

" A CRITICAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE  
PHILOSOPHICAL, ECCLESIASTICAL, AND  
OTHER INFLUENCES ON ERNEST RENAN'S  
"VIE DE JÉSUS".

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by

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## CHAPTER I.

### Introductory.

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The year 1860 marked an important point in the career of Ernest Renan. He was commissioned by the Imperial Government of France to proceed to Syria and undertake an expedition in search of ancient Phoenician monuments, sites and inscriptions. This welcome opportunity of sojourning in a country whose inhabitants, languages, customs, and traditions had become a subject of absorbing interest to him, Renan owed to his friend Prince Napoleon, and in a yet larger measure to a woman of remarkable ability, Madame Hortense Cornu, whose mother had belonged to the household of the Emperor, and whose secret and beneficial influence was to be found in many of the liberal and intelligent measures that characterised the second half of the Empire. (Renan's "Feuilles détachées" - essay on Madame Hortense Cornu, pp.302-321). The mission on which Renan was despatched to the East was probably one of the most notable scientific expeditions ever undertaken at the national cost, for it was destined to leave its mark in the history of science and ideas, not only through its direct results, for the archaeological harvest which Renan gathered on this ground which had seemed exhausted by numerous wars and revolutions was indeed rich, but also and chiefly through two great productions which resulted from it, namely, "The History of the Origins of Christianity", and the "Corpus Inscriptio-  
num Semiticarum".

The conduct of the expedition was undoubtedly a task exactly suited to the taste of the young member of the "Académie des Inscriptions", already distinguished for his prize essays on philological subjects. As early as 1857 he had read before the Academy a Mémoire on "The Origin and character of the Phoenician History that bears the name of/

of Sanchoniathon", and in a note near the end of it he had expressed the hope that excavations might be made at Byblos to discover the record of Phoenician cosmogony on sacred steles which he was convinced must be there.

Though but youthful in years, Renan stood in the front rank amongst the rising generation of French writers on matters of criticism, and was recognised as one of the leading Orientalists of France. Indeed, by dint of arduous toil and unremitting study he had already acquired a reputation throughout Europe as a man of letters and as an authoritative writer on Semitic languages and Eastern archaeology, and his distinguished scholarship led afterwards to his obtaining the Chair of Hebrew at the Collège de France. The subjects of his Oriental publications are very varied and indicate a far-reaching study of the development of the human mind. He made his first appearance in the domain of history in a work which constitutes a most interesting discussion, the "Histoire Générale des Langues Sémitiques" (1855), a study in comparative psychology, an attempt to delineate the characteristics of the Semitic race, and a witness to his marvellous industry and aptitude in the field of research, which the late Prof. R. Flint in his great book on the "History of the Philosophy of History" has characterised as "the best of all Renan's writings". It established his fame as a philologist, and threw over all his literary works of a religious character a certain halo.

On the Arabs likewise Renan wrote much which carries great weight. His exhaustive monograph on Averroës ("Averroës et l'Averroïsme", 1852), which gained for him the "Doctorat ès Lettres", and gave him  
a/

a place among the most erudite of European scholars, is a complete guide to one of the most complex byways of philological history. It contains an admirable history of the introduction of Greek philosophy into the west by the Arabs. Renan was attracted to this 12th century sage as a philosopher who, to a partial reproduction of Aristotle and his commentators, based on Arabic versions of Syriac translations from the Greek, added doctrines of his own and founded a school of advanced thought, which for several centuries exerted a great influence on European speculation. Strange phenomena and phases of thought had always an attraction for Renan, whose intellectual inquisitiveness was unbounded, and his volume on Averroës is full of curious information regarding the philosophical and other sects of medieval Mohammedanism and the interaction of Averroism and scholasticism. One of his biographers truly remarks that "the range of erudition and the knowledge of the history of philosophy displayed by Renan are enormous, and he treats the abstrusest questions with an ease and animation which make the book instructive and interesting to students of the arcana of thought, and, it must be admitted, to them alone".

Two such books as the "Averroës" and the "Histoire des Langues Sémitiques", backed up by the poetic and scholarly translations of the Book of Job, of Ecclesiastes, and of the Song of Songs, with their accompanying essays, also by a number of able essays in the Revue des Deux Mondes, afterwards collected in book form and published in the "Études d'Histoire Religieuse" and the "Essais de/

*de Morale et de Critique*" - all issued before the appearance of the "Vie de Jésus," and probably of more account than it from the point of view of scholarship, and certainly not inferior to it in literary workmanship - had made Renan by the year 1860 one of the most distinguished scholars of his country, and sure of an audience not only among experts, but among cultured readers throughout Europe. No other man could lay claim to an erudition at once so universal and so precise as his. No branch of human knowledge was alien to him. One of the most opulent natures that have adorned modern literature, he took captive his readers by the breadth of his learning and the abundance of his ideas, no less than by the magic of his style. A philologist - he was that first and foremost - a historian, a theologian, a philosopher, a publicist, he appealed to thoughtful men of every variety of intellectual character. It is evident therefore that he was well qualified for the conduct of the important expedition to which he was commissioned by the French Government.

Renan's devoted sister, Henriette, acting as his manager, secretary, and beloved confidante, accompanied him on that mission to Phoenicia which was to be one of the leading episodes of his life. During the greater part of a year he was engaged in excavations and travels. Assisted by soldiers of the army of occupation, and having a naval steamer at his disposal for coastal trips, he plunged heart, mind, and strength into his task. He was the earliest Syrian excavator on a large scale. From November 26th. 1860 to February 9th. 1861 he was at Byblus, then /

then at Tyre, Sidon, Tortosa, and other places on the coast, making excursions into the Lebanon mountains, and spending days in the desert under a tent. He was frequently eight or ten hours in the saddle at a time, undergoing all sorts of fatigues and hardships without complaint. His interest in what he saw eclipsed all sense of discomfort. From morning to night he was busy travelling, planning, supervising. Four campaigns were inaugurated under his eye, and then continued by assistants. All kinds of negotiations had to be undertaken both with officials and with the populace, schemes of work had to be laid out, unearthed objects had to be viewed and classified, larger monuments carefully studied and measured, and reports prepared. Henriette writes that both she and her brother had unusual health and strength, and indeed for this task they needed all the physical vigour with which they were endowed. She accompanied him on most of his expeditions, bearing hardships and privations beyond the endurance of most women, taking charge also of the accounts, copying and arranging the records, and relieving her brother of all material cares. Lockroy, who made drawings for the expedition, reports that Renan was like a child in the hands of his sister, who looked after him incessantly, laid down the law to him, and occasionally scolded him.

Meantime there was another history than that of Phoenicia, and another classic ground than that of Hiram and Dido, which, through all these months, was exercising a strange fascination on/

on this worshipper of Science. The attraction proved too great to be resisted, and, unlike Napoleon, who is said to have replied on a similar occasion, "Jérusalem n'entre pas dans la ligne de mes opérations", Renan traversed with his devoted sister the whole of Palestine as far south as Hebron, and paid repeated visits to the most alluring and classic ground of all, Galilee. The scientific mission of exploration led him to reside for some time on the borders of Galilee, and to travel frequently through almost every scene of our Lord's life on earth.

Like him

"Who on the Chilian strand  
Beheld the Iliad and the Odyssey  
Rise to the swelling of the voiceful sea",

So did our author, as he informs us, while he mused by the lake of Gennesareth, see rising from its waters and its shores the form of his Galilean idyll, - his "fifth Gospel", as he calls it. But we will let him tell this in his own words:- "All that history, which, while I was at a distance seemed always to float in some unreal cloud-land, assumed a body and a solidity which astonished me. The striking agreement of the texts and the places, the marvellous harmony of the evangelical idea, and of the country which served it as a frame-work, were to me a revelation. Before my eyes I had a fifth Gospel, disfigured, though still legible, and from that time, in the narratives of Matthew and Mark, I saw instead of an abstract being, who could be said never to have existed, an admirable human figure, living and moving. During the summer, having to go up to Ghazir, in Lebanon/

Lebanon, to take a little repose, I fixed, in rapid sketches, the picture as it appeared to me, and from them resulted this history.... In reading the Gospel in Galilee, the personality of this great founder had forcibly appeared to me. In the profoundest repose that it is possible to conceive, I wrote a life of Jesus, which at Ghazir I brought down to the last journey of Jesus to Jerusalem. Delicious hours, too soon vanished; may eternity bring you again." (Introduction to "Vie de Jésus", E.T., pp. liii., liv.). These words at once explain and sum up the human charm and the scientific originality of the "Vie de Jésus." They indicate a profound and penetrating feeling of the human personality of Jesus. Renan's scientific predecessors (not of course his purely orthodox ones) had made the life of Jesus either an amalgam of arid rationalism and attenuated mythology, which satisfied neither reason nor faith nor history, or a creation of imagination and logic, due entirely to the mind of the believer, to his expectations and prior beliefs. Renan, however, drew nearer to the human Christ than anyone had done, for he was the first writer who brought Him back within the limits of historic humanity.

"This explains to us the whole character of the book," writes Theodore Christlieb. "On a well-drawn background of Syrian landscapes, Renan sketches the picture of Christ, not in philosophical abstractions, but with the fresh colours of life; not floating in mythical mists, but with sharply defined features. Unlike the figure drawn by Strauss, which is constantly shrinking under the monotonous action of the critical dissecting knife, till at/

at last the operator complains that of few men do we know so little as of Christ; - unlike this, here we see flesh and blood, life and development. Indeed, there is a certain warmth of feeling for the beauties of the King who yet he seeks to dethrone." (Christlieb's "Modern Doubt and Christian Belief", pp. 426, 427).

So the plan was formed and the work was begun of fixing the impressions of that summer spent in the immediate vicinity of Galilee, in the shape of an extended biography of Him whose footsteps lent to Galilee all its fascination - the effulgence of whose presence still lighted up to Renan's imagination the dreariest rocks and the most melancholy wastes of Judea.

The first sketch of his work, traced amid the scenes of the gospel history, was concluded under the very shadow of death. By June 1st the party was back in Beirut. The mission of exploration was ended by the withdrawal of the French troops. The essential work was finished; what remained was to close up the affairs of the expedition, group results, ship home tons of antiquities, and visit some of the high parts of Lebanon, where relief could be obtained from the deadly heat of the plains. A new campaign of excavations in Cyprus was also in prospect for the ensuing Autumn. Meanwhile, during the month of July, spent at Ghazir, Renan had started eagerly to work on his projected book. Writing to Marcellin Berthelet, his bosom friend and confidant on September 12, he says, "I have employed my long days at Ghazir/

Ghazir in composing my Life of Jesus, as I conceived it in Galilee and in the land of Tyre. In a week it will be finished; I have only the story of his last two days left to write. I have succeeded in giving all this an organic continuity which is completely lacking in the Gospels. I truly believe that the reader will have before his eyes living beings, and not those lifeless phantoms of Jesus, Mary, Peter etc., which have passed into the state of abstractions and mere types. As in the vibration of sonorous discs, I have tried to give the stroke that arranges all the grains of sand in natural waves. Have I succeeded? You will judge. But I ask you not to say a word about it outside our little circle. This big piece in my portfolio makes up my whole force. The wind must not be taken out of it. It will come forth in its proper time. Now that it is done, I have come to care little for the Collège de France and all the world. If I am allowed to publish it (and I cannot be refused), that will be enough for me". ("Correspondance entre Renan et Berthelet")

Early in September the needs of the expedition called Renan away from Ghazir, which he and his sister left "not without tears". On the 15th. of the same month they went to Amschit, where he supervised the shipment of two large sarcophagi. In their little house at Amschit sister and brother both fell ill of malarial fever, and Renan awoke from a long interval of unconsciousness to find that Henriette was dead. "The pillar of fire that had so far gone before him" was extinguished for ever. This bereavement was the great sorrow/

sorrow of his life and a trial grievous indeed to bear, for Henriette had been to him a silent benefactor, a good genius of whom the world knew little, but of whom her brother knew much. From his very charming though brief biographical sketch, "Ma Soeur Henriette", originally written for a limited circle of friends, as well as from the volume of letters that passed between sister and brother ("Lettres Intimes"), published in English 1896), one can easily understand how deeply indebted the brother was to her tender and unselfish solicitude, to her unfailing love, and to her unswerving intellectual honesty.

She had accompanied him, as we have seen, everywhere, climbing to the highest summits of Lebanon, and traversing the Jordan deserts. She never hesitated before rough and wild tracks and dire privations. This expedition had become a sacred quest for her, as well as for her brother.

It had been at Henriette's instigation, indeed, that Renan began to write the "Vie de Jésus", over which brother and sister were in entire conformity of feeling and opinion.

That he had such a work in hand was apparently no secret. Taine, who saw much of him at Chalifé, says, "He read me a long piece of his Life of Jesus. He constructs this life delicately but arbitrarily; the documents are too much altered, too uncertain. For the period of Nazareth, he puts together all the gentle and agreeable ideas of Jesus, removes all the gloomy ones, and makes a charming mystical pastoral. Then in another chapter he gathers every/

every threat, every bitterness, and attaches these to the journey to Jerusalem. In vain Berthelot and I told him that this is putting a romance in place of a legend; that by a mixture of hypotheses, he spoils those parts that are certain; that the clerical party will triumph and pierce him in the weak spot. He will hear nothing, see nothing but his own idea, tells us that we are not artists, that a simple positive and dogmatic treatise would not reproduce the life that Jesus lived and must be made to live again, that he does not care if people howl etc. etc." (Taine, "Vie et Correspondance", vol. iii, p.245).

Commenced in conjunction with Henriette, and with but a New Testament and a Josephus for original documents, in the vales and dales of Lebanon, the "Vie de Jésus" was completed after her sad demise while Renan was still steeped in the wonder and tragedy of his Eastern travels. Its dedication, "though to English ears it may want the reserve in which, perhaps, we too much delight to shroud private grief," writes Richard Holt Hutton (Theological Essays p.293), "is too striking a guarantee of the earnest purpose of the book to be passed over by those who wish to reproduce honestly the sort of impression it is calculated to make, before they attempt to point out how its genius and insight seem to be in conflict with the ground principle which underlies and runs through it." It is one of the most tenderly beautiful and exquisitely phrased passages of its kind. Indeed, it is so charming a piece of paganism that one is tempted to insert it entire:-

entire:-

"To the pure soul

of

My Sister Henrietta,

who died at Byblus, 24th September 1861.

From the bosom of God, in which thou reposest, dost thou recall those long days at Ghazir, when, alone with thee, I wrote these pages, which were inspired by the places we had visited together? Sitting silently by my side, thou didst read each sheet and copy it as soon as written - the sea, the villages, the ravines, the mountains being meanwhile spread out at our feet. When the overpowering light had given place to the innumerable host of stars, thy delicate and subtle questions, thy discreet doubts, brought me back to the sublime object of our common thoughts. Thou saidst to me one day that thou wouldest love this book, because, first, it had been written in thy presence, and because, also, it was to thine heart. If at times thou didst fear for it the narrow opinions of frivolous men, thou felt always persuaded that truly religious souls would, in the end, take delight in it. While in the midst of these sweet meditations, Death struck us both with his wing; the sleep of fever overtook us at the same hour, and I awoke alone! Thou sleepest now in the land of Adonis, near the holy Byblus and the sacred waters where the women of the ancient mysteries come to mingle their tears. Reveal to me, O good genius! - to me whom thou lovedst - those/

those truths which conquer death, strip it of fear, and make it almost beloved."

Soon after his return from Syria, Renan was appointed to the chair in the Collège de France, then vacant, of Professor of the Hebrew, Chaldean, and Syriac Languages and Literature. His inaugural address on the "Part of the Semitic Peoples in the History of Civilisation," in which he spoke of Jesus as the reformer, regenerator, re-creator of Judaism, and the founder of "the eternal religion of humanity, the religion of the spirit, disengaged from everything sacerdotal, from all rites and observances," (p.23), alarmed the priests and the government, and a few days after its publication (Feb. 27, 1862) a decree suspended his functions. This was followed by an appeal to his colleagues, - ("La Chaire d'Hebreu au Collège de France, Explications à mes Collègues,") - presenting, with great beauty of expression and of spirit, his ideas of the way in which a teacher, appointed to address at once Christians and Jews, ought to speak of religion and of Christianity.

Although these papers were subsequent to the conception and composition of the "Vie de Jésus", still they may be regarded as containing the germs of the idea of Christianity, which that book implies. Particularly may this be said of the Chapter in the "Explication" (p.27) entitled, "That it is not irreligious to try to separate Religion from the Supernatural." In one place he says that, inasmuch as he treats his subject not as a theologian, but as a historian, he cannot recognise miracles. He lays it down as an "inflexible rule, base of all criticism, that an event designated/

designated as miraculous is necessarily legendary". "The supernatural", he continues, "has become a sort of original defect, of which one is ashamed; even the most religious want no more than a minimum of it; one seeks to make it play as small a part as possible; one hides it in the corners of the past". Finally, he says:- "Whether to be rejoiced in or regretted, the fact is, the supernatural is disappearing from the world. It no longer secures serious faith except in those Classes which are not up to their age. Must religion crumble under the tame blow? No, No! Religion is eternal. The day when it should disappear would see the drying up of the very heart of humanity. Religion is as eternal as poesy, as eternal as love; it will survive the destruction of all illusion, the death of the loved object. But what do I say? Its object also is eternal. Never will man content himself with a finite destiny; under one form or another always a cluster of beliefs expressing the transcendent value of life, and the participation of each one of us in the rights of a Son of God, will make part of the essential elements of humanity". (p.30.) In these minor works of Renan there can be seen, now and again, a predominance of sentiment over philosophy, not to say logic, which we shall also notice in his "*Vie de Jésus*". Whether the speculations in these treatises be true or false, they certainly give one an agreeable impression of the author's temper and spirit. How fine, for instance, is his statement of the neutrality required of a state/

state professor in religious matters! "It does not consist," he says, "in satisfying everybody (which could not be done without warping the scientific spirit), nor in passing silently over the points that might wound anyone's opinion (which would be to belittle everything): it consists in a propriety of tone, in a certain serious and sympathetic manner suitable to religious history, and above all in that highest homage which the truth claims, in that supremely religious act which is truthfulness." ("La Chaire d'Hébreu. Explication à mes Collègues". p.12)

It was at this stage that Renan conceived his monumental work on "Les Origines du Christianisme," the labour of well-nigh thirty years, in which he embodied his construction of the evolution of the Christian religion and theology. He had already touched, in his "Essais de Morale et de Critique," and in his "Études d'Histoire Religieuse" (first series), on many religious problems, and on questions of religious criticism and exegesis; but he was not disposed to confine himself to critical analysis. He desired to undertake some great synthetic work - to set himself to the task of historical reconstruction. The religious questions had always seemed to him the vital questions of history, and the questions which most needed the application of the two essential qualities of the historian, namely, critical acumen and that use of the imagination which resuscitates the men and civilisations of the past. It was upon Christianity, the greatest religious phenomenon of the world, that Renan turned the whole resources of his erudition, of his poetic insight, and artistic skill.

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He was afterwards to complete the work by adding to it, by way of introduction, his "Histoire du Peuple d'Israël." Meantime, of "Les Origines du Christianisme", the "Vie de Jésus" was intended to be the first volume, and as such it appeared in print on 23rd June, 1863. The other volumes of the series in their order of issue were:- "Les Apôtres" 1866, "Saint Paul" 1869, "L'Antichrist" 1873; "Les Evangiles et la seconde génération Chrétienne" 1877, "L'Eglise Chrétienne" 1880, "Marc Aurèle et la fin du monde antique" 1882, and "Index Générale" 1883.

The "Vie de Jésus" was therefore no mere brilliancy improvised. Beside the ordered mass of gathered knowledge lying behind it, there was also a large plan of which it was to be the vestibule, - a great epic on the rise and development of Christianity. For more than twenty years he laboured at the series, carrying it on to Marcus Aurelius, - a history of the nascent Church, unique of its kind, so shining and so well-proportioned, that the artist has been sometimes praised to the detriment of the historian.

With sure penetration Madame Darmesteter notes how "the strongest bent of his genius inclined him to consider the origin of things. He loved the delicate rooty fibres." Delicate handling, deep searching in the common soil, vigour and taste, and no fastidious conventions; but always determination to have a finished work, truth attested by simplicity: that was Renan's historian-conscience, and he took his own line masterfully. His profound acquaintance with the past, together with the magic gift which enabled him to clothe it with flesh and make it stand upon its feet, made/

made him an incomparable historian. This was his highest glory. In a century which was before all things a century of history, in which art and literature, religions and philosophies, were chiefly interesting as successive manifestations of human evolution, Renan had the supreme historic gift. In this he was a true representative of his time. And it may be said that he enlarged the domain of history by admitting into it the history of religions.

It was only after careful revision that the "Vie de Jésus" was given to the world. Considering the effusive emotion that not infrequently characterises the work, even in its final form, one may be permitted to express gratitude for the fact that Renan, according to his own statement, spent a year in modifying the exuberance of his first draft. In the "Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse" he writes in that connection, "I spent a year in toning down the style of the Vie de Jésus, as I thought that such a subject could not be treated too soberly or too simply. . And we know how fond the masses are of declamation. I have never accentuated my opinions in order to gain the ear of my readers. It is no fault of mine if, owing to the bad taste of the day, a slender voice has made itself heard athwart the darkness in which we dwell, as if reverberated by a thousand echoes".

The success of the "Vie de Jésus" was immediate, far-reaching, and extraordinary. The popularity of the most celebrated/

celebrated novels was, as Sainte Beuve remarks, surpassed by this volume. Goethe has said somewhere that "a book which should explain to us Christ as a man glorified by the pure divine charm which surrounded him, would exercise an unusual influence on Christianity". If the success of a volume were any criterion as to its intrinsic value, we might imagine that Renan had succeeded in solving this problem, and that Goethe's prophecy was fulfilled in him.

The "*Vie de Jésus*" took its place among European books as an event of the first magnitude. Indeed, it may be said to have taken the world by storm. Pfleiderer called it "a book of international importance". One of Renan's most discerning critics described it as "one of the events of the Century". In ecclesiastical, philosophical, academic, and literary circles it was a common topic of conversation. "It is heard", says Principal Tulloch in his lectures on Renan's "*Vie de Jésus*", delivered and published shortly after the issue of the work, "amidst all the excitements of political and military struggle; in the halls of Oxford, in the salons of Paris, in the Churches of Italy, in the Counting-houses of the Levant. Like its German predecessor, the "*Vie de Jésus*" marks the spring-tide of an advancing wave of thought inimical to Christianity." (Tulloch's "*Christ of the Gospels and the Christ of Modern Criticism*" pp.2,3.)

Five months after its publication, Renan informed his friend and biographer, Sir Mountstuart E. Grant Duff, that when the eleventh edition, then being issued, was disposed of, there would/

would be 66,000 copies in circulation, and that there were already two German, two Dutch, and one Italian translations of it. An English translation also appeared in the year of the publication of the original edition. By the year 1895 it was credibly reported that half a million copies of the book had been circulated in one way or another. Prosper Mérimée, the well-known French novelist and historian told his "Inconnue" that Renan had made over £4000 by his "idyll". No such success had ever as yet issued from the printing presses of the century. But that was only a symptom of the universal interest in it. Its wide sale could not be regarded as anything else than the proof of a conscious void in the literature of unbelief which had hitherto craved in vain to be supplied.. Every past demonstration of the merely human origin of Christianity had evidently failed. "There had been a time", as Moncure Conway has pointed out, "when the religious heart loved to dwell on the sweet humanities of Jesus". In the seventeenth century the poet, Thomas Dekker, wrote:

"The best of men

That e'er wore earth about him was a sufferer;  
A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit,  
The first true gentleman that ever breathed".

And such remembrance of Jesus, in his life among the people, his friendships, smiles, and tears, are found in the sermons of Tillotson, South, and Jeremy Taylor. But the descended God gradually consumed the humanity. In the last century it became a heresy to consider Jesus as a man. The man was crucified on a cross of dogmas; he lay dead and buried under a stony theology, until/

until Renan rolled away the stone, raised him to life, clothed him with flesh and blood, invested him with beauty, and said once more, Behold the man! Hence this new rendering of the life of the Founder of Christianity which would solve the problem without doing damage to the popular faith, was eagerly hailed, and soon made the round of the world.

Joseph Joubert has observed that "the authors who have most influence are merely those who express perfectly what other men are thinking; who reveal in people's minds ideas or sentiments which were tending to the birth". These words admirably indicate the chief cause of Renan's immense popularity. His spiritual history was the spiritual history of very many writ large. He used his incomparable literary skill to interpret the mind of his generation to itself.

The wide circulation and immense popularity of the "Vie de Jesus" on the Continent were not only due to its destructive tendencies, but also to the fact that Renan presented a clear and definite conception of the person of Jesus to thousands of readers in France and Germany who were probably very imperfectly acquainted with the inimitable truth and beauty of the Gospels. It is not so much to the matter as to the manner that we must look for an explanation of the flutter of excitement which the volume occasioned. The mode of its presentation had an originality, an individuality, a freshness and charm about it which no work of its class had ever before displayed. It was something quite apart from the Volneys and Voltaires, the Strausses and Baurs. Nearly a generation had gone/

gone since the heavy stone called Strauss's Life of Jesus fell into the sea of public thought, and made a ripple which had not ceased at the time of the issue of Renan's volume. Strauss's "Leben Jesu" was indeed a stone, and not the bread which the hearts of men oppressed with superstition and ceremony, and grown cold with living on words and forms, craved for their true life. They wanted a pure and lucid life, free from pedantic encumbrance, as well as from traditional prejudice. They wanted the timbre but not the tune of philosophy and theology. Above all, they wanted scene and atmosphere, a living story, the portrait of the hero, his deeds and words and character. And that was what Renan gave twenty-five years later, in 1863. A thorough Frenchman, he understood the "taste" of his countrymen, their insistence on lucidity, their impatience with the master who elaborates all he has to say. In the "Vie de Jésus" there was to be found, combined with the freedom of the Straussian criticism, the saving grace of an intense regard and reverence for the Christ as a real man, and not a mere name for a nucleus of abstract truth in a nebula of myth. Men felt that cold-bloodedness was the word to be applied to Strauss's treatment of this theme. A certain instinct told them, not merely that it was not sentimental enough, but that it was not even thoroughly philosophical, that is, inspired with the love of divine wisdom. Renan says in his Introduction to the "Vie de Jésus", that he had been tempted in the same direction; but "I learned", he says, "that history is not a mere play of abstractions, that in it men are more than doctrines". In other words, he learned that biography is the life and soul of history./

history. Here, then in the "Vie de Jésus", there is something positive and palpable,- there is the very life-blood of humanity. That was what made Renan's book so attractive to the people, yet so alarming to sacerdotalism. Renan wrote a book which was neither theology nor archaeology, but human history, a book which could be "understood of the people". Therein lay the significance and importance of the "Vie de Jésus". A deep and abstruse production for the select few would have had its brief day, and would then have passed into the limbo of oblivion, unnoticed and unchallenged; but a fifth gospel, as accessible in language and style as the other canonical four of sacred writ, seemed to herald a new Reformation. Moreover Renan's own experiences in the East gave an extraordinary vividness to his pictures of ancient times. "You could not believe", he himself wrote to his friend Berthelot, "how many things in the past are explained when one has seen all this". A new sentiment enveloped biblical scenes and personages. With his "La Génie du Christianisme", Chateaubriand had swept the great mass of half-indifferent readers into orthodoxy; but by this time his direct influence was spent, and this same mass was aroused and moved with a totally different result by the "Vie de Jésus".

The book was symptomatic; it was the first volume of a series that increased in wisdom as it grew in number, recognising throughout this truth - that Christianity was to be explained not through abstract principles, tendencies, differences, conciliations, but through its most creative Personality. And it was prophetic, for/

for in its train came a succession of remarkable works; two of these were contributions as characteristic of Germany and England as the "Vie de Jésus" was of France. The English work was "Ecce Homo." The German work was the new "Leben Jesu" (*Das Leben Jesu für das Deutsche Volk bearbeitet*).

The state of intellectual preparation brought about by Positivism "combined with the genuine literary merits of the Vie de Jésus," Prin. Tulloch points out, was "sufficient to account for its extraordinary circulation and the remarkable interest which it has excited everywhere. There were waiting for such a book many minds stored with vague novelties as to the growth of religious and social constitutions, and the general development of civilisation, such as Positivism suggests, and groping in that dim perplexity of spiritual inquiry which is so common in our time. A volume which professes to account for the origin of Christianity, and to explain the appearance of Jesus on ordinary historical principles, within a few hundred pages, written in a charmingly facile style, and with an apparent depth of thoughtfulness and sentiment, could not fail to secure hosts of readers and to excite universal attention". (Tulloch's "The Christ of the Gospels and the Christ of Modern Criticism", p.6).

It took the reading world by storm. It appealed principally

principally, of course, to that somewhat wide circle of readers who, without holding a belief in the supernatural side of religion, felt a dislike for the arid and negative teaching of the 18th. Century deism and some more modern forms of scepticism. To such as these, Renan's new gospel appeared an honest attempt to bring the life of the Founder of Christianity into the light of modern historical study; but, as might well be expected, the publication of the work was for orthodox opinion as a match applied to a powder magazine.

On all sides men looked upon the volume as a banner lifted up, which must be attacked or defended. It soon became evident that it was to be one of the most hotly discussed books of the century. The effect of its appearance was phenomenal. Christians of all creeds united in severely condemning it as an infidel production, the more deadly in character because of the incomparable beauty of its style.

Monsabré described it as a "kiss given by a footpad to his victim prior to his assassination". The Rationalism of the age hailed it as the Coup de grâce given to Christianity. Renan himself was held up to reprobation as a "fat, overfed animal, destitute of all fine feeling and without doubt a libertine"; on the other hand he was described as "the greatest genius amongst ecclesiastical historians". The book was taken as propaganda on both sides, and so it became an immediate success, a banner of emancipation to youth, and a hissing and a reproach to/

to clericalism, and yet the only tangible result the whole storm had, as far as its author was concerned, was to turn Renan to write his larger work, "Les Origines du Christianisme".

The extraordinary effect produced by the "Vie de Jésus" on the public mind may be judged from the fact that, in France alone, fifteen hundred books or pamphlets about it were issued within twelve months from its appearance, the majority of them attacking it with fierce vigour. Strauss's "Leben Jesu" had already created a tremendous stir, not only among theologians, but among the general public; the fact that it was translated by writers like Littré in France and George Eliot in this country was in itself a significant fact. But Germany did not possess the universal and proselytising qualities of French; Germany in 1835 when Strauss's work was published was not so sharply divided as France in 1863 between uncompromising orthodoxy and radical free-thought engaged in a life and death struggle; and, moreover with all its merits, Strauss's work was wanting in that quality which, in spite of all its shortcomings, Renan's volume possessed in abundant measure, namely, life and genius. "For hundreds who read Strauss in Germany", says Christlieb, "tens of thousands in France and Italy have been seen devouring Renan".

This human and therefore scientific conception of the Christ went/

went back to Renan's Catholic and French education. In that beautiful page of the "Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse" where he imagines the Christ, in the midst of his religious and intellectual struggles at the Seminary of St. Sulpice, saying to him, "Abandon me in order to become my disciple," he adds, "I can say that from that time the "Life of Jesus" was written in my mind. The belief in the pre-eminent personality of Christ which is the soul of this book had been my strength in my struggle with theology." A Catholic who ceases to believe in Christ "truly man and truly God," is compelled to choose clearly and without reserve between the Christ-man and the Christ-God. He seizes the man Jesus with an instinct for reality which no liberal theologian has, and Renan justified these lines written several years before he began his Life of Jesus when perhaps he was already dreaming of it; "we can affirm that if France, less gifted than Germany with a sentiment of practical life, and less prompted to substitute in history the action of ideas to the play of the passions and individual characteristics, had undertaken to write in a scientific manner the life of Christ, it would have done so with a more rigorous method, and that by avoiding the taking of the problem, as Strauss has done, into the domain of abstract speculation, it would have approached much nearer the truth." ("Les Historiens Critiques de Jésus" in "Nouvelles Études d'histoire religieuse" p.197).

Moreover the "Vie de Jésus" was written with that consummate art, delicate poesy, sentiment, and thorough scholarship, which had distinguished the previous productions of Renan's pen, and placed him in the front rank of modern writers. The harmonious cadences,

cadences of its exquisite prose, the perfections of its descriptions, the seductiveness of its sentiment, need not however blind us to the fact that this sentiment occasionally passes into sentimentalism, and that the aesthetic aspect of the subject is accorded an undue preponderance. The story goes that a certain lady, having picked up the volume, was so fascinated that she devoured it as though it were one of the most dramatic and enthralling of romances. With a sigh, not of relief, but of insatiety, she read the final page and exclaimed, "Ce qui m'ennuie. C'est que cela ne finit pas par un mariage!" This anecdote indicates both the strength and the weakness of the book. It was undoubtedly the greatest work of a purely infidel cast that had been produced during the century, not even excepting the "Leben Jesu," in which there is a much more trenchant vigour and more minute elaboration, but which is so thoroughly vitiated by the hypothesis in which it is rooted, and is so far removed by its severe intellectualism from the sphere of religious emotions, that its scientific value, in attempting an explanation of the Gospel history of Jesus and of the rise of Christianity from purely natural causes, cannot be compared with the work of Renan. The "Vie de Jésus" bears the impress of its origin. It is filled with the living, vibrating atmosphere of the East. It is the work of one familiar with the Bible and theology, and no less acquainted with the inscriptions, monuments, types and landscapes of Syria; it is above all the work of a man who has sounded the depths of the human heart.

Whether appraised or anathematised, none could deny the high gifts/

gifts of which it made full proof. It may or may not have been what is termed "an epoch-making book". It certainly created the literary fame of its author, although, as we have already seen, Renan had long before amply proved to a more limited circle his possession of qualities which constitute literary excellence: a rare subtlety, abundant learning, a full and commanding survey of the field of inquiry, a brilliant imagination, and a fascinating style.

The name of those who were opposed to it was legion. In particular, whatever wore a soutane and could wield a pen, charged against Renan, the bishops leading the van of the attack. The tone of these attacks was not always very elevated, nor the logic of them very profound. In most cases the writers were only concerned to defend the deity of Christ and the miracles, and were satisfied that they had done so when they had pointed out some of the glaring inconsistencies of Renan's production. Here and there, however, among these refutations, we catch the tone of a loftier ethical spirit which has recognised the fundamental weakness of the work, the lack of any definite principle in the writer's outlook on life. There were some, indeed, who were not content with a refutation; they would gladly have seen active measures adopted against Renan. One of his most bitter adversaries, Amadée Nicolas (author of "Renan et sa vie de Jésus sans les rapports moral, iégal, et littéraire. Appel à la raison et la conscience du monde civilisé", 1864), reckons up in an appendix to his work the maximum penalties authorised by the existing enactments against freethought, and would welcome the application of the law of 25th March, 1822, according to which five years' imprisonment could/

could be imposed for the crime of "insulting or making ridiculous a religion recognised by the State".

That the Orthodox should attempt to rend this new apostle was but natural. His rejection of the supernatural and of miracles, his denial of the divinity of Christ, his want of reverence, his free, almost reckless and by no means scrupulous treatment of the character of Jesus, of the facts of his life and of his motives and aims, could scarcely fail to pain and provoke Christian men. What the representative pious Catholic thought will be understood from a letter written to Bersot by Montalembert (June 16., 1863) - "It must be easy for you to fancy what a Christian has to suffer in reading the Life of Jesus. Imagine what you yourself would feel if your father were treated publicly as a charming impostor. Just imagine that Jesus Christ is for us more than a father, that he is our God, that all our hopes and all our consolations are based upon his divine personality, and then ask yourself if there could be for our hearts a more deadly wound than that here given." ("Bersot et ses amis" p.19). The very citadel of the faith seemed to be rudely assaulted, the holiest and tenderest associations to be cruelly violated, and the one hope of the world to be abandoned, indeed, almost disdained. No wonder, therefore, that not fear only, but strong indignation also was aroused, and that a multitude of vigorous champions rushed forth to do battle, and with all the force of argument and all the warmth of passion to denounce and exterminate the new adversary.

Apart from the particular views set forth in Renan's volume, it must/

must be remembered also that the very fact of his writing upon a sacred subject, which was looked upon as an exclusive privilege for the theologians or Churchmen was regarded at that time as an original and daring feat in France. Before Renan, the history of religion was the close preserve of the theologians, whether rationalistic or orthodox. He was the first to take it up in a purely secular spirit, and to make it the property of the public. Not only so, but he dealt with sacred subjects with a peculiarly audacious originality. In the eyes of Catholics this was sheer presumption; it was a crime without parallel; an offence against God and man. The Church therefore regarded him as her worst enemy. To give the history of religion a place in the general history of the human mind was to strike a blow at the ideas of revelation and the supernatural which no mere tenderness of sentiment could heal or soften. On the other hand, Renan stimulated curiosity regarding religious questions; and if the orthodox accused him of profaning holy things, he may at least be accorded the merit of having vindicated the necessity of the science of religion to the understanding of human history, and of having awakened in many minds a new taste for religious subjects.

