Luke and the Greek writer of Matthew's gospel used as guides in their composition the gospel according to Mark and also a writing now lost and which was not available to Mark, since both Matthew and Luke contain in common much material not appearing in Mark and also adhere rather closely to the Marcian narrative. That many others had written "narratives" on the same subject is indeed stated by Luke in the opening paragraph of his gospel. It is easy to imagine that the sayings of Jesus were put in writing if not during his lifetime yet shortly after his death and were handed down to those who later composed the "gospels" which have come down to us.

In this connection it may be well for us to consider the meaning of the word "gospel." In the opening sentence of Mark's work he states he is going to write the "gospel" of the Lord Jesus Christ. In beginning his work, Luke states that he is going to narrate things as they happened. Matthew and John launch into their narrative without indicating its purpose. "Gospel" is an Anglo-Saxon word which might probably be rendered into present-day English in the term "good news." A present-day literal translation of the Greek word used by Mark would probably be "good message," and liberally translated might be taken to mean something such as "gracious news" or "gracious message" or "happy thoughts." The imagination must of course be exercised to gain a conception of Mark's meaning in thus describing the book he was about to write. In any event, he started in to write Jesus' "gospel."

The disinclination to attribute historical accuracy to the gospels is based on contents which, written at this time, would be considered fictitious. By this, however, it can not be understood that the gospels are without historical value. The fact that of the numerous contemporaneous writings of the period none dispute the historical accuracy of the gospels, means, if nothing more, that it is not permissible for us, at this late date, to dispute their historical value. There is no recourse but to accept their statements. Even if the view is taken that the gospels are narratives of events in the life of Jesus shaded to substantiate the teachings of Paul's, the events are narrated there for us, and we must accept them if we would learn of Jesus. They are not disputed. They are cast in the Jewish and Greek religious phraseology of the times. Though we many find in them few contradictions and many accounts of

miracles, we can still read between the lines the faint traces of a simple, natural, and powerful life—a life that certainly could be lived today by one possessed of like courage. Surely it is not denied to us to disregard what we find it difficult to accept in the gospels if we would get back to what Jesus was and what he can still be for us. It cannot be denied to us to seek to lift him out of the maze of the supernatural into which the writers of the first century probably cast him, if we would bring him now to our side and place him now in our midst. It can not be denied to us to seek to recast the gospels in phraseology that may make an intelligible narrative for today; and this is something that it is certainly possible for any one to do by a careful, intelligent, liberal, and open-minded reading of the English version now extant. The historical facts may be picked out by any liberal-minded reader. The outstanding fact, and one which can not be disregarded, is that the events in the life of Jesus had a profound, irresistible, conquering religious meaning with his contemporaries. That they interpreted his life, then, in the religious views of the day, is entirely natural, and that they should write of his life in religious terminology was unavoidable with those upon whom he made the most profound impressions. Accordingly it is not denied to us to learn of the life of Jesus and interpret it in the religious views which we ourselves may possess; for he was confessedly a religious teacher. We long to get back to Jesus. Without a mouthpiece of God's we are lost and it is impossible to live. He who could enfold the lives of his fellows, and through them the lives of millions for centuries that have elapsed—has he not a message still for us?

He is one of a trinity worshipped in a religion that embraces one-third of the inhabitants of the earth; and, strange to say, many who have studied the record of his life carefully, adhere to the belief that he never purposed to found a new religion. Significant in this respect is his own statement that he did not come to set aside the religious tenets of his race but that he came to prove their validity. It is hardly possible that this statement could have been invented by the writers of the gospels, so staunch as they were in their devotion to the new religion that sprang up after his death. All his life he was a devout Hebrew. Yet it is admitted that he has exerted an influence upon the human race such as no other man has exerted. Is it not wonderful that his brief three years of activity—and an activity characterized by an astonishingly small degree of self-assertion—should have accomplished such results?

And this can only mean that he fills a need in the hearts of men that none other has so well filled. What is this need? It is the religious craving.