The fierce assaults which immediately opened upon it made the "Vie de Jésus" familiar to every priest in France, and caused a flutter indeed in all the ecclesiastical dovecots from Madrid to Moscow. Not a clerical meeting was convened between /

between Provence and Brittany in particular, but its demerits came up for discussion. Archbishops, bishops, Jesuits, priests, theological professors, and dissenting ministers joined eagerly in a heresy hunt of unprecedented dimensions; the heavens were darkened with a multitude of reviews and controversial treatises. An innumerable host of vituperative and sometimes libellous pamphleteers denounced Renan as actually bent on bringing about the reign of the devil upon earth. The rage of the orthodox was beyond measure. Henceforth Renan became Antichrist in their eyes. French Catholicism could not bring the author to the stake, but it exhausted the modern methods of persecution. What was particularly galling to the clergy was the fact that the child-prodigy of Tréguier, who had been expected as he grew into manhood to charm the worldly into the Church by his genius, was, instead, leading people into paths that they considered ways of perdition, and all the world was reading and discussing the abominable book. So the leaders sharpened their knives for the victim. Pulpits rang with indignant denunciations. The spokesmen of Roman Catholicism treated Renan as an arch-blasphemer. Expiatory services were ordered in all Christendom. Renan's character was picturesquely defamed; from the anonymous but pious lady who with the best intentions commenced the monthly despatch to him of a letter conveying the brief warning, "There is a hell", to Pope Pius IX, who designated him "the European blasphemer". The whole Church militant was arranged against/

against Renan. Ernest Hello, who had devoted his main philosophical work to "Renan, Germany, and Atheism in the nineteenth century", abandoned his mystic realm to refute the historian. Pascal suggested that "Poison" ought to be boldly written upon Renan's volume, and that it should be called "An Antichristian Life of Christ". Father Gratry, liberal and enlightened, though he was, almost rivalled Veuillot in his energetic anathemas, and wrote his Life of Jesus as a counterblast to that of Renan. Charles Montalembert saw fit to denounce Renan as "a protégé of Caesar's."

Even the dead were pressed into service: some of Lacordaire's lectures were reprinted in 1863, and entitled, "To the Readers of M. Renan: the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ". One of the most virulent of the printed libels was a pamphlet, "Renan en famille" (by Ch. de Bussy, Paris 1866), a series of pretended letters between Renan and a supposed Sister Ursule, introduced, with the obvious intention of inflicting as much pain as possible, by the letter from the spirit of Henriette, Renan's sister, in which she is made to say, "Blot out my name at once from that book which is as badly written and heavy as it is abominable, and from that preface with its grotesque pretentiousness and its pitiable French". It is stated also that the guests in a hotel at Dinard threatened to leave if Renan were allowed to remain there, and a local paper published some malignant verses beginning, "Breton, No! Jew sprung from the blood of Judas Iscariot, what have you come here for?"

Even/

Even Jasmin published an offensive poem (*Lou poëto del pupile à moussu Renan, Agen, Août 1864*), in which "he left his sphere and forced his rustic pipe".

The intense feeling did not soon abate. Taine tells with great glee the story of a young mistress of Plon-Plon, who complained bitterly that on the trip to Norway in 1870 she had to sit at table beside such an impious renegade as Renan. But the touches of personal attack we meet with are nothing compared with the coarseness exhibited in other quarters. Here, for example, is the sort of stuff which M. Eugène Potrel (author of "*Vie de N.S. Jésus Christ: Réponse au Livre de M. Renan*", Paris, 1863) prefixes to an antidote "Life", which is itself nothing but a paraphrase of the Gospel histories:-

"Les livres de M. Renan et de ses pareils détruisent dans le cœur de l'homme toute charité, toute bonté, toute vertu; ils développent l'animalité dans l'homme; ils glorifient la gredinerie et la bassesse. La conclusion logique de tous ces discours sans veillance, ce serait l'abolition du culte, le fermeture des églises, la divinisation des instincts féroces, l'assassinat de la morale, l'apothéose du brigandage civilisé. Ce serait le règne du diable, si ces gens là avaient ce qu'ils n'ont pas, l'esprit du diable! Rien n'est si bête que tous ces momeries philosophiques. Parmi tous ces/

ces parleurs, lequel aura l'héroïsme de braver les puissants de la terre au point de se faire crucifier? Ce n'est certes pas M. Renan. Il parle et pense comme un piou; Jésus parle et pense comme un Dieu". (pp.43,44).

Among other denunciatory volumes or pamphlets were the following, and they were but a very small part of the prompt and piquant replies Renan's book provoked:-

La Divinité de Jésus, prouvée par les faits; Reponse à M. Renan, by M. L'Abbe Pioger, du Diocèse de Paris - L'evangile selon Rehan, by Henri Lasserre - Le Livre de M.E. Renan sur la Vie de Jésus, by M. Laurentie - M. Renan et sa Vie de Jésus. Lettre au R.P. Mertian, Directeur des Etudes Religieuses, Historiques et Littéraires, by le R.P. Felix, de la Compagnie de Jésus - Une Prétendue Vie de Jésus, ou M. Ernest Renan, Historien, Philosophe et Poete by M. L'Abbé Jules - Théodore Loysen - Examen Critique de la Vie de Jésus de M. Renan by M. L'Abbé Freppel, Professeur d'Eloquence, sacrée à la Sorbonne - La Critique et la Tactique. Étude sur les Procédés de l'Antichristianisme moderne, a propos de M. Renan, by le P. Delaporte, de la Société de la miséricorde - Leçon Preliminaire à M. Renan sur la Vie de Jésus by L'Abbé J.H. Michon.

These publications afford a striking illustration of the animus of the predominant religion in France, scarcely one of them touching the heart of the subject, (though often probing most effectively weak points in Renan's argument), - never (or/

(or with scarcely an exception) seeking to discover how Renan might have slipped from the right road, in order to try to lead him back, or dreaming it possible to learn anything from him, but almost throughout showing themselves as God, armed with terrifying thunders and avenging lightning - in short, affording a melancholy comment on the low state of French civilisation as tried by one of the surest tests, that of a manly recognition of the right and duty of free thought. If Renan did not become notorious, it was certainly not for want of names pinned on his back in the pillory where his adversaries placed him. He was called a Judas, a Pilate, an Erostratus, a Samson, a Matricide, a Deicide. At the same time, in spite of the frequent substitution of base aspersion of his motives, and once or twice even of his person, it must be confessed that these brochures made fairly thorough work of the weaker parts of Renan's book and system. All these reviewers agreed in calling the volume a romance, of which he, and not Jesus, is the hero; all dwelt on the loose, inaccurate, unscholarly and inconsistent character of his argument in the discussion of so great a subject, on the slightness of the research and reasoning with which he justifies, the vagueness with which he announces, and the still greater recklessness with which through the book he practically treats his professed recognition of the Evangelic authorities, which he admits are the prime sources of information in the case. All of them reprobate the sentimentality/

sentimentality of his style as unworthy the sublime simplicity of his theme, and take special pains to analyse and expose the ill-matched work of his apparent reconstruction of the individuality and idea of Jesus. These denunciatory productions continued to be issued during a considerable time.

At Court the "Vie de Jésus" was received, not with favour, but with perhaps unexpected toleration. The Empress Eugénie, a pillar of the Roman Catholic Church in France, refused to attempt to stop the publication of the book, and is even stated to have said to Madame Hortense Cornu who reported to Sir Mountstuart E. Grant Duff the Imperial lady's remark, "It will do no harm to those who believe in Christ and to those who do not it will do good." As an illustration of the effect produced by the book upon one of the latter class, Sir Mountstuart E. Grant Duff in his Diary tells of the story circulating in Paris about an old general, Voltairian in opinion, to whom some of his family read the "Vie de Jésus" on his deathbed. After getting pretty well into the book, he exclaimed - "Enfin il était Dieu," - sent for the priest and died reconciled to the Church.

The passionate and persistent protests of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, however, told at last on the Emperor, and resulted in the Imperial Government suspending Renan's tenure of the Chair of Hebrew in the Collège de France. After the fall of /

of the Empire he returned to it, and under the Third Republic became Director of the College.

Renan was defended by an important section of the French press, - by the *Siecle*; by the *Débats*, at that time the leading French newspaper; by the *Revue des Deux Mondes* in which Havet's article was unreservedly laudatory; and by the *Temps* in which E. Scherer, Renan's friend, wrote the ablest of the criticisms by non-orthodox writers on the "Vie de Jésus". His review was indeed a masterpiece of dexterous and appreciative criticism. Favourable in the main, it was nevertheless cold and guarded, and propounded many serious objections. It was indeed typical of Scherer's elusive, many-sided mind. Yet the critic's admiration and sympathy were beyond doubt. His summary of the characteristic merits of Renan's book is expressed thus - "He has sought for Christ beyond the region which bears his name, and the Gospel beneath what the Church has founded on it. He has succeeded in restoring the physiognomy of Jesus, in giving us a distinct, living, and verisimilar personality". While commending the extraordinary merit of the production, Scherer maintained that it pleased the sceptics just as little as the believers. The effect on members of both these/

these classes and of a third indefinable class, he illustrated in reports of confidences on the subject, bestowed on him by three friends. The first is an orthodox Catholic, indignant but not abusive. He asserts that to believe in the tradition of the Church, and to accept the universal assent based on the testimony of the first and only witnesses of the Christian era, is as rational as to believe in Renan's numerous hypotheses and conjectures. The second friend is a sceptic, who is irritated by Renan's transcendent admiration of Jesus, and out of patience with Renan's ambiguities and his ecclesiastical unction, and who indeed bears the closest resemblance to Scherer himself. This friend complains that if Renan deprives Jesus of his Godhead, he makes Jesus such a man as none has ever been, above humanity, and divine in everything but name. For his part, the sceptic likes the old Jesus just as much as the new. The third friend is a politician and man of the world, who dilates on the benefits conferred on society and individuals by the ancient faiths, and thinks it therefore very dangerous to meddle with them.

With all his appreciation, Scherer is not sparing of more or less inculpatory criticisms. On the appearance of the book he had predicted on its behalf a success so great that it would be felt by those who never heard of it; yet three months later he was obliged to recognise that it had only attracted the curious, and summarises well-founded objections raised against it thus:- "1. M. Renan has judged a moral work/

work in the spirit of a mere artist. 2. He has virtually denied the integrity and the purity of Jesus Christ. 3. He has falsified his character by making of an admirable teacher an unnatural Colossus. (Le Temps, Sept. 29th., 1863). It is indeed very difficult to bring so unique an artist as Renan within the ordinary formulae of criticism. Scherer felt the difficulty. "Pour parler convenablement de Renan", he writes, "si complex et si fuyant quand on le presse et quand on veut l'embrasser tout entier, ce serait moins un article de critique qu'il conviendrait de faire, sur lui qu'un petit dialogue à la manière de Platon". The Revue des Deux Mondes, which had years before uplifted a warning voice against Strauss and his epoch-making volume, the "Leben Jesu", allowed itself to go with the stream, and published in its issue of August 1st 1863 a critical analysis by Ernest Havet, Professor at the Collège de France ("Jésus dans l'histoire. Examen de la Vie de Jésus par M. Renan"), in which he hailed Renan's work as a great achievement, and criticised only the inconsistencies by which he had endeavoured to soften down the radical character of his undertaking. His analysis may be summed up in the general statement, "that his (Renan's) criticism in detail is not always sufficiently firm and severe. M. Renan knows all that can be known and no one has anything to teach him. He voluntarily refuses to follow his own criticism to the end". In later issues, however, the Revue des Deux Mondes changed its attitude and took sides with Renan's opponents. The/

The advance notice in the *Débats* (June 24, 1863, the date of publication) was penned by the sturdy, but liberal-minded Jansenist, Silvestre de Sacy, and perhaps no fairer estimate of Renan's work has been published. It is, says de Sacy, the "fruit of long labour and great inward agitations". Renan "seeks to conciliate the most exalted mysticism with the most hardy scepticism, the rigour of historical method with a transcendental imagination". The work is replete with interest; the things have been actually seen, but de Sacy prefers the simplicity of the old Evangelists. "I believe in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; I do not believe in the Gospel of M. Renan". The review in the *Journal des Débats* (August 23, 1863) was written by E. Bersot, who undertook the difficult task unwillingly and against the advice of friends. Bersot was not, indeed, a specialist in biblical studies. Thus the greater part of the article is taken up with a discussion of eighteenth century scepticism as compared with the modern critical method. He imagines how the book might have been otherwise done, is surprised at the idea of a trick in the raising of Lazarus, and realises that the portrayed of Jesus as a delicate, charming young man, will wound, though not purposely. Jesus always hangs between science and art, and Renan has painted his portrait much in the manner of the artist Ary Scheffer, his father-in-law.

Most/

Most amazing, however, was the zest evinced by the "smart-set" press on behalf of orthodoxy. Papers whose pages were in ordinary occupied with Parisian scandal, denounced the blameless scholar as "undermining the foundations of public morality". Obscure "Chroniclers" accused Renan of being ignorant of Hebrew. The conjunction of Parisian levity and ecclesiastical conservatism was to Renan the most painful experience of all. He considered that those who served the ideal and lived pure lives should stand together against the "practical Atheists", the frivolous-minded, and the materialists, whatever their professed creed might be.

In the correspondence of two more or less distinguished contemporaries of Renan in the French world of letters there are to be found some not uninteresting references made just after its publication to the "Vie de Jésus". In one of his "Lettres à une Inconnue", the sceptical and cynical French novelist and historian, and leader in the romantic movement, Prosper Mérimée, a man of great intellectual power, but enervated by his long habit of paradox, fastidiousness, and frivolity, describes the book as being both "of little and of much importance". It is a great blow dealt to the Catholic Church. So far doubtless good. But then, "the author is so terrified at his own audacity in denying the divinity "of Jesus," that he loses himself in hymns of admiration/

admiration and adoration, so that he is left without a historic sense with which to judge the doctrine. However it is interesting".

The other reference occurs in a letter written by Armandine Lucile Aurore Dudevant, the French novelist who wrote, under the nom-de-plume of George Sand, to Prince Napoleon with whom she was on terms of close friendship and who had desired her opinion of the "Vie de Jesus", a book for which he seems to have cherished a great admiration. M. Renan", she writes to Prince Napoleon, "has a little lowered, on one side, his hero in my estimation, while raising him on the other. I liked to persuade myself that Jesus had never proclaimed himself to be specially the Son of God, and that his belief in an avenging and penal God was an apocryphal interpolation added to the Gospels. This, at least, is the interpretation which I had always accepted and even sought for; but now comes M. Renan with the results of deeper, more competent, more strenuous study and examination. There is no need to be as learned as he is to be conscious in his work of realities and appreciations forming a whole, and beyond discussion. Were it only through its colouring and life, a perusal of the book suffuses a clearer light on the age , the environment, the man. I think, then, that he has seen Jesus better than we in our anterior preceptions of him, and I accept the Jesus whom he has given us. Jesus is no longer a philosopher, a genius concentrating in himself what was best in the philosophy and/

and knowledge of his time: he is a dreamer, an enthusiast, a poet, a man inspired and simple-minded. Be it so. I love him still, but how small for me is the place which he fills in the history of ideas! How the importance of his personal work has diminished! How much more henceforth is his religion to be sustained by the accidents of human events than by any of those great historical necessities which we agree, and are a little compelled, to call providential. Let us accept the true, even although it takes us by surprise and alters our point of view. Verily, then, here is Jesus demolished! So much the worse for him; for us, perhaps, so much the better! His religion has arrived at the point at least as much evil as it had done good, and since - whether it be Renan's opinion or not - I am to-day persuaded that it can only do evil, I think M. Renan's book is the most useful that he could have written".

George Sand felt compelled to accept the historical results arrived at by Renan, but not without disappointment and sorrow: she had lost her Christ, a humanitarian, anti-clerical prophet of the pure 1848 type.

In the Protestant Camp there was an even keener sense of distaste than in the Catholic, for the sentimental gloss which Renan had spread over his work to make it attractive to the multitude by its iridescent colours. In four remarkable letters Athanase Coquerel the younger took the author to task for this.

From the standpoint of orthodox Protestant scholarship,  
E./

E. de Pressensé ("L'École Critique et Jésus Christ, à propos de la Vie de Jésus de M. Renan) who wrote one of the best criticisms of Renan that has appeared in any country, condemned Renan, and proceeded without loss of time to refute him in a large scale Life of Jesus ("Jésus Christ, son temps, sa vie, son oeuvre". Paris 1865); although in expressing his opinion regarding the ultimate effect of Renan's book, Pressensé wrote, "I am persuaded that the results accomplished by it will be in the main good; that it will not shake the faith of any true believer; that it will produce with many of those who were wavering, a good reaction, which will bring them back to a positive faith; and that the common sense of the people will not fail to see that it is not thus history is written, and that the problem of the origin of Christianity still remains unexplained in its grandeur". Pressensé was answered by Albert Réville (La Vie de Jésus de Renan devant les orthodoxes et devant la critique 1864) who claims recognition for Renan's services to criticism.

In general, however, the rising French school of critical theology was disappointed in Renan. T. Colani was then spokesman ("Examen de la vie de Jésus de M. Renan", Revue de théologie. 1864) "This is not the Christ of history, the Christ of the Synoptics", he wrote in 1864 in the Revue de théologie, "but the Christ of the Fourth Gospel, though without/

without his metaphysical halo, and painted over with a brush which has been dipped in the melancholy blue of modern poetry, in the rose of the eighteenth-century idyll, and in the grey of amoral philosophy which seems to be derived from La Rochefoucauld". "In expressing this opinion," Colani adds, "I believe I am speaking in the name of those who belong to what is known as the new Protestant theology or the Strassburg school. We opened M. Renan's book with sympathetic interest; we closed it with deep disappointment".

Abroad, the "Vie de Jésus" leaped into fame at a bound. French was then, as it had long been, the common language of society and of culture. "Such a book, appearing in England", says Canon Barry "would have taken five years to cross the Channel. To England, Bishop Colenso was the critic who gave offence, but who could not win renown, by his dull cross-examining of the numbers in the Pentateuch. Strauss had put forward his theory, which resolved the four Gospels into myth and allegory, a generation earlier. But to the frivolous coteries of Paris, that German professor was only a name; and not so much as a name to the French Clergy at large". (Barry's Renan, p.111) The excitement caused in Germany, however, by the appearance of Renan's work, was scarcely less than in France. Within a year there appeared no fewer than five different German translations of the "Vie de Jésus", and many of the French criticisms of Renan were also translated, as for example Henri Lasserre's work, "Das Evangelium Nach Renan", published at,

at Munich 1864; Freppel's "Kritische Beleuchtung der E. Renan'schen Schrift", published at Vienna 1864; Prof. Lamy of the Theological Faculty of the Catholic University of Louvain, published at Münster in 1864 a work entitled, "Renan's Leben-Jesu vor dem Richterstuhle der Kritik." The German Catholic Press also reached a high pitch of excitement. In that connection Dr. F. Michelis produced his "Renan's Roman Vom Leben Jesu. Eine deutsche Antwort auf eine französische Blasphemie" (Münster 1864).

Dr. Sebastian Brunner wrote on "Der Atheist Renan and sein Evangelium" (Regensburg 1864). Albert Meisinger published a book on "Aphorismen gegen Renans Leben-Jesu" (Vienna 1864). Dr. Martin von Deutlinger wrote on "Renan und das Wunder" (Munich 1864); and Dr. Bonifacius Haneberg produced a treatise on Ernest Renan's Leben Jesu (Regensburg 1864).

The Protestant press in Germany acted in a comparatively moderate spirit, and was more inclined to give Renan a fair hearing. It even went the length of venturing in some cases to express admiration for the historical merits of his performance. Prof. Beyschlag in a lecture delivered at Halle in 1864, entitled "Über das 'Leben Jesu' von Renan", saw in Renan an advance upon Strauss, inasmuch as for him the life of Jesus as narrated in the Gospels, while not, indeed, in any sense supernatural, is nevertheless historical. Even Theodore/

Theodore Christlieb, criticising in severe terms the "boundless, well-nigh incomprehensible capriciousness" of the work, "its superficial frivolity, which only calculates on sensations suited to the times, and gracefully waives the most difficult problems....its entire want of earnest moral consciousness, of real scientific perception, of thorough and conscientious historical investigation, and, worse than all, the piquant flippancy which does not hesitate to clothe the most holy Figure in history in the garb of a social democrat of modern France, nor to change the most sacred life into - a novel" - even Christlieb, with all this, admits that indeed there is "a certain warmth of feeling for the beauties of the King whom yet Renan seeks to dethrone. No where do we breathe the close air of the study, but always the fresh breezes of an inspiring journey. But then the vivid freshness is so dearly bought, that we could wish the lamp of the study had not been wanting in the Maronite hut (and afterwards too!), and that the clever French man had not so often tried to cover his want of thorough investigation by fanciful ideas and brilliant superficiality."

(Christlieb's "Modern Doubt and Christian Belief", p.426).

With regard to a certain school of German theology, therefore, Renan was a deliverer from Strauss; they were especially/

especially grateful to him for his defence, sophistical though it was, of the Fourth Gospel. Mommsen declared Renan to be "a savant, in spite of his beautiful style." Weizsäcker expressed his admiration for him. Strauss, far from directing his later and revised "Life of Jesus for the German People," in which he was then engaged, against the superficial and frivolous French treatment of the subject, as had sometimes been alleged, welcomed Renan in his Preface as a kindred spirit and ally, and "shook hands with him across the Rhine." Luthardt, however, the famed Evangelical Professor of Theology at Leipzig in his "Die modernen Darstellungen des Lebens Jesu," a discussion on the writings of Strauss, Renan, and Schenkel, and on the essays of Coquerel the younger, Scherer, Colani and Keim (1866) - remained fixed in his opinion of Renan's work. He asks, "what is there lacking in Renan's work?" And his own answer is, "it lacks conscience." Ewald and Keim were both severe upon the book, "which professed to deal with great questions, but which answered none."

Renan's "Vie de Jésus" will always retain a certain degree of interest both for France and Germany. "The German," says Albert Schweitzer, "is often so completely fascinated by it as to lose his power of criticism, because he finds in it/

it German thought expressed in a new and piquant form. Conversely the Frenchman discovers in it, behind the familiar form, which is here handled in such a masterly fashion, ideas belonging to a world which is foreign to him, ideas which he can never completely assimilate, but which continually attract him. In this double character of the work lies its imperishable charm".

Renan's "Life of Jesus" created deep and widespread interest not only on the Continent, but in our own country as well. The verdict of George Eliot who stepped forth in the vanguard towards the new religion of Humanity, and the translator of Strauss's "Leben Jesu"; writing in her Journal, July 12th 1863, was that Renan "is a favourite writer of mine, but I care less about this "Vie de Jésus" than I should have cared years ago. It consists of conclusions without any statement of the process by which they have been arrived at; and the conclusions, I imagine, have nothing novel in them for people who have been long acquainted with the results of modern criticism. But I am surprised to hear that there is anything "cavalier" in Renan's treatment of religious belief: he has always seemed to me remarkable as a French mind that is at once "scientific" (in the German sense), and eminently tender and reverent towards the forms in which the religious sentiment has incarnated itself". Later on in the same year, she further expressed/

expressed her views on Renan. "Renan is a favourite with me. I feel more kinship with his mind than with that of any other living French Author ... For minds acquainted with the European culture of this last half-century, Renan's book can furnish no new result; and they are likely to set little store by the too facile construction of a life from materials of which the biographical significance becomes more dubious as they are more closely examined. It seems to me the soul of Christianity lies not at all in the facts of an individual life, but in the ideas of which that life was the meeting-point and the new starting-point. We can never have a satisfactory basis for the history of the man Jesus, but that negation does not affect the Idea of the Christ either in its historical influence or its great symbolic meaning. Still, such books as Renan's have their value in helping the popular imagination to feel that the sacred past is of one woof with that human present, which ought to be sacred too". (G. Eliot's Life, as related in her letters and journals, by J.W. Cross, pp.364-5). In a letter of a later date in the same year, G. Eliot somewhat modifies her judgment on Renan. "I have read Renan's book which has proved to be eminently in the public taste. It will have a good influence on the whole I imagine; but this "Vie de Jésus", and still more Renan's "Letter to Berthelet" in the "Revue des deux Mondes", have compelled me to give up the high estimate I had formed of his mind. Judging from the indications in some other writings of his, I had reckoned him amongst the finest thinkers of the time."/

time. Still his "Life of Jesus" has so much artistic merit, that it will do a great deal towards the culture of ordinary minds, by giving them a sense of unity between that far-off past and our present". (Life of G. Eliot, pp. 371-2).

If such was the verdict of one in the front ranks of those who advanced towards the new religion of Humanity, we may expect from others, like Thomas Carlyle, who maintained that history should deal with what really happened, a more emphatic condemnation of Renan.

Carlyle disliked the book, and wished it had not been written. The great statesman, Mr. W.E. Gladstone, writing to the Duke of Argyll, declared his opinion of Renan to be completely dual. "His life of our Lord I thought a piece of trumpery; his work "Sur les langues Sémitiques" most able in its manner and discussion".

On the whole, the "Vie de Jésus" was vigorously attacked by British scholars. Most of the important Reviews of the time, whilst frankly admitting the beauty of Renan's literary style, were very severe in their criticism of the volume. Generally speaking, it may be said that there were three main grounds for this attitude. First and foremost, the effeminacy of his portraiture of Jesus revolted sturdy British sentiment. Half consciously a self-deceiver and a deceiver of the people, His figure, as Renan sees it, only served to awaken revulsion. As an illustration of this, Dr. Fairbairn's reference to the "Vie de Jésus" in his "Christ in modern Theology" may be cited. "It s faults/

faults were flagrant, as were all its qualities; it was inadequate, was perfunctory in its literary criticism, violent and subjective in its historical, selecting and grouping its material in obedience to an aesthetic faculty that had more appreciation of the picturesque than of the real. For the rest it was unctuous, without ethical sense or moral discernment, steeped in false sentiment, extravagant in its inverted pietism, offensive in its rapturous eulogies of One it could still represent as in the supreme moments of His life stooping to imposture". (Fairbairn's "Christ in Modern Theology", p.278). That was quite a clear British outburst, and it explains a good deal. A second reason why the "Vie de Jésus" met with severe criticism in this country is to be found in Renan's sublime dogmatism. With all the felicity of his style he can be very trenchant, and nowhere perhaps so much as when he speaks of miracles. "If miracle has any reality he says in the Preface to the "Vie de Jésus", "this book is but a tissue of errors". The effect of such language can readily be imagined; it certainly did not predispose scholars to listen to Renan as a critic. His temper is anything but that of the calm judicial mind beloved of British scholarship.

A third ground of offence lay in the essential scepticism of Renan's historical principles. For him alternatives are sharply cut; he pays little heed to the finer shadings of personality or to the insensible modifications which may affect the forms of early tradition. He can see no religious movement in which deceptions do not play a great part. He declares that every tentative religion with which he is acquainted "exhibits unmistakably/

unmistakably an enormous mixture of the sublime and the ridiculous". And for Renan this "mixture" is in the nature of things. "Humanity is so feeble of mind that the purest thing has need of the co-operation of some impure agent". It was a scepticism of this kind which lay behind the audacity which did not scruple to liken Jesus to a thaumaturgist who is eventually "cornered". The same cynicism appears in his account of the miraculous; a miracle, he maintains, presupposes three conditions: "first, general credulity; second, a little complaisance on the part of some: third, a tacit acquiescence in the principal author".

The attitude of Renan, so bitterly attacked from many quarters, was full of calm dignity.

His friend Marcellin Berthelot, had written to him, "when you come back, you will not merely be assailed with small troubles; look out for a storm of contradiction and hatred - pope, archbishops, bishops, curés, deacons, and subdeacons, not to speak of the third order and the sons of ex-Liberals. But you will get the upper hand of all that by holding to your opinions; Voltaire stood out well, without much persecution. But you are in for it as long as you live, and you will escape persecution simply if you never flinch. Your name will be conspicuous in the nineteenth century, as the philosophers won in the eighteenth. The insistence and lasting hatred of Catholics will suffice to point out your way".

It is true that Renan did not have to flee Paris, as Rousseau/

Rousseau had done a hundred years before, but he had drawn on himself a strife with "a notable and little amiable portion of humanity for the rest of his life," enough to intimidate one of less firmness. Yet Sainte-Beuve, commanding Renan's courage, could say, "Those of us who have the honour of M. Renan's acquaintance know that he has strength enough to face the situation. He will show neither irritation, nor bad temper; he will remain calm and patient, ever serene; he will retain his quiet smile; he will preserve his loftiness by never answering. He will vigorously pursue his work, his exposition henceforth more solid, more historical and scientific; no cries nor clamours will cause him to deviate a single instant from his aim." Such words seem bold enough, yet Sainte-Beuve wrote personally to Renan, "You have won for us the right of discussion on this matter, hitherto forbidden to all. The dignity of your language and of your thoughts has forced the defences," and again at a later date when thanking him for an article on Port-Royal: "I place my intellectual honour in having my name associated with yours in this reform which is to be undertaken at the present period of the century. I have come too late and am about to finish. You are in full career and you can long endure and fight."

Renan replied to none of the attacks rained upon him, and pursued his work with the same serenity as if his volume had passed/

passed unnoticed. He never stooped to polemics, but kept the quiet of his thoughts untouched by all this wrangling. He could never be induced to speak an unkind word against the Church which was so severely reviling him. While his book was causing such a commotion, Renan had been enjoying with his family a summer expedition to Dinard. His mind was made up not to answer his critics; but he wrote, not quite in his usual calm temper, to Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff, his Scottish friend, "Sometimes, I confess, when I observe the rage that my new volume has provoked among the orthodox, I almost repent of having published it. I did not expect so much passion or party spirit. However, what I have done was in absolute sincerity." On the whole, Renan seems to have been somewhat strangely obtuse to the offensiveness of his volume to believers. He even sent copies, with an affectionate dedication, to his former comrades of the St. Sulpice Seminary, some of them already bishops. (Jules Simon, "Quatre Portraits.") He was indeed so preoccupied with his own ideas that he could not sympathise with the opposite view, and seems to have felt the same naïve surprise at the commotion over his book as he felt at the Abbé Cognat's refusal in early years to continue their discussions on Christianity. In spite of all warnings he went directly ahead, convinced that what he was doing was what needed to be done.

Whatever/

Whatever else may be said of Renan, he was at least a consummate artist in words. Whether men applauded or anathematised the "Vie de Jésus," none could deny the gifts of which it made full proof. He was beyond compare the greatest French writer of his time; and he is one of the greatest French writers of all time. The beauty and clearness of the French language have seldom if ever been better displayed than in Renan's crystal sentences. Brought up on the Bible, the Greek and Latin classics, and the standard authors of his country, he had accustomed himself to a fashion of speech, at once simple and original, expressive without oddity, and supple without languor; a style which, out of the somewhat restricted vocabulary of the 17th. and 18th. centuries, could sufficiently furnish itself to render every subtlest shade of modern thought.

There are to be found in Renan bits of narrative, of landscape, of portraiture, which are models for all time. "Renan will outlast all the other authors of our century," declares Gabriel Monod, "because he has equalled the most illustrious of them in force and picturesqueness while surpassing them in simplicity and artistic sensibility. Beside him, Chateaubriand seems a mere disclaimer, Lamartine limp and redundant, Victor Hugo brutal and monotonous, and Michelet restless and unequal. But the real triumph of Renan's style is this - that he has never been a stylist; he has never treated literary form as an object in itself. He had a horror of rhetoric; and what he understood by perfection of form was the means of presenting the/ .

the thought in all its force and individuality, in the fullness of its character, "in its habit as it lived." The simplicity of his style was just the reflection of his simplicity of nature; its force and its brilliancy were derived from the plenitude of his knowledge and the abundance of his imagination." ("Les Maitres de l' Histoire: Renan, Taine, et Michelet," by G. Monod.)

The book was the work of a poet and an artist, as much as of a patient and erudite scholar. To long and thorough study of the texts had been added personal knowledge of the scenery and other aspects of the Holy Land. The old landscapes were revived on Renan's canvas, the village life, the life of the synagogue, the Jerusalem of the Herods is brought near to us in the clear mirror of Renan's pages, and the panorama of Jesus' Palestine is unrolled to the music of a style unrivalled, incomparable in its union of simplicity and beauty. There was a flexibility too in his style that fitted it for the expression of all thought and all emotion. Renan had the faculty of making his subject perfectly clear to himself, and his wealth and felicity of expression rendered it delightfully clear to his readers, In point of style and treatment, Renan is, by all those who are competent to judge, acknowledged to be one of the greatest of modern literary artists. An acknowledged master of French and English criticism, Prof. Geo. Saintsbury, is constrained/

constrained to confess that "Time and his own merits have given Renan among French men of letters unquestioned supremacy. There is at the present moment no one who can write French of the best kind as Renan can write it." (Saintsbury's "Miscellaneous Essays," 1892) "In some purely literary gifts," continues Dr. Saintsbury, "Renan has had few superiors among men of his time. Pathos, gentle satire, pure narration, exposition which is half argument, half narrative, imaginative construction, he can do them all, and do them goldenly. In three things, and in three things only, does he go wrong - in his excess of egotism, in his defect of taste, and in the weakness of his reasoning power, properly so-called. It may be that egotism is a special French quality. But in Renan, whether as a matter of idiosyncrasy or as a matter of nationality, it has reached a climax. The mere presence of the "je" and the "moi - même" would go for nothing. But every sentence is saturated with self-consciousness. Even Byron is not Renan's superior or inferior in always thinking of self whatsoever he is writing about. Brittany is the key to Nazareth. Paris shadows forth Jerusalem. Renan put together in mosaic fashion a sentimental romance which was coloured from beginning to end by his own experience."

A friendly critic, Réville, expressed the matter very concisely and aptly - "It must be confessed that on the whole his Jesus appeals less to conscience than to aesthetic sense." Indeed the principal thing kept in view is the literary character of the book. The style takes precedence of the facts; elegance is the author's highest ambition. He seems almost to have imposed/

imposed upon himself the rule not to write like any other man. All the terms of phrase, all the expressions, aim at the picturesque and the novel. Wit, cleverness, mental reservation, the art of forcing a secret conclusion upon the conclusion which is expressed, and the discrediting the cause which in appearance is defended - such is Renan's task.

He was the greatest master of genius his generation had known; in philosophy and history the compeer of Taine; in philology the heir of Burnouf; in style, sentiment, and poetry of feeling no less a master than Victor Hugo, worthy of a place beside Chateaubriand and Lamennais (both of them also Bretons), inspired by the charm of that French idiom, which in those eloquent preachers struck a tragic and sombre note, but which from Renan's pen flowed in a smiling stream. The lyric beauty and charm of his wonderful "Souvenirs d' Enfance et de Jeunesse," in which he invoked childhood memories of Celtic Brittany, is something which not even the most extreme among his clerical enemies could deny. In point of poetical charm, refined humour, and kindly philosophy, Renan's "Souvenirs" stand supreme. Simple and artless as is his story, the form in which it is given is highly artistic. How could Renan write anything but in perfect style? The story of the old Breton days is exquisitely told. The gem of the collection, surely however, is the "Flax Crusher." Few can read it without being moved. Rarely has the story of a woman's unrequited love been more beautifully told/

told. Indeed, sometimes one may be tempted to wish that Renan had left controversies alone and just waved his enchanter's wand at his own sweet will; but then he would not have been Renan.

Regarding the eloquence of some of the descriptive passages in his historical work, even so valiant a foe as René Bazin has to acknowledge "these supple, glowing phrases, sonorous as the waves of the sea, and simple even as they." It is perhaps a little feminine, almost precious in its limpidity, this delicate instrument of style which Renan wielded, sometimes even entirely lacking in virility; yet it could at times flash out in bitter irony, and it could quiver in biting denunciation. It is probably no exaggeration to say that Renan will one day be remembered mainly by his mastery of prose. His books, and especially the "Vie de Jésus," contain some immortal pages, — passages of ravishing splendour in which, in spite of the limits which his preconceived ideas impose, his admiration for and love of the Saviour, rise almost to inspired and impassioned rapture, and they will scarcely be read now-a-days except for the study of an acute mind as well as for the purity of their style, a style which in its familiar grace and easy beauty recalls at times the best Greek prose — the winged words of Plato or Xenophon, a style which still remains a model for the best French writers of modern times, such as Anatole France, Pierre Loti, Regnier, Hermant. That supremely beautiful instrument for prose, the French/

French language, has rarely been handled with higher distinction, or with more consummate mastery than in certain passages of haunting beauty as for example the closing one of the "Vie de Jésus":— "As to us eternal children, condemned to impotence, who labour without reaping, and who will never witness the fruit of that which we have sown, let us bow before these demi-gods. They did that which we cannot do — create, affirm, act. Will great originality be born again, or will the world henceforth content itself by following the paths opened by the bold original minds of antiquity? We do not know. In any case Jesus will not be surpassed. His worship will constantly renew itself, his history will provoke endless pious tears, his sufferings will subdue the stoutest hearts; all ages will proclaim that, among the sons of men, no one hasbeen born who is greater than Jesus." ("Vie de Jésus," p.p. 265,266) There is also the passage in which, referring to the Woman of Samaria and to the words, "The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth," Renan thus writes — "The day on which he uttered this saying, he was in reality Son of God. He uttered for the first time the sentence upon which will repose the edifice of eternal religion. He founded the pure worship of all ages, of all lands, that which elevated souls will embrace until the end of time. Not only was his religion on this day the best religion of humanity, it was the absolute religion; and if other planets have inhabitants endowed with reason and morality their religion cannot be different from that which Jesus proclaimed near Jacob's well. Man hasnot been able to hold/

hold to it; for we can attain the ideal but for a moment. This sentiment of Jesus has been a bright light amidst gross darkness; it has taken eighteen hundred years for the eyes of mankind to become accustomed to it. But the light will grow into the full day, and, after having traversed all the circles of error, mankind will come back to this sentiment and regard it as the immortal expression of its faith and its hopes" (*"Vie de Jésus"*, p.136). Once more, having described, in few and touching words, the crucifixion and death of Jesus, Renan thus breaks forth into a splendid apostrophe: "Rest now in thy glory, noble founder. Thy work is completed; thy divinity is established. Fear no more to see the edifice of thy efforts crumble through a flaw. Henceforth, stripped of all frailty, thou shalt aid, by the exaltation of thy divine peace, the infinite fruits of thy acts. At the cost of a few hours of suffering, which have not even tinged thy great soul, thou hast purchased the most complete immortality. During thousands of years, the world will extol thee. Ensign of our contradictions, thou wilt be the standard around which will be fought the fiercest battles. A thousand times more living, a thousand times more loved, since thy death than during the days of thy pilgrimage here below, thou wilt become so completely the corner-stone of humanity that to tear thy name from this world would be to shake it to its foundations. Between thee and God, men will no longer distinguish. Complete vanquisher of death, take possession of thy kingdom, whither shall follow thee, by the royal road thou hast traced, ages of adorers". (*"Vie de Jésus"*, p.245). "O si sic omnia!" One may well exclaim. In these and not a few other passages of exquisite beauty and power, there/

there are no signs of defective sensibility or susceptibility. And there are many other pages of exceptional beauty and power, which nevertheless are not of the nature of "purple patches", but have the quality of being integral and inevitable parts of the work in its totality. Indeed, there is hardly a section of Renan's volume where there may not be found some touch of feeling which possesses real beauty. The essay on the sources of the "*Vie de Jésus*" with which it opens is itself a literary masterpiece.

Professor L. Freeman Mott has summed up the matter of Renan's style admirably,- "To say that the reader rarely thinks of it at all is perhaps its highest praise. It is marked in general by sobriety, ease, and good sense. Often miracles and theological absurdities are related with an indulgent smile, by many called irony, but it is the sort of irony used by grown people toward children. There is no violence; for although both good and bad are characterised with suitable epithets, there is always an aloofness on the part of the writer, as one not engaged in the affair, not overpraising or blaming the actors. Even the most vivid and sometimes painful passages do not much disturb the reader's tranquillity. This effect results largely from the neutralising influence of intermingling the scientific with the imaginative in immediate sequence. We are never kept long on the same level. Often the mode of speaking is distinctly ecclesiastical, the eloquence of a sermon; the next moment it is familiar, the tone of a charming causerie; then again the rhythmical sweep of an apostrophe will elevate the movement, or some noble object or thought will clothe itself in appropriately ornate expression. There are indeed few pages/

pages that can be called dry, although the amount of intrinsic interest and the skill displayed certainly vary in different parts of the narrative". (Prof. L.F. Mott's Renan, p.411).

Literature so simple, so beautiful in expression, so varied in its appeal, belongs clearly to the rare class which will be read with delight so long as human nature remains unchanged. In a historical age Renan was a prince among historians. What historian has been at once so sure a master of the most delicate critical implements, and yet so rich in the imaginative gifts which recreate the distant past? What a wealth he displays of generalisations, some indeed fantastic and strained, but many just and illuminating! What a profusion of images and historical analogies he brings forth from his rich storehouse! And with it all Renan is in his style flowing, easy, charming. The inner secret of all this was an intellect of unusual power, courage, and tenacity, guided by gifts of exquisite aesthetic sensibility.

## CHAPTER II.

Sources and Synopsis of the "Vie de Jésus".

Summary of Chapter:-

Renan's Introduction to his "Vie de Jésus".

Its importance in a critical study of the book.

Renan's main principles set forth in it.

His indebtedness to several predecessors in the field of critical inquiry ; principally F. D. Strauss.

Original sources after the Gospels

- (1) Philo,
- (2) Josephus,
- (3) Apocrypha of the Old Testament,
- (4) the Talmud.

The four Gospels his main source.

Renan's attitude to the Synoptics and John.

Synopsis of the career of Jesus.

Three Stages -

- (1) The Ideal,
- (2) The Messianic.
- (3) The Passionate and Thaumaturgic.

## CHAPTER II.

Before entering upon a critical examination of the various influences on Renan's "Vie de Jésus" there is but one legitimate method to be adopted, namely, to inquire first of all, what are its sources, and secondly, what use has been made of these sources; and thereafter to present an outline of the work, studiously endeavouring to set forth the salient features in it.

There are, one may say, four main lines along which a life of Jesus might be written. The first, and the only one accepted by the orthodox Churches, is a mere harmony of the evangelical records. Of this type, Bossuet's remains a good model; Veuillot's, and, with a veneer of philosophy and scholarship, Père Didon's, belong to the same class. This method takes the whole question for granted: in practice it leads to great difficulties; flagrant contradictions cannot be reconciled without straining common sense and good faith to the breaking point. The second is mainly philosophical: the idea rather than the personality of Christ is its main objective. In extreme cases, the personality is entirely lost sight of, and the life of Christ becomes the study of the formation and development of a myth: such, at least, is the tendency of Strauss's "Leben Jesu." This method is seductive, but perilously arbitrary. A third type, strictly scientific/

strictly scientific, is critical - the discussion and comparison of all existing documents, and principally of the Gospels, is practically the whole history. In Renan's time, and in France, this work was done piecemeal by the Strasburg school of liberal Protestants. Its method is purely destructive, and therefore inadequate to the treatment of the greatest event in the world's history.

Renan adopted a fourth method, which he borrowed from Michelet, namely the "integral resurrection of the past". When all authorities have been collected, collated and criticised, a few facts stand out as certain, and the impression of a general trend remains. With these facts, with this general impression, with sympathy, insight, and a feeling for the laws of life, the historian composes a plausible and artistic narrative. In other words, he offers us a hypothesis which must take all known facts into account, and at the same time conform with our ideas of possibility.

The objections to such a method are obvious. The qualities of insight, imagination and sympathy are not to be despised in a historian; when they are kept under control, when facts are numerous and well-established, these qualities transmute erudition into real history. They are evident in the last and soundest works of Michelet and Carlyle, and are not lacking in a few of the greatest German scholars, such as Niebuhr, Ranke, Burckhardt, and Mommsen. There is not a page

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of real history, as distinguished from the mechanical compilation of documents, that is not plausible and artistic hypothesis. But, when facts are few and uncertain, when there is no universal consensus as to their significance, the personality of the author becomes the main element in the book, and the theory defines the historical romance rather than history.

A Critical Introduction of no fewer than fifty six pages forms the portal of the "Vie de Jésus" a volume that can only be described as consisting of moderate dimensions. Here let it be said that Renan's Prefaces in his different works are invariably important and eloquent. Those who have read the first collection of his critical Essays, the "Essais de Morale et de Critique," will not have forgotten the enchanting pages that introduce that production. To the Introductory pages in the "Vie de Jésus" therefore, some careful attention must at the outset be given, for, although they are to many readers of the book not the most interesting portion of it, they are indeed a literary masterpiece, and they constitute for the critical student by far the most important section of the volume, inasmuch as they contain a statement of the principles upon which it was composed. It was not Renan's highly coloured descriptions of Galilean scenery, nor the sentimental portraiture of Christ as a "charming teacher" and a "delightful moralist," nor even the more serious offences he committed against good sense and good taste which darken the later chapters of the volume, that were likely to inflict any dangerous wound upon orthodox Christianity. It was his fundamental principles which were incompatible with belief, in the ordinary/

ordinary sense of the word. It was the premisses which were responsible for the conclusion. And to grapple with the conclusion without noticing the premisses, could only be regarded as an ineffective method of dealing with his argument.

The main principles, then, that are set forth in the Introduction are three in number. The first principle is a remarkable sample of pure scientific dogmatism, namely, that there neither is, nor can be, any such thing as a miracle. "Miracles are things which never happen; only credulous people believe they have seen them; you cannot cite a single one which has taken place in presence of witnesses capable of testing it; no special intervention of the Divinity, whether in the composition of a book, or in any event whatever, has been proved. For this reason alone, when a person admits the supernatural, such an one is without the province of science; he accepts an explanation which is non-scientific." (Introduction p.xi). From this principle it immediately follows that the Gospel histories, into which miracle is so abundantly interwoven, must needs be to a large extent legendary.

The second principle Renan advances is an equally remarkable specimen of scientific scepticism, namely, that no history whatever, sacred or profane, is strictly true; that a true general impression is all that is really attainable; and that, consequently, in working up unhistorical materials into the form/

form of history, Renan is acting the part of a true historian.

The third principle is the arbitrary maxim that the test of a true representation is its coherence and consistency. But these questions must be more closely examined.

In the opening paragraph of his Introduction, some light is at once shed on the object and meaning of the book, by the author's indication that it is, after all, only the first instalment of a larger scheme. It is not Jesus for his own sake, but the broad, unique, and prolific fact called Christianity that interests Renan and sets his pen in motion (Introduction p. xxxiii). The "Life of Jesus" was but "the fact which served as the point of departure for the new religion." Accordingly, the author's design, which was ultimately realised, as has already been indicated, was that the "Vie de Jésus" should be followed by other volumes, carrying out the "History of the Origins of Christianity," and tracing the gradual growth and development of Christian ideas down to the reign of Constantine.

In the composition of the initial volume of the series, Renan candidly acknowledges his indebtedness to several students who had preceded him in the domain of critical inquiry, and who had accumulated materials of which he freely made use. With a kind of effortless ease he makes his readers acquainted with the critical work of Strauss, Baur, Eichthal, Reuss, Colani, Paulus, Scholten/

Scholten, Schenkel, Réville, Nicolas, and Zeller. Three of these writers, namely, E. C. Reuss of Strassburg, J.J.A. Nicolas, and F.D. Strauss, were well known in Renan's time. A fourth was Albert Réville, a Protestant pastor at Rotterdam, and a contributor to the "Revue Germanique," who himself wrote an exceedingly able criticism on Renan's book, dealing in masterly fashion with many of its weak points (Réville's "La Vie de Jésus," de M. Renan. Paris, 1864). A fifth was Eichthal, the author of a work that displayed ~~extreme~~ recklessness of method and an unscrupulousness of language, only equalled by the worst school of English Deism in the 17th century.

Of these authorities, however, there was but one who was of really supreme importance, as being the Socrates to this accomplished Plato, and that was the celebrated F.D. Strauss. For years Renan had been a close student of Strauss, and published the results of his studies in a criticism of the "Historiens Critiques de Jésus," (reprinted later in his volume "Nouvelles études d'Histoire Religieuse"). Though departing in much from Strauss, and though there is nothing in his writings of the acrid temper which mars the kindred work of Strauss, his "French continuator," as Renan has been designated, has much in common with him. They agree substantially in their religious philosophy. Renan looks askance on Deism no less than upon orthodox Christianity. He rejects, like Strauss, all miracles, though rather as unproved than as impossible. He discredits likewise the immortality of the soul as at variance with physiology. Strauss and Renan agree also/

also in their estimate of Christ's commanding influence. Like Strauss, Renan exalts Jesus as the greatest religious genius the world has seen, and the man who had the highest consciousness of oneness with God; and he deduces the Christian Church and the Gospels from the same mixture of fact and fiction, the real grandeur of Christ acting on the Jewish fancies of his disciples, and blending supernatural legend and Messianic adaptation with literal history.

The chief differences in these otherwise kindred works are, (a) and chiefly, that Strauss everywhere forgets the biographer in the critic, and leaves the actual Jesus a pale and dim shadow, while Renan strives by every dramatic art to give his creation life and colour, employing to this end, not only the resources of imagination, but of personal experience in travel amid the scenes of Gospel History; (b) that Renan uses far more readily the Gospel narratives as supplying the historical matter, making them, as he does, fall within the first century, and even conceding the frequent truthfulness of the fourth Gospel, while denying the authority of its discourses; (c), that Renan does not preserve the decorum of Strauss towards Christ's character; but while loading him with far more frequent and high sounding eulogy, ascribes to him complicity in various acts of pious deception practised by his disciples; (d), that Renan's work, whilst denying to Jesus any political mission, contains various allusions of a political character, from which the more scientific treatise of Strauss is free. (e) Renan professes to disagree with Strauss in/

in his treatment of the Gospels; he prefers the word "legende" to Strauss's "mythe" and describes his master as "deficient in historical feeling"; he even good-naturedly reminds him that he is in the estimation of many "un théologien timide."

But in spite of all these differences, it is impossible not to recognise in Strauss's "Leben Jesu" the quarry whence Renan's "Vie de Jésus" was hewn, and in the former's theory of "myth founded upon facts" only a less dramatic form of the latter's theory of "legend founded upon facts." Myth, then, or legend, whatever term he used, was the magic word with which both master and pupil proposed to unlock the mysterious secret which had so long baffled all enquirers, whether knocking furiously like **Bruno Bauer** and Strauss, or "doucement" like Ernest Renan and Francis Newman.

Renan's work stands closely connected also with Baur and the Tübingen school. Baur, of whom Strauss was a younger pupil, attempted to explain the origin and success of Christianity without the admission of the miraculous, and in connection with acknowledged and historical facts. The whole of Baur's conception of history is permeated with the Hegelian philosophy. To the last he was governed by the fundamental idea of Hegelianism, namely, the immanence of God and the world, according to which the relation of the divine and human spirit must be conceived of as essential unity, not as personal distinction and intercourse. This idea, as we shall see, pervades Renan's work, and is due not merely to his direct/

direct study of the Hegelian philosophy, but also to the influence of the Tübingen school. According to their tenets, God does not live and reign above the world and its changes; He is only realised in and with it, and the history of the world is the process of an absolute Being, which develops with an iron necessity according to natural laws. All that appears in nature and history is a revelation of the eternal Idea. But the latter is never fully realised in a single individual, only in the general development taken as a whole. There is a very striking resemblance between this conception and Renan's idea of all Being as Becoming, a perpetual Fieri, an eternal process towards an unknown end, an infinite continuance over which an unconscious deity broods in the abyss. The aim of the Tübingen school, headed by Baur, in all their criticism and historical investigation was a dogmatic one. They worked upon a philosophical presupposition. The miraculous as such is impossible. The appearance of the miraculous is to be explained by a deeper view of the immanence of the Divine in nature. "The elements of the Christian religion are derived, as much as possible, from conceptions and ideas already extant in Judaism and Heathenism, and by connecting them with these, as though they were products of a natural development. The means by which Baur seeks to eliminate the miraculous is the demonstration of historical analogies and points of contact between the pre-Christian and the Christian view of the world and of God... Baur arrives at the conclusion that the germs of a new creation lay dormant in the dissolution of the old world, and only needed to/

to be centred in one focus, in order to raise the religious consciousness to the level of Christianity. Christianity, therefore, is only the natural unity of all these elements. It contains nothing which is not conditioned by a preceding series of causes and effects; nothing which had not long before been prepared in different ways; nothing which had not already been indicated, either as a result of rational thought, or as a need of the human heart, or as a requirement of the moral consciousness." (Christlieb's "Modern Doubt and Christian Belief," pp. 509, 510, 512). The standpoint of Renan in his "Vie de Jésus" is in the main essentially the same as that of the Tübingen school.

In enumerating the sources from which a trustworthy account of Jesus and his times is to be obtained, Renan's view of the matter is that first in importance, of course, stand the Gospels. These were naturally the principal foundation for the life of Jesus, and Renan's treatment of them has been one of the chief points of attack by orthodox critics, their grievance being his separation of what he regarded as historical from what he considered legendary and of the nature of Aberglaube.

Next in importance after the New Testament comes Philo, who was a contemporary with Christ, and who, preserved by distance and Greek culture from the narrow pedantry of the Jerusalem schools, affords invaluable insight into the general state  
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of the Jewish mind at the time. "The writings of Philo," says Renan, "have the inestimable advantage of showing us the thoughts which, in the time of Jesus, stirred souls occupied with great religious questions. Philo lived, it is true, in quite a different sphere of Judaism from Jesus; yet, like him, he was quite free from the pharisaic spirit which reigned at Jerusalem." Renan ventures to call him "*le frère ainé de Jésus.*" "Philo is in truth the elder brother of Jesus. He was 62 years of age when the prophet of Nazareth had reached the highest point of his activity. What a pity it is that the accidents of life did not direct his steps into Galilee! What would he not have taught us!" (Introduction to "Vie de Jésus," p. xxxv). Renan greatly exaggerates the value of Philo as an illustration of the circle of religious ideas in which a simple Galilean artisan of his time would have moved. There would have been, says a competent critic, about as much in common between them as between a Catholic peasant in the Tyrol and one of Renan's "advanced" professors at Strassburg or Montauban.

Next to Philo, as an original source, stands Josephus - useful rather in the way of presenting the external features of the age. "Josephus," says Renan, "who wrote chiefly for the Pagans, did not exhibit the same sincerity" as Philo. "His meagre accounts of Jesus, John the Baptist, and of Judas the Gaulonite, are colourless and lifeless. We feel that he sought to represent these movements, so profoundly Jewish in /

in character and spirit, in a form which would be intelligible to the Greeks and Romans...That which constitutes the immense interest of the books of Josephus in respect of our present subject is the vivid picture he gives of the times. Thanks to this Jewish historian, Herod, Herodias, Antipas, Philip, Annas, Kaiaphas, and Pilate are personages whom, so to speak, we can touch, and whom we can actually see living before us". (Introduction to "Vie de Jésus" p. xxxv).

On the list of chief authorities according to Renan, there stand also the Apocrypha of the Old Testament, and especially that singular apocalyptic literature which, beginning with the Book of Daniel and including the fourth Book of Esdras, the Sibylline Verses, and the Book of Enoch, gradually gave rise to those ideas about the "Son of Man" and his second advent which prevailed among the contemporaries of Jesus, and which formed, as Renan designated it, the "envelope fabuleuse" by which the more spiritual doctrines of Jesus gained entrance into the hearts of men. These apocalyptic and apocryphal writings of the Old Testament, according to Renan, "possess a primary importance in the history of the development of the Messianic theories and in the understanding of the conceptions of Jesus in regard to the kingdom of God. The Book of Enoch, in particular, and the Assumption of Moses, were much read in the circle of Jesus." (Introduction to "Vie de Jésus" p. xxxv). The Gospels, and the writings/

writings of the Apostles, contain, Renan thinks, but little in fact of apocalyptic doctrine which may not be already found in Daniel and Enoch, and the Sibylline oracles, which were of Jewish origin. Jesus took possession of these ideas which were generally spread among his contemporaries; he made them the fulcrum of his action, or, to speak more correctly, one of his fulcra - for he had too profound a perception of his true work to establish it solely on principles so fragile and so exposed.

Last, but not least, in utility as a source of information regarding the Jewish ideas of the first century, Renan names the Talmud, that vast collection (as he well describes it) of lecture-room notes, "the enormous medley of writings which, for generations, had accumulated in the different Jewish schools," (Introduction to "Vie de Jésus," p. xxxvii), transmitted orally till after A.D. 200, and then written down. By that time Jewish hostility to Christianity was too pronounced to render the suspicion of any dependence on Christian records reasonable.

If we may believe Renan's critics, however, he does not know how to quote the Talmud correctly, and he has altogether neglected those parts of it which most faithfully reflect the feeling and opinions of the Jews of the time of our Lord as to the promises of the Messiah and the qualities of his character. It is somewhat remarkable that Renan who includes among his authorities the Talmud and the Apocrypha of the Old Testament, should/

should have distinctly set aside as undeserving of notice the "Apocryphal Gospels". One is certainly not inclined to exaggerate their importance; though it is not impossible that they may contain one or two shreds of old and authentic tradition. But the writers of the worst of the classes into which these compositions may be divided - that which contains the forgeries manufactured by heretics for the purpose of palming off a view of the life and teaching of Christ in harmony with their own doctrine - are frankly speaking, but the literary ancestors of Renan.

Allowing for differences of persons and countries, time, place and literary style, Renan has done nothing which they have not done before him, excepting only that he has prefixed to his Gospel an Introduction of about sixty pages which is meant to be the critical foundation on which the remainder of the work is based. It was not the fashion to do this in the second century; but there is no doubt that many could have written with as fair an appearance of learning, for their time, as Renan for his.

Not only are the Apocryphal Gospels discarded, but we hear nothing of the Apostolic Fathers. Renan is certainly very capricious in his selections of ancient authorities. He has good reasons, of course, for making little account of the Epistles of Paul, which would obviously harmonise but poorly with his view of the life, character, and institutions of Christ. It is easy to see that his list of authentic sources is purely arbitrary, both as to what he admits/

admits and as to what he excludes.

It is of course in the four Gospels, and more especially in the Synoptics, and most particularly in Matthew and Mark, that Renan claimed to find most trustworthy material for the construction of his history. Justly perceiving that it was vitally important for him to build his castle, not in the clouds, but on the earth, he admits that the four Gospels are the main source of information with regard to the life of Jesus, and accordingly he devotes a considerable number of preliminary pages to the question of their origin, composition and authority. The account he gives of the Evangelical records has a very important bearing on Renan's book, and here, therefore, an endeavour must be made to follow his line of reasoning carefully.

At first sight Renan appears, for a rationalist, unusually indulgent in his concessions regarding the four Gospels. Unlike Strauss, he admits them as authentic. An incautious reader might almost think that he was about to accept them in their integrity. Of course, says Renan, the Gospels are legendary biographies; "mais il y a légende et légende," and not all are to be rejected at once as worthless. He traces them all with great honesty and candour to the first century, that is, in substance, and thinks them almost wholly the work of/

of the authors to whom they are attributed, though their historic value, according to him, is very unequal, Matthew being the most to be depended upon for the words of Jesus, and Mark for a pure and plain account of his actions; while with regard to Luke he seems to adopt in some considerable degree the Straussian notion of the original materials having been rolled about like boulders in the stream of tradition. Luke's Gospel is a collection of traditions of the apostolic age, when the legends as well as the history, had gathered consistency and shape. There are marks of polish in the style which make the discourses reported by Luke less trustworthy than those of Matthew; but of many that he alone reports, there can be no doubt as to their genuineness and authenticity. As regards John, admitting that he had a deeper insight into the mind of Jesus than the others, and that he knew much of his external life which they did not, Renan is of the opinion that John's imagination largely co-operated with his memory, and, furthermore, that not a little of the speculative and spiritual part of the Gospel may have been added by the Ephesian school.

On the whole, no doubt there is a good deal of truth mixed up with Renan's ideas on this subject; but one thing must strike a thoughtful reader, that, after all, the mere acknowledgment of the right names having been prefixed to the four Gospels is comparatively little, and that they might as well be/

be any other four names, unless the authority which these names express is recognised. Neglecting to do this, Renan, although theoretically admitting the value of these documents, practically makes them of very doubtful and wavering significance in many of the most interesting and important points of Christ's life. And so, when he tells us that the problem of the Gospels "has arrived at a solution which, though leaving room for many uncertainties, is fully adequate to the requirements of history," one may seriously suspect his meaning to be, for such a history as he wishes to write. For the looseness of Renan's theory enables him to take just such things out of the Gospel records, and in such order as suits his purpose, and to emphasise these, or slur those, as his object requires. The sum of all Renan's critiques on the Gospels is clearly this - that they are in every way worthy of credit in all cases in which it is possible they should be believed.

Thus we have from Renan a general acceptance of the four Evangelical records as historical authorities. How then does he draw from them such a caricature of the life of Jesus? As far as any reason at all can be found in his pages, it is contained in the modifications on which he insists when he deals with the Evangelists singly. It must be borne in mind that Renan is a sceptic with regard to all supernatural revelations. His volume was the expression of a prevailing philosophical tendency. He makes the absolute rejection of the supernatural the basis of the whole structure of his work. Throughout the introduction and the early Chapters/

Chapters especially, the author parades the great Positivist conception of an unchanging material Law governing all things, - the world of history as well as the world of matter, Any miraculous narrative is for Renan quite incompatible with historical veracity. It is sufficient to prove that a record is so far fictitious or legendary, when it acknowledges the reality of the supernatural, or when it includes any professed miraculous occurrences. And until a new order of things arrives, Renan " will maintain this principle of historical criticism, that a supernatural narrative cannot be admitted as such; that it always implies credulity or imposture;.that the duty of the historian is to interpret it, and to investigate what portion he can receive as truth, and what portion as error"

Proceeding, then, to consider Renan's attitude towards the Gospels in a more detailed manner, we find that he holds that they are in part legendary, and his reason for this, which he considers to be sufficiently evident, is, that they are full of miracles and the supernatural. So, then, we are to believe that there were no real miracles in Christ's life, and that all miraculous narratives are legendary. More than this, the presence of the supernatural in any form is sufficient proof that it is legend, and not history, that we are reading. No doubt: for when a man has persuaded himself that nothing is real among us which is not human in its origin/

origin, and that divine interference cannot take place - that, in fact, there is neither miracle, nor prophecy, nor inspiration, nor revelation, he must deny the authenticity of the records of such things. But surely we must prove these things, and not take them for granted. Renan contents himself with saying that he does not deny the possibility of a miracle, but that a miracle has ever been demonstrated. All such writing proceeds on foregone conclusions, and may well be pronounced arrogant and dogmatic.

Acting on his philosophical preconceptions regarding the supernatural and the miraculous, when he deals with Matthew's Gospel, he sets to work to discard from the original narrative almost all its historical statements, containing so large an element as these do of the supernatural and miraculous. Not that he intends to accept, as having been really spoken by our Lord, all that this Gospel declares to have been said by Him. But he draws a distinction between discourses and actions; the latter he dismisses, the former he admits when they seem to him authentic.

Renan's entire hypothesis is based upon a single word of Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia during the first half of the second century, preserved to us by Eusebius, which our author chooses to understand in a restricted sense. Renan builds upon this testimony or rather upon his misconception of it, his theory regarding the origin of the Gospels/

Gospels. Parenthetically, one may remark that it is somewhat amusing to see an author like Papias, who is not usually held in high esteem by rationalistic writers, made so much of by Renan for once, simply because he happens to serve a particular purpose. If Renan had found Papias an obstacle in his way, it is quite probable that he would have reminded us that Eusebius declares him to be a man of small intelligence.

However, Papias, according to Eusebius, (Eusebius, Hist. Eccl. liii C. ult.) mentions that he had heard an explanation from a certain "elder" of the difference between the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. In speaking of Matthew's Gospel, Papias uses the expression λόγια and nothing else - Ματθαῖος μὲν οὖν ἔβραιδ-διαλέκτῳ τὰ λόγια συνεγράψατο. The Gospel of Mark is described as containing Τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἡ λεχθέντα ἡ πραχθέντα.

The following is the passage in full : - Μάρκος μὲν ἔρμηνευτὴς Πέτρου γενόμενος, διὰ ἐμνημόνευσεν ἀκριβῶς ἔγραψεν. οὐ μέντοι τάξει τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἡ λεχθέντα ἡ πραχθέντα. οὗτε γὰρ ἦκουσε τοῦ Κυρίου, οὔτε παρηκολούθησεν αὐτῷ. Ὁτερον δὲ ὡς ἔφην Πέτρῳ, ὃς πρὸς τὰς χρήσιας ἐποιεῖτο τὰς διδασκαλίας. ἀλλ' οὐχ ἄσπερ σύνταξιν τῶν Κυριακῶν ποιούμενος λόγων. ὡς τε οὐ δὲν ἥμαρτεν Μάρκος, οὕτως ἔνια γράψας ὡς ἀπεμνημόνευσεν. ἐνὸς γὰρ ἐποιήσατο πρόνοιαν, τοῦ μηδὲν, ὃν ἦκουσεν, παραλιπεῖν, ἡ ψεύσασθαι τι ἐν αὐτοῖς. Ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ἱστόρηται τῷ Παπίᾳ

περὶ τοῦ Μάρκου. περὶ δὲ τοῦ Ματθαίου ταῦτα εἴρεται, Ματθαῖος μὲν οὖν ἔβραιδ-διαλέκτῳ τὰ λόγια συνεγράψατο. ἤρμήνευσε δ' αὐτὰ ὡς ἥδύνατο ἔκαστος.

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to the needs (of his hearers), but had no design of giving a connected account of the Lord's oracles. Thus what is first asserted of Mark, is in the second place asserted of Peter. Neither pretended to give a collected and arranged account. In the clause about Mark, the subject is called *πραχθέντα* ἢ *λεχθέντα*; in that about Peter, it is called *λόγια*.

The "elder" quoted by Papias, goes on to say that Matthew did what the others did not, - *Τὰ λόγια συνετάξατο*, he collected and arranged the "oracles". Renan would have us understand that the word *λόγια* was intended to describe the discourses of Christ, and to exclude His actions; that the original Gospel of Matthew contained only the *λόγια* or discourses, which still form so large a part of it, and that the Canonical Gospel was the product of a subsequent addition of narrative matter to that earlier work. Mark's Gospel, on the other hand, according to Renan, was originally little more than a brief narrative of facts, or a collection of biographical anecdotes. It was only gradually/

(Eusebius, Historia Ecclesiastica, iii 39)

Mark is said to have written accurately what he remembered from Peter; without however recording in order the sayings or doings of Christ (τὰ ὡπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἡ λεχθέντα ἡ πραχθέντα).

He was the companion of Peter, who adapted his instructions to the needs (of his hearers), but had no design of giving a connected account of the Lord's oracles. Thus what is first asserted of Mark, is in the second place asserted of Peter. Neither pretended to give a collected and arranged account. In the clause about Mark, the subject is called πραχθέντα ἡ λεχθέντα ; in that about Peter, it is called λόγια.

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gradually, by a process which he describes, that these Gospels respectively assumed their present form. Matthew is "characterised by long discourses; Mark is above all anecdotal + more exact than the first as to minute facts, brief even to dryness, poor in discourse, ill composed"

In point of fact, however, there is no warrant so far as Papias is concerned, for presuming that Mark's Gospel was nothing else than a brief narrative of facts, or an anecdotal collection. It is distinctly stated to have contained not only the things "done", but also the things "spoken" by Christ.

And as regards the precise interpretations of the word *λόγια*, it certainly is capable of a wider meaning than Renan takes out of it. It is equivalent to both the discourses and the actions of Christ. No doubt, in the main, it suggests the idea of discourses, or rather "oracles", but as Dr. Tulloch points out, it can also be interpreted in the general historic sense of "annals"; and it is maintained by impartial critics that it has that meaning here. The word *λόγια* comes from the New Testament, where Paul employs it of the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures - "To the Jews were committed the oracles of God" (Rom. 3<sup>2</sup>). In three other places in the New Testament the expression *λόγια* is found, and in each of them it bears the meaning of "oracles". "Moses received the lively oracles to give unto us" (Acts 7 38.) "Ye have need that we teach you which be the first principles of/

of the oracles of God" (Heb. 5<sup>12</sup>), "If anyone speak let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4<sup>11</sup>). Further, Papias himself described his own collection of Apostolic "memoirs" as λόγια ; and in this collection it is quite certain that actions as well as sayings were included. But even granting the restricted sense of the expression to be the more correct one, it would be very unfair to argue from it here. The "elder" to whom Papias refers, is not giving a general account of the Gospels, but explaining what seemed to him a defect in Mark's Gospel, as compared with that of Matthew. The latter Gospel contained many things omitted by the former, and it appeared to be superior in arrangement. This is the most probable interpretation; even if the "elder" were speaking of "discourses" only - for the Gospel of Mark contains very few of them - his assertion only goes so far as to account for their absence in Mark, and to affirm their presence in Matthew, and cannot by any means be twisted into the conclusion that Matthew contributed nothing but discourses.

Further, even supposing λόγια to mean "discourses" simply, yet Papias is speaking here aoristically - of something that had occurred at a former time, but was no longer the fact. That is, when he says that ἡρμηνευσε διδύται ὡς ἤδυνατο ἐκάστος , "everyone interpreted the Hebrew Matthew as he could", he means, and implies in his language, that the necessity of rendering the Hebrew into the Greek had once existed, to be sure, but existed no longer. Why? Apparently because the Greek Matthew was now in the hands/

hands of the Christians. This Greek Matthew which Papias and his contemporaries used, seems undoubtedly to have been our first Gospel in its present form. Our Greek Matthew is represented by the Fathers to be a translation of a Hebrew Gospel. If we admit the correctness of the tradition, then the Hebrew Matthew must have received its supplement of narrative matter, and in its complete form been generally connected with the name of this Apostle, before the Greek Version was made. The hypothesis that this Gospel received essential changes or additions of matter, subsequent to the time of Papias, is excluded by an overwhelming weight of evidence.

Such, therefore, is the single and slender foundation upon which Renan's hypothesis regarding the original Gospel of Matthew is based. We need scarcely add that this hypothesis itself displays a great lack of critical discrimination.

The Gospel according to Matthew in its present Canonical form has been acknowledged by New Testament scholars to be a perfect whole, in which unity of design and mutual dependence of parts can easily be demonstrated; perhaps more easily than in the case of the other Gospels. The history cannot be detached from the discourses, nor the discourses from the history. Prin. Tulloch in his "The Christ of the Gospels and the Christ of modern Criticism", Lectures on the "Vie de Jésus", has admirably summarised the position with regard to Matthew's Gospel, - "Catholic tradition, and the voice of the Fathers,

so /

so far as it has been preserved, - of Irenaeus, Origen, and Eusebius, - unanimously presume the integrity of St. Matthew's Gospel from the beginning. Patristic authority, it is well known, is almost unanimous in asserting a Hebrew original of this Gospel, prepared by the Apostle specially for the use of his countrymen, and it is most unlikely that such a document would not contain a narrative of our Lord's miracles, as well as of His discourses. And when we turn to the Gospel itself, it is found to bear every appearance of undivided authorship. It is stamped throughout by a dominant impression, - a special and individual aim, - exactly answering to the Patristic idea of it. The author is a Jew among Jews, and obviously writing for Jews. The great purpose of his Gospel, accordingly, is to exhibit Jesus as the Messiah - as the accomplishment of Hebrew prophecy - the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets .... This is the image which the Gospel, not merely in parts, but as a whole, not in its discourses merely, but in its narrative also, constantly brings before us. This personality lives throughout its pages, binding them into a unity, animating them as a whole. And it is impossible that such a consistent picture could have been, as supposed, a mere mass of gradually accumulating tradition". (pp. 98 - 101)

At first sight, Renan appears more inclined to deal fairly with the Gospel of Mark. It is, at all events, founded, he says, on the anecdotes and memoirs written down by Mark from the/

the recollections of an eye-witness; and there is nothing to contradict the statement of Papias that this eye-witness was Peter. And yet, after all, Mark is the one of the Evangelists of whom Renan makes perhaps the least account. He adopts an ingenious method by which any one may eliminate anything that displeases him from the text of his authorities. Renan has a theory regarding the formation of the Gospels which leaves him or any other critic entirely at liberty to take or reject the materials before them at discretion. Contrary to every single witness of the highest antiquity, he declares that for the first century and a half the text of the Gospels was of no authority, and no care was taken to preserve it. "People made no scruple about inserting paragraphs in them, of combining various narratives, and in perfecting the one by the other. The poor man who had only one book was anxious that it should contain all that was dear to his heart. These little books were lent by one to another; each transcribed into the margin of his copy the phrases and parables he found in others which affected him. The most beautiful thing in the world has thus proceeded from an obscure and wholly popular elaboration". (Introduction to "Vie de Jésus" p. xl).