In this capacity he brings a message to every heart. There is not a mind, and never has been a mind, that has not its religious yearning, from the savage engrossed in his war-dance to the scientist in his laboratory. Religion is the contemplation of the supernatural in its relation to one's moral obligations. Where there is a natural there is a supernatural; where there is ambition there is a moral obligation. However one may scoff at his fellows for their faith in religious beliefs, he himself has his own peculiar beliefs on the same problems, be they no more than a surrender to a future without hope. The eternal question ever remains unanswered. The future can not be thrust behind us. There is a seen and an unseen; a heard and an unheard; a felt and an unfelt; a touched and an untouched; a known and an unknown; a natural and a supernatural; a now and a hereafter. It is the seen that we can shun, the unseen that we fear; it is the known that we can accept, the unknown that we believe; it is the now that is, the hereafter that is to be. The stone in my hand is as great a mystery as is my soul. I can not exist without either. In the stone I see perhaps molecules; in the molecules, atoms; in the atoms, nuclei; in the nuclei, what? Thus we see that the natural itself is inevitably wrapped up in the supernatural and can not be known except in terms of the unknown—in pictured superstitions. To deny the existence of this soul is but the soul seeking to deceive itself: but it can not be done. And thus it is that the unanswerable question arises to torment us until we silence it with a belief. It is these beliefs that are religion, and hedged in as they are with doubts, it is to our fellows that we turn for assurance. This is the rôle which Jesus assumed,—the bearer of the light. He spoke; we listened. Others before him had spoken: they had spoken of God, Jehovah, the Lord, the Creator; he spoke of the Father. They spoke of vengeance; he spoke of love. They spoke of punishment; he spoke of forgiveness. They spoke of retribution; he spoke of salvation. It was a new message. It was indeed a "gospel" that he brought, and a gospel which possessed the singular merit of surviving his few years and perpetuating itself in a church and a religion that is the greatest blessing with which man has endowed himself.

The first preacher of the new religion was Peter. The first one to establish it through tangible formalities was Peter. It is

Peter's conception of the words of Jesus which has been accepted by these millions of men and women who through the centuries have called themselves Christians. It is Peter who has resurrected Jesus from the dead and handed him over to us, a blessing. But with it all, it is Peter's Jesus that we have. The religion of Peter's served a purpose and served it well, as history shows, and it still has its purpose to serve. Do we not owe to it the perpetuation of the teachings of Jesus? Is it not the song that fell from our mother's lips as she sought to hold up before us a savior? Are there more fitting words in which she could have sung? But when the light has dawned, we long to get back to Jesus; we long to know him better, more truly, more simply, more implicitly.

Peter's first sermon, according to Luke, was preached shortly after the death of Jesus. It is true that the words of this sermon were put into Peter's mouth by Luke, the companion of Paul, and that they may thus in large measure be Luke's words instead of Peter's. That this is so, however, we are in no position to state positively. The probabilities are that the occasion narrated by Luke was historic and that the theme of the sermon was Peter's and the words Luke's. This much is quite certain,—that Luke received his religion from Paul and that Paul received his from the followers of the crucified Jesus, the leader of whom was Peter. The occasion of this first sermon of Peter's was the gatherings of people on the day of Pentecost. The followers of the crucified Jesus had met together, as indeed must probably have been their daily custom, bound to one another as they were by the ties of a common discipleship and the memories of one who had led them in a life of loving self-sacrifice for a period of probably three years. The cruel death to which their master had been subjected lingered as a burden in their mind. May it not have given rise to a feeling of vindictiveness within their hearts? Yet with it all we find them arriving at the conclusion that his death was a victory, not a defeat. Surely the spirit of their master did not forsake them, and instead of vengeance their lips breathed love. They took up the word that Jesus had dropped from the cross. It fired their souls. They could not keep silent. And in their enthusiasm, a crowd gathered. Here was the occasion for Peter. He would tell them what it all meant. The servant of God David, he declared, died and was buried; the servant of God Jesus, who, as you yourselves have seen, did mighty works in your midst, and whom you crucified, arose from the grave

and appeared to us after his death.* Their conscience pricked, the multitude cried, "What shall we do?" "Repent of your sins", he answered, "and be baptized in the name of Jesus the Christ." And Luke says that three thousand persons accepted the teachings of Peter.

Peter's answer to the question was the answer of the church that he on the occasion established. The same question had been put to Jesus, "What shall I do to be saved?" He answered, "Keep the law, divert your riches to the welfare of the poor, and go to the sick in heart and sick in body and help them, as I do." The answer of the church was to believe and submit to a formality; the answer of Jesus was to love. The one answer involves a belief in predetermined dogmas; the other involves action. The one answer is hedged in with doubts; the other is as simple as life itself. Clearly it is permissible for us who are in the church and have been so blessed by it, to dig beneath the dogmas, beautiful as they are, and without defacing them, and kneel with Jesus beside the sick and the criminal, and through him and him alone make contact with our God.