Since the doctrine of the origin of the world from the fortuitous concourse of atoms was exploded, surely no hypothesis more absurd than this of Renan has been seriously put forward. Somehow or other, "par une élaboration obscure et/

et complètement populaire", four distinct Gospels emerge from this process: the text is the same, the arrangement the same, the distinctive character and contents of each one of the four are the same everywhere. That is, each one of these obscure "élaborations" made up four separate books and put the same contents into each in the same order. And, of course, as these humble elaborators felt no scruple in adding to the text in order to make it, according to their ideas, more perfect, in Renan's opinion one need feel no scruple in mutilating the text in order to render it according to one's ideas more original. This principle will, of course, enable Renan to do anything he likes with Mark. He will use him now and then for the minute and graphic touches of incident and character with which that Gospel abounds; but another great principle must forbid him doing more. Experience, says Renan, has demonstrated the impossibility of anything supernatural. As for miracles, he does not say that they are impossible; he is content with asserting that none have ever taken place under the requisite scientific conditions. Miracles, therefore, must be made away with, as well as prophecy. Mark, unfortunately, is full of these things. He is the evangelist of miraculous cures and of instances of the casting out of devils. Renan, of course, discredits both the reality of the cures and the existence of the devils; and it can, therefore, be easily imagined how much he will admit of Mark's Gospel, short as it is/

is, and mainly devoted as it is to the actions rather than to the teaching of Jesus.

The early chapters of Luke's Gospel do not receive any more favour from our author. It goes almost without saying, that, from Renan's philosophical preconceptions, the whole "legend" of Christ's conception, birth, and infancy must be discarded. Renan however, uses Luke for his own purposes. Mention has already been made of some of the eulogies he passes on the third Gospel, as a regular composition, entirely from one hand; we are presently informed that the value of this Gospel is far inferior to that of Mark; that it is a second-hand production; that its sayings of Christ are more considered and composite. Renan is somewhat severe on Luke; - he, the man of Philippi, does not understand Hebrew nor the Jewish character, and often takes the word Jew in a bad sense; he garbles his documents, "fausse la biographie de St. Paul," for the sake of conciliation; to him the truth is nothing, the dogmatic and moral purpose everything. He is a trimmer, who respects even James, and yet could admit Gentiles to fellowship. That Luke was later than the other Synoptics, Renan argues from his severing the account of the destruction of Jerusalem from that of the end of the world, whereas, in the others, they are intermingled. His Gospel is full of mistakes, which he might have avoided if he had had the advantage of Renan's advice/

advice in its composition. He sums up his estimate of Luke by showering on him a number of compliments. He describes him as an "artiste divin," and "his Gospel as that which has the greatest charms for the reader, for to the incomparable beauty of the subject matter common to all the Evangelists, he adds an amount of art and composition which singularly enhances the effect of the picture, without seriously outraging truth." Renan had a theory of his own about truthfulness. Unfortunately it was not that which is common among honest men; and his judgment of Luke, translated into ordinary language, places his authority on the very lowest level.

Regarding John's Gospel, Renan is unusually vacillating and self-contradictory. It seems as if the Evangel of the beloved disciple were particularly disagreeable to him - his bête noire.

It may be that the divine majesty of Christ which is so strikingly set forth in its pages, had a disquieting effect upon Renan. Usually he goes on his way with the most imperturbed, light-hearted gaiety; if he has any deep feelings on the subjects that pass before him, he makes it a part of his business to hide them under an expression of charming politeness and Parisian ease. But somehow he cannot bear John's Evangel of the Word made flesh, of the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, of the Teacher who taught the necessity of the new birth and who spoke of the Son of Man who was to be lifted up as the serpent in the wilderness. It suits Renan to paint Jesus as a "charming young/

young Rabbi" going about with a crowd of women and children, gay, joyous, indulgent, passing from one feast to another, winning everyone by his beauty and grace, repeating moral aphorisms which he gleaned from writers who had preceded him, and promising a paradise which was to be a delightful garden in which the childlike happiness that his followers enjoyed here was to be continued. Certainly this fantastic picture dissolves fast enough before the Gospel of John; and Renan is not sufficiently skilful in his assumption of jaunty indifference to conceal entirely his vexation at this. He seems to lose his temper, and betrays a kind of animosity against the beloved disciple. He imputes to him as a motive for the composition of his Gospel a desire to vindicate for himself a position not inferior to that elsewhere given to Peter. John, moreover, is declared to have a spite against Judas Iscariot. On the contrary, however, Renan admits a certain amount of authority to John, especially with regard to the historical portions of his Gospel. His treatment of the fourth evangelist is exactly the reverse of his treatment of Matthew. Matthew is to be accepted as an authority regarding the discourses of Christ; but his facts are to be disregarded. John possesses little or no weight as to the discourses, but is of great value as to the facts. No one, Renan tells us, can attempt to make out a connected life of Christ with the materials supplied by the four Gospels, without discovering that the historical statements of John are of the utmost comparative value. In the same way, he/

he maintains that no one can make such a narrative with any consistency and coherency, without setting aside the discourses in the fourth Gospel. Just as Renan founds his acceptance of the "words of the Lord" in Matthew on his own intuitive perception of their genuineness and divine force and life, so his rejection of the discourses in John is mainly based upon subjective proof of the same kind. His objection is that the discourses in John are full of abstract and doctrinal language which contrasts strongly with the simple and practical moral tone of the sermons in Matthew. Pieces of theology and rhetoric, they have no analogy to the discourses of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels, and have no more historical reality than the discourses which Plato puts into the mouth of his master Socrates at the moment of dying. Moreover the language of John is in complete harmony, according to Renan, with the intellectual state of Asia Minor at the close of the first century. He has even invented a "mysterious school of Ephesus" and "some great schools of Asia Minor," to whose influence he attributes the tone of John's Gospel, if indeed it does not in great part proceed from them, rather than from the Apostle after whom it is called. Renan has cut the ground from beneath his own feet in acknowledging the historical facts of John as genuine, and particularly the account of the Passion. Every characteristic of the Gospel is there; the contrast between the Evangelists is nowhere more obvious. Nor can the discourses and actions be separated. All sound modern criticism tends to establish the perfect unity of John's/

John's Gospel.

Difficult as the problem of the dates and connection of the Synoptic Gospels might be, and whatever careful discrimination was needed in order to settle even tentatively the historical value that could reasonably be attached to them, the Gospel of John presented difficulties of an even more serious nature, difficulties which Renan recognised by completely changing his views regarding it in the 13th edition of the "Vie de Jésus," and by devoting many pages to a discussion and defence of his new position.

The theory adopted by Renan in the earlier edition of his book was that the fourth Gospel was substantially the work of the Apostle John, although it might have been edited and retouched by his disciples, and that the events related are direct traditions.

This comparatively moderate theory held by Reuss, Ewald, and others, is in strong contrast to the more thorough-going scepticism of Baur, Strauss, Réville, and the Tübingen school generally, who maintained the absolute untrustworthiness of the fourth Gospel, and the impossibility of regarding its relation of either events or discourses as historical. Renan's instinctive dislike to taking extreme or negative views, or, at least, to enunciating them distinctly, led him finally to a position midway between the theory which he originally held and the last-mentioned hypothesis. He was still convinced that the Gospel had an actual connection with the Apostle, and that it/

it was written at the end of the first century, but he no longer believed it to be the composition of John. On the contrary, the author was to be found in some of John's disciples who wrote with the intention of passing off the work as that of the Apostle. The discourses were almost entirely fictitious, but the narrative portions contained valuable traditions which in a measure must be traced back to the reminiscences of the Son of Zebedee. "I persist in believing," Renan writes, "that the Gospel possesses a fund of valuable information equal to that of the Synoptics, and even sometimes superior."

Renan devotes more than a hundred closely printed pages to justifying and amplifying his new position in abandoning his first and more conservative views, and in not adopting the more thorough-going scepticism of the Tübingen school.

If the principles which alone could justify Renan in his treatment of the four Gospels can thus be shown to have been gratuitously assumed, it follows, of course, that the entire fabric erected on them falls to the ground. Renan's criticism is arbitrary and personal in an unwonted degree. He claims the right, and carries it into practice everywhere throughout his volume, to select and adapt the texts of the Gospels as he pleases, accepting what suits him, and rejecting what does not fall in with his preconceived ideas. "Grant me," he says, "that there is nothing supernatural, that miracles and prophecies cannot be, and that I may deal as I like with the four Gospels, and then I will undertake to produce an account of the life of Jesus that shall be in keeping/

keeping with my philosophical ideas." "This is not to write history," declares Prin. Tulloch. "It is impossible to use documentary sources after such a fashion; or, at any rate, it is incompatible with any fair and consistent principles of historical criticism to do so. Legend and history must be kept in their respective places. The former may be a safe and valuable stimulant to the historical imagination, but it is useless as a guide to historical truth. And, particularly, a document cannot be regarded as at once legend and history, in the sense and to the degree, presumed by our author of the Gospels." (Tulloch's "Christ of the Gospels and of Modern Criticism," p.88).

What then is the nature of the account Renan gives of the career of Jesus? This can only be given here in broad outline. "It is said that Angelico Fiesole painted the heads of the Virgin and Christ on his knees. It were well if criticism should act thus, and did not openly disregard the rays which emanate from certain facts - facts before which centuries have bowed themselves, and in the end worshipped." These are impressive words. They teach, as well as any words can teach, the true spirit in which a man of religion and humility should enter upon a study so delicate and perilous to other souls besides his own, as that of sacred criticism. The significant point is that they are the words of Ernest Renan himself, placed at the commencement of his essay on "Les Historiens Critiques de Jésus" ("Nouvelles études d'Histoire religieuse," p.171 E.T.) How far he has adhered/

adhered to these principles in the volume before us we shall be better able to judge after a more detailed examination of its contents.

It is a great conception of our Lord that Renan attempts to delineate; there is, in spite of its serious defects, a certain grandeur and sublimity about it, like that which moves the spectator in the marbles and paintings in the galleries of France; its proportions are colossal, too colossal. Like most French works, the material magnificence strikes; we look for the Divine and the spiritual in vain. In Renan's devotion to his "hero" there is a certain melodramatic element; he surrounds him with a rose-coloured atmosphere which disguises the natural hue of life. This characteristic quality belongs perhaps partly to his individual nature and partly to his French nature; and sometimes we feel as if the glow of his eagerness to justify his ideal, created a whirl in the mental atmosphere unfavourable to a steady vision of the sober truth.

The life of Jesus, which is, according to our author's view, that of a mere man without any supernatural endowments, much less the possession of divinity, is divided by him into three stages, which mark the development of Jesus' character and opinions. We may call these stages, (1) The Ideal, (2) The Messianic, (3) The Passionate and Thaumaturgic.

### I. The Ideal Stage.

Renan/

Renan begins by discussing the place of Jesus in the history of the world, and gives us his notion of the universal history of religion, from man's primeval barbarism without any defined religious ideas, to the advent of Jesus. He thinks apparently that man originally had no religion at all, and was not to be distinguished from the brutes. Developments, however, took place in different directions, but, except in the case of the Israelites, and perhaps in Persia, they nowhere arrived at pure Monotheism. The Semitic race has the glory of having made the religion of humanity, which began with the Bedouin patriarch Abraham, and was carried forward by the nomadic tribe of the Beni-Israel. Their law was very anciently written on plates of metal; so Renan says. Their priests were like other ancient priests. Every one of their tribes had its Nabi or prophet - a sort of living oracle consulted for the solution of obscure questions. The Nabis organised themselves into groups or schools, and proclaimed unlimited hopes for the Jews. A gradual work of development went on, and eventually new texts, such as Deuteronomy, assuming to represent the true law of Moses, were compiled. The Jews adopted "a code of blood," and displayed extraordinary zeal for their religion. Through all national changes their belief retained its hold upon them, and just when their hopes had reached the climax, Jesus appeared. In all this, it will be noted, there is neither revelation, inspiration, nor any other form of the supernatural. From its origin to the advent of Jesus, religion even in its highest form, was natural religion.

Jesus was born at a time when the Jewish world was in a ferment with revolutionary hopes, which broke out occasionally in fanatical sedition; for long, before, the Messianic ideas of the people had changed. Instead of dreaming now of a Messiah who should conquer the nations into subjection to Israel, and make Jerusalem the seat of an universal monarchy, in their despair the Jews hoped for a complete "bouleversement" of the world. They believed in the sudden end of the world, and the restoration of a new heaven and earth. And further, they adopted the idea of a resurrection, foreign to their old traditions, in which the people of God should rise in the flesh to assist in the triumph over their enemies. These ideas found expression in the Apocalyptic books of the Old Testament, particularly in the books of Daniel and of Enoch. Into this burning atmosphere of feeling Jesus was born. Following the life of Mohammed as a supposed basis on which to explain the history of Jesus, Renan represents him as born in Nazareth, not of the lineage of David, but of poor Nazarene parents, richly gifted in nature, but reared in the narrow sphere of the common people. It was a supposititious legend, based on popular Messianic ideas, that introduced the mention of Bethlehem. His parents were humble; his father a carpenter; his education was limited.

The Books of the Old Testament made a deep impression on him; he partook the taste of all the world for the allegorical interpretations which saw in them the predictions of the Messiah. The Law appears not to have had much charm for him; he believed that/

that a better could be made. But the real poetry of the Psalms, was found to be in marvellous accord with his lyrical soul, and continued through life his food and stay. The prophets, in particular, Isaiah and his continuator of the times of the captivity, were, with their brilliant dreams of the future, their impetuous eloquence, his true masters. He was acquainted also with those comparatively modern apocryphal books of which the authors had sheltered themselves under the name of some venerated character to secure for them a greater authority; and one of these, the book of Daniel, especially impressed him. For Jesus, thus filled with apocalyptic dreams, the surrounding world was of little account. He neither knew it nor cared to know. He learned to read and write, but it is doubtful whether he understood the original Hebrew of the Scriptures. It is probable that he did not know the Greek language at all, and most certainly he was profoundly unconscious of all Greek science or philosophy. Renan is assured that neither directly nor indirectly was Jesus affected by any element of Hellenic culture. He lived entirely in a Jewish atmosphere; though, happily, a comparative stranger to the fantastic scholasticism which was being taught at Jerusalem, and which is discoverable in the Talmud. The principles and aphorisms of Hillel, whom he resembled, were probably not unknown to him. But his chief occupation and delight consisted in perusing the Old Testament, whose true poetry he fully comprehended, and by which he was profoundly impressed. Of the general condition of the world he had no knowledge. "The charming impossibilities with which his/

his parables abound, when he brings kings and mighty ones on the stage, prove that he never had any conception of aristocratic society except as a young villager who sees the world through the prism of his own simplicity." ("Vie de Jésus," p.24). The great kingdoms of the world only cast a vague, troubled reflection of their grandeur upon the village youth in Nazareth. In a still slighter degree, or indeed not at all, was he aware of those scientific views propounded, a century before, by Lucretius, which established the regular and orderly as against the capricious government of the world. Nor is it to be wondered at, since Philo, who lived in a great intellectual arena, and was a man of liberal education, had but a chimerical notion of science.

Never before, perhaps, had the Jews manifested such a hunger and thirst after the marvellous. Jesus lived in an atmosphere loaded with what we should call supernaturalism. The picture Renan gives of the religion which, he says, "alone made Christianity," is exceedingly beautiful. Nature was a pure and gentle nursing mother to this Galilean boy. A deep and tender piety, fed by the solemn and winning aspects of nature around him, rendered thoughtful as he was by the rich sentences of Hebrew wisdom, and humane in the school of domestic love, took early possession of him, and moulded his whole belief, affections, and will.

A very elevated idea of God was formed in the mind of the youthful Galilean peasant by the combined influences of the study of natural scenery and of the Old Testament. One simple formula condenses the essence of it all; God was a Father; not distant and hard to find; not even external, coming in vision or by word; but,

but a Father within, communing with the pure in heart, and abiding with living, pitying, loving presence in our humanity. This characteristic faith - remote alike from the Jewish and Pagan type - was indigenously his; not learned by tradition, not discovered by reasoning, but presenting itself as a clear consciousness of God, blending in one the light that shows and the vision that sees. Jesus thus felt himself in direct relations of sonship to the Father, not specially his, but such as all men would find true. From this central faith flowed all his conceptions of the government of the world, the maxims of duty, and the spirit of human life. The universe was no mechanism of relentless Fate, nor even an empire of inscrutable will, but the theatre of a moral drama, a home of domestic discipline, ruled with impartial love. In the face of this sublime sonship, common to all, the distinctions of social life disappear, and no ranks have any reality except the gradations of inward likeness to God. In the Sermon on the Mount, "that most beautiful code of a perfect life which ever moralist drew up," we may recognise the main features of this divine kingdom; a worship built upon purity of heart and brotherly love to men; a religion without priests and outward ceremonies, entirely depending on the invitation of God and the immediate communion of conscience with the heavenly Father. The only rich are the poor in spirit; the only great, the servant of all: the supremely wise are the pure in heart: and the sole hierarchy/

hierarchy is a hierarchy of graces. From his reading of the prophets, Jesus learned to value a pure heart and a humble mind more than all the ritual he had seen in operation during his early visits with his parents to Jerusalem. This same truth is the solvent of enmities, as it is of distinctions; anger knows not what spirit it is of, and observes not the Eternal Father's ways. Does He not make His sun to rise on the evil and the good? Humility, self-denial, disinterestedness, may well be called the special Christian virtues, for they come spontaneously from the soul that lives filially with God, and are the fruits of faith that were most welcome to the eye of Christ himself. With a spirit thus tempered, he carried his affections behind the showy veil of life, and redressed the strong world's scorn by searching out the little and the weak: he loved the child, he loved the poor that rested in their lot, he loved the fallen that were in tears for their sin. His lessons, moreover, even where they seemed to say what the wise and humane had said before, escaped the level of ethical maxims, and rose into a diviner light and glow. Drawn from the contemplation of Infinite Perfection, they aspired thitherward again; hence their unspeakable poetic depth of tone; from his lips the rule of duty is a breathing of humility, a sigh of eternal hope, a vision of unspeakable beauty.

To discover the Founder of the true kingdom of God, the kingdom of the gentle and lowly, the kingdom of God in the heart, we must go, says Renan, to "the Jesus of these early days/

days, who founded the true kingdom of God, the kingdom of the meek and humble, the Jesus of those pure and cloudless days when the voice of his father re-echoed within his bosom in clearer tones. It was then for some months - a year, perhaps, - that God truly dwelt on earth. The voice of the young carpenter acquired all at once an extraordinary sweetness. An infinite charm was exhaled from his person, and those who had hitherto seen him recognised him as the same no longer. He had not as yet any disciples, and the group of people that gathered round him was neither a sect nor a school; but there was already an influence both sweet and penetrating. His amiable character, and doubtless one of those exquisite faces, threw around him a fascination from which no one, in the midst of those kindly and fresh-minded peoples, could escape. Paradise would, in fact, have been brought to earth if the ideas of the young master had not far transcended that level of ordinary goodness which the human race has found it hitherto impossible to pass." ("Vie de Jésus," pp.48, 49).

And here is, according to Renan, the nursery and theatre of this pure life:- "A beautiful aspect of nature contributed to the formation of this less austere, though less sharply monotheistic spirit, if I may venture so to call it, which impressed all the dreams of Galilee with a charming and idyllic character. The region round about Jerusalem is, perhaps, the gloomiest country in the world. Galilee, on the/

the contrary, was exceedingly verdant, shady, smiling, the true home of the Song of Songs and the Canticles of the well-beloved." ("Vie de Jésus," p.39). "This lovely country, which at the present day has become (through the woful impoverishing influence which Islamism has wrought on human life) so sad and wretched, but where everything that man cannot destroy, breathes still an air of freedom, sweetness, and tenderness, overflowed with happiness and joy at the time of Jesus. It spiritualised itself in mysterious dreams, in a kind of poetical mysticism, blending of heaven and earth. Leave the austere John Baptist in his desert of Judea, to preach penitence, to inveigh unceasingly, and to live on locusts in the company of jackals! Why should the companions of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? Joy will be a part of the kingdom of God. Is she not the daughter of the humble in heart, of the men of goodwill?" ("Vie de Jésus," pp.40,41).

"The entire history of infant Christianity is in this sense a delightful pastoral. A Messiah at the marriage supper, the Courtesan and the good Zaccheus called to his feasts, the founders of the kingdom of heaven like a bridal procession; - this is what Galilee has dared to offer, and what the world has already accepted. Greece has drawn admirable pictures of human life in sculpture and poetry, but always without backgrounds or receding perspectives. Here were wanting the marble, the practised workmen, the exquisite and refined language. But Galilee/

Galilee has created for the popular imagination the most sublime ideal; for behind its idyll the fate of humanity moves, and the light which illumines its picture is the sun of the kingdom of God." ("Vie de Jésus," p.41). These passages will prepare one for perceiving the beauties and the faults of Renan's book. In his desire to justify the romance of history as he feels that he has found it in the pure beginnings of Christianity, he overlays fact with fancy, and does not hesitate to give a roundness and a colouring to his work, which the very authorities he refers us to not only fail to sustain, but even forbid.

II. We enter now the second period of Jesus' career, that of intoxicated Galilean enthusiasm - the Messianic stage - the result according to Renan, of the unfavourable influence of John the Baptist. During the period of his fresh enthusiasm, the Messianic Visions of the Jewish apocalyptic literature - particularly the books of Daniel and Enoch - slept in the background of his imagination; or threw forward only their ideal elements, their images of pure worship, of compensated sorrow, of everlasting righteousness. But from the moment of contact with John the Baptist, an unfavourable change commenced. Into the kingdom announced to be so near, it became necessary to look with more distinct scrutiny; its blank outline must be filled; its chief figure must be determined. It could not coexist with tetrarchies and hierarchies and procuratorships as they were, and carried with it suggestions of political revolution. The Messianic circle/

circle of ideas drew more closely round Jesus; and though insurrectionary force was uncongenial to him, - though the heroism of Judas the Gaulonite came from the thought "God is King", while now it was the truth of truths that "God is Father," - yet somehow, in ways that would declare themselves, the kingdoms of this world would have to vanish and leave room for the divine age which would wait no more. As a result of his intercourse with John, his ideas of the kingdom of God became matured; a greater personal boldness was manifest in his tone. From that time he was no longer a delightful moralist: he was a great revolutionist who aspired to renew the world from its foundations and to found on earth the ideal which he had conceived.

On returning from the Jordan, this prejudicial influence of the sterner prophet, John the Baptist, on the gentler became evident.

The preaching of Jesus was more and more definitely about the "kingdom" to come; and its advance in force and decision was at the expense of breadth. He did not refuse the Messianic titles, speaking of himself as the "Son of Man," and allowing others to draw the inference contradicted by his birth and to call him "Son of David." With deepening sympathies for the village people among whom he moved, and with delight in the simple love they gave him, he met the frowns of the decorous classes with less reserved antipathy: he openly disregarded their outward customs of homage to religion in their daily meals and their periodic fasts;/

fasts; he took pleasure in breaking through their Sabbath rules; he allowed a strange mixture of people to gather around him by the natural ties of inward trust and need, and paid no heed to "respectable" objections. His views were utopian; he lived in a dream-life, and his idealism elevated him above all other agitators. He founded a sect, and his disciples became intoxicated with his own dreams. In the body of more intimate followers whom he now organised into a fraternity, the majority were quite poor and untaught; and its aristocracy consisted of a custom's officer and a land-steward's wife. The native affinities of good and pious hearts, the immeasurable superiority of Jesus, the resistless charm of his word and look, and his deep insight into character, held them to him as by a divine spell. "It was infancy, in fact, in its divine freshness, in its simple bewilderments of joy, which took possession of the earth. Every one believed that the kingdom so much desired might appear at any moment. Each one already saw himself seated on a throne beside the master. They divided the places amongst themselves; they strove to reckon the precise date of its advent. The latter was called the "Glad Tidings;" the doctrine had no other name. An old word, "Paradise," which the Hebrew, like all the languages of the East, had borrowed from the Persian, and which at first designated the parks of the Achimenidae kings, summed up the general dream; a delightful garden, in which the charming life led here below would be continued for ever. How long did this intoxication/

intoxication last? We do not know. No one during the course of this magical apparition, measured time any more than we measure a dream. Duration was suspended; a week was as an age. But, whether it filled years or months, the dream was so beautiful that humanity has lived upon it ever since, and it is still our consolation to gather its weakened perfume. Never did so much joy fill the bosom of man. For one moment, humanity in the most vigorous effort she ever made to rise above the world, forgot the leaden weight which pressed her to earth and the sorrows of the life below. Happy the one who has been able to behold this divine unfolding, and to enjoy, though but for one day, this unexampled illusion! But more happy still, Jesus would say to us, is he who, freed from all illusion, shall reproduce in himself the celestial vision, and, with no millenarian dream, no chimerical paradise, no signs in the heavens, but by the uprightness of his motives and the poetry of his soul, shall be able to create anew in his heart the true kingdom of God!" ("Vie de Jésus," pp.112,113).

Once having committed himself to the realisation of these visions, Jesus could not for ever linger in his beloved Galilee. They pointed to the citadel of the nation's history; and thither he must carry them to win a further way. But Jerusalem, by its very appearance, stripped them of their joy; the temple-buildings, the priestly pomp, the Pharisaic sanctities, had no charm/

charm for him. The keen, malicious eye, the quibbling intellect, the professional contempt of the scribe, all these things disturbed him. His disciples, divided on account of their dialect and rusticity, felt uneasy and out of place; and his own spirit, alone lofty and simple amid the insincerities of conventional religion, could hardly move freely and effectively.

The chief influence of his visit to Jerusalem was reflex upon himself; he took the bold step of renouncing allegiance to the entire system that had crystallised itself into the Jerusalem he saw; and having vindicated the forgotten idea of the temple by whipping out the traffic from its courts, he left his protest behind, and sought again clearness and composure on the familiar beach and among the quiet hills. Even they had come to be invested with a light less pure. He had claimed the Messianic character; he had allowed it to mean more than he could always hope; he had broken with the Law, and he stood alone. A shadow, a deep and dark shadow, was resting on his path. He had a baptism to be baptised with, and how was he straitened till it was accomplished!

III. This brings us to the fatal third period, that of the dark, fanatical conflict with the Pharisees - the Passionate and Thaumaturgic stage of Jesus' career. It had its commencement in this recoil from Jerusalem. In order to attack the citadel of Judaism, Jesus changed his place of action from Galilee to Judea and/

and Jerusalem. Surrounded once more by those who trusted him, he was unable to retreat, and found courage to advance. What though the proud heirs of the kingdom would not prepare for its approach? The kingdom would be taken from them and given to others: for Gentiles and Samaritans also were God's children, and had often a truer heart of faith than Israel. What even though his way should lie through hands of violence and he might have to yield up his life? The pious dead were to live again and to share in the kingdom to come, and the Messiah beyond the boundary of death would be in the right place to lead the way for their return.

And so, according to Renan, Jesus advanced to bolder self-assertion and compensated forebodings of the Cross, that were beginning to possess his soul, by predictions of return in glory. The higher title of the Messiah sounded with richer and fuller sweetness in his ear; he acceded more freely to the demand of his followers for miracles, and bore with the exigencies and feverish half-faith which they implied, sustained by the belief that through prayer and fasting such works were given to men. In his most exalted moments, however, there is not the slightest approach to those conceptions of Divine Incarnation or equality with his Father in heaven, by which, in Renan's view, the exaggerations of a later time endeavoured to glorify Jesus. On the contrary, he distinctly repels such an idea; he is simply and at the highest, "Son of God," - as all men may become in various degrees. The judgment of Renan on this point is so important that a quotation of it is made in extenso. He favours us with a beautiful piece of Pantheism as representing/

representing Christ's full belief:- "That Jesus never dreamt of passing himself for an incarnation of the true God, there can be no doubt. Such an idea was quite foreign to the Jewish mind; and there is no trace of it in the three first gospels; we only find it alluded to in portions of the fourth, which cannot be accepted as reflecting the thoughts of Jesus. Sometimes Jesus even seems to take precautions to repress such a doctrine. The accusation that he made himself God, or the equal of God, is presented, even in the fourth Gospel, as a calumny of the Jews. In the latter Gospel he declares himself less than his Father. Elsewhere he avows that the Father has not revealed everything to him. He believes himself to be more than an ordinary man, but separated from God by an infinite distance. He is Son of God, but all men are, or may become so, in diver's degrees. Every one each day ought to call God his father; all who are raised up again will be sons of God. The divine Sonship was attributed in the Old Testament to beings who, it may by no means pretended, were equal with God. The word "son" has in the Semitic tongues and in the New Testament the widest meaning. Besides, the idea Jesus had of man was not that low idea which a cold Deism has introduced. In his poetic conception of nature, one breath alone pervades the universe; the breath of man is that of God; God dwells in man, and lives by man, in the same way as man dwells in God and lives by God. The transcendent idealism of Jesus never permitted him to have a very clear notion of his own personality. He is his Father, his Father is he. He lives in his disciples; he is everywhere with them; his disciples are one, as he and his Father are one. The spirit to him is everything; the/

the body, which makes the distinction of individuals, is nothing." ("Vie de Jésus," pp.140,141). Renan finds in these affirmations of Jesus the germ of the doctrine which afterwards made a Divine person of Christ; but readers of his book must remember that his own point of view from which he contemplates and describes the work of Jesus is that of a pantheist. Again and again, as will be shown more fully in a succeeding chapter, evidences of that are presented to us.

With the expectation of his own death and return came the assurance, solemnly announced, of the end of the world within that generation: a marvellous belief, the disappointment of which the religion could never have survived, but for the imperishable spiritual elements mingled with its illusions and remaining as its essence.

The more definitely Jesus became committed to these views, the more imperative was the necessity of action in advance. He sent out, therefore, bodies of disciples, empowered and authorised to speak and act in his name; associating them as partners in his miraculous power, he evidenced the sincerity of his own feeling with regard to it. They were to be safe from the scorpion's sting and the poison-cup; and they were to carry healing to the sick, as well as hope to the heavy laden and despairing.

It/

It is impossible, Renan maintains, to relieve Jesus, at the expense of the Evangelists, from the weakness implied in the pretension to miracles; but it is quite probable that it was the result of a genuine though not unfaltering illusion. Indications were not wanting of a certain uneasy consciousness on this matter, as if the answer of experience were liable to fall short of his full faith. His prayers and inward conflict before the act, his frequent wish for privacy, during it, his injunction not to report it afterwards, his inability amid the cold unbelief of Nazareth, his sharp, stern rebuke of the desire for signs, are all natural; if the effects which, in his fixed idea, ought to arise were slower or less certain to appear than was good for the faith; while, on the other hand the real influence of his soothing and authoritative presence, his look, his word, his touch, on the nervous disorders brought to him, would afford sufficient confirmatory phenomena to sustain his inward persuasion. It was during this period that the first legendary germs began to gather around even the living person of Jesus. Because the Messiah was generally supposed to be the Son of David, Jesus let himself be called so; at first, unwillingly, because he well knew that he was not descended from him, yet afterwards he found pleasure in the title. But now in this third and final period of his career he assumes the appearance of miraculous power. "True, even earlier/

earlier than this, he may have given an impulse to the formation of miraculous legends; for one of his most constant and deep-seated convictions was, that through faith and prayer a man could obtain full power over nature. Resting upon this conviction, he obtained the extraordinary power over men's minds which soon led them to attribute to his miraculous power every remarkable case of recovery from sickness, or awakening from apparent death, that happened in his neighbourhood. Fame multiplied the number of these occurrences immensely. For, on the whole, there are but few different kinds of miracles related in the Gospels; they are merely repetitions of one and the same pattern. It was against his will that Jesus became a miracle-worker. He had no choice. Miracles were universally considered an indispensable proof of a divine mission. He allowed himself, compelled by this unconquerable prejudice of the multitude to assume the appearance of miraculous power, and in some cases really did succeed in producing improvement in the condition of physical or mental sufferers by means of his moral influence." (Christlieb's "Modern Doubt and Christian Belief," p.431). Still, the thaumaturgic part, like all the more definite Messianic pretensions, had its miseries for him, and the near escape of death looked welcome. His manner and bearing altered. He became excited and passionate, provoked by opposition, terrible in invective, advancing from defence into attack that left him no retreat; yet in spite of that, on the first invitation/

invitation from anything pure and simple, returning, only with sadder voice, to a tone of singular sweetness and calm. With an infinite delicacy of mind, catching every shade of feeling, and drawing women and children towards him with unspeakable attraction, he united an unsparing severity towards opponents; and it was inevitable that the irritation of the Pharisaic bourgeoisie, whom he abhorred as the very antithesis to his religion of the quiet heart and pure spirit, should at length come to a head, and bring on the catastrophe which his last visit to Jerusalem almost courted. For himself, it was time to close a career no longer tolerable. Almost without fault of his own, his conscience had lost its transparency; he had become committed to impossibilities. But in accepting the relief of martyrdom, he did not despair of his work. Love for it and faith in it enabled him to rise above suffering and unite his darkest hour with his sublimest triumph.

Sad is the remainder of this strange and tragic romance. In Renan's delineation of the career of Jesus it is impossible not to perceive a gradual deterioration of character. There is a fundamental fault of structure in his conception of Jesus. It was a favourite theory of Feuerbach, about whom Renan had already written so sympathetically in his essay, "M. Feuerbach and the new Hegelian School" ("Etudes d'Histoire Religieuse," first series, pp. 36, 46), that the Christian dogmas were inverted truths./

truths. They were verities standing on their heads. To set them right, they had simply to be turned upside down. Renan employed this short and summary method with Christendom's conception of the character and work of its divine Founder. The Gospels depict the career of Jesus as a constant growth in inner sanctity and outer moral grandeur, till it reached its climax of trial and triumph in the grief and glory of Calvary. It has been reserved for Renan to discern that the course of Jesus was not an ascent, but a descent; not a progression but a moral declension.

The brilliant morning becomes overcast with clouds at noonday; and the rays of sunset penetrate through the storms. The struggle of ideal faith to penetrate and mould the world involves, it is said, an inevitable descent. It can shape and influence mankind only on one condition, - that of falling in with their illusions, and in deadly conflict with them it has no effective force, except by clothing itself with the energy of their passions. Compelled to pass from his early dream of pure religion into the narrower conditions of the Messianic doctrine, Jesus fell into a false position, and as the necessities of the case drew in more closely around him, he was urged, by partial loss of inward clearness and simplicity, into a more feverish enthusiasm, and into the solution by self-sacrifice of a problem otherwise insoluble. In our judgment, we may venture to say that this theory has not been drawn/

drawn from the history, but is a preconceived, *a priori* idea of Renan, applied to it, and that not the slightest shadow of support can be given to it, except by transposing the evangelists' memorials to suit its exigencies, and by forcing on them a grouping which they will not bear. Left to their own natural witness, we believe that they attest a moral order absolutely the reverse, showing in the person of Jesus an ascent from the higher levels of his inherited faith to an even loftier and wider vision of the spiritual relation between man and God, and, along with this, an inward sincerity, strong and stedfast against increasing strain, and culminating at length in his final sacrifice.

If he sought death, Jesus knew how to bring it about, and he took the means, according to our author. He poured out upon the ruling powers among the Jews "his exquisite mockeries his malignant provocations, which always struck to the heart." Very striking is the contradiction between the beginning and the end of Jesus' career in Renan's volume. A historical character is supposed to develop according to the laws of life. Jesus was no exception, and the most orthodox apologists speak freely of his growth, an evolutionary view for which there is Gospel authority. But Renan, though so great an adept at fine shading , at nuances, shows us a glaring contrast instead of a gradual change. He has described with a charm not entirely devoid of sentimentality the "joyous idyll" of Galilee. Then with the scantiest transition/

transition, we are shown a totally different Jesus; the joyous moralist of the earlier period became harsh, fanatical, revolutionary, a "sombre géant" whose awful foreshadowings threw him more and more beyond the limits of human nature. The flesh must be absolutely repressed; everything must be renounced; the dead must be left to bury their dead; the living must follow him. For a moment the former sweetness would return. But his general tone now was austere. Life was a thing to be despised and crushed; every constituted prejudice was in opposition to the kingdom of God; family, friendship, human ties, had neither force nor significance. An extraordinary appetite for suffering and persecution took possession of him; he had come to bring fire upon earth, to set division between house and house, to fling the sword into their midst. His gentleness forsook him; he became defiant and strange. His struggle in the name of the ideal with the rude reality became to him insupportable, and obstacles irritated him more and more. Such is the lot, declares Renan, of all who attempt to convert men to an idea. Most succumb before this insensate neglect; he succeeded by determining on death. He proclaims that he shall die; he seeks to die.

But before Jesus reached the end, his friends were destined to drag him down lower in the spiritual scale, and by the same means to hasten his destruction. The family at Bethany, in the bosom of which Jesus often sought repose after the labours and discouragements/

ments of the day in Jerusalem, were the agents. They had long lamented his scanty success in the seat of the theocracy, and imagined that if a great and astounding miracle could be wrought, such as raising from the dead a man who was well known at Jerusalem, it would produce a striking effect on hiersolymite incredulity. The matter was easily arranged. Lazarus of Bethany was sick. His sisters sent for Jesus. "Perhaps Lazarus, still pale with his sickness, caused himself to be wreathed round with bands like a corpse, and shut up in his family tomb." The sorrow of Jesus would only appear as the convulsions which preceded a great work; and the stone being removed, Lazarus came forth. In this, not only blasphemous, but repulsive conception, Renan reached the very acme of cold-blooded impiety. He had to fall back on the Voltairian hypothesis of fraud. If anything was needed to consummate it, it is the apology which the author offers for the principal actors of this gross fraud, and even for Jesus, himself. In their case Renan informs us that "faith knows no other law than the interest of that which it believes to be true." In the case of Jesus, Renan is anxious to remind his readers that "in this dull and impure city of Jerusalem Jesus was no longer himself. Not by any fault of his own, but by that of others, his conscience had lost something of its original purity. Desperate, and driven to extremity, he was no longer his own master. His mission overwhelmed him, and he yielded to the torrent." ("Vie de Jesus," p.208). In fairness to/

to Renan, it ought, however, to be stated that he abandoned his earlier hypothesis regarding the miracle of Lazarus in the 13th. edition of the "Vie de Jésus," and accepted Strauss's symbolical interpretation of the miracle. His gross insult to Christ and to Christendom called forth rebuke so severe from the public, and protests so decided from his friends, that he cancelled it of his own accord. Yet, lest his book should show a great gap, and his theory be exposed as broken down, he substituted another supposition. Since, however, it was a supposition, and nothing else, it was of no more value than its predecessor, and may be left in silence to find its fate.

Renan's ideal Jesus is full of gross and painful inconsistencies; he knows not how to solve the character of the Saviour - as who could solve it on such principles? Yet that character has to be reduced to pure naturalism, to satisfy and square with our author's theory; and therefore, he is charged with conscious hypocrisy; and he who founded the Church of Saints and Martyrs, did so by soiling his own purity. In innumerable particulars he is seen to be the victim of the society he came to restore. Renan believes that all faith loses its beauty, and lustre, and bloom, when it seeks to manifest itself; and that purity is only safe when it is cloistered; and Jesus when greatest as a lone Hebrew villager, would have been lost in the crowd of the world's great men. He lost his own purity that he might bless the world! This is Renan's ideal!

It was indeed time for him to die. Everything belonging to the accessories of the death of Jesus - the trial, the character of the high priests and Pilate - are described by Renan in a manner almost perfect, but the whole travail of the Redeemer's soul is misapprehended. In the great high-priestly prayer of John's Gospel, chapter 17, "we feel," says Renan, "the artificial composition, the prepared rhetoric." The agony in the Garden, Renan is inclined to reject as related by the evangelist. But there must have been some agony in passing away from life. "The man who sacrifices his repose, and the legitimate rewards of life, to a great idea, always experiences a moment of sad revulsion when the image of death presents itself to him for the first time, and seeks to persuade him that everything is vanity. Perhaps some of those touching reminiscences which the strongest souls retain, and which at times pierce like a sword, seized upon him at this moment. Did he recall the clear fountains of Galilee, where he might have refreshed himself; the vine and the fig tree under which he sat down, and the young maidens who, perhaps, might have consented to love him? Did he curse the hard destiny which had denied him the joys conceded to all others? Did he regret his too lofty nature, and, a victim of his greatness, did he grieve that he had not remained a simple artisan of Nazareth?" ("Vie de Jésus," p.218). Renan answers, "We know not." Our reply is different. We would answer with an emphatic negative; such thoughts are absolutely unworthy of any great soul in the solemn/

solemn moment of life's close, and such thoughts were infinitely removed from the soul of Jesus.

He was occupied with the burden of human sin, the cup of sacrificial suffering. No idyllic softness could enter that awful shade where the great Sufferer, withdrawn a stone's cast from his dearest disciples, agonised and prayed.

Renan's representation of the scene of the Cross gives no relief to the pain caused by this false picture. "For a moment, his heart failed him; a cloud hid from him the face of his Father; he experienced an agony of despair a thousand times more acute than all his tortures. He saw only the ingratitude of men. Repenting perhaps in suffering for a vile race, he exclaimed; "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" ("Vie de Jésus," p.244).

His burial, it appears, took place nearly as the Evangelists relate it, but with the exception of the precaution of the guards and the seal, perhaps to prepare the way for Renan's own legend of the resurrection. "The life of Jesus for the historian," declares Renan, "finishes with his last sigh." He lays the Saviour in the sepulchre, it is true, but he leaves him there. As with Renan there is no personal immortality, death is the last act of this drama which we call life, and a hereafter whether in the way of transition or resurrection, is utterly impossible. Yet he cannot keep back from our anxious/

anxious curiosity his view of the resurrection. He has his own theory regarding it, although he asserts that "through the fault of contradictory documents we shall for ever remain ignorant of the truth" about it. He who has already performed such creative marvels is not to be foiled here. The resurrection was but a hallucination of the enthusiasts who believed in Jesus after his decease. The belief is admitted; the fact is denied. What then of the belief? It originated in a fancy hatched in the heated brain of an epileptic courtesan, and nursed and propagated by her associates, who in reality had removed the body by night. "Such was the impression he had left in the hearts of his disciples and of a few devoted females, that during some weeks more it was as if he were living and consoling them. Has his body been taken away? Did enthusiasm, always credulous in certain circumstances, create afterwards the group of narratives by which it was sought to establish faith in the resurrection? In the absence of opposing documents, this can never be ascertained. Let us say, however that the strong imagination of Mary Magdalen played in this circumstance an important part. Divine power of love! Sacred moments in which the passion of one possessed gave to the world a resuscitated God!" ("Vie de Jésus," p.249). A crazy woman, Renan declares, fancied she saw Jesus after his death, and this fancy, adopted by the Apostles, founded the Church./

Church. Surely a more unnatural, a more unlikely theory was never put forward. Causes, to be real and true, must bear some resemblance and proportion to their alleged effects. Are these the qualities we recognise between our present culture and that hare-brained fancy? Christian Civilisation has its origin in the morning dream of a visionary and an epileptic woman! The mere statement of the hypothesis (for hypothesis it is, and nothing more), is its refutation.

### CHAPTER III.

#### Influence of Positivism on the "Vie de Jésus."

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Summary of Chapter:-

The "Vie de Jésus" a direct result of the philosophic tendency of the age.

Great advance in critical science.

Two main philosophical systems -

(1) Positivism, (2) Pantheism.

Auguste Comte and Positivism.

Effects of French Revolution.

Brief survey of Comte's Positivism.

Its dominant influence on Renan.

Comte "un exciteur de ma pensée."

Claude Bernard and Marcellin Berthelot -

Positivists, Renan's close friends.

Renan's positivist views - exemplified in various works - "L'Avenir de la Science," "Etudes d'Histoire Religieuse," "Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse" etc..

The positivist spirit permeates the "Vie de Jésus."

Renan's attitude towards the Evangelical narratives, and towards leading features in the career of Jesus - his incarnation, the origin of Christianity, Messianic ideas, the teaching of Jesus, his miracles, death, and resurrection.

Foremost among the influences that contributed to the form in which Renan's "Vie de Jésus" appeared, were those of a philosophical nature.

The book was the direct result of the prevailing philosophical tendencies of the age. A strongly marked feature in the intellectual life of the early part of the nineteenth century presented itself in the development and in the pretensions of historical criticism. The scope and arrogance of this new science cannot be better described than by giving a quotation from our author which reveals his own view of the trend of the intellectual thought of his time, as well as of the period leading up to it. Our citation is from the beginning of the article that Renan wrote on "Les Historiens Critiques de Jésus," in his volume "Nouvelles études d'histoire religieuse," (pp.172-174). "Study since the Renaissance," he says, "the march of modern criticism, and you will see it, following always the line of its inflexible progress, replace, one after the other, the superstitions of incomplete knowledge by truer images of the past. A regret seems to be attached to each of the steps which have been taken in the fatal path; but, in fact, there is not one of the gods dethroned by criticism which does not also receive from criticism more legitimate titles to adoration. There is first the false Aristotle of the Arabs and of the commentators of the middle ages, who fall under the attacks of the Hellenists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and give/

give place to the authentic and original Aristotle. Then there is Plato, who raised his voice for a moment against the scholastic Peripatetism preached at Florence as the gospel, and who found his true titles of glory by descending from the rank of revealer to that of philosopher; next there is Homer, the idol of the ancient philosophy, who one fine day has disappeared from his pedestal of three thousand years, and recovers his real beauty by becoming the impersonal expression of the genius of Greece; then there is primitive history accepted up to this point with a clumsy realism which comes to be the better comprehended, the more severely it is discussed. A bold advance from the letter to the spirit; a painful decipherment which substitutes for the legend a reality a thousand times more beautiful. Such is the law of modern criticism. It was inevitable that criticism, in this impassioned search for origins, should encounter a collection of works - products more or less pure of the Hebrew genius, which, from Genesis to the Apocalypse, form, according to the point of view in which we place them, either the finest of the sacred books or the most curious of literatures... To stop the human mind in this descent would have been a thing impossible. As orthodoxy was still the law of the outward life, and even of the greatest part of conscience, there were some believers who at first tried Biblical criticism, simple illusion, which proves at least the/

the good faith of those who undertook this work, and more still the fatality which drew the human mind, engaged in the ways of rationalism, to break with the tradition which it at first resisted!" (*Nouvelles études d'histoire religieuse*, pp.172-174).

This quotation from Renan is most valuable as indicating his views on the new critical spirit of his time and also his personal attitude towards the modern tendency. The advance of critical science to which Renan refers here, and indeed in numerous passages that might be selected from his other books, and especially from his ponderous work "*L'Avenir de la Science: Pensées de 1848*," (a volume written in his earlier years when he was only twenty five, and under the immediate influence of the events of 1848, though not published until 1890 when the Empire had produced a pessimistic temper in him), was indeed a phenomenon of the utmost importance. The laws of inductive investigation, which had been applied to, and which had made wonderful discoveries in, the realm of physical science, were being applied with equal zeal and success in the realm of historical research. Vast treasures had been unearthed from their hiding-places in distant parts of the earth, and gathered together for the scrutiny and analysis of the scholar. New mental appliances for the study of human history had been found, and were, in the application of them/

them, being quickly improved - such as the comparative sciences of Ethnology, Philology, and Mythology. Inductive science with its rigid system of proof, with its contempt for prescriptive authority, with its slow experimental and tentative methods, undoubtedly removed much of the legendary haze that hung over the ancient traditions of every land and people, and cast a welcome light upon the actual scenes of the primitive life of man in many parts of the world.

The issue of all this was that there came into existence at the period with which we are specially concerned, a science of history, and the intrinsic nobility of the study of this new science, a science not simply of matter, but of man, attracted not a few of the greatest minds of the early part of the nineteenth century, and the literature of Europe was enriched by numerous masterpieces of historical criticism.

There were, broadly speaking, two great systems of thought which exercised a dominating influence upon the intellectual development of the first half of the 19th century. One of these was Positivism - the belief in an unchanging material Law Governing all things, - the world of history, as well as the world of matter. The mode of thought which found expression in the Positivism of Auguste Comte became in France, for well-nigh half a century, more prevalent and potent than any other. The/

The effects of it were to be seen everywhere - in the tone of society, in the conduct of life, in politics, in history, in poetry and other arts, in fiction, and in the aims and efforts of science and speculation.

Auguste Comte's "Cours de Philosophie Positive," published in 1839-42, gave him a foremost position among the most important thinkers of his time. A school of Positivism soon appeared in France, and in our own country men like John Stuart Mill, Alexander Bain and Herbert Spencer were considerably influenced by him. Comte has been called the founder of Positivism. That is a misnomer. For Positivism had been inculcated in all its essential principles by Protagoras and others in Greece four hundred years before the Christian era. Comte was not the originator of the theory. To be more accurate, he rather gave it a new name and a vigorous impulse. Positivism was the phenomenalism of the Greek Sophists revived and adapted to the demands of the early nineteenth century. "It is scarcely possible," says Prof. Flint, "to find in Comte's writings an original view, except on the subject of scientific method...But although all the chief ideas of Comte had been clearly and repeatedly enunciated by earlier thinkers, he had great strength and skill in systematising doctrines and elaborately applying principles, and his influence has been both extensive and intensive." (Flint's "Anti-Theistic Theories," pp.177,178). It is impossible to refuse to Comte the credit of/

of having, more than any other man, created the modern movement. He was the prophet of modern materialism, and we must go back to his writings if we would study the springs of the movement, and understand something of the hold it took on Renan and on his age.

In its attitude towards religion, and as represented by Comte, Positivism maintained that we know, and can know, nothing except physical facts and their laws.

Its most obvious characteristic was its distrust of all pretensions to the possession of absolute truth; its aversion to all belief in the supersensuous; its contentment with a reference of phenomena of every kind to antecedent and contiguous phenomena as an adequate elucidation. Positivism involved the definite abandonment of all search for ultimate causes and the inner essence of things, and the direction of human attention towards the laws of phenomena as the only facts alike knowable and useful. The senses were the source of all true thinking, and nothing could be known excepting the phenomena which they apprehend, and the relations of sequence and resemblance in which these phenomena stand to one another. Mental phenomena could all be resolved into material phenomena, and there was no such thing discoverable as either efficient or final causation, or an origin or purpose in the world, or consequently a creative or providential intelligence. The mind in its progress necessarily finds out that phenomena cannot reasonably be referred to supernatural agents/

agents, but that they can only be accepted as they present themselves to the senses, and arranged according to their relationships of sequence or coexistence, similarity or dissimilarity. To the Positivist there is one being only, the growth and development of nature's forces. There are not two orders of being, as all theology believes, and all metaphysic implies; but only one order. The spiritual is not a distinct quality or essence in man, but merely a function of the physical - its final result and expression. This is the essential position of Positivism, the fundamental antithesis which it presents to Theism. The postulate of all theology is, on the contrary, that there are two orders of being , and two sources of knowledge - the one natural, and the other supernatural - and that man belongs to both. The spirit soul, or reason, while manifesting itself under natural conditions is yet in itself, apart from these conditions, a reality belonging to a higher order of life, of which God is the head. Positivism, on the other hand, in denying the divine side of man and a divine order in the universe, makes Humanity its highest word - its "Supreme." It allows no transcendental order. It has not only constructed an elaborate philosophy upon a physical basis, but it has, with a strictly consistent logic, constructed a religion on the highest results of this philosophy - in other words, on the supreme conclusions of science.

The other system of philosophy which exercised a commanding influence/

influence upon the intellectual life of the early nineteenth century was the ideal Pantheism of Hegel, that philosophical conception which regards all finite things as merely aspects, modifications, or parts of one eternal and self-existent being, and which views all material objects, and all particular minds, as necessarily derived from a single infinite substance. The one absolute substance - the one all-comprehensive being - Pantheism calls God. God, according to its principles, is all that is; and nothing is which is not essentially included in, or which has not been necessarily evolved out of, God.

Without some knowledge of these two systems of philosophic thought, Positivism (or Comtism, as it has been designated after the great thinker who gave its ideas a new vogue and a fresh impulse) and Pantheism, and their remarkable bearing upon modern thought, it were impossible to understand Renan's position.

Positivism will be considered first in the potent influence it exercised on the "Vie de Jésus". Unmistakable traces of its effects are to be seen, indeed, in all Renan's works.

Events had been leading up to the development of the rationalistic spirit in France. In the world of speculative thought there was reflected at the opening of the nineteenth century the work of the French Revolutionaries on the one hand, and that of Emmanuel Kant on the other. Linked on to these great factors/

factors was the permeating influence of the Encyclopaedists and the thinkers of the Enlightenment. These two contributory forces, one of them causing, as it did, a sudden shock to metaphysical as well as to political thought, combined to originate a sense of instability and dissatisfaction towards the end of the eighteenth century. A feeling of change, a sense of transition, it might almost indeed be said a sense of resurrection, a yearning after, and a hope of, a new life, filled the minds and hearts of those who crossed the threshold of the nineteenth century.

As a direct result of the Revolution and of the cold, destructive, negative criticism of the eighteenth century, there arose a demand for constructive and positive thought. Prof. Flint has summed up the situation concisely. "The Revolution, after passing through various stages during which the minds of men were too engrossed with the events of the day to be able to study those of bygone days, issued in the military despotism of Napoleon, which proved as unfavourable to historical science as democratic disorder and violence had been. Napoleon was the persistent oppressor of free thought. He feared and hated speculation; he cherished a mean jealousy of every kind of intellectual superiority which he could not enslave; and exerted the immense force, which his genius and fortune gave him, to turn reason from every path of enquiry which might lead to conclusions unfavourable to his own schemes and interests. He failed, as he deserved to do; and was signally punished for his selfish abuse of vast powers, and/

and for preferring a baneful glory to loyal service in the cause of France and of humanity. When he fell, the profusion with which ideas burst forth showed how ineffective all his efforts at the repression of thought had been. By partially and temporarily checking its utterance he had probably rather favoured than hindered its formation. During the period of comparative silence which he enforced, men did not cease to investigate and reflect, although they had to keep their conclusions to themselves. Consequently when freedom returned with the Restoration, it soon appeared that there had been growing up diverse systems of opinion, all resting on, or at least involving, general theories of history." (Flint's "Philosophy of History," pp.340,341).

This new and strong desire for constructive thought found a lodgment not only in the minds of those who were known as the Traditionalists because of their eager endeavour by a perfectly natural reaction to summon their fellow-countrymen, during this period of unrest and unsettlement, back to the beliefs and traditions of the past, but in the minds likewise of men like Cousin and Maine de Biran. They all aimed at intellectual reconstruction, but, whilst (however) there were some who contended vigorously against the principles of the Revolution, as did the Traditionalist party, and some who like Cousin tried to rectify and steady those principles, there were others who sought to complete them and to carry out a more stringent application of the watchwords of the Revolution. Liberty, /

Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. The Revolution and the war had shown to men that many and vast changes could be brought about in a comparatively brief period of time.

All these events encouraged bold and imaginative spirits. Endeavours after a better condition of things generally, - after new intellectual systems and a new order of society - began to manifest themselves.

The world needed a new spiritual force. Men's conceptions were intellectually incoherent, and consequently their actions were morally unstable. Where could such a new organising power be found? In answer to this question, Comte turned to science, and he enunciated the doctrine of Positivism. He maintained that science properly studied, afforded the materials for a creed that would reform society. His conviction was that a careful study of the universe and of human nature would reveal the fundamental laws of progress; and these truths, properly systematised, would form a creed, a philosophy, a religion. Comte's scientific synthesis he called Positivism, or, when viewed from the standpoint of feeling, the Religion of Humanity.

All preceding facts culminate and find their supreme meaning in man. He is nature's choicest result and crown; and if he is to worship at all, he must worship the ideal of Humanity as exhibited in its most perfect forms. Comte owns no light from any other region. There is no other region. Humanity, as it has been, and will be, is at once the highest fact and the highest thought. Human life in its historical development,/

developemnt, in its present activity, and its future progress,  
is for Comte Supreme - "le vrai Grand <sup>Ê</sup>tre."

He was a thinker of immense resources, and with his vast store of scientific knowledge, he was amply equipped for the great project of a Positive philosophy, which he set out to demonstrate. This was contained in his "Cours de Philosophie positive." The intellectual development of humanity was formulated in a general way by Comte in what is known as "The Law of the Three Stages", that part of his doctrine which is best known. Comte lays down the principle that the human mind, in its search for a theory of experience, passes through three stages - the theological, the metaphysical, and the scientific stage. The earliest is the theological or fictitious stage, in which the explanation of things is referred to the operations of divine agency. Theology preceded both metaphysics and science; it goes back as far as history will take us; there is reason to believe it coeval with man. In this state the facts and even events of the universe are attributed to supernatural volitions, to the agency of beings, or a being, adored as divine.

Man starts by explaining the phenomena of nature theologically. He attributes the activities of things to an arbitrary will such as he finds in himself. In its earliest form this is fetichism, which obviously leaves but little room for the recognition of positive law.

It passes on to astrolatry, the worship of the stars, to polytheism which gradually concentrates itself into monotheism.  
The/

The contact of the monotheism of Jewry with that of Europe gave rise to Christianity. Christianity culminated in Catholicism, which is, according to Comte, the last and highest type of monotheistic development. With it the long infancy of thought ends. Theology failed in its interpretation of the universe because it attributed phenomena to personal causes. This stage corresponds with belief in the supernatural.

The second is the metaphysical or abstract stage when, in place of supernatural agents, abstract principles are substituted. Phenomena are supposed to be due to causes and essences inherent in things. First causes and final causes, these are what the mind in this state yearns after and strives to know, but in vain; and it begins slowly and gradually to recognise , in one sphere after another, that a knowledge of these is unattainable. The metaphysical method also failed, because, though it set aside personal wills as the cause of phenomena, it postulated essences and entities - it personified attractions.

To the metaphysical, in Comte's view, there succeeds the final, the positive stage, which occupies itself solely with the facts of experience, and the laws which they reveal, without making the impossible attempt to penetrate behind phenomena to the unknown real. In the positive stage, agreement with facts is the only criterion. Positivism is as far from empiricism as it is from mysticism; it neither falls apart into/

into disconnected observations on the one hand, nor departs from facts in order to lose itself in supernatural beings or abstract principles on the other. In place of seeking out absolute causes, and striving to trace out their workings, it searches after the laws of phenomena. Whether men are endeavouring to understand thoughts and feelings, or stress and weight, their knowledge can only show us the relations in which they occur. Science rests on the immutability of natural laws.

In the scientific or positive stage, the human mind has passed beyond a belief in divine agencies or metaphysical abstractions, to a rational study of the effective laws of phenomena. All our conceptions, Comte maintains, - every branch of knowledge, - passes through the theological and metaphysical stage towards the Positive. In other words, theology merges into metaphysics, and metaphysics gives way to science. This he proclaims as a universal law, and this is the sum and substance of his general doctrine. Science, and science alone, according to the Apostle of Positivism, holds the key to the temple of truth, because setting aside supernatural agencies and metaphysical abstractions, it abides rigorously by fact; it confines itself to the study of things as they appear to the senses, on the basis of observation, verification and experiment. Positivism is the absolute religion, or the worship of humanity, which needs no God nor revelation. It is here that the human spirit encounters the real. It surrenders the illusions/

illusions of its infancy and youth, it ceases to fancy it can transcend nature or know either the first cause or end of the universe, or that it can ascertain about things more than experience can tell us of their properties and their relations of coexistence and succession. It abstains from pretensions to absolute knowledge. It does not theorise regarding the beginning or the end of the universe; it takes only into consideration facts within human knowledge. It is a state of learned ignorance in which intelligence sees clearly its own limits and confines itself within them. Within these limits lie all the positive sciences, beyond them lie theology and metaphysics, the two chief forms of pseudo-science or false belief. Knowledge is relative, and never absolute, but it grows to a greater accord with reality. It was this passion for "accord with reality," which was the leading characteristic of the scientific or positivist spirit.

The influence of Comte's philosophy was profound and far-reaching. It was not so much the content of Positivism, however that survived, but rather its spirit. Most noteworthy, so far at any rate as we are concerned in this work is Comte's influence on subsequent thinkers in France, and particularly on Hippolyte Taine and Ernest Renan. Auguste Comte was assuredly an influential antecedent of the period. The tendency towards the strictly scientific attitude which was so marked a feature of the early nineteenth/

nineteenth century was in no small degree due to his enunciation of Positivism. The chef d'oeuvre of his undoubtedly great mind was the organisation of the scientific spirit as it appeared in his time. This positive spirit Comte, as we have already indicated, strove to express rather than to originate, for it was there already in the sciences. Renan indicated the truth regarding Comte in his "Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse," - "Auguste Comte expressed what all scientific minds had seen for the last two hundred years as clearly as he had done."

It was Comte, however, - it is well to emphasise the point - who undoubtedly made the Positivist Spirit more prominent and clear.

This, then, was the philosophical system which, as we shall endeavour to prove, exercised a more potent sway over Renan's thought than almost any other. It is true, that, as Prof. Flint remarks, "Renan entertained a very poor opinion of A. Comte and his philosophy. He was of too tolerant a temperament and too familiar with doubts and difficulties, to have any sympathy with a nature so arrogant and dogmatic. He was too learned to be able to overlook Comte's ignorance of historical and other facts which he pretended to reduce under frigid laws. He had too delicate a perception of the fitnesses of things not to be shocked by the want of common sense/

sense and ordinary foresight shown in many of the doctrines and prophecies of the founder of "the religion of humanity" . . . Yet M. Renan may, without any substantial injustice, be numbered among positivists. He discarded theology and metaphysics as entirely as Comte. Only positive science, he held, could supply men with the truths without which life would be insupportable and science impossible. He believed in the ideal but not in the supernatural; in God and Providence, but as "categories of thought." (Flint's "Philosophy of History," pp. 622, 623).

Again and again Renan himself alluded to Comte in warm terms as "un excitateur de ma pensée." Indirectly also, yet none the less potent because indirectly, Comte's influence operated on Renan through two of his closest friends, both of whom were men of great ability and ardent followers of the renowned positivist. One of these, Claude Bernard, who held a foremost place among the scientific minds of his day, and occupied the chair of Medicine at the Collège de France, and was also Professor of Physiology in the Faculté des Sciences at the Sorbonne, entertained very pronounced naturalistic views. Science, Bernard maintained, concerned itself only with phenomena and their laws. He attempted in his celebrated "Introduction à l'Etude de la Médicine expérimentale" to establish the science of physiology on a sound basis, having regard only to fact, and owing no homage whatever to theories of a/

a metaphysical character or to the authority of persons and creeds. "The experimental method is," Bernard emphatically asserted, "the really scientific method which proclaims the freedom of the human spirit and its intelligence. It not only shakes off the yoke of metaphysics and theology, in addition it refuses to admit personal considerations and subjective standpoints." ("Introduction à l'Étude de la Médecine expérimentale," Ch.ii., section 4).

Claude Bernard's attitude was clearly that of a positivist, and the general tone of his observations, as well as his attitude on many special points, agreed with that of Comte.

The other close associate of Renan's who was a pronounced positivist and the most intimate of all his friends, was the distinguished chemist and statesman, Marcellin Berthelot (1827-1907). The friendship of two men of intellectual genius can never be unproductive of result both for themselves and for the world at large; and the friendship of Renan and Berthelot was no exception to the rule. Berthelot's influence on the development of Renan's rationalism cannot be over-estimated. It was this intimacy between them which almost more than anything else affected Renan's thought, and brought a fresh and unfailing stream into the current of his life. Writing to his mother from Paris (24th February, 1846) Renan tells of an excellent neighbour who occupies the opposite room to his at Crouzet's. "He is a young/

young man who is preparing to take his degrees in science. He is the son of one of the most celebrated physicians of Paris, Mons. Berthelot. I have known few young persons so distinguished, so religious, so serious; it seems as though we were cut out for each other."

Marcellin Berthelot already possessed the encyclopaedic mind, the concentrated ardor, the passion for truth, and the sagacity in discovery, which were to make him one of the kings of science. Younger than Renan by four years, he imparted to his friend, the revelation of science and the philosophy of the external world, as Renan had communicated to Berthelot the revelation of the philosophy of the Spirit. A strong attachment which was to endure for forty years, was established between these two young men, both of them infatuated with science and dreaming of cosmogony. Each was still a Christian in imagination; but the exchange of ideas sufficed in a few months to relegate these vestiges of faith "to the department of their souls devoted to memory."

Theirs was indeed a sacred union. They were two young heroes walking along different paths to a single aim; their quests were essentially identical. They desired to increase the light and to dissipate the clouds of darkness, and their enemy was also the same dragon with a hundred heads - unreason, superstition, and intolerance. Their political opinions were most/

most divergent, for Renan was a Tory and a Monarchist; Berthelot was a Liberal and a Republican. But their love of knowledge was equally intense; they were animated by the same idealism, by the same regard for human reason. The one supplemented the knowledge of the other, and their ideas were shared without question of priority or ownership. Truth is a diamond of many facets, and these two young men had seen her at different angles. Each knew most things the other did not know. Renan was already expert in theology, philosophy, philology, and history. But Berthelot revealed to his friend a new world of vaster vistas and more precise perspectives - the magnificent certitudes of physical and natural science. Such a friendship was a source of happiness and an incomparable opportunity for mental development. The conflicts of their points of view, the clashes of their enthusiasms, the piecing together of their information, the continual challenge of their respective prejudices, could not fail to be, and indeed were, immensely fruitful. They discussed endlessly every problem of life. In those exquisite fragments of autobiography which he collected together under the title of "Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse," Renan declares that, "the profound affection which thus bound M. Berthelot and myself together was unquestionably of a very rare and singular kind. It so happened that we were both of an essentially objective nature; a nature, that is to say, perfectly free from the narrow whirlwind which converts most consciences into an egotistical gulf like the conical cavity of the/

the formica-leo. Accustomed each to pay very little attention to himself, we paid very little attention to one another. Our friendship consisted in what we mutually learnt, in a sort of common fermentation which a remarkable conformity of intellectual organisation produced in us in regard to the same objects. Anything which we had both seen in the same light seemed to us a certainty." ("Souvenirs," p.297). It was in companionship the two young men began to think. "We owe too much to one another," wrote Renan, "ever to be separated, at least in heart and thought; the more so, since the results we have reciprocally lent one another are so intertwined that no power could ever analyse this network and discern the property of each." (Letter to Berthelot, 28th.August, 1847).

The two friends weathered together the Revolution of 1848. "The year 1848," wrote Renan, "made a deep impression on me. I had never given the social problems a thought before. These problems, bursting from the ground, as it were, on a frightened world, took hold of my mind, and became an integral part of my philosophy." As soon as his studies allowed him a short respite, he wanted to take stock of his beliefs. By this time he had left the Church for science, as a better means of attaining the truth and serving the ideal: was there not a more excellent way, a more immediate duty? And the result of his anxious questionings was a remarkable book, which, though written by Renan/

Renan, bore, unmistakable traces of Berthelot's influence on almost every page - "L'Avenir de la Science" - a production as chaotic, as obscure through the plethora of thought in a mind which had not as yet learned to sacrifice or reserve a part of its treasures and which gave itself forth entire, and as dogmatic and naïf as one might expect the encyclopaedic treatise of any young man to be. It is crude, aggressive, tactless, much of it poorly written, yet with more than the merit of being a curiosity and containing some very brilliant passages in the midst of it, and full of excellent suggestions cleverly made, full of delicious remarks, and full of learning and wisdom. Berthelot writes regarding Renan's "L'Avenir de la Science," "this volume represents the first unripe fruit of the effervescence of our young heads; a mixture of current views of the philosophers and scholars of the epoch with our personal ideas, which though later developed, were at this time merely confused sketches." (Introduction to the "Correspondance entre Renan et Berthelot"). A careful analysis of it shows it to contain germs of the best thoughts of Renan's later years. Indeed it holds an intimate connection with the entire mass of his life's work. It already embodies all the ideas on life and the world which he elaborated in detail in his subsequent writings, including the "Vie de Jésus;" but they are here affirmed in a tone of enthusiastic conviction which became more and more modified as time went on, though the basis of his teaching remained unaltered. He hails the dawn of a new era  
in/

in which the scientific conception of the universe shall take the place of the metaphysical and theological. Natural science, and especially the historical and philological sciences, are to be not only the liberators of the human mind, but also the guides of human life. Science is to become the source and final form of religion. No man ever affirmed more unflinchingly the sovereign claims of science as the only source of positive certainty, and the necessity of finding in it a sufficient basis for life. No one ever more resolutely excluded the supernatural from history.

"L'Avenir de la Science" had as the dominant note of it the belief in positive science as enunciated by Comte. Its philosophy at this early stage of Renan's career was that which he inculcated during the remainder of his career. It unfolds a programme that is, Utopian; but all Renan ever knew or dreamt may be traced across its pages, rudely sketched, exuberant, inchoate, wanting the touch of his mature style, for he was not yet an artist. The book is in a certain sense the most complete one Renan ever wrote, for it contains the whole Renan whom we know. "L'Avenir de la Science," says Jean Pommier, "a été à cet égard pour lui ce que les Natchez avaient été pour Chateaubriand." (J. Pommier's Renan, p.69).

It was primarily a scrutiny into the writer's own conscience, and the answer given in it to his anxious questionings was unequivocal: "Yes, Science is worth while." The inquiry turned into a great confession of faith. The whole ponderous production glows with/

glows with an ardent belief in reason and its ultimate triumph. The epigraph which Renan inserted in the title page of the volume is fully justified - "Hoc nunc os ex ossibus meis et caro de carne mea." Despite the corrections which age was yet to bring to these theories of youth, all Renan's essential ideas are in "L'Avenir de la Science" already, and it was upon this foundation, laid in his 25th. year under the association and influence of Marcellin Berthelot, that his whole doctrine was developed. Generally speaking, Renan was now at twenty five what he was to be later. His philosophy was constructed. External circumstances might alter the form and the expression, but not the essence. All his positive philosophy is contained in his "L'Avenir;" his later works, including the "Vie de Jésus," are merely his early essay divided up, reworked, lightened though enriched, mellowed and ripened. For long, "L'Avenir de la Science" was a sort of monumental quarry from which Renan drew, without exhausting it, raw material and polished stones, like those architects of old who built the Rome of the Popes from the stones of the Coliseum. Some of his most admired pages in the "Vie de Jésus" came from this quarry, and no where has he brought out more clearly his conception of the divine. (See article on Feuerbach in Renan's "Études d'Histoire Religieuse," 1st Series, p.46).

Wise friends interfered to prevent his entering the literary world "with this huge packet on his head," in the fear that the hard and dogmatic tone of "L'Avenir" might repel the reader, and that its ideas might prove too novel and too daring to be accepted all at once. It was not published until 1890, but to all intents and purposes/

purposes it was the same work as when it proceeded from Renan's pen forty years before. He felt convinced that scientific research not abstract speculation, would discover how mankind had originated. If so, it must not pause until it dealt with history, philology, myth, and legend, the primitive and spontaneous man who had created our governing ideas. "What I have sought above all to inculcate in this book," he writes, "is faith in reason, faith in human nature. I would have it serve to react against the sort of moral enfeeblement which is the malady of the rising generation. I would have it guide back into the true road of life some of those enervated souls who complain of being lacking in faith, who know not which way to go and who search everywhere in vain for an object of worship and devotion. Science alone can solve for man the eternal problems, the solution of which his nature imperatively demands. In my childhood and youth I tasted the sweetest joys of the believer, but, and I say it from the bottom of my soul, such joys were nothing to those which I had felt in the passionate search after truth. If I were to see all the truths constituting what is called natural religion, a personal God, Providence, prayer, anthropomorphism, personal immortality; if I were to see all these truths go to wreck beneath the legitimate effort of critical examination, I should clap my hands with joy over their ruin, thoroughly convinced that the real system of things, of which I may be still ignorant, but in the direction of which this very denial is a step, infinitely surpasses the poor imaginations without/

without which we are merely passing through one of those fatal periods of transition when humanity ceases to believe in chimerical beauties ere it arrives at the discovery of the marvels of the reality. We should never get frightened at the onward march of science, seeing that we may be sure that it will only lead to the discovery of incomparably beautiful things." ("L'Avenir de la Science," pp.87, 88).

As has been already indicated, traces of Marcellin Berthelot's influence are to be found on well-nigh every page of "L'Avenir de la Science," and Berthelot through his close association with Renan was undoubtedly the means of reinforcing in his mind the positivist tendency. A little known volume published under the editorship of Calmann Lévy, Paris, in 1898, entitled "Correspondance entre Renan et Berthelot," contains a considerable number of letters that passed between the two friends, ranging from 1847 to 1892, and reveals not only the admirably pure and lofty friendship and the very close intimacy between them, by the medium of language of the homeliest, frankest, and oftentimes most effusively affectionate nature (even for Frenchmen), but also sheds incidentally here and there side-lights upon the philosophical opinions of Renan and Berthelot.

"Sa correspondance avec E. Renan," writes Pommier, "nous a fourni (encore qu'il ait cru devoir couper et peut-être altérer la texte en certains endroits) le meilleur guide de long d'une vie qui, pour s'être développée en ligne droite, a su pourtant choisir/

choisir ses paysages." (J. Pommier's Renan, p.3).

Each was deeply interested in his companion's pursuits. Berthelot, as we have seen, was a pronounced positivist. "After the first months of 1846," in one place he says, "the clear scientific view of an universe in which no volition superior to that of man acts in any appreciable fashion, became the immovable anchor from which we never wandered." Referring to his youthful friendship with Marcellin Berthelot and their mutual progress in scepticism, Renan says, "When we first became acquainted, I still retained a tender attachment for Christianity. Berthelot also inherited from his father a remnant of Christian belief. A few months sufficed to relegate these vestiges of faith to that part of our souls reserved for memory. The statement that everything in the world is of the same colour, that there is no special supernatural or momentary revelation, impressed itself upon our minds as unanswerable. The scientific purview of a universe in which there is no appreciable trace of any free will superior to that of man became, from the first months of 1846, the immovable anchor from which we never shifted. We shall never move from this position until we shall have encountered in nature some one specially intentional fact having its cause outside the free will of man or the spontaneous action of the animal." ("Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse," p.298).