A manifest inclination to dig beneath the dogmas of the church and get back nearer to Jesus did not evince itself until the later years of the church's history. Not until the sixteenth century, under the leadership of Luther and Zwingli, followed by Calvin and Knox, was any appreciable reformation accomplished. For fifteen hundred years the church had enjoyed a steady and thrifty growth. This was a period of accretion, under which its influence extended until at one time it controlled the temporal power of the civilized world. There is perhaps no phenomenon in the history of civilization more striking than the progress of the Christian religion. Launched by Peter and John shortly after the death of Jesus, we see it spread through Palestine and thence into Syria, where at Antioch we find a community to which the name "Christians" was first applied. This was about thirty years after the death of Jesus. About the same time the first of the "gospels" was written. In the meantime Paul, a Roman citizen, first a persecutor of the followers of Jesus, had become converted to the new religion and had taken up the mes-

*It is possible here to make two deductions with reasonable certainty. First, at the time of this Pentecost the death of Jesus was of too recent a date to permit Peter's statements on the occasion to pass undisputed in the event that they were not the truth; second, that the religion launched by Peter on the occasion was the theme that permeated the "gospels" written 20 years or more thereafter.

sage of Peter and John and started with it beyond the seas, and had set up Christian churches in Greece. Under his marvelous leadership and a life of self-sacrifice not excelled by the disciples themselves, the seat of authority began to shift from Jerusalem to Rome. The community of interests could not remain unorganized, and the offices of elders, deacons, and bishops were established. At the end of the third century almost half of the inhabitants of the Roman Empire, and several neighboring countries, professed the religion. In the fourth century it was adopted as the official religion of the Roman Empire, its one-time persecutor. Soon we see it take up the reins of temporal government that had fallen with the death of the Empire. We see it conserve within its hands the remnants of a civilization about the overrun with barbarianism. We see it gather into its folds these barbarians that would plunder it—not gathering them in by force, but by moral suasion. To accomplish this end it was entirely natural that it should cater to the barbarian instincts and woo them with mysteries and magic. It is quite natural that it should seek to hold within its sway these children of the human race through a mystified priesthood and a mystified Christ. And that it accomplished its ends can only mean that the gospel given to man by the crucified Christ, and which it preached though perhaps not in the words of Jesus but in the words of its hearers, is able to still the troubled heart, quench the murderous lust, and answer the doubt.

In the fifteenth century, however, signs of unrest began to appear. The gospel of Jesus which Peter, John, Paul, and the Evangelists preached had been monopolized by a church. In the hands of this church the gospel had become the predominant power in the world. Access to the gospel could be had only through the church. As long as the church exercised intellectual supremacy the words of Jesus could be framed so as to support the church's interests. It is significant that the Reformation followed closely the Italian Renaissance. Though abuses of the church, like the sale of indulgences, were the pretext of the Reformation, its underlying cause was the failure of the church to provide the moral food which would satisfy the yearnings of an intellect of rapidly widening horizon. It is but natural that the words of Jesus, which could give birth to such a church, should hold together its dissatisfied elements in its days of reformation. The reforming step was therefore no more than a step back to Jesus. All that was needed was that the reformers should discard the artificial authority,

dogma, and ceremony, and stand closer to the light that had first pierced the shadows of the spiritual eye. The process was a slow and a gradual one. Reformation followed reformation, quietly seizing hold on the Church of Rome itself. And the process is still going on. Still the church, whatever its form, does not answer the direst need of the human soul except the church casts aside for a moment its outward manifestation and opens to the struggling conscience the words of the one who gave it birth. It is the words of Jesus that can save, not the sanctuary. Perhaps it was not to be until the eighteenth century had come that, under the radical reforms of the Wesleys, it was possible for the church temerously to sanction a thing so bold as the unbearing in the streets of the words of their master. This, we see, was the accomplishment of Whitefield. The huge task was completed; the rock was shattered; the cloud was rolled away; the thunder ceased. And from the storm that had been smouldering for three long centuries was heard the still, low voice "Come to Jesus." "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden light."

But still the church did not satisfy that craving or nourish that hope which burn in the heart of even the most forsaken of mankind. William Booth came, and saw sin and suffering on one hand and a church on the other, and an impassable gulf between the two. Who was to speak to these hungry souls? Jesus? How could he speak to them?—through the church? Booth tried it; but the church revolted and cast Booth out. That the Methodist Church, which had been so bolstered up by the preaching of Whitefield should, a century afterwards, have rebuked the Whitfieldian tactics of Booth, is hardly to be wondered at when it is recalled that Calvin, Knox, and Luther themselves could not brook reformation of the churches which they had established out of a reformed Church of Rome. Perhaps the fault is inevitable in any institution founded by man. Perhaps it is a fault which the church can not escape if it would retain its organization. And not until some brave soul comes with courage enough to break away from the organization so as to follow simply Jesus is the light brought by this Nazarene uncovered to the world. This step of Booth's, then, was but another return to Jesus. It is interesting to consider what amount of dogma and ceremony has been cast aside from the