Certain inflexible principles were laid down which were to form the "inconcussum quid" of their faith. - There is no solution/

solution of continuity in the phenomenal order; there is no interruption in the laws of nature, which goes on without ceasing, following the impulse of its interior movements, while no external will, no supernatural intervention can ever be detected in the world: such were the necessary conclusions which followed from experience and the justified inductions of science.

Analogous conclusions were necessary in the world of mind and in the history of man. Never has a miracle been proved; never has the intervention of an extra-human will been manifest to man; in every verifiable case where such a deviation has been declared, the apparent deviation has been resolved into an illusion or a legend. The history of man and of his thought is only one chapter in natural history. In this way Renan and his friend found themselves brought back to the point of view of all French philosophy, of the great empiricists of the previous century and the idealists of the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Renan and Berthelot learned many things together, indeed, as Renan himself has said, but they learned many things apart, for as time went on, Berthelot was drawn into the sphere of physics, and especially of chemistry, where he made his mark. In after years he published a volume entitled, "Science et Philosophie," which contains much interesting and illuminating matter on Positivism.

Part/

Part of this volume was penned to begin with in correspondence with Renan, and in reply to a communication of Renan's, Berthelot puts the case for Positivism very emphatically. "Positive science seeks neither first causes nor the ultimate goal of things. In order to link together a multitude of phenomena by one single law, the human spirit has followed a simple and invariable method. It has stated the facts in accordance with observation and experience, compared them, extracted their relations, that is the general facts, which have in turn been verified by observation and experience, which verification constitutes their only guarantee of truth. A progressive generalisation, deduced from prior facts and verified unceasingly by new observations, thus brings our knowledge from the plane of particular and popular facts to general laws of an abstract and universal character... It is one of the principles of positive science that no reality can be established by a process of reasoning. The universe cannot be grasped by 'a priori method.'

These two scientific exponents therefore, both of them men of undoubted ability, and contemporaries of Renan, the one, Claude Bernard, a few years his senior, and more especially the other, Marcellin Berthelot his junior by four years, exercised a most potent influence in a naturalistic direction on the formation of their friend's thought. Whilst he was on the/

the very threshold of life, Renan was imbued with the Spirit of Positivism, and did not fail to reveal his passion for science and the scientific method.

In all his works Renan proceeds on the presumptive idea, (an idea, let it be well noted, which he propounds without a single word of vindication, or even formal exposition of his theory) that it is no personal and free God who rules nature and man; but a blind, undetermined Cause producing all by an unthinking process. Phenomena, he maintains, are to be explained by natural laws whose regularity excludes the idea of all superior and exceptional intervention. With such a system metaphysics cannot exist. Renan's determinism, applied to religious belief, proves by scientific, historical and philological reasoning that religions are all relative and of human origin. He affirmed the determinism of phenomena with even greater vigour than Taine. The development of man, the growth of religion, the march of civilisation - all of these according to the positivist philosophy, are the necessary sequences of prior natural causes. There has been absolutely no intervention, no interference in this inevitable order - no exercise of human freedom - no interruption of natural law. As one writer expresses it wittily, "Topsy's solution of the mystery of her wild nature is the solution given by this philosophy of the mystery of man and nature." Nothing has been arranged by the free/

free will of God or man; there is no government by a Divine hand; everything has simply developed into what it is. Positivism boldly asserts that there has been no supernatural communication or help ever given to man - that there can never have been anything of the kind, and never can be - that no violation of the laws of nature has ever transpired, that a miracle is unthinkable. The positivist most unhesitatingly maintains that every fact reported as miraculous is false. From the first, the underlying principle, in all rationalistic criticism of the evangelical records, has been the impossibility of accepting the supernatural, as fact. It must be regarded as the natural, seen through the haze of the human mind, at a certain stage of its development towards scientific thought. In other words, it is relegated from the world of reality to the world of ideas. At all costs, the miraculous, as commonly understood, must be eliminated. The first attacks, made by the coarse infidelity of the 18th. century, on the moral character of Jesus and His disciples, such as those by Reimarus, in the "Wolfenbüttel Fragments," in the middle of the century, and by some of the English Deists, followed by the French Encyclopaedists and writers like Voltaire, were so clumsy and barbarous, that they no longer suited the more scientific spirit of the 19th. century. They were entirely discarded. The next step was to suggest that, instead of intentional fraud in the writers, a mixture of causes operated; in some cases, ignorance and enthusiasm working upon natural phenomena; in others, a few original facts exaggerated by a legendary process, as they passed from lip to lip by/

by oral tradition eventually taking the form in which they are now found in the Gospels. The old Rationalists, headed by Paulus, rendered themselves a laughing-stock, by their foolish attempts at naturalistic explanations of miraculous narratives. Schleiermacher may be said to have given them the Coup de grâce. But in the Tübingen school much more formidable opponents were met with, men of scholarly minds, philosophical acumen, and scientific method of research. Strauss and Schenkel attempted to establish the mythical theory. Baur sought to prove that the New Testament and the development of Christian history, were natural products of existing moral forces in the world. Renan, who followed in their wake, in his whole work, "Histoire des Origines Christianisme" made a laborious attempt to dispense with the supernatural. Personal will, interposing in human affairs, is in his view incompatible with science, which inculcates with irresistible force of evidence, that the order of the universe is unchanging.

Renan, then, exhibits in most unmistakable fashion this ruling tendency of his day. He is first and foremost a Positivist. In his famous article on "The Metaphysics of Religion" by Vacherot, he repudiates and denies altogether the possibility of metaphysics. (*Revue des deux Mondes*, Jan. 15, 1862). He repeatedly and most unhesitatingly declares that every fact reported as miraculous is false, that every phenomenon in human history, whether in an individual or in society, is the inevitable result of certain conditions inherent in that individual, or in the society/

society; or, in his own words, "the phenomena of history are only the regular development of laws as unalterable as reason and perfection." This doctrine he applies in rigid sincerity to the history and influence of Jesus:- "A more extensive view of the philosophy of history will make us understand that the true causes of Jesus are not to be sought outside of humanity, but in the bosom of the moral world; that the laws which have produced Jesus are not exceptional and transitory laws, but the permanent laws of the human consciousness." ("Les Historiens Critiques de Jésus" in "Nouvelles Études d'Histoire Religieuse.")

It is his evident master principle, as it is that of the Positivist school, to ignore the reality of any spiritual or divine government of the world. The order of the universe is fixed in certain laws, which exclude all personal intervention, and remain unchanging for ever. It is the business of science to discover these laws; it is the function of the historian to recognise their operation, and to interpret by them the whole course of past phenomena. There is and can be no room, therefore, in history for the miraculous. There is no room even for God, save as the poetic or philosophic ideal of an inflexible system of law. This is Positivism in its general conception. Not only Christianity, but Theism, is held to be a philosophical mistake.

The Positivist trend of thought permeates not only the whole of Renan's "Vie de Jésus," but indeed most of his other works. Reference has already been made to the supreme place it occupies in his early production, "L'Avenir de la Science." It is the primary/

primary axiom, the regulative principle of all his historical studies. Thus in the Introduction to his "Études d'Histoire Religieuse" (p.7) he states that "The first principle of criticism is, that a miracle has no place in the web of human affairs, anymore than in the series of the facts of nature. Criticism, accordingly, which commences by proclaiming that everything in history has its human explication, even when the explication fails us for want of sufficient information, could not harmonise with the theological schools which employ a method opposed to its own, and pursue a different aim." "Criticism has two manners of attacking a miraculous narrative, for it cannot dream to accept it as such, since its very essence is the denial of the supernatural." ("Études"). "All controversy between people who believe in the supernatural and people who do not believe in it, is stricken with sterility. It has to be said of miracles what Schleiermacher said of the angels: One cannot prove an impossibility... This is not an argument, but a grouping of the facts from which modern sciences obtain this immense result: there is no such thing as the supernatural. Since there is such a thing as being, everything which has taken place in the world of phenomena has been the regular development of the laws of being, laws which constitute only a single order of government; I mean nature, whether physical or moral. Whatever speaks of something as being above or beyond nature in the order of/

of facts, asserts a contradiction; we might as well speak of the superdivine in the order of substances." ("Les Historiens Critiques de Jésus" in "Nouvelles études d'Histoire religieuse," p.224). Compare also, "There is no history, if we do not comprehend the non-reality of miracles," ("Etudes" p.178). Indeed the whole of Renan's Essay on "Les Historiens Critiques de Jésus" in his "Nouvelles études d'histoire religieuse" is occupied with this conception.

And this philosophical mode of thought is the keynote to his "Vie de Jésus." The positivist spirit pervades the work. Despite the occasionally indecisive tone of the Introduction, Renan has no hesitation in declaring afterwards that "physical and physiological sciences have demonstrated to us that all supernatural vision is an illusion." Our author brings the life of Christ to his own mind, and measures it by his own conceptions of the natural, and probable, and possible. He labours to show that the whole birth and appearance of Christ is a process of naturalism. As Principal Tulloch in his able exposition of Renan's book and of the historical and philosophical, as well as Christian, principles which negative its conclusions, aptly remarks, "The author not only does not conceal, but parades the great Positivist idea of an unchanging material law governing all things, the world of history, as well as the world of matter. And he expressly appeals to this idea as the necessarily guiding principle of all historical investigation - and of the investigation of the origin of Christianity,

no/

no less than other historical problems." (Tulloch's "Christ of the Gospels and of Modern Criticism," p.13).

The doctrine of Positivism Renan applies rigidly therefore to the history and influence of Jesus. There can be no admission of the supernatural whatever attaching to his work or mission. "A more comprehensive view of the philosophy of history will enable us to understand why the true causes of Jesus ought not to be sought for outside of humanity, but in the bosom of the moral world: why the laws that have produced Jesus are not exceptional and transitory, but the permanent laws of the human conscience." ("Les Historiens Critiques de Jésus" in "Nouvelles études d'histoire religieuse," p.225).

Though Renan is not at all prejudiced against the great Founder of Christianity, but, on the contrary, displays everywhere a great and even patronising partiality towards the wonderful Being whose life he relates, he sets out with an *a priori* theory concerning the world and its management, which from the very beginning settles arbitrarily the most important questions involved. Nothing could be more dogmatic, nothing more polemical, than his manner of treating the supernatural. His hostility on this point rises to a passion. It is a pre-determined question with him that there is and can be no supernatural, and hence, when he comes to New Testament criticism, he must of necessity explain away, in the best manner he can, everything that savours of the miraculous. Instead of examining carefully the evidence for the great facts and truths of Christianity, he/

he fore-closes the question by asserting that there can be nothing supersensuous, and that therefore the Gospel narratives must be to a large extent legendary and fictitious, just because they contain so considerable an element of the miraculous. The supernatural is the very subject under proof, and he rejects the evidence for it, for the simple reason that it contains the element of the supernatural; as if the supernatural could be proved by anything short of the supernatural. In the world, as it appears to Renan, there are no complications except such as can be disposed of scientifically. He has his mind made up before he commences his account of the career of Jesus, that no super-sensuous power of whatsoever description has any hand in the matter. Like those humble descendants of the mummers of old who still lingered about the land in Renan's time, the French savant has to send someone before him to sweep the stage clear for his drama; and it is with an apparent ignorance of, or indifference to, any other reasonable theory of existence that he draws up the curtain and discloses to his audience the clean and tidy platform upon which humanity has to work out its history, - a world, to wit, out of which, by a careless exercise of will, he has cleared everything divine and mysterious, leaving only Man and Law to fight out the oft-repeated battle through innumerable ages. Such a clean sweep at the beginning no doubt in a fashion simplifies matters, though, at the same time, it eliminates the true soul of philosophy from the argument which follows, making it rather an elaborate/

elaborate and laborious arrangement of facts to fit a theory, than an impartial and unbiassed investigation of the actual for the demonstration of the true. And therefore the "Vie de Jésus" has been aptly characterised "as more than a work of art; it is a work of artifice."

"The first impression that the Vie de Jésus makes on critical readers," says Dr. George Saintsbury tersely, "whether orthodox or unorthodox, is in all probability identical, nor can it be said this impression is ever removed. Nothing can to all appearance be more hopelessly uncritical and arbitrary than the proceeding. To take a connected narrative and reject such details as happen not to square with preconceived ideas, while admitting the others; to reject a prophecy as obviously false, and take it up the next minute as a trustworthy history of the events à posteriori; to see in a reported miracle not an imposture but an innocent distortion of some ordinary fact - all this seems at first sight to partake decidedly of the spirit of Dichtung than of Wahrheit." (*Miscell. Essays*, p. 121).

The Introductory account Renan gives of the Gospels is a most important feature of his work. Given the hypothesis (and this assumption is the basal principle of the "Vie de Jésus") that the supernatural is false, the problem is, "How to explain the composition of the New Testament, the character of Jesus, and the success of Christianity," and with a poetic sympathy for what he terms "the unequalled epic of the story of Christianity," Renan has inevitably to set himself to erase all that is beyond the laws of nature from the Evangelical narratives and from the origin of Christianity. His

His philosophical position explains at once all that he says regarding Jesus. He looks at him from the naturalistic angle of vision and estimates him accordingly. He has at the outset to show that the spiritual monotheism which gave the ascendancy to Christian truth had its rise in the Semitic races; that it was "a Semitic dogma, which Jesus loosened from its root-hold and winged for universal acceptance;" that the legendary stories, as he describes the miraculous narratives of the Gospels, are simply the deposit of a later age, the fruit of credulous and fervid imaginations; that indeed every conception of the life of Jesus imputing superhuman perfection to his character, or miraculous power to his will, must be false, and that therefore the narratives of his life which we possess are to be so interpreted as to bring back to us his real character and work, and to account for the origin of those supernatural contents which are repudiated; and that the remainder of the Evangelical records may be manipulated and humoured in such a manner as to be fairly pieced together after the miraculous sections in them are pared away, and may be made to exhibit something like the original lineaments of the person of Jesus, before these miraculous glosses smeared over and obscured his true image. Thus for Renan, the Gospels are materials of the most tractable plasticity. They shall establish nothing supernatural, and therefore nothing miraculous. He applies but one test of reliability to the Evangelical narratives, and that is their compatibility with his purely human conception of/

of Christ's character. That conception has for its axiom the affirmation that nothing beyond the laws of nature has ever happened. The principle is trenchant, and, honestly applied, makes well-nigh a clean sweep of the contents of the Gospels. For this wholesale eviction of the supernatural the rationalist is ready, but the historian hesitates, for the critic's ruthlessness would be the artist's ruin. The principle is therefore applied, and — evaded. As much of a Gospel narrative as is obnoxious to the rationalist is dismissed with a shake of the head, and as much of it as is convenient for the artist is quietly recovered by some such magical phrases as, "It may be permitted us to believe," or "we cannot but conjecture." Thus what is ostentatiously flung away with one hand is surreptitiously stolen back with the other. The procedure is somewhat irrational, but the awkwardness is covered by taking care that the critic's right hand should not know what his left hand does. The awkwardness is concealed, but the irrationality remains, and its consequences drive Renan to strange conclusions.

Such, then, in general terms, is the position to which Renan's naturalistic opinions conduct him in his "Vie de Jésus". The axiom of Positivism, that "there is and can be no such thing as the supernatural," is, as he himself so truly styles it, the foundation of his work.

Commencing with this arbitrary assumption, he declares  
"That/

"That the Gospels may be in part legendary is evident, since they are full of miracles and of the supernatural." He allows the four evangelical records to have been produced, as we now have them, before the end of the first century; but the whole history passed through several processes before it reached this definite stage.

And all this be it noted, is introduced with a "ce semble," or "on peut croire," or "on a le droit de supposer," in a way which even the author of "Supernatural Religion" found provoking; his excuse for Renan being so positive in his conclusions, so vague as to the intermediate steps, being that constructive criticism is far harder than destructive criticism, just as synthesis is always harder than analysis.

(1) To begin with, accepting the testimony of Papias given by Eusebius, he supposes that there were two primitive sources of Gospel tradition which correspond to the discourses of Matthew, and the anecdotal narrative matter of Mark, primary redactions which no longer exist.

(2) But these, according to Renan, are not the Gospels which we possess today. As time went on, the primitive nuclei of the Evangelical tradition developed into more elaborate and composite forms. Our Gospels have been produced in a manner so simple and touching, that it is very surprising it was never known before, and one cannot do better than quote the discoverer's own words. After informing us of another novelty, namely, that the text of the Gospels possessed little authority during the/

the first hundred and fifty years, Renan proceeds to say, "The early Christians cared little for any written accounts of the sayings and actions of Jesus. They preferred always to them oral tradition. Seeing that the world was believed to be near an end, people had not much inclination to write books for the future; they were solely concerned about preserving in their heart the living image of him whom they hoped to see soon again in the clouds. Hence the small authority which, for nearly a hundred years, evangelical texts enjoyed. People made no scruple about inserting paragraphs in them, of combining various narratives, and in perfecting the one by the other. The poor man who had only one book was anxious that it should contain all that was dear to his heart. These little books were lent by one to another; each transcribed into the margin of his copy the phrases and parables he found in others which affected him. The most beautiful thing in the world has thus proceeded from an obscure and wholly popular elaboration." (Introduction to "Vie de Jésus," p. xl).

A most touching sight is it not, this of poor men lending and borrowing their cherished little booklets, and inscribing in their poor but best manner the portions dear to their hearts! A pity it is only a legend of the 19th. century manufactured by Renan! We may presume that one of these little books so written on the margin was destined to/

to be the Gospel of Matthew, and the other that of Mark. Thus arose the Gospels of Matthew and Mark in their present canonical form. They are "impersonal compositions" giving no evidence of individual authorship. But there must have been many more which are lost, according to Renan's theory; and, judging by those we have, the loss is enormous, for we would infinitely prefer those "elaborations of the poor men" to the elaborately critical production of Renan himself.

What then is it that Renan asks us to believe? A community that cared little about books, because the end of the world was regarded as nigh, occupies itself in an incessant labour of borrowing, copying, collating, altering, and mending its books. A community which, even from the first, erred in excess of personal attachment to a leader and pushed it on to party Spirit, took the "things said and done" which bore Mark's name, and the "Logia" which bore Matthew's name, and without scruple, assimilated, altered, added to them, and forgetful of any claim of Matthew or Mark, made each his little gospel of what touched his heart most. Was this state of things possible? There is no kind of record of it. It is quite opposed to what Papias describes. The Hebrew Matthew interpreted into Greek by different readers and instructors has nothing to do with this incessant tampering with and obliteration of an apostle's undoubted work. But grant Renan all he asks; attribute all this strange literary activity, this free/

free handling of apostolic writings, to the simple, unlettered Christians of the first age, and two questions will still need an answer -

(a) How comes it that all the earliest records of the formation of the Canon give us our four Gospels and no more, after a process that must have tended to form a multitude of gospels, or to assimilate all to each other, and so merge them into one?

(b) Why, in this supposed of free gospellers did not many a variation of the text disappear, which has since perplexed the minds of harmonists? When the Gospels emerge into the period of written Church history, they are the Gospels that we have at present. But these considerations trouble Renan very little. His purpose requires two things, and he secures them both. There must be some historical basis for his romance; and as the history that is available abounds with miracles, is interwoven with miracles, he submerges it a little in a sea of popular editing and copying, in the hope of being able decently to avoid reading what he does not desire to read, in their stained and altered pages.

(3) The third stage of Gospel composition was that of combination or of redaction which is designed and meditated, where we perceive the effort to conciliate various versions. Renan cites Luke's Gospel as an example of this. Luke was a companion of the Apostle Paul, and wrote his Gospel, Renan says, after the destruction of Jerusalem. It is a book written throughout by the/

the same hand, of the most perfect unity. But yet its historical value, declares our author, is very feeble. It is a document of the second-hand, compiled from preceding documents. It is the work of a man who selects, adapts, combines. It weakens the details for the purpose of producing concord, between the different accounts. It softens passages which had become embarrassing from the point of view of the Divinity of Jesus, it exaggerates the marvellous, and perpetuates errors of chronology.

These are a few of the feebly sustained charges which Renan strives to make against this Gospel.

(4) The last stage in the history of the Gospels is that "of speculation and conscious narrative purpose, represented by St. John." "The Gospel of St. John," says Renan, "forms a composition of another order, and altogether apart." With reference to this Gospel, Renan's opinion is peculiarly irresolute. He is decided, however, in believing it to be a product of the first century containing many things which are attributable to John, but he declines to accept the report of Christ's discourses which it contains. The speeches of John's Gospel with their superhuman assertions will not harmonise with his merely human Jesus and are therefore inadmissible; but our historian cannot afford to lose the graphic incidents and picturesque touches of the narrative in the fourth Gospel. The dilemma is met by the theory that "The discourses are almost entirely/

entirely fictitious, but the narrative portions contain precious traditions springing in part from the Apostle John." (Introduction "Vie de Jésus" p. xi).

Thus, although Renan assigns to each Gospel some characteristic beauty or virtue, their historic value is small in his eyes. Over and over again we are assured by him that our Gospels contain passages designedly coloured or positively fictitious. No where do we find that Renan has the remotest idea of inspiration, and, indeed, how can he, when he considers the Gospels to be what he describes them? They are in flagrant contradiction with one another, and in such a case the historian can only choose for himself what he believes to be true. "Who does not recognise," he declares after his ingenious account of the book-making of the poor men, "the value of documents constructed thus out of the tender recollections and simple narratives of the first two Christian generations, still full of the strong impressions produced by the illustrious Founder, and which seem to have survived him for a long time?" (Introduction to "Vie de Jésus" p.xl). And elsewhere in the Introduction he says, "It will now, I presume, be understood what sort of historic value I put upon the Gospels. They are neither biographies after the manner of Suetonius, nor fictitious legends after the manner of Philostratus; they are legendary biographies./

biographies. I place them at once alongside of the legends of the saints, the lives of Plotinus, Proclus, Isidore, and other compositions of the same sort, in which historical truth and the desire to present models of virtue are combined in divers degrees. Inexactitude, a trait common to all popular compositions, makes itself particularly felt in them. Let us suppose that fifteen or twenty years ago three or four soldiers of the Empire set themselves to write a life of Napoleon from recollections of him. It is clear that their narratives would present numerous errors, great discordances. One of them would place Wagram before Marengo; another would boldly state that Napoleon ousted the government of Robespierre from the Tuilleries; a third would omit expeditions of the highest importance. But one thing, possessing a great degree of truthfulness, would certainly result from these simple narratives - that is, the character of the hero, the impression he made around him. The same can also be said of the Gospels. Bent solely on bringing out strongly the excellency of the master, his miracles, his teaching, the evangelists manifest entire indifference to everything that is not of the Spirit of Jesus. The contradictions in respect of time, place, and persons were regarded as insignificant; for just as the greater the degree of inspiration that is attributed to the words of Jesus, so the less was granted to the compilers themselves. The latter looked upon themselves as/

as simple scribes, and cared only for one thing - to omit nothing they knew." (Introduction to "Vie de Jésus", p.1).

For Renan, the real history of Jesus is throughout distorted by legends, and adorned by the traditions of the wonderloving disciples. As Strauss made use of the myth to get rid of the supernatural, so Renan uses the cognate conception of the legend. From the mass of legends and apocryphal miracles which had accumulated, the real history of Jesus may still be extracted by means of a bold historical criticism.

Why then does Renan insist that a process of free alteration has deprived us of the original Gospels? One strong bias sways every page of his volume - the bias towards Positivism - the determination that nothing of the nature of miracle can be allowed in the career of Jesus. The book, with all its charming, idyllic descriptions, its occasional appreciation of what is good, is tainted by the fixed idea that there shall be no supersensuous element. No bigot for tradition ever held his dogma more tenaciously through every inconsistency than does Renan his theory that the miraculous is absolutely inadmissible. Such, then, are the expedients to which he is compelled to resort in order to explain away those portions of the evangelical narratives which do not harmonise with his naturalistic philosophy.

Coming/

Coming to a detailed consideration of Renan's conception of the actual character and career of Jesus, we are brought face to face with his strong *a priori* positivist bias. His "Vie de Jésus" is, in large part, a wreath of immortelles laid on the tomb of a faith to him utterly dead, - that is, the faith in a supernatural Christ. The late Prof. W. G. Elmslie has well said that "the verdicts of criticism in the realm of religion are partly of choice and partly of necessity, to a large extent subjective. They are not so much decisions based on proof as opinions of experts. The critic's divining rod is aptly described in the aphorism -

"So redt' ich wenn ich Christus wär."

Armed with this singularly handy rule-of-thumb - "Had I been Christ, I should have spoken thus" - the critic proceeds confidently to sift the Gospel records, and to reconstruct the history of Jesus. There must ever be a close connexion between character and creed. Says Goethe -

"Wie einer ist, so ist sein Gott,  
Darum wird Gott so oft Zum Spott."

"As is a man, so is his God,  
That's why so often God's a thing of scorn."

When a man undertakes to manufacture a god, he will naturally make him in his own image, and the dignity of the deity will depend on the moral magnitude of the maker. The critic, who makes himself the measure of Christ, compels scrutiny of the standard, and thus constitutes his personal character part of the/

the question." Renan is a striking illustration of this dictum.

We need scarcely pause to state that Renan ignores the alleged supernatural birth of our Lord. Renan sees in Jesus nothing more than a man. "He sprang from the ranks of the people. His father Joseph and his mother Mary were of humble position, artisans living by their work, in that condition which is so common in the East." Here, as in other places, our author deliberately sets to one side the Gospel tradition whenever it does not suit his preconceived notions. Christ was not born at Bethlehem, nor in the manner Luke indicates. The whole story of Bethlehem is summarily banished to the region of mere legend. The idea of such a birth, says Renan, arose out of an endeavour which was made afterwards to connect Jesus with the house of David. The prevailing idea in Judea was that the Messiah was to be a descendant of David. The legend, therefore, was invented that Jesus was born of the royal line, and for further confirmation the story was got up that his reputed parents went to Bethlehem "in the days of the taxing." The explanation of the origin of Christianity which he furnishes in the early pages of his book, further betrays the influence of Renan's naturalistic mode of thought. Whence did Christianity spring, he enquires? From Jewish culture in Galilee, is the answer supplied. The same views were placed before the British public in a prominent manner by Renan on his appointment to deliver the Hibbert Lectures for 1880 in London, when the subject selected was "The influence of the institutions, thought/

thought, and culture of Rome on Christianity and the development of the Catholic Church." The theory of the origin, growth and triumph of Christianity, set forth in these lectures, is substantially the same as that which Renan has propounded in his "Vie de Jésus," as well as in the other volumes of his "Histoire des origines du Christianisme." He will allow to Christianity no divine origination. It is represented as simply a reformed and purified Judaism. Indeed he goes further back than that. In the first chapter of the "Vie de Jésus" which is entitled "The place of Jesus in the history of the world," Renan gives us his idea of the universal history of religion, describing "the revolution by which the noblest portions of humanity passed from Paganism to a religion based on the divine unity." His opinion is evidently that man had at the outset no religion at all. Developments however took place, as the ages passed, that led to the springing up of Monotheism among the Israelites and possibly in Persia. Thus, in his view, the Semitic race had the glory of making the religion of humanity, and through all the vicissitudes of their national existence, their belief maintained its hold upon them, and just when their hopes had reached the climax, the advent of Jesus took place. In all this theory of the rise and development of religion there is for Renan neither revelation, inspiration, nor any other species of the supernatural. From its source right on to the coming of Christ, even in its highest and noblest form, religion was purely natural.

Jesus was a man, nothing more, a human being such as any other, in no respect essentially different from his fellow-men, a typical Galilean of his day with high visions and hopes for his race. On this ground, and on this ground alone, Renan endeavours to explain Christ's life in its antecedents, its origin, its course, and all its consequences, precisely as one might interpret the career of Alexander the Great, or Plato, or Caesar, or any other historical personage.

To reduce Jesus to the stature of an ordinary mortal, Renan lays under tribute the times, the country, and the men in whose midst he lived. "No historical scene was so fit as that in which Jesus grew, to develop those hidden forces which humanity keeps, as it were, in reserve, and which it does not bring forward except in days of excitement and peril. All the moral wisdom of the synagogue was found in Him, clothed in better and more beautiful forms; He wrought it into a more exquisite creation of art than any teacher of the synagogue had yet done. All the passionate hopes of a higher kingdom for Israel, which fermented in the popular Jewish imagination, were His in their utmost freedom and joyfulness of excitement." (Tulloch's "Christ of the Gospels and of Modern Criticism" pp. 144, 145).

The Messianic ideas that Jesus entertained at a later stage in his career were, according to Renan, purely human in their genesis. They were the common property of his time, and were founded upon expressions in the old apocryphal books - the Book of Daniel (in Renan's judgment belonging to the age of Antiochus Epiphanes, and of no higher rank than the other apocryphal/

apocryphal books) and the Books of Enoch, and particularly in the former of these.

"A gigantic dream haunted for centuries the Jewish people, constantly renewing its youth in its decrepitude....Judea concentrated on her national future all her power of love and longing. She believed herself to possess divine promises of a boundless future.....At the time of the captivity, a poet full of harmony foresaw the splendour of a future Jerusalem, to which the nations and distant isles should be tributaries, under colours so charming that it seemed a glance from the eyes of Jesus had reached him from a distance of Six Centuries." ("Vie de Jésus," p.30). "Jesus, from the moment he began to think, entered into the burning atmosphere which had been created in Palestine by the ideas we have just referred to.....Free from selfishness, he thought of nothing but his work, his race, and humanity at large. Those mountains, that sea, that azure sky, those high plains in the horizon, were for him not the melancholy vision of a soul which interrogates nature upon her fate, but the certain symbol, the transparent shadow of an invisible world and a new heaven." ("Vie de Jésus," pp.33, 34).

Regarding the teaching of Jesus, and taking the Sermon on the Mount as a striking example, Renan denies for it any absolute originality. According to him, there were two main sources of the doctrines of Christ, one, the Messianic ideas which/

which commonly prevailed; and the other, the moral aphorisms of Judaism. Jesus borrowed the form of his teaching and much of its expression, from the Rabbis. His first preaching was a perfect idyll of spiritualised Judaism. So far from conceding anything like a stamp of divinity to Christ's utterances, Renan maintains that, with all the beauty of form and the lofty emotion and high tone of authority with which Christ invested his words, - "the highest creation which ever proceeded from the human conscience, the most beautiful code of the perfect life ever traced by moralist!" they were not first-hand, and they had no originality of substance; they were "capable of being entirely recomposed from ancient sources."

Carrying out his arbitrary materialism, (Renan, be it said, is far more arbitrary in his treatment of the Gospels than either Strauss or Schenkel) he, of course, discards absolutely all miracles, and the connection of Jesus with phenomena so called, is variously explained. The chapter on "Miracles," (ch. xvi.) seems one of the weakest in the volume. His treatment of miracles throughout is neither adequate nor satisfactory. Is it not strange and significant, that the writer of a life of Jesus, a life which has, through its miraculous character, produced the profoundest effect in the world during the past nineteen centuries, should dismiss the subject of miracles in nine feeble pages out of his two hundred and sixty six? He attacks the miracles of Scripture, and upon this subject says, "Observation, which has never once been/

been falsified, teaches us that miracles never happen, but in times and countries in which they are believed and before persons disposed to believe them. No miracle ever occurred in the presence of men capable of testing its miraculous character. Renan has laid down the conditions which in his opinion would alone be sufficient to demonstrate the reality of a miracle. (Introduction "Vie de Jésus," pp. 1-1ii, and Introduction "Les Apôtres," p.xxiii). According to him, in order to make the result completely satisfactory, Jesus in raising a dead man to life, for example, would have needed to submit to some such conditions as the following. A commission composed of physiologists, physicians, chemists, and persons trained in historical criticism would have to be formed. This commission would select the corpse; they would test scientifically that the body was really dead. They would select a room for the experiment, and arrange a complete system of precautions requisite to place the result beyond doubt. And then in the face of day and before an assembly of accredited scientists the miracle would be performed. But even the performance of the miracle once and again after this fashion would not be sufficient. It must be repeated in different circumstances and on different corpses. Renan ("Vie de Jésus," Introduction, p.liii) declares that he will accept a miracle as proved only if it is found that it will succeed on repetition, forgetting that in such a case it would not really be a miracle at all, but a newly-discovered natural law. Such is a sketch of Renan's requisite conditions. Who does/

Who does not instinctively feel that such a method partakes far too much of the merely theatrical, and is absolutely foreign to the spirit of Jesus and to the natural manner in which His miracles always arose out of actual life and history. And, further, it may safely be said that such a method would never have satisfied even Renan himself.

With this singular proposal, in which <sup>the</sup> weakness of Renan's mode of argument is very remarkably shown, Prin. Tulloch has ably dealt by a very lucid and striking description of the difference between historical and scientific facts: "M. Renan has fallen into so plain a confusion as to confound a fact of experience with a scientific conclusion. Facts of incident and contingency - and all historical facts, miraculous or otherwise, are of this class - belong to a sphere of their own, different from the scientific, and rest on their own characteristic and appropriate proof. Whether anything has happened or not is a question of contingency to be settled by the evidence of those who profess to have seen the thing happen. Did they really see it? Were they truly cognisant of it? And were they capable of judging, not by scientific tests, but by the ordinary exercise of their senses and their judgment, whether what they saw was a reality, and not an illusion? Such is the nature of historical evidence. Scientific evidence is of a different character; the evidence not of personal testimony, but of continual demonstration. Scientific facts, unlike facts of mere contingency or incident, are truths of nature, which, once discovered, admit of repeated verification, because they rest on the/

the constitution of things - the existing laws of the material universe; they are equally true at all times, therefore, and their proof can be demonstratively exhibited at one time as well as another. In the case of such facts personal evidence is of no consequence." (Tulloch's "The Christ of the Gospels and of Modern Criticism," pp. 46-48).

Renan professes to enter upon the consideration of his subject with a mind entirely impartial and unbiassed by theory, and yet it is upon an absolutely foregone conclusion that he bases his whole argument. This is the one dogmatic assumption which obscures the whole field of Renan's vision - the unproved and unprovable presumption that there cannot possibly be any such thing as miracle. The "*Vie de Jésus*" is, all in all, little more than an attempt to account for Christ and Christianity and the Christian Scriptures without giving credence to miraculous events. We are not to be misled by his apparent hesitation in one passage in the Introduction where he says, "we do not affirm that miracles are impossible, we only affirm that hitherto none have been proven." ("*Vie de Jésus*" Introduction p.li). Renan has displayed his colours too clearly in other places in the "*Vie de Jésus*" as well as in other productions of his pen, to leave us in doubt concerning his real feelings and convictions on the matter. Regarding the narratives of miraculous events in the Gospels, he favours, as has already been indicated, the legendary, as distinguished from the mythical (Straussian) theory. These records were rather the transfiguration of facts, than a pure/

pure creation of pious enthusiasm. Renan is decided in affirming that, at least, a very considerable portion of these accounts emanated from the Apostles themselves. But here we cannot acquit the Master at the cost of his disciples. Jesus himself, according to Renan, allowed his followers to believe that he miraculously healed the sick and raised the dead. Renan is driven to this conclusion by his views regarding the Evangelical documents. What explanation of the testimony of the Gospels and of the extraordinary phenomena in the life of Christ, can be given? Renan's reply is that the Gospels are legendary narratives, like the lives of some of the mediaeval saints; and that the events in the life of Christ which appeared miraculous, assumed this appearance partly through the blind enthusiasm of the apostles, and partly through the pious fraud in which they had an active, and their master a consenting, agency. In defending his position, Renan declares that Jesus had no conception of a natural order governed by laws, and that he was unconscious of the distinction between the natural and the supernatural, the normal and the miraculous. But hallucination, as Renan feels and frankly admits, will not effectively explain these events in the Gospels. They were either miraculous, or there was fraud. He faces the dilemma, and does not scruple to summon the assistance of *fraus pia* to account for them. The resurrection of Lazarus was only a pretended resurrection, which the friends of Jesus got up for popular effect, and in which Jesus unwillingly, yet consciously and wilfully, played his part! This is one of the/

the most hateful things we find in Renan's book; yet he adopts it because, precluded on account of his philosophical tenets from believing in a miracle, he is cornered and knows no other way out.

In consonance with Renan's positivist bias, there is of course, no place in the "Vie de Jésus" for the sacrifice on the Cross of the Divine Saviour for the sins of the world. "I am often asked by German Christians," said Renan, "what do I make of sin? Mon Dieu, I believe that I suppress it." The sin and pain of life do not press on Renan. He has borne no sorrows and carried no sins - not even his own. Sin to him is not what it was to Jesus, a thing to die to rescue men from. In Renan's sight it is but the shadow of moral light, a shading we should miss in the world's panorama, at most an anti-social force to be managed, mitigated, reformed, or utilised. The Cross of Calvary, instead of being the supreme proof of the love of God for humanity in bearing the sin of the world and in agonising against death and hell, to carry back to holiness and heaven a world ransomed and renewed, is for Renan simply the escape from a dilemma. The world's salvation shrivels into the mere evasion of a blunder, and the Divine Redeemer dwindles down into a martyr by mistake. The death of Jesus was simply that of a good man, disappointed in his aims, and compelled at last to seek escape from an inextricable situation by/

by the sacrifice of his life. "Oh if he had but died after preaching the only absolute religion by the well of Samaria," exclaims Renan! But he went on, and had at last to play a part which became so intolerable, that he was compelled to die, had almost to commit religious suicide, that he might deliver himself from its fatal necessities.

The impossibility of forming a consistent conception of Christ, when the supernatural element is discarded, is strikingly manifested in Renan's volume. The most incongruous assertions are made concerning him. At one point sublime attitudes of mind and heart are ascribed to him; he is declared to be the greatest of all the sons of men, a character of colossal proportions; at another point, vanity is laid to his charge; he is flattered by the adulation of the simple folks who follow him; he is accused of weakly yielding to the enthusiasm of his disciples, who were eager that he should win the renown of being a thaumaturgist, and he is described as giving way to a mood of gloom and resentment, to a morbid relish for persecution and martyrdom, to an excess of passionateness, and to an entire loss of self-control towards the close of his career. Gentle and sweet, meek and loving, at the first, the impression is irresistibly conveyed by Renan, that Jesus was, by and by, hurt and wounded, goaded and irritated, and that he became morose, soured, and harsh, subject to fits of severity, and above all so oppressed and crushed by the weight of his mission, that at last he was beside himself, and was carried away by the impetuosity/

impetuosity of his feelings and temper. "Urgent and imperative, he suffered no opposition....His natural gentleness seemed to have abandoned him; he was sometimes harsh and capricious. His disciples at times did not understand him, and experienced in his presence a feeling akin to fear. Sometimes his displeasure at the slightest opposition led him to commit inexplicable and apparently absurd acts. It was not that his virtue deteriorated; but his struggle in the cause of the ideal against the reality became insupportable. Contact with the world pained and revolted him. Obstacles irritated him... Contact with men degraded him to their level." ("Vie de Jésus," pp.184,185).

A multitude of texts are referred to by Renan in support of these painful and unfounded statements. The texts are grouped together, with little regard to the order either of time or place, referring as they do to the beginning, or the middle, or the close of his public life, to Galilee, or other districts of Judea, or to Jerusalem. But the impression is made, that with a natural kindness and sweetness of temper, at the first, aided besides by a striking form and appearance, and by a winning voice, the underlying passionate-ness of Jesus' nature flashed out ever and anon, and was displayed more and more as the time advanced, until at last it gained all but complete mastery over him, so that at the close of his career he was irascible, overbearing, and violent. Renan depicts under the name of Jesus an impossible being.

Although/

Although incompatible actions and traits of character are imputed to him without necessity, even upon the naturalistic theory, yet the chief and insuperable barrier in the way of the task Renan undertook, lay in the impossibility, so long as the supernatural elements of the narratives were rejected, of attributing to Jesus the excellence which undeniably belongs to him.

Renan closes the life of Jesus with the last sigh on the Cross. With his final breath on Calvary the life of Jesus ends. The resurrection for Renan is quite unhistorical. The empty grave and the imaginary vision which appeared to the highly-strung and excited Mary Magdalene gave the impetus to the legend. Only the enthusiasm of love raised Jesus to the height of the Godhead. "Divine power of love," - thus Renan concludes with solemn, pious-sounding pathos - "sacred moments, in which the passion of a hallucinated woman gave to the world a resuscitated God!"

His "Les Apôtres" which is perhaps the weakest, certainly the least brilliant, of the volumes that made up Renan's "Histoire des Origines du Christianisme," contains, more fully explained, his strange mode of accounting for the Resurrection. "Enthusiasm and love do not recognise conditions barren of results. They dallied with the impossible, and, rather than abdicate hope, they did violence to all reality. Several phrases of the Master, which were recalled, especially those in/

in which he predicted his future advent, might be interpreted in the sense that he would leave the tomb. Such a belief was, besides, so natural that the faith of the disciples would have sufficed to create it in every part. The great prophets, Enoch and Elijah, had not tasted death. They began even to believe that the patriarchs and the men of the first order in the old law, were not really dead, and that their bodies were in their sepulchres at Hebron, alive and animated. It was to happen to Jesus, what had happened to all men who have captivated the attention of their fellow men. The world, accustomed to attribute to them superhuman virtues, cannot admit that they would have to undergo the unjust, revolting and iniquitous law, to wit, a common death... Death is a thing so absurd when it strikes down a man of genius, or the large-hearted man, - that people will not believe in the possibility of such an error in nature. Heroes do not die. Is not true existence that which is implanted in the hearts of those whom we love? This adored Master had filled for some years the little world which pressed around him with joy and hope; would people consent to have him to rot in the tomb? No; he had lived too much in those who surrounded him for people not to declare after his death that he still lived." ("Les Apôtres," pp.1,2).

Resolved that Jesus should not remain with the dead, the believing company were in a fit state of mind for seeing their crucified one alive again. Mary Magdalene was the first to have a vision. Impressible and easily excited, she thought she saw Jesus, and her fancy communicated itself to the rest; when/

when they were met together, a sudden gust of wind was enough to make them feel, "It is the Lord." Mary's mistaking the gardener for "le fantôme du maître exquis," is made the corner stone of Christianity. The disciples are men and women of the Eastern type, and are therefore specially open to illusion; not, however because of their inability to value solid truth, but because the Syrian, we are told, is, by reason of his excessive abstemiousness, in a constant state of nervous exaltation; unable to carry on a continuous train of thought; he is susceptible to a degree of which we have no conception. This directly contradicts every word of the only existing records, which clearly show that excited expectancy was entirely absent. Nor is it possible to think that if the Resurrection was only subjective, these visions suddenly gave place, after six weeks, to the calm strength of the early Church. Regarding the after history of Christianity, and denying the supernatural altogether, Renan tells us that "le développement des produits vivants est partout le même." With a poetic sympathy for what he calls "the unequalled epic of the story of Christianity," and yet at the same time still adhering firmly to his positivist principles, he labours to prove that its triumphs were due to the natural greatness of the human soul mingling with the various historical forces that were at work in the Roman Empire. Christianity entered upon an inheritance already prepared for it, and the chief facts of its subsequent development were due to that on which it entered, and which was contributed to it from without. This reasoning, however, is subverted by one fact, - the moral supremacy of Christianity was/

was achieved before the material, and the inheritance of the Roman Empire was delivered up to the Christian Church, only because the history of the Christian religion had proved that it was capable of taking the inheritance.

No one can study the Christian writers of the first two centuries and deny that the influence of Jesus Christ is uppermost in their character. We cannot ascribe their Christianity to anything else than their faith in Christ. If it be granted, then, that the early Christians were what they were because they came under the influence of Christ, and that the Christian history was what it was because it was an effect of which the power of Christ was the cause, we ask, What was that influence and power of Jesus Christ? It was not the mere result of his doctrine or his moral teaching; nor was it simply because his human life constituted an embodiment of the morality which he taught. Nor was it the result of intellectual superiority, nor of all the causes combined which by their united action make a great man, in the ordinary acceptation of the term. The mighty influence of Jesus is founded on that Divine life which runs through his native character, as it is depicted by the evangelists; not merely in those actions which we designate miracles, but in every portion of it. This attractiveness culminates in one special aspect of it - the perfection of self-sacrifice manifested in his life, followed by the divinest exhibition of love displayed in his voluntary death. This it is which distinguishes the greatness of Jesus from that of all other men, and constitutes the secret of his power. Jesus Christ has lived in/

in his Church, age after age, and, working in it and through it, he has conquered, renovated, and regenerated human society by the heavenly life which he has breathed into all the elements that compose it. The grain of mustard seed has become the greatest of trees, and the fowls of the air have taken shelter in the branches of it. In the life, the character and the person of our Divine Lord we find the germ and principle of everything that is beautiful and worthy in the history of the Christian Church.

We have thus stated and exemplified the fundamental principle upon which Renan constructs his argument and which governs the entire course of his thought. He has a fixed and foregone conclusion, based on his positivist philosophy. Jesus is a man, and no more. He cannot, positively speaking be any more. Of all miracles, a Divine Incarnation is the most impossible. Renan would reason with himself thus, and does virtually so reason; "the greatest men that ever lived in the past ages, the priests, the kings, the legislators, the benefactors of the world, all were men, imperfect men, sharing more or less in the weaknesses, the follies, and the vices of their human brothers. An absolutely perfect man never has appeared on this earth, never can, and never will appear." Renan opens the Gospels to find in them what he believes they must contain - the history of a man who, however great and good, is bound to be like his race, imperfect, a sharer, to some extent, in the weaknesses, the errors, the sins/

sins of common humanity. Employing on principle throughout, as we have sought to show, not a rational and impartial induction alone, not induction from the whole of the facts as they lie in the record, but to a very considerable extent, "divination and conjecture" apart from the facts, and sometimes in the face of the facts, and drawing also largely on his imagination and his power of arbitrary combination, he labours to make out what to him, holding such philosophical conceptions as he does, is alone a possible human character. The Gospels must contain what in his view is alone conceivable—a human character, that is, an imperfect character; and his effort, from first to last, is only and wholly to interpret and explain the record in such a way that it shall appear consistent with this presupposition. There lies in this method of procedure a fundamental and fatal mistake.

Admitting unqualifiedly Renan's perfect honesty and sincerity, his modus operandi is unsound; the principle from which he sets out and on which he constructs his history is thoroughly unreliable, and must inevitably vitiate the entire erection which is based upon it.

Avowedly Renan constructed his "*Vie de Jésus*" under the prevailing influence of what he calls "divination," or what most critics would call conjecture. Actuated by a foregone conclusion adverse to the supernatural, and having fancied a life of Jesus in which his own preferences and tastes are embodied, he subjects such materials as his criticism spares to a handling so free and so arbitrary as to bring forth/

bring forth a caricature instead of a history. Indeed, what he calls the "Life of Jesus" is little else than a pure fiction, interspersed with names, words, and dates taken from the Gospels. Such a life was never lived by any being on this earth. Some one has said that poetry is the art of saying anything on any subject. Certainly Renan's "divination" reveals a divining rod, capable of any and every travesty that a rank imagination can devise, or an over-riding philosophy can exact. He feels himself at liberty to call into being what has no place in the record, and to disregard and dismiss solid, substantial statements. His eye is unconsciously strained to conjecture how this or that might be, or how perhaps it never was at all. He guesses at what he deems probable truth and probable fact; now almost credulous, and again stolidly sceptical. Honestly desiring to make out of Jesus a veritable, historical, human person, but no more, his eye, without his knowing it, is open only to one side of the extraordinary life and to one class of the unexampled phenomena. It is not that he does not appeal to facts, for he does. But instead of taking in the whole of the facts, he selects some, and ignores others. His treatment of history is grossly absurd; he uses so much of it as suits his theory and no more. He even transposes the facts, and sometimes creates and imagines what shall fill up a hiatus or shall displace and cover over actual phenomena. Thus in perfect consistency with his underlying positivism, and in complete singleness of purpose, he makes out of the evangelical records, or rather creates, a character in some respects unique and great; but it is Renan's own creation, the work of his judgment/

judgment, his fancy, and his taste. It is not the product of the whole facts as they stand in the Gospels, but only of a selected portion of the facts. It is not the cautious and well-balanced result of a complete and impartial induction.

## CHAPTER IV.

Influence of Pantheism on the "Vie de Jésus."

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Summary of chapter:-

Coalescence of Pantheism with Positivism.

Broad definition of Pantheism.

Pantheistic philosophers - Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel.

Renan - Theist or Pantheist?

His apparent oscillation.

Illustrations of seeming inclination towards Theism.

His pronounced Positivism rules this out.

His equivocal use of language.

Is Renan really a Pantheist?

Acknowledges his debt to Pantheistic thinkers.

Synopsis of Renan's Pantheism.

The ideal Pantheism of Hegel the main influence on Renan.

Examples of this in the "Vie de Jésus."

Illustrations of Pantheism in his other works.

In the preceding chapter it was indicated that, in the main, there were two great systems of thought which exercised a dominant influence upon the intellectual life of the first half of the nineteenth Century, and which combined to give the philosophy of history, based upon historical criticism, its place as the science which crowns and completes the monument of human knowledge. These two systems were Positivism and the ideal Pantheism of Hegel, who by his method of thought was one of the greatest formative and reformatory forces in the theology of the period.

To attempt to understand intelligently the movements in theology, especially those that circle round the history and person of Christ, without taking him into account, would be futile. One thing is at least certain, that apart from Hegel we should never have had the "Leben Jesu" of Strauss, and without that work not a few of our modern developments in theology would probably have taken a different trend.

The former of these philosophical systems, Positivism, wielding as it did, in our opinion, the supreme influence on Renan's "Vie de Jésus" and his other works, has already been dealt with. It falls to us now to consider Pantheism in its bearing on our author, and an endeavour will be made to prove that Renan unites in himself, and exhibits distinctly, both of these ruling tendencies of the age he lived in.

Strange to say, the influence of Pantheism, or broadly

speaking, that theory of the universe which identifies God with the sum of finite existences, or which regards God as the single principle of which these are the manifestations, expounded by its great hierophant Hegel and by the Neo-Hegelian school, almost in every respect coalesced with, and strongly reinforced the influence of, Positive philosophy. Originating as Positivism and Pantheism did from two opposite schools of thought - the former (in its more modern form at least) from the materialism of Saint Simon and Comte, the latter from the abstract idealism of Kant and Fichte - and laying hold, by their first principles and by their respective methods, upon minds very differently constituted, these extremes met in precisely the same conclusions. It is interesting to note their exact and wonderful coincidence with reference to worship and religious faith. The atheistic materialist Diderot had declared, long before, that all positive religions were but the heresies of natural religion. So too Comte affirmed that natural religion is no better than the positive faiths, that it belonged to the infant stage of humanity, that it was a delusive chimera of the head, or a vain and sterile abstraction of the heart. One might imagine that the result of this reasoning would be, that all religious dogmas, feelings, and words ought to be forever forgotten, so that the religion of the future would be no religion. But Comte recoiled from such a conclusion. He acknowledged that man was a religious being, that society without religion was impossible. Hence he sought out something which, since the idea of God was suppressed/

suppressed, might draw the regard and adoration of men, and set up before Europe the same new god that Feuerbach the Hegelian had done, namely, the human race. Comte intensely valued Humanity in its entirety as a supreme Being. In his later years he gave to his doctrines a sentimental expression of which his "Religion of Humanity" with its ritualism was the outcome.

He endeavoured to substitute for the traditional God, this Positivist religion of the Supreme Being of Humanity, - a Being capable, according to Comte, of sustaining human courage, and of becoming the end of actions and the object of love.

Feuerbach, the Hegelian, on whom Renan wrote one of his most brilliant essays, entitled, "M.Feuerbach and the neo-Hegelian School" ("Études d'Histoire Religieuse", 1st. series, pp.36 &c.), on the other hand, maintains that, since according to Hegel, God only becomes conscious in man, the Divine consciousness and the Divine essence cannot be separated. If man has the consciousness of God, he really has the essence of God - he is God. Hence his profane interpretation of the Christian dogma, God-man, as God in the human race. The consciousness and being of God only exist there; so that, arriving at the same conclusion as Comte, the human race is the only legitimate object of worship.

The influence of both these systems of philosophy, Positivism and Pantheism, has been acknowledged to be profound, but it is also worthy of notice that the enormous and almost ~~ir~~resistible sway which they exercise on the speculations and ideas of the first half of the nineteenth century arose from their concurrence and precise identity in/

in certain fundamental dogmas and tendencies. This identity may be indicated in several respects. Pantheism exalts the study of human history as much as Positivism, though from different causes. A sentence from Hegel will reveal what was the root principle of his system and of Pantheism - "The history of the world begins with its general aim, the realisation of the idea of spirit, only in an implicit form, (*an sich*,) that is, as nature; a hidden, most profoundly hidden, unconscious instinct; and the whole process of history is directed to rendering this unconscious influence a conscious one. The vast congeries of volitions, interests, and activities constitute the instruments and means of the world - spirit for attaining its object; bringing it to consciousness and realising it. And the aim is none other than finding itself, coming to itself, and contemplating itself in concrete actuality." (Hegel's Philosophy of History translated by L. Sibree, p.26). The German philosophy, it is true, proclaims God under the names of the Absolute, the World-Spirit, the World-Idea. But this God, considered in itself, is but an abstraction, or rather the phantom of existence. He has not a life which is his own. He only exists in becoming everything by turns - space, time, metals, plants, animals, and finally man. It is, however, in man that God realises and completes Himself. It is in man He becomes conscious of Himself. Consequently, the study of human history is pre-eminently the loftiest study for man. It reveals the unfolding and awakening in man of the Absolute, the only Deity. But, further, this development of the World-Spirit in nature, and finally in human history, is necessary and is determined by inevitable laws. It is not a personal/

personal and free God who rules nature and man; it is a blind, undetermined Cause producing all by an unthinking yet fatal process. The development of man, the growth of religion, the march of civilisation - all these according to Pantheism, precisely as according to Positivism, are the necessary sequences of preceding causes..

Both these philosophies, the Positive and the Pantheist, which were so largely in vogue at the beginning of last century, united in declaring that there had been no supernatural message or help ever vouchsafed to man, that there never had been any violation of the laws of nature. At the same time they both, by the dogmas they propounded, and by the aims they effected, urged men to the study of every realm of human history, as the noblest and most useful field of intellectual toil.

Pantheism, negatively defined, in its relationship to religion, is the denial of the Personality of God. God is synonymous with the sum-total of things, and He attains to self-consciousness only in the finite consciousness of men. It identifies God with the world, or the totality of things. It differs from Atheism in holding to something besides and beneath finite things - an all-prevading Cause or Essence. It differs from Deism in denying that God is separate from the world, and that the world is sustained and guided by energies imparted from without, though inherent in it. It differs from Theism not in affirming the immanence of God, but in denying to the immanent power personal consciousness and will, and an existence independent of the world.

With the denial of will and conscious intelligence, Pantheism excludes design or final causes. Finite things emerge into being, and pass away, and the course of nature proceeds through the perpetual/

perpetual operation of an agency which takes no cognisance of its work, except in so far as it may arrive at self-consciousness in man. It is the doctrine that all things are the forms, or manifestations, or developments of one being or essence. That being is termed God. Monism, or the identifying of the world, as to its substance, with God, is the defining characteristic of Pantheism.

Inasmuch as Renan acknowledged his profound indebtedness to Pantheistic philosophers from Descartes onwards to Hegel, we shall do well at the outset to investigate the trend of Pantheism as advanced by its most profound European exponents, striving to show how he was affected by them. The founder of modern European Pantheism was Spinoza. It is impossible to minimise the importance of one who was an influential factor in the thought of men like Lessing and Goethe, like Schelling and Hegel, and who, more especially in theology, besides leaving his mark so clearly on Schleiermacher, foreshadowed the naturalistic rationalism of Semler, Eichhorn, and Paulus, the mythical theory of Strauss, and the vision hypothesis of Baur, Scholten, and Renan. Spinoza was a disciple of Descartes, and his philosophy may be regarded as an attempt to improve on that of the illustrious Frenchman by reducing its dualism to unity. The philosophy of Descartes was essentially dualistic. He recognised besides God, two mutually independent substances, matter and mind, the characteristic property of matter being extension, and of mind, thought. Spinoza, the most celebrated and influential of modern Pantheists, on the other hand, acknowledged only one infinite, indivisible substance, of which thought and extension are attributes, and all particular beings, extended or thinking, modes. This one substance Spinoza denominates/

denominates God. In the 14th proposition of the first book of his great work, "Ethica ordine geometrico demonstrata", he states, "Besides God no substance can exist or be conceived." "The universe is bound by an iron chain of necessity, which leaves no room for freedom either in God or in man. All individual life is transient; only the one infinite substance is eternal. Nature is the ever-abiding, yet superficially ever-changing ocean of being, and we men, and all things we see, are the waves or the foam on its surface; here to-day, gone to-morrow, as the winds determine." The course of nature is unalterable, fixed, and needs no alteration. Whatever is must be, and whatever is is right. According to the Spinozistic philosophy,, moral evil, so-called, belongs to the eternal order of things, and is in reality good. Moral distinctions are therefore in his view non-existent.

It follows, as a matter of course, that the personality of God, a supernatural Providence, miracles, and revelation are rejected under this system. The supernatural has no place in Spinoza's doctrine; anything beyond nature is beyond being, and consequently inconceivable. The "<sup>l</sup>révélateurs," the prophets, were men like others. The distinction of Son of God was not the privilege of one man alone.

Although Spinoza borrowed his definition of Substance from Descartes, he is original in the main aspects of his scheme. He is the forerunner of the later German systems of Pantheism, as some of their leading representatives, including Hegel, have granted. Yet these systems would not have arisen, but for the impulse communicated  
by/

by an intervening thinker, Immanuel Kant. The most striking and immediate result of the success of Kant's critical philosophy was the rapid rise of the romantic speculation that dominated Germany during the first third of the nineteenth century and resulted in the system of Hegel, which was the culmination of the idealistic movement to which the philosophy of Kant gave rise.

Apostle of Pure Reason and special vindicator of the a priori element, Kant never ceased to maintain against all the Cartesian school the necessity of experience as a co-factor in all knowledge. Knowledge cannot come merely from the outside, but it cannot be without an outside. "The essential fact in all cognition is synthesis." But Kant not only appeals to experience as a basis; he makes it the limit as well as the starting-point of all knowledge. He is opposed not only to the dogmatism which separates mind and nature, but no less to the dogmatism which would transcend experience. He directs his criticism repeatedly against all attempts to find knowledge beyond the sphere of speculative reality. He does not gainsay that there is such a sphere; but he wholly denies that we can know anything about it. The pretence of spiritual or theological knowledge was specially obnoxious to Kant. He turned away from it as superstition and fanaticism; and his dislike of it made him draw the limits of the knowable with a very strict hand. He was indeed a positive philosopher before Positivism. The phenomenal, for Kant, is the only true region of science, because it is the only true region of speculative cognition. From the consequences of this organised scepticism, the natural as well as actual outcome of which/

which was the systems of Pantheistic idealism, Kant delivered himself by his doctrine of the Practical Reason. But his theoretical philosophy was the starting point of the subsequent systems.

Fichte took the short step which Kant stedfastly refused to take. The Idealism of Fichte evolved the external world (so-called) from the thinking subject. All things which constitute the objects of thought are modifications of consciousness, which are wholly due to the self-activity of the subject. The impression of externality results from the check put upon this self-activity by its own inward law. It is not, however, from the particular, individual ego, that all existence thus issues forth, but rather from the absolute, impersonal ego, which evolves at the same time the individual subject, and the object of which is inseparably related to it. The relativity of consciousness, in which the ego and the object of thought stand in correlation, belongs to the finite subject, and not to the Absolute Being; yet the Absolute is viewed as a subject and denominated the ego.

Schelling modified Fichte's conception of the Absolute. The Absolute, according to his idea, the root of all particular existences, is no more to be called subject than object. It belongs equally to the thinker and the thing. Connected with this view was Schelling's dynamical conception of nature. Nature is made up of forces, and is pervaded through and through with rationality. The mind and nature are bound to each other by closest affinities.

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The knowledge of nature is nature itself attaining to self-consciousness. But how was the Absolute to be cognized? Schelling supposed a peculiar organ of Intellectual Intuition, by which the soul, freeing itself from the ordinary bonds of consciousness, gains a direct vision of the Absolute.

It was no wonder that the rigorous intellect of Hegel was dissatisfied with this mode of bridging the gulf between finite and infinite being. The philosophy of Hegel, if it is to be regarded as pantheistic, may be described as an idealistic pantheism, since Hegel's Absolute is conceived as spiritual, in contrast to the Spinozistic pantheism in which God is represented more materialistically as substance. In the Hegelian system, God, the world, and man are connected together by a process involving succession, if not in time, at least in logical thought. The absolute spirit becomes objective to himself, becomes another, in the world of nature; makes for himself as it were, a body in the material universe, and loses himself therein. Then in man he returns to himself, recognises himself, becomes conscious of himself, and the great world-process is complete. In the Spinozan system, on the other hand, material things, modes of extension, and mental things, modes of thought are, so to speak, contemporaneous and mentally independent manifestations of the one eternal indivisible substance. There is not one process binding God, nature, and man together, but two parallel processes, which are mutually exclusive though not without correspondence. In this respect there is a clearer affinity between Spinoza/

Spinoza and Schelling than between Spinoza and Hegel. In philosophy Schelling has been described as a chameleon, and assumed in succession very diverse aspects. In all the phases of his ever-varying speculative career he always leaned on some great name. Among his philosophic heroes and models Spinoza had his turn, and when his star was in the ascendant, Schelling adopted at once his views and his demonstrative method of exhibiting them, and taught an Absolute which was neither subject nor object, neither mind nor matter, but the indifference or the identity of both, yet revealing itself at once as matter and as mind, as object and as subject, as nature and as thought.

Accepting the notion of the Absolute, as defined by Schelling, Hegel professed to set forth the process in which the entire universe is necessarily involved. Commencing like him, with the assumption that subject and object, thought and thing are identical, Hegel ventured on the bold enterprise of setting down all the successive stages through which thought in its absolute or most general form, by means of a kind of momentum assumed to inhere in it, develops the entire chain of concepts, or the whole variety and aggregate of particular existences, up to the point where, in the brain of the philosopher, the universe thus constituted attains to self-consciousness. The religion which is deduced from this system may be said to consist of the objective existence of the infinite mind in the finite, for mind is only for mind; consequently God exists only in being thought of and thinking. In the/

the philosophy of nature, intelligence and God are lost in objective nature. Hegel allows them a distinct and separate existence, but refers them to a common principle which, according to him, is the absolute idea, or God. To Hegel the task of philosophy could not be considered as complete until it was shown that, in tracing the actual structure of mind and of nature, the structure of the Absolute itself was being traced. The Absolute was not something which remains in the background, indifferent to its manifestations; only to be detected by some sudden flash of insight; it must rather be held to live and move and have its being in its manifestations, so that only through the laborious investigation of these can it reveal itself to us as it is.

Like Schelling, Hegel did not regard "nature" and "mind" as parallel manifestations of a single Absolute, which itself was neither "nature" nor "mind". He preferred to see in them integral parts of one process of self-manifestation, apart from which there was no Absolute at all. Hegel designated his philosophy "absolute idealism." The late Prof. T.H. Green, of Oxford, has summarised the vital truth which Hegel had to teach: "There is one spiritual self-consciousness, of which all that is real is the activity and expression; we are related to this spiritual being, not merely as parts of the world which is its expression, but as partakers in some inchoate measure of the self-consciousness through which it at once constitutes and distinguishes itself from the world; this participation is the source of morality and religion." (Green's works, vol.iii p.146).

From this general survey of the leading forms of Pantheism, we turn/

turn now to show that the influence of Pantheism, especially of Hegel's ideal Pantheism, is to be found in Renan's work. The severe, irreligious secularism of the Positivist philosophy was not calculated to attract many minds in that age, when there was so strong a renaissance of religious sentiment felt in society. It was the alliance of Pantheism, which allows and fosters a certain self-satisfying religiosity of feeling, with Positivism, and their identity in scientific methods, which had such a strong fascination for minds like that of Renan.

Renan's views with regard to deity at first sight appear somewhat difficult to determine; indeed there is the important initial question to be answered, What is he really? Is he a believer in a personal God, or is he a Pantheist? The ordinary critic finds his writings full of seeming inconstancy and even of contradiction, and is ready to accuse him of paradox or pyrrhonism, if not of worse crimes. James Darmesteter has called him "one of the most attractive and complicated characters which have appeared since Montaigne."

The philosophy of Renan is at times not easily defined. His metaphysical lucubrations are a singular mixture of piety and paganism. We come upon passages that read like the production of a mediaeval mystic, and anon we light on paragraphs that might have issued from the pen of Epicurus. There is hardly a single possible position of speculation that does not find expression in the philosophical utterances of Renan. One is almost tempted to conclude that he is all things by turns, and nothing long.

Renan's views regarding God, in especial, appear somewhat indefinite/

indefinite and incoherent. In point of fact, his general attitude to belief and knowledge is irritating by reason of its vagueness and changeableness. He combines incompatible attributes in one person, and then apologises with commonplaces about the contradictions of human nature. Renan's eminence and genius are undoubted, but he plays in a bewitching and frequently perplexing manner with great and serious problems, and one cannot help wishing that that great intellect of his - and it was unquestionably great - was not more steady, and that it was not applied by its owner more resolutely and courageously to ultimate problems. The very vagueness and indefiniteness of Renan's writings, and even the contradictions in them, may be said to have contributed in no small measure to his popularity. He was all things to all men. The universal favour into which he blossomed in the last decade of his life was due on the one hand to the large geniality which irradiated his manifold knowledge, and on the other hand to his supreme facility in saying things delightfully. There was in him, he tells us, in an amusing passage in his "Souvenirs d 'Enfance et de Jeunesse", an irresistible impulse to give to everyone that asked of him just the answer which he knew would be agreeable. "Vous avez raison" , was his habitual response in conversation. Even when disagreeing, he always began his reply with, "you are right, though".

"The clear perception of a truth", he says in one place, "does not in the least hinder one from discerning the opposing truth the next minute with just the same clearness."

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So his works reflect a bewildering variety of contrary moods, playful, scathing, serious, and mocking, affirming what he has contradicted, and contradicting what he has affirmed. There was a marvellous coquetry in his intellect; at one moment dallying with materialism, at the next fondly embracing the ideal; now, passionate in professions of mysticism; then, cold and disdainful in negation or indifference. In a fine essay on Renan's friend, James Darmesteter, M. Gaston Paris admirably describes Renan's as a "complex and even deceptive nature", which, while "infinitely mobile on the surface, beneath the varying play of light and shade", is nevertheless "unchanging in its depths". Speaking for himself, Renan informs us that from his earliest years he was destined to be "a tissue of contradictions, reminding one of the hircocervus of the schoolmen, which had two natures. One half of myself was fated to be employed in demolishing the other, like that fabulous animal mentioned by Ctesias which ate its own feet unawares." Some literary men are eminently uniform. One may be sure of finding their mark on whatever they write, no matter how the subject differs from what they usually deal with. Others writers are intensely dualistic. This dual nature Renan possessed in an unusual measure. As we study him we find at once a friend of progress, yet a lover of the good old times, a thorough sceptic, and yet a man of deep faith. There is a host of contradictions which it would not be difficult to cull from almost any of his works. They were no accident, these incongruities/

incongruities. They were a habit; nay more, they were a law of his nature. Indeed, he found in them an evidence of veracity. "La Vérité réside tout entière dans les nuances," he declared. "Malheur à qui <sup>ne</sup> se contredit pas une foi par jour." Renan's method is rather that of the novelist, than that of the historian. Facts are of secondary consequence. He is essentially an artist, and sacrifices everything to form. M. Talmeyer remarks that "what Renan pursues beyond everything else is intellectual enjoyment. He seeks truth after the fashion of an intellectual Don Juan. All ideas are in his eyes alike good; none can make him constant. What he demands of art, science, research, study, travel, meditations, recollections, is a succession of fascinating hypotheses, which which he may pass an hour of voluptuous and refined relaxation." (Intransigeant, 29 June 1883).

"That he should utter diametrically opposed statements," says Prof. L. Freeman Mott, "is by no means evidence of inconsistency. Formulas are merely the means by which our minds do their work. In each there may be truth, but never the entire truth, for truth is infinite and as a whole inexpressible." (Prof. L.F. Mott's Renan p.445)

Thus as <sup>a</sup> figure in the intellectual life of his time, Renan is difficult to estimate. Indeed in his day many readers doubted whether he himself knew where he stood. It is perhaps a judicious critical conclusion that, with his Breton gifts/

gifts of sympathetic emotion and exposition, and his somewhat incongruous vein of smiling scepticism, he never really did, and never could, verify his conceptions. More than once he implies that in his opinion it is best not to seek a verified truth, but to give out one's critical and historical reflections and impressions as they come to one, thus weaving a web of different notions which answers to the many-coloured and ever-changing web of life.

The very subtlety of Renan's intellect betrayed him into an oscillation which was far from admirable. He seems a type, reflecting many tendencies of his age, useful as an illustration to the historian of the ideas of the period, but for philosophy in the special sense he has none of the clearly defined importance of men like Renouvier, Lachelier, Guyan, Fouillée, or Bergson. His humanism keeps him from dogmatism, but his mind fluctuates so that his general attitude to the ultimate problems is one of reserve, and of frequent paradox and inconsistency. That is Renan's attitude, - to assert a duty of doubt, and often perhaps to gain a literary brilliance by contradictory statements. The problems of philosophy involve "une nuance de foi", as he styles it. They involve willed adhesion, acceptance or choice; they provoke sympathy or hate, and call into play human personality with its varying shades of colour. This state of "nuance" Renan asserts to be the one of the hour for philosophy. It is not the time, he thinks, to try to strengthen by abstract reasoning the "proofs" of God's/

God's existence. "Ce Dieu est-il ou n'est-il pas?" "Questions of being are beyond us", Renan replies. And so elsewhere he writes, "Le problème de la cause suprême nous déborde et nous échappe; il se résout en poèmes (ces poèmes sont les religions) non en lois; ou, s'il faut parler ici de lois, ce sont celles de la physique, de l'astronomie, de l'histoire, qui seules sont les lois de l'être et ont une pleine réalité." (Renan's "Table Analytique.")

In his "Dialogues et Fragments Philosophiques" Renan declares that "Toute proposition appliquée à Dieu est impertinente, une seule exceptée; 'Il est'" Yet in another place in the same work we read, "L'absolu de la justice et de la raison ne se manifeste que dans l'humanité; envisagé hors de l'humanité cet absolu n'est qu'une abstraction ... L'infini n'existe que quand il revêt une forme finie." ("Dialogues et Fragments Philosophiques" p. 326) Knowledge, he maintained, lay somewhere between the two schools into which the majority of men are divided.

"For Renan, philosophy was simply a noble style of thinking" remarks Prof. Flint, "and religion but a superior kind of poetry. Absolute truth and goodness he regarded as only ideals, to be sought merely for the pleasure of seeking them; and their appearances he deemed wholly relative and ever varying. Hence he disliked decided affirmations and negations, and delighted in nuances of thought and expression suggestive of the uncertainty and illusoriness which must prevail in

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a world of which the universal law is "an eternal fieri." He had temptations which less richly endowed artistic natures are spared, to sacrifice critical rigour and historical precision to beauty of form, and to supply from imagination what was wanting in facts to make a picture lifelike or a story dramatic" (Flint's "Philosophy of History" p.627

"The true state of his mind, if we may venture to say so, appears to be one of perpetual oscillation between theism and pantheism - between a God who is merely "the category of the ideal" and a God who is a blind but mighty fatality, labouring to bring forth by a slow and painful self-evolution an absolute intelligence - a man-God, in whose consciousness the thoughts and feelings of all the generations of humanity may be comprehended." (Flint's "Antitheistic Theories" p. 378).

At first sight one would unhesitatingly say that Renan is a Theist. There are numerous passages, not merely in the "Vie de Jésus", but also in his other works, which seem inexplicable on any other hypothesis. For instance, he asserts the very obvious truth that "God was revealed before Jesus, - God will reveal Himself after him." (Introduction to "Vie de Jésus" p. lvi) "Jesus had no visions, God did not speak to him as to one outside of himself; God was in him; he felt himself with God, and he drew from his own heart all he said of his Father. He lived in the bosom of God by an increasing Communication."/

Communication." (*Vie de Jésus*", p.45) "God conceived simply as Father, was all the theology of Jesus". (*Vie de Jésus*" p.46) "He looked on himself as standing with God in the relation of a son to his father ... The God of Jesus is not the tyrannical master who kills, damns, or saves us, just as it pleases Him. The God of Jesus is our Father. We hear him while listening to the gentle inspiration which cries within us - "Father." (*Vie de Jésus*" p.47) "The Jesus who founded the true kingdom of God, was the Jesus of early life, when the voice of his father re-echoed within his bosom in clearer tones." (p.48) "A pure worship, resting entirely on the feelings of the heart, on the imitation of God, on the direct Communication between the conscience and the heavenly Father, was the result of these principles." (p.51)"Jesus insisted particularly upon the idea that the heavenly Father knows better than we do what we need." (p.52) "Although greater thus in the eyes of God, he would have remained unknown to men." (p.55) "If the earth does not lend itself to this complete transformation, it will be purified by fire and by the breath of God" (p.69). "The happy band, trusting to its Heavenly Father to supply its wants, held the cares of life to be an evil ... Each day it asked of God the bread for the morrow." (pp.99,100) "The heavenly Father hides his secrets from the wise, and reveals them to babes." (p.112) "For a moment his heart failed him; a cloud hid from him the face of his Father." (p.244) "He lived only for his Father and the divine mission/

mission with which he believed himself charged." (p.265)

Numerous other passages, similar to these, might be quoted, which are absurd except on the supposition of a personal God. Nay more, there are places where Renan appears expressly to repudiate Pantheism; for example, "Pantheism, in suppressing the Divine personality, is as far as it can be from the living God of the ancient religions. Were the men who have best comprehended God — Sakya-Mouni, Plato, St. Paul, St. Francis d' Assisi. and St. Augustine (at some periods of his fluctuating life) — Deists or Pantheists? Such a question has no meaning" ("Vie de Jésus". p.45).