days of the height of the Roman church to the days when William Booth, four centuries later, cast off the cloak of Methodistic forms and, penniless and without second other than his frail wife already burdened with the cares of motherhood, lifted his voice, in the face of buffets and ridicule, in the slums of London. It is easy to imagine that Booth's tactics were probably the tactics of Peter when, on the day of Pentecost, a crowd of the curious drew together at the clamor of the disciple's vociferously expressed loyalty to his dead master, and Peter addressed them. Now enter the drum and the tambourine into the Christian liturgy; but still is it not the same tactics as we may imagine Peter's was? There is a difference to be noted, however, in the messages the two bore. Peter's message was the divinity of Jesus, and it carried with it the threat that if this was not acknowledged destruction would follow. Booth's message was the ability of Jesus to rescue from destruction: Jesus can save, he can save, he can save; if he can save, that is all that is necessary; any question of divinity may be discussed later, if desired. Who was Jesus? Nobody knew, except that he could save. How do you know he can save? Come and see. Easy enough. A trial costs nothing. The step is a simple one. Follow me, and see if he can not save. We can almost throw ourselves back into that day when, on the last trip of Jesus to Jerusalem, somewhere on the road between Capernaum and Jericho, there elbowed his way through the throng that surrounded the teacher, a rich young man. Booth was there also. We can imagine him perhaps as close up to the teacher as he could possibly get, much closer perhaps than dogmatic Peter. He stoops over to catch each word that falls from the teacher's lips. "What shall I do to be saved?" cries this rich young man. Ah, that is the question which torments the soul of the rich and the poor, the mighty and the lowly, the pure and the corrupt; it is the first question to confront the stumbling youth, the last to haunt the drifting senses when the pulse of life is slowly ebbing away. O, what will the answer be? Follow me. Like a jewel fallen from heaven it is snatched up by Booth and trumpeted back to the gathered hosts. He catches up the step himself, casting aside all hope of riches that might embarrass him and receiving without resentment the jibes and jeers and buffets which he encounters, and follows this teacher. Slowly the throng gathers about Booth. The procession moves. It is true it may not proceed with mathematical precision, but the line of march is diligently adhered to whithersoever it may lead. Though none may equal nor all ap-

proximate the grace of the leader, yet his command is accepted and cherished.

The success of this reversion of Booth's is attested by its results. The success was immediate and it is enduring. Like the revolting touching by Jesus of the lepers in Palestine, it came into contact with the practical in the establishment of rescue missions and a cost-service eating-house. The steps taken by both were innovations, nor was either an easy step to take except under the inspiration of the love that it was the confessed mission of Jesus to establish upon earth. The step was a bold one. Is it not the implicit adoption of the instructions of Jesus, "Follow me?" Are we thus not led closer to the Nazarene?

In a brief review of the story of Christianity one of the features brought out in perhaps unwelcome prominence is the biting and snarling that has gone on among its devotees themselves. Beneath this blot, however, there lies an ocean of benediction the depth of which it is hard for the world to comprehend. Conflicting interests are bound to arise. Settlement of the conflicts lies only in a return to the side of the leader. One lesson we must learn: that Jesus is the one who has brought us nearest to God; that to follow him there must be an organization; that whatever form this organization may assume, be it that perpetuated from the church at Rome established centuries ago, or that established by Luther or Knox or Calvin or Wesley or Booth or any other soldier of the cross, it is but a necessary though fallible means of getting nearer to God through Jesus; but that until we close our eyes to the faults of the churches and ourselves get back to Jesus, we are far adrift.

Like driftwood on the sea, from the unknown I come, by fate am tossed about, and into the midnight vanish. Lost? Drifting aimlessly? Food to the elements? And is this superb sight with which I am endowed in the end to be swallowed up in darkness? The visions I paint, are they to be but ruthlessly blotted out? With all my toil, shall I not conquer? Is there no victory? Is death defeat? My epitaph, "Forgotten"? Amidst the shadows of hopelessness I raise my head and through the mists dimly see the outlines of an outstretched hand; hear a voice, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

There are some things in the Gospel narratives of the life of Jesus so individualistic that they stamp upon the story there narrated the mark of indisputable genuineness. One of these is

this sentence just quoted. Though I can imagine Jesus saying these words, I can not imagine the evangelist John fictitiously putting them into his mouth. The idea they contain is unique in all history. I can imagine Moses giving the law, and Mohammed the sword, and Solomon and Confucius their maxims, but Jesus alone can I imagine who would dare to make the assertion we have quoted,—not Moses, nor Elijah, not Solomon, nor David, nor Confucius, nor Buddha, nor Mohammed, nor Plato, nor Socrates, nor Paul, nor John; nor can I imagine the last named, who quotes Jesus thus, nor any other man but Jesus himself, to have conceived even the thought conveyed by these words so individualistic, so all-embracing, so revolutionary, so daring, so strange, so simple, so beautiful. They without hesitation lift the clouds of doubt and misgiving, and of death itself. They pierce the heart to its core and thrill the hopes with a joy that no other words that can be compounded can convey. They lift the struggling soul and lay it in the very bosom of its God. And this is what Jesus says he is to me.