Indeed, it would not be difficult to show that Renan is, with the sole exception and obstacle of a prejudice against miracles, not entirely adverse to orthodox Christianity, veiling under philosophical mystifications at times just those truths that the Catholic Church has ever taught.

We find him, for instance, in the prayer with which he closes his remarkable essay on "La Metaphysique de l'Avenir", written in 1860, thanking his "Heavenly Father" because He "has not chosen to bestow a clear reply to our doubts, in order that faith in goodness should not remain without merit, and that virtue should not be a calculation. A distinct revelation would have assimilated the noble to the vulgar soul; evidence in such a matter would have been an attack on our freedom. Thou hast/

hast desired that our faith should depend on our inward disposition." Expressions like these appear to point to a theistic tendency.

Renan seems to accept the idea of a personal God, standing in the paternal relation to his human sons, as the highest and ultimate conception it is possible to arrive at. So far, of course, he is Christian; and the more so, inasmuch as he expressly repudiates Deism. He fully believes that in God "we live and move and have our being," and that "He is in us and we in Him"; though there is a progress going on which shall ultimately bring the reign of mediatorial agencies to an end, when "God shall be all in all."

He believes also that the paradox of a ministry of Deity on earth while yet He "is in heaven", will terminate in some changeless state of glory when all men will live again. These great truths, however, Renan expresses with less simplicity than the Church has been in the habit of employing. He states them thus; "God is in fieri; He is on the way to make Himself." But to stop there would be a very incomplete theology: God is more, therefore, than total existence; He is at the same time the Absolute. Thus viewed, God unreservedly is; He is eternal and unchangeable."

Regarding the second Person of the Trinity and the Incarnation, Renan informs us that Jesus regarded Himself as "the Son of God, the intimate of the Father, the executor of His wishes," and thus in the spirit of "infinite love, passed at a bound the abyss, impassable for the most part, that the mediocrity of the human faculties traces between man and God"; and though in Gethsemane He was shaken for a moment by his lower human feelings, yet "his divine nature soon recovered the upper hand"; so that, having merited, by founding the/

the absolute and final religion of humanity "the divine rank which had been attributed to Him," He now "beholds from the bosom of His Father His work bearing fruit upon earth," and henceforth "gives his presence from the lofty heights of Divine peace, at the infinite consequences of His acts on earth."

Concerning the success achieved by the brief ministry of this wonderful Person, Renan makes statements which orthodox Christianity would accept unhesitatingly - "the world has been regenerated. It is to Him that each of us owes whatever worth he has." So that the best of men henceforth cry "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." And this amazing result of so small a seed was not fortuitous but intentional. "He proposed to create a new state of humanity;" and it was not effected by preaching a philosophy but a Person. And as to the future, "Jesus will not be surpassed. His worship will constantly renew itself." What, we may well ask, with amazement, is there, in full view of such concessions as these, to prevent Renan from enrolling himself in the ranks of the Christian Church?

Turning to that volume in which he has so charmingly delineated his own character, the "Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse," we find Renan frequently writing as if he were a Theist.

"I have never doubted my Father which is in Heaven, or His goodness. Upon the contrary, I have always given Him thanks, and have never felt myself nearer to Him than at moments like these. The heart learns only by suffering, and I believe with Kant that God is only to be known through the heart," ("Souvenirs," p.335) — the language surely that of one who lived in close touch with a personal God. Further on in the Appendix to his "Souvenirs," in

the supplementary letters to the Abbé Cognat in 1845, he writes, "I must tell you that at times I have been within an ace of a complete reaction, and have wondered whether it would not be more agreeable to God if I were to cut short the thread of my self-examination". ("Souvenirs," p.340). "Is it not indeed the case that God has done me but a poor service? It seems as if He had employed all His strategy for surrounding me in every direction. But for all this I love Him, and am persuaded that He has done all for my good, much as facts seem to contradict it." ("Souvenirs," p.341).

At times Renan prays with rapt devotion to the Father, the Father in heaven, and we imagine we are listening to the supplications of a Christian theist. Thus, writing to the Abbé Cognat, he says, "yes, my dear friend, I still believe; I pray and recite the Lord's Prayer with ecstasy. I am very fond of being in Church, where the pure and simple piety moves me deeply in the lucid moments when I inhale the odour of God. I even have devotional fits, and I believe that they will last, for piety is of value even when it is merely psychological. It has a moralising effect upon us, and raises us above wretched utilitarian preoccupations; for where ends utilitarianism, there begins the beautiful, the infinite, and Almighty God; and the pure air wafted thence is life itself."

("Souvenirs," p.339).

In another passage he declares his belief that "there is not in the universe an intelligence superior to that of man," and we set Renan/

Renan down as an Atheist, and then he oscillates to the other extreme, when, writing to a young friend at Tréguier, he unbosoms himself in announcing what proved to be a fateful decision, "many a cruel moment do I pass. This Holy week, above all, has been a painful one. I console myself by thinking on Jesus, on him so beautiful, so pure, so ideal in his sufferings. How little is man free to choose his destiny. Here is a child who acts only from impulse and imitation, and yet it is at such an age that he is made to stake his whole life.

A power higher than himself enmeshes him, silently carries on its work. At a certain age he awakens, he wishes to act. Impossible! He is bound hand and foot in a network from which no extrication is possible. It is God himself who holds him fast."

In the "Lettres Intimes," a fascinating collection of correspondence that passed between Renan and his sister Henriette during several years, and most valuable, shedding light as it does on a momentous period in his career, there are not a few expressions that seem to indicate a theistic attitude. Writing to Henriette from the Seminary at Issy, near Paris, in which he was a student, in 1845, he says, "God has not forsaken me while He spares me your faithful generous love." ("Brother and Sister - Correspondence," p.187). And again, describing the severe mental conflict through which he was passing, he expresses himself thus, "I drew consolation from the thought that I was suffering for conscience and for virtue's sake. The figure of Jesus in the Gospels, so pure, so noble, so calm, so far beyond the comprehension of his most devout adorers, was especially supporting to me. When that sublime ideal of suffering and virtue was conjured up before me, I felt my strength return, and I was even ready to suffer again." And adopting the language of the Saviour, he/

he cries, "My God, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done." In the same letter he writes, "If God were to grant me that divine inspiration which puts its finger on the truth and makes all doubt impossible, from that instant out I would consecrate myself to the service of Catholicism." (pp.189, 190.) Describing the operation of his mind during this time of intense mental and spiritual struggle, he says, "Once roused, my reason demanded its legitimate rights. Then I fell to verifying Christian truth on rational grounds. God, who sees the secrets of my heart, knows whether I did it faithfully and carefully." (p.190). "God forbid I should say Christianity is false....I shall always love it and admire it....Above all, Jesus will always be my God." (p.191.)

In one of his youthful notebooks, much of the material in which has been published for the first time by Prof. L.F. Mott in his exhaustive study on Renan, we find our author addressing Jesus in language which certainly savours of Theism. "Thou art my master in moral ideas; thou art a God in comparison with me. I have indeed an idea in addition to thine, that thou couldst not have and oughtest not to have had; it is science.. But Heavens! how thou surpassest me in the great vital science! O if I had only known thee! How I should have been thy disciple! Love me, I pray, bend me, if thou wilt, I will do thy will to please thee...How I long to know if thou lovest me! For, after all, thou canst not be dead. What art thou? So much the better if thou art God; but then cause me to know it. Ah, if I could see thee, O God! I would willingly consent to pass the rest of my life without consolation. Make me believe concerning thee all that I must believe to please thee."

There are numerous other passages that occur in this collection  
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of letters which are of a similar nature and seem to indicate a theistic tendency.

There was a time when Renan, following Kant in his second Kritik, believed that the love of goodness and of truth, that the determination of saints, martyrs, and the noble-minded of all ages to sacrifice themselves for what they thought to be the good and the true, testified to the existence of a deity who directly inspired those feelings. Then the pendulum swung in the opposite direction, and for the Renan of the "Examen de Conscience Philosophique," ("Feuilles détachées": Essai xxviii - pp. 401-443) God seems to have vanished from the universe. The "Examen de Conscience Philosophique" was Renan's confession of Faith, written four years before his death, in which he tries to defend his sceptical attitude and to advance scepticism as an apology for his own uncertainty and his paradoxical changes of view. He endeavours in his "Examen" to sum up his attitude on this question, affirming that it is beyond dispute or doubt that we have no evidence whatever of the action in the universe of one or of several wills superior to that of man.

God, in the popular sense, living and acting as a Divine Providence, is not to be seen in our universe. And yet irony mingles with Renan's doubts. We do not know ultimate reality, he declares; we do not know whether there be any purpose or end in the universe at all. There may be, but, on the other hand, it may be a farce and a fiasco.

With a contrary oscillation to that of his "Examen de Conscience Philosophique", and still nearer the close of his life, Renan's earlier/

earlier nobleness shows itself again. We are to be good and true, and self-sacrificing, he asserts, because "the voices of the universe bid us be good, true, and self-sacrificing in a language coming from the infinite, perfectly clear in what it commands, obscure in what it promises." And in the preface to one of his last works, the "*Feuilles Détachées*," Renan approximates to a more distinctly theistic faith. God is not visible in our Cosmos, he says, but He may have created it and may be behind it.

Nevertheless beneath those appeals to the Heavenly Father that abound in Renan's earlier works, beneath those passages that seem to open up vistas of reality in the region of the unseen, beneath all admissions and panegyrics of ideal morality and religion in his "*Vie de Jésus*," we come ever in the last resort to certain cold and confirmed principles of intellectual negation. The constructive, the spiritual elements of his work are thus seen to be really due to the exigencies of the artist's imagination, that recoils from the gloomy barrenness of scepticism. But the foundation and background of all his airy and beautiful idealism is a very definite and dismal substructure of denial.

First and foremost, Renan is, as we have seen, a Positivist, and his Positivism allows him no credence in the supernatural. In spite of all his apparent oscillation to Theism, Renan's naturalism rules out the possibility of theistic tenets. Without a doubt there can be no rational consistency between Theism and Positivism/

Positivism, or indeed any form of a purely sensational or materialistic philosophy. If the Positivist ground-plan of thought be accepted, and all knowledge be restricted to the domain of phenomena, then no rational foothold can possibly be found for Theism, or the idea of an Intelligent Will ruling nature and the world.

It amounts to this, then, that Renan's Theism is but a semblance, and "our Father in heaven" on his lips is merely equivalent to "Our Father the Abyss." In point of fact, Renan's frequently lax use of certain words and phrases is to a large extent the explanation of his apparent contradictoriness. He is amazingly deft in his manipulation of words, giving them now one sense, now another and contrary sense. He writes not as the scholar, nor as the man of science, nor as the Cavalier of truth, so much as the literary artist. He is dominated by his artistic genius.

Renan is a literary Proteus. "Formas certit in omnes." That is one of the secrets of his being. With him form is everything, fact nothing. Metaphysics, science, religion - they are all alike raw material for literary art. In him the theologian, the linguist, the philosopher are mere hewers of wood and drawers of water to the artist. Readers go to him not for history, not for truth, but for style, for suggestive phrases/

phrases, for literary expression, for mental stimulus, for enjoyment. That is all he desires. He would rather not be cramped by consistency and pinned down to principles. Of all writers Renan is the least consistent and reliable. On one page we read one thing, on the next another. His hues are as many as those of the chameleon. So variable and fickle is his tone that he is ever a slave to the impulse of the moment.

"Il serait intéressant," writes Jules Lemaitre, "de dresser la liste des contradictions de M. Renan. Son Dieu tour à tour existe ou n'existe pas, est personnel ou impersonnel. L'immortalité dont il rêve quelquefois est tour à tour individuelle et collective. Il croit et ne croit pas au progrès. Il a la pensée triste et l'esprit plaisant. Il aime les sciences historiques et les dédaigne. Il est pieusement impie. C'est un mystique et un pince-sans-rire. Il a des naïvetés et d'inextricables malices. Il est Breton et Gascon. Il est artiste, et son style est pourtant le moins plastique qui se puisse voir. Souvent la pensée est claire et l'expression obscure, à moins que ce ne soit le contraire. Sous une apparence de liaison, il a des sautes d'idées incroyables, et ce sont continuellement des abus de mots, des équivoques imperceptibles, parfois un ravissant galimatias. Il nie dans le même temps qu'il affirme. Il a des affirmations auxquelles, au bout d'un instant, il n'a pas plus l'air de croire, ou, par une marche opposée, des paradoxes ironiques auxquels on dirait qu'il se laisse prendre." ("Les Contemporains, Études et Portraits Littéraires," Première Série, pp. 211, 212).

Renan/

Renan is indeed a successful word-painter. He draws scenes that live and glow, but his ease of utterance is his "rock of offence." Painting everything by turns, he paints nothing permanently, if only because one portrait, one landscape darkens, eclipses or confuses another. He prefers to be in his opinions an intellectual opportunist, and in speculation to enjoy an unfettered intellectual vagrancy. To turn a sentence to elaborate a peroration, he permits himself frequently a latitude of expression, which, in cold blood, he would probably have softened down, if not repudiated. To take one of the most striking instances, he certainly lays himself open to the cross-fire of both orthodox and heterodox critics by his indiscriminate and irresponsible use of the words "God" and "Father", which, as we have already remarked might provoke a direct enquiry as to whether Renan believed in a God or not, and, if not, why he constantly seemed to assume God's existence. One is sometimes persuaded of the truth of the saying that language was given to man to conceal thought. We do not forget that every man is entitled to his own definition of God; Spinoza, the great father of modern pantheism was fond of repeating that "the love of God" was man's summum bonum, and of expressing by the phrase "love of God," a passionate zeal in the quest of scientific truth. Yet, to say the least of it, such diverse definitions are somewhat bewildering to the ordinary man. And, as the ordinary man in his thousands was among Renan's readers, such equivocal usages of speech were scarcely commendable. Gabriel Monod in his "Les Maîtres de l'Histoire: Renan, Taine, Michelet," will however listen to no suggestion that Renan was careless about accuracy, or arbitrary in dealing with authorities. He desired "veritatem/

"veritatem dilexit" to be his epitaph; and it was his exceeding scrupulousness that led him avowedly to offer fancies when facts were not attainable, and to suggest one or more of the ways in which things might have happened when he was sure that the truth was lost. In such cases, however, Renan's incomparable literary talent was apt to lead the reader, if not the writer himself, astray. The gift of seeing many sides of truth, combined with a passion for tracing delicate gradations from truth to error, like the changing hues on a pigeon's neck, to use Renan's own simile, is more valuable in imaginative literature than in history treated as a positive science.

On these main grounds, therefore, - on the grounds of the Positivism which is at the basis of his system of thought, and which excludes the conception of a personal Deity; and on the ground of Renan's equivocal employment of language and his verbal artistry — art and artifice we may call it — our contention is, that, strictly speaking, Theism holds no place in Renan's creed.

Is he then really a pantheist? That is the question that must next be met and answered; and the initial claim we make is that Renan is a pronounced pantheist. We have already noticed how the great and almost irresistible influence which Positivism and Pantheism wielded upon the speculations and ideas of the early 19th. century arose from their concurrence and identity in certain fundamental dogmas and tendencies.

Their concurrence is strikingly exemplified in the case of Renan. He unites them as the *raison d'être* of his standpoint. In the /

the early part of this Chapter the development of Pantheism has already been outlined.

To all those pioneers like Descartes, Spinoza, Herder, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and the Tübingen school, philosophers whose names stand forth prominently in connection with the spread of pantheistic dogma, Renan time and again expressed his deep indebtedness.

St. Sulpice, the Seminary in Paris, in which Renan studied for the priesthood, was in metaphysics Cartesian, - that modern movement which, beginning with Descartes, turned away from objective knowledge as a starting-point, and came back to the self as the clue to the interpretation of reality. What Descartes resolved to do was to strip himself completely of all that he had formerly believed, and start de novo, with the intention of admitting only that which was absolutely certain, in order that he might discover whether on this basis a system of philosophy might be erected which would escape the uncertainties of the old system.. To do this he required a definite method of work; and as the old logic was unsuitable for the discovery of new truth, he drew up a code of rules for himself, the first and chief of which was "never to receive anything as a truth which I did not clearly know to be such; that is, to avoid haste and prejudice, and not to comprehend anything more in my judgments than that which should present itself so clearly and distinctly to my mind that I should have no occasion to entertain a doubt of it."

Descartes' system brought him to the point of regarding God as only a God-Idea, or human thought containing itself in divine thought and in infinity. St. Sulpice, as we have indicated, was imbued with the/

the Cartesian spirit, and the atmosphere of the Seminary quickly affected Renan. No sooner did he grasp the import of logic, with its immediate application to problems that he had never before dreamt of, than his whole being underwent a crisis. Up to this period in his career he had believed in his teachers as if they were divine oracles. Now, he was determined, in accordance with the Cartesian maxims, to take nothing for certain that was not perfectly clear and evident to himself. He made his own, Descartes' abstract and inflexible rule of evidence namely, clear ideas.

There can be no doubt, therefore, as to the influence which Descartes, the Apostle of Rationalism exercised on Renan thus early in his career. The principles of Descartes, never lost their hold on the French mind, and moulded it in a remarkable way. Cartesianism gained new power through the agency of the Eclectic School, whose champions were Collard, Maine de Biran, Cousin, and Jouffroy. "The modern philosophical works of Mm. Cousin and Jouffroy," says Renan in his "Souvenirs," "were rarely seen in the Seminary, though they were the constant subject of conversation on account of the discussion which they had excited among the clergy. This was the year (1842) of Jouffroy's death, and the pathetic, despairing pages of his philosophy captivated us. I myself knew them by heart. We followed with deep interest the discussion raised by the publication of his posthumous works." ("Souvenirs," p.216). "One of our number would recite passages from M. Cousin to us." "Cousin fascinated us." ("Souvenirs," p.217). In warmest terms Renan long after Cousin's death expressed his debt to him. He spoke of him as "un excitateur de/

de ma pensée."

To Spinoza also, who has been well named "the Father of modern European Pantheism," Renan acknowledged his indebtedness time and again. In 1877, when Renan's reputation was European, he received an invitation to deliver at the Hague an address in connection with the movement then on foot to celebrate the bi-centenary of the death of Spinoza, a man who had much in common with himself, not only in his opinions, but in his extraordinary goodness and amiability. In the noble oration which he delivered on that occasion he dwelt on the purity and simplicity of Spinoza's character, and pronounced him "the first saint whom the modern philosophy of reason had produced," and proceeded to assert that "there is no enlightened person to-day who does not recognise that Spinoza penetrated the divine conscience to a greater extent than any of his contemporaries." ("*Etudes d'Histoire Religieuse*," p.49). Renan's address was a glowing tribute to this man whom "Schleiermacher Goethe, Hegel, Schelling, proclaimed with one voice to be the father of modern thought," a thinker who "dreaded all chains."

In his peroration Renan declared that "since the days of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius we have never witnessed a life so profoundly penetrated by the sentiment of the divine....All honour then to Spinoza who dared to say, 'Reason before everything.' With us who believe that truth is something real, how can we dream of obtaining by force an adhesion which is only to be prized when it is the fruit of free conviction. To us a belief has no value when it has not been achieved by the reflection of the individual. The personal supernatural is not the ideal. The origin of the supernatural /

natural is lost. The cause of the ideal has suffered no reverse; it never will. The ideal is the soul of the world, the permanent God, the primordial, efficient and final cause of this universe. In this we have the basis of eternal religion. In order to worship God, we have no need any more than Spinoza had, of miracles nor of intercessory prayers ..... So long as there are friends of truth, ready to sacrifice their repose to science, trusty friends devoted to the useful and holy work of mercy, a heart of womanhood to love what is good, beautiful, and pure, — gentlemen, God lives in us.... Our aspirations, our sufferings, our faults even, and our boldnesses are the proof that the God lives in us. Yes, human life still retains something of the divine ... God is still in us. Gentlemen, God is in us! *Est Deus in nobis.*" "Let us with Schleiermacher render the best homage of which we are capable to the manes of the holy and disowned Spinoza. He was penetrated with the sublime spirit of the world; the Infinite was his beginning and his end; the Universal his single and eternal love. Here from his pedestal of granite, he shall teach to everyone the path to happiness which he discovered, and in ages to come, the cultivated man who passes along shall say to himself — "It is here, perhaps, that God has been seen the most near'." ("Spinoza" in "*Etudes d'Histoire Religieuse*," pp 65-71).

The influence of Kant's philosophy is very evident in Renan's thought, inasmuch as he continues the Positivist scorn of metaphysics with the Kantian idealism. At times, however, his attitude is decidedly Hegelian, and he believes in universal change/

change which is an evolving of spirit, the ideal or God, call it what we will. We need not be too particular about names or forms of thought, for, after all, everything "may be only a dream." That is Renan's attitude, to temper enthusiasm by irony, to assert a duty of doubt, and often, perhaps, to gain a literary brilliance by contradictory statements. "The survey of human affairs is not complete," he reminds us, "unless we allot a place for irony beside that of tears, a place for pity beside that of rage, and a place for a smile alongside respect." (Preface to Renan's "Drames Philosophique").

Hegel's claim to immortality, Renan reminds us in his "L'Avenir de la Science" (p.160) consists in his having been the first to express with perfect clearness the vital force which neither Vico nor Montesquieu noticed, and of which even Herder had only the vaguest notion, that there is a life of humanity just as there is a life of the individual; that history is but a spontaneous tendency towards an ideal goal, that the perfect is the centre of gravity of humanity as of everything that lives. Through this, Hegel "has insured for himself the title of the definite founder of the philosophy of history.. Henceforth, history will be no longer what it was to Bossuet, the unfolding of a particular plan conceived and realised by a power superior to man; it will no longer be what it was to Montesquieu, an interlinked chain of facts and causes; what it was to Vico, a lifeless and almost reasonless movement. It will be the history of a being, developing himself by his inward power, creating himself/

himself and attaining by diverse degrees to the full possession of himself. There is, no doubt, a movement, as Vico meant; there are, no doubt, causes, in Montesquieu's sense; there is, no doubt, a previously imposed plan, agreeing with Bossuet's theory. But what they failed to perceive," declares Renan, "was the active and living force impelling that movement, animating those causes, and which, without co-operation from without, and solely by its tendency towards the perfect, accomplishes the providential plan. Perfect autonomy, inward creation, in short, life:" Such was the law of humanity, according to Hegel's system. And Hegel's pantheistic idealism impressed itself strongly on Renan, and coloured to a large extent his writings, and not least his "Vie de Jésus."

What, then, we may inquire, are Renan's particular views with regard to Pantheism? We shall indicate them in a broad, general way. He affirms that it is beyond dispute or doubt that we have no evidence whatever of the action in the universe of one or of several wills superior to that of man, that no mind greater than the human mind has existed anywhere. To Renan, therefore, the moral law is an acquisition, not from a Divine source, but as literally manufactured as a civic code of laws. What then, is religion for him? It is worship of the higher, ideal self. What is conscience? It is but the dream of a shadow./

shadow. It can never be the voice of a God who has not yet begun to be. Man is not "alone with the Alone," he is alone with himself. The actual state of this universe gives no sign of any external intervention, and we know nothing of its beginning. No beneficent interfering power, a deus ex machina, corrects or directs the operation of blind forces, enlightens man or improves his lot. No God appears miraculously to prevent evils, to crush disease, to stop wars, or to save his children from peril. No end or purpose is visible to us. God in the popular sense, living and acting as a Divine Providence, is not to be seen in our universe. To Renan, God is nothing but a Divine souffle - an impersonal atmosphere of the ideal world. His favourite dogma is that the universe does not exist in all its plenitude, but is ever growing, ever becoming, eternally developing itself from one unknowable in the direction of another. In place of a definite creation, Renan explains the universe by the gradual evolution of a germ. All Being is Becoming: a perpetual Fieri: an eternal process towards an unknown end, an infinite continuance, over which an unconscious deity broods in the abyss. "Le Père qui est aux cieux," writes Ed. de Pressensé, "se confond pour M. Renan avec l'Abîme notre Père d'où nous sommes éclos; cette dernière phrase est devenue immortelle dès la premier jour par son tour original. On se rappelle également son fameux article sur la Metaphysique de M. Vacherot où nous lisons ces mots qu'il n'a pas désavoués; L'absolu de la justice et de la raison/

raison ne se manifeste que dans l'humanité; envisage hors de l'humanité, cet absolu n'est qu'une abstraction, envisagé dans l'humanité, il est une réalité. L'infini n'existe que quand il revêt une forme finie....Ce même article se terminait par une prière au Père céleste, preuve nouvelle que l'oraison dominicale se concilie pour l'habile écrivain avec l'atheisme humanitaire que est le vrai fond de son système. Mais dans sa Vie de Jésus il ne s'explique pas avec cette netteté." ("L'Ecole Critique et Jésus-Christ, à propos de la Vie de Jésus de M. Renan," by Ed. de Pressense, pp. 3,4).

Renan looks out on the world about him, and perceives that like himself it is not fixed and stable, but in a condition of becoming. The stars in their courses, land and sea, plants and sentient creatures, man, in whom, so far as we know, the universe first becomes conscious of itself, are all moving forward toward some unknown infinite perfection. This movement is the evolution of God. God is no anthropomorphic personality. As the soul is the individual becoming, so God is the universal becoming. God exists in all things, or rather is the sum of all things, grows conscious in humanity, and is subject to evolution toward the perfect. In Renan's view, history merely displays a spontaneous tendency toward an ideal aim, a movement produced by an active, living force in things and without any external help. "Perfect autonomy, self-creation — in a word, life — such is the law of humanity." The universe is animated by one single Soul, in whom all living beings share, but of which/

which, so to speak, they only enjoy the usufruct, since they fade and vanish like sparks that fly upward, while it remains eternal. Carrying himself backward through innumerable aeons, he arrives at a point in the boundless past when the Absolute All was a universe of atoms obeying only the laws of mechanics, but containing the germ of all that was to ensue. The atoms become molecules, the molecules are massed into suns, the suns throw off planets, each of them having an evolution of its own. Among them is our mother Earth, something of the story of which is told by geology and palaeontology, until man arrives on the scene.

"Two elements, time and the tendency to progress, explain the universe. *Mens agitat molem.....Spiritus intus alit.*" (Revue des Deux Mondes 1863, Renan's article, "Les Sciences de la Nature et les Sciences Historiques"). Given time and progress, what may mankind not attain to, when science, a child of yesterday, shall have grown with the growth of millions of aeons? The universe will differ as much from the world which is now, as the world which now exists differs from that of the time when neither sun nor earth existed. There will be something which will be to the actual consciousness of man what the actual consciousness of man is to the primeval atom. Knowledge is power. Who knows whether science, infinitely developed, will not bring with it infinite power? A single power will then govern the world; that power will be science, will be the mind. "The triumph of mind is the true Kingdom of God. There will be then a resurrection of us men/

men of the idea who have contributed to that end... Our little endeavour to forward the reign of the Good and the True will be a stone hidden away in the foundations of the everlasting temple, but we shall have none the less contributed to the Divine work. Our life will have been a part of the infinite life, in which we shall have a place marked out for us through all eternity. The recompense of the individual is complete absorption into the substance of Deity, a divine unconsciousness, a  $\mu\epsilon\gamma\alpha\lambda\eta$   $\tilde{\alpha}yv\omega\alpha$ .

The just shall not perish! The Elect shall see God! The Residue of Perfection is secured by the Frontier-Spirit. Every disinterested effort makes for the little residue of excellence which, for ever accumulating, goes to shape the Divine Idea. Spirit is a mystic interplanetary influence which carries the current of Being from the domain of pure Spirit into the domain of pure matter, thus mingles either and thus strengthens each. Those who have contributed to the fund of the universe their atom of disinterested thought or feeling shall receive, in exchange for the imperishable spark which they emit, a part in the eternity of the World-Soul." Renan professed a confidence in the final triumph of truth and goodness. He has faith in a dim, shadowy, far-off event which he terms "the complete advent of God." God will then have come to himself. From this point of view, the universe is a progress to God, to an increasing realisation of the Divine in truth, beauty, and goodness. God is as dependant on man as man on God. Natural evil is God's incompleteness: when man is complete/

complete, God will be complete; there will be no more injustice. The universe, Renan believes, must be ultimately rooted and grounded in goodness; there will be, in spite of all existing evils, a balance on the side of goodness, otherwise the universe would, like a vast banking concern, fail. This balance of goodness is the *raison d'être* of the world and the means of its existence. The general life of the universe may be illustrated, according to Renan, by that of the oyster, and the formation within it of the pearl, by a malady, a process vague, obscure and painful. The pearl is the Spirit which is the end, the final cause and last result, and assuredly the most brilliant outcome of this universe. Through suffering the pearl is formed; and likewise, through constant pain and conflict, the spirit of man moves intellectually and morally onward and upward to the completed realisation of justice, beauty, truth, infinite goodness, and love, to the complete and triumphant realisation of God. ("Feuilles Détachées"- "Examen de Conscience Philosophique"). Thus, for Renan, the world is a mighty maze, with laws and order, but without a providential plan. Nature, herself immoral, blindly plants in man the instinct of virtue. Religion is a sentiment, immortality a dream, and God a name powerless to modify the moral or material conduct of the universe. "For myself," writes Renan, "I believe that there is not in the universe an intelligence superior to that of man; the absolute of justice and reason manifests itself only in humanity; regarded apart from humanity/

humanity, that absolute is but an abstraction; the infinite exists only when it clothes itself in form." (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1860). Thus God depends for His reality on man; before man appeared there was no real God; when man shall have passed away, God will cease to exist. In all worlds and all states of existence, where man is not, God is only an abstraction. In this sense, the human consciousness of God may be termed God's consciousness of Himself, His self-realisation through chosen souls, His more and more complete incarnation. "God is immanent," says Renan, "in the whole of the universe, and in each of the beings that compose it. Only He does not know Himself equally in all; He knows Himself better in the plant than in the rock, in the animal than in the plant, in man than in the animal, in the intelligent man than in the dullard, in the man of genius than in the intelligent man, in Socrates than in the man of genius, in Christ than in Buddha. Such is the fundamental thesis of our theology. If such was the meaning of Hegel, let us be Hegelians." ("*Etudes d'Histoire Religieuse*" — "Feuerbach and the neo-Hegelian school").

This is assuredly the creed of Hegelian Pantheism. The whole tangled web of Renan's contradictions unfolds itself when we follow this clue. He brings us down to the abstract, impersonal element, which in Hegel, or Averroës, or Spinoza is the One Everlasting. He asserts what alike the science and the sense of our day deny, that intelligence comes from unintelligence, morality from immorality, and that, in place of God creating man, it is really man that creates God. Heinrich Heine exposed/

exposed long ago the hollowness of such a creed, when referring to the restoration of his faith, he wrote, "Yes, I have returned back to God, like the prodigal son, after having for a long time kept swine with the Hegelians. A heavenly homesickness fell upon me, and drove me forth across the dizzy mountain pathways of dialectic. By the way I met the God of the Pantheists, but I could make nothing of him. That poor, dreamy being interwoven and entangled in the world, as it were imprisoned in it, gapes out at you, will-less and impotent. To have a will, one must be a person; and to manifest it, one must have the elbows free. If any man desires a God that can help - and that is after all the main concern - he must be content to accept his personality, a distinction from the world, and his holy attributes, all goodness, wisdom, righteousness.... I have spoken of the God of the Pantheists, but I cannot help remarking that he is no God at all." (Heine, Werke, xviii, 10).

Renan's God then we maintain, is not the God of Scripture, the free, personal Creator of the World. This is evidenced by numerous pantheistic statements in the "Vie de Jésus," some of which he puts into Christ's mouth, and also by other utterances in which he declares his leaning to Hegel and his "absolute idealism." It is, as we have already stated, the alliance of pantheism, which allows and fosters a certain self-satisfying religiosity of feeling, with positivism, and their identity in/

in scientific methods, that fascinates with so strong an allurement men like Renan. His pantheism, however, is open and daring, though it may not be detected immediately by an unsuspecting reader of the "Vie de Jésus." But those versed in the shifty and elusive phraseology in which modern Pantheism delights to express itself will find little difficulty in discovering from the book that Renan is to be numbered among its votaries.

From the very outset of the "Vie de Jésus" Renan studiously and vigorously sets himself to clear Jesus from the imputation of regarding or proclaiming himself God.

Praise of Jesus flows readily from his pen. Jesus is the man for humanity, the founder of "eternal religion." He has been a "brilliant light amid gross darkness." In his most exalted moments, however, there is not the slightest approach to those conceptions of Incarnation or equality with God. On the contrary he distinctly repels such ideas. He is simply and at the highest, "Son of God," as all men may become in various degrees. Renan maintains that the thought of Divine Incarnation was entirely foreign to the Jewish spirit; that there is no trace of it in the Synoptics; that it is not indicated except in portions of John's Gospel, which, in Renan's opinion, cannot be accepted as an echo of the thought of Jesus. He is absolutely fixed in his determination to bind Jesus down to mere humanity, and yet on this theory he finds no little difficulty in interpreting the words of Jesus; for he believed himself to be "more than an ordinary/

ordinary man, but separated from God by an infinite distance."

"We must place Jesus in the first rank of the great family of the true sons of God. Jesus had no visions; God did not speak to him as to one outside of himself; God was in him. He lived in the bosom of God by an unceasing communication; he did not see God but he understood Him....Jesus never once announced the sacrilegious theory that he was God. He believed himself to be in direct communication with God - he believed himself to be the Son of God. The highest consciousness of God which has existed in the bosom of humanity is that of Jesus." ("Vie de Jésus" pp. 45 46).

Thus Jesus is not God manifested in the flesh; he is not different from ordinary men in that respect. God lives by man; all is God; and God is all. In this connection, Renan favours us with as beautiful a piece of Pantheism as one could imagine. "In his (that is Jesus) poetic conception of nature, one breath alone pervades the universe; the breath of man is that of God; God dwells in man, and lives by man, the same as man dwells in God, and lives by God. The transcendent idealism of Jesus never permitted him to have a very clear notion of his own personality. He is his Father, his Father is he. He lives in his disciples; he is everywhere with them; his disciples are one, as he and his Father are one. The idea to him is everything; the body, which makes the distinction of individuals, is nothing.... The position which he assigned himself was that of a superhuman being, and he wished/

wished to be regarded as having a higher relationship with God than other men. But it must be observed that these words, "superhuman" and "supernatural," borrowed from our pitiful theology, had no meaning in the exalted religious consciousness of Jesus. To him, nature and the development of humanity were not limited kingdoms outside of God - paltry realities subject to the laws of a desperate rigorism. There was no supernatural for him, for the reason that there was no nature. Intoxicated with infinite love, he forgot the heavy chain which holds the spirit captive; he cleared at one bound the abyss, impossible to most, which the weakness of the human faculties has formed between God and man." ("Vie de Jésus," pp. 141,142).

It is in this thoroughgoing Hegelian fashion that Renan presents to us his conception of Jesus, as one of the greatest of men; whose individuality imprinted itself strongly and imperishably on the souls of his followers, and of all succeeding generations. In him the spontaneous force, the highest intuition, the purest will of the human soul, are all revealed.

Many illustrations of Renan's pantheism might be adduced not only from his "Vie de Jésus," but from his numerous other works.

The Revue des Deux Mondes for October 15th. of the same year in which the "Vie de Jésus" was published, opens with a letter written by Renan from the seaside. Contemplating the immensity of the universe, he begins by confessing his old preference/

preference for natural science over those historical and critical studies in which he had been so much engaged; then ascending in thought from human history to geology, thence to astronomy, from that still higher to chemistry, (the science of atomic combinations), and finally to dynamics (the realm of pure forces); pausing there on the border of the unknown region of spirit, and returning on his track, downward and onward, he anticipates the day when the process of development which has been going on in nature will be complete, and when, "although we shall for myriads of years have been dust, and the particles which composed our material being shall have been disengaged and passed through incalculable transformations, we shall revive in the form of that world, which we shall have contributed to make." And then, too, God will come to a complete recognition and consciousness of himself. Just as in the Hindoo theology an inert and unconscious godhead, Brahm, reaches conscious and creative activity, in Brahma; so God, who "knows himself better in the plant than in the rock.....in Buddha than in Socrates, in