Can he be all this? To answer this we must indeed get back to him—get back to him through the maze of possible superstition with which the Gospelists and Paul in their enthusiasm and enthralldom hedge him in.

In this brief sentence of Jesus' all queries end. It is the conclusion of the whole matter. It embraces all theology, and indeed all philosophy. It prescribes religion. It came near the end of his career, and at the mental crisis of his life. It is the final outburst of his soul in his contact with his disciples. It is his final gift. It is his all.

The feast of the passover was at hand; but on the heart of Jesus lay the burden of humanity. He had preached his word, but on one hand he had been answered with hatred. Undaunted he had rebuked the very seat of authority among his people. Guiltless, they condemned him to death. He and his disciples were celebrating this feast of the passover. He must, however, soon leave them. He alone knew this. "I shall be with you only a little while longer", he breaks the word to them. Peter asks him where he is going. Peter would know in due course of time; indeed, he would follow him to the same place. He was going home. "There are many abodes in my father's house; and I am going first in order to prepare the way for you. You, however, already know the way home."

But Thomas was unconvinced. The veil of doubt still hung

before his eyes. "But we do not know this", he countered. "All is darkness. We can not see this home that you say you are going to. We are here today, but tomorrow are like the chaff and are lost in the wind. We know nothing real about this heavenly home. How then can we be expected to know of and to follow any way that will lead to such a place. All is darkness, all is hatred, all is death. No, we do not know the way."

And had Jesus suffered with and taught them these many years, and now, in almost his last moments, were the tangled meshes of infidelity still to be untied? He could make but one more effort. The secret in all its boldness must be declared. The way to salvation must be made plain. "I am the way; there is no fiction, for I am the truth; there is no death, for I am the life. There is no way to salvation except by following me. You may philosophize as you will, but in me and in me alone is truth. And unless you believe what I say you are doomed to death. No one cometh unto the Father, but by me."

The challenge is indeed a bold one. We must either accept it or reject it. Jesus was either a charlatan or what he said he was (twenty centuries have not proved that he was a charlatan). But we can accept or reject his challenge only when we familiarize ourselves with the subject of the sentence he uttered, namely the "I." The truth of his words hinges on the "I." Who was Jesus? His disciples certainly knew him well. They accepted his divinity. Indeed, in these words Jesus declares himself to be all that divinity can be in a human being. We must bear in mind that he was human, that he was a historical personage; at least it is from such angle that we are considering him here; it is of Jesus the man that we speak. Yet we find him declaring himself to be divine (as divine, mark you, as a human can be). Our acceptance of him as this human divine depends, as we have said, on what he was. "I am the way." "There is no other way but *me*." "I am the truth." "I am the life." "There is no truth except what *I* give you." "There is no life except as you receive it from *me*." Who is this "*I*"? That he was a historical personage may be debated, but to deny his historicity seems in the end to be but a subterfuge,—but a weak prevarication. His historical character is preserved only in the four Gospels and in the testimony in Paul's letters to churches. To these we must turn if we would know this "*I*." Other recourse have we none. No sweeter story is handed down by history than the life of Jesus. He shines like a new star suddenly cast upon

the canopy of night. It is not strange, then, that this embodiment of love and of all that is good and wise should be transfigured to conform to the religious tenets of his disciples. Yet he is not alone their Jesus. He is not alone the property of the Christian church: that church was founded after his death. He is not alone the property of the Roman church, nor of the Protestant church, nor of any of the other many manifestations of Christianity. He is the property of all who will learn of him and follow him, whether in secret or in public. He is the property of the sinner, the blasphemer, the wreck, of the churchgoer and of the non-churchgoer. He is the property of humanity. Nor is it strange that even with us it should all taste of the supernatural. It is not strange that we can behold this living reality only as a mystery. The real mystery, however, is that the way is so mysteriously simple and the truth so mysteriously plain. In the words of his judges, "No man has ever spoken as he speaks." And the same is true today.

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or athirst, and gave the drink? And when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? And when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethern, even these least, you did it unto me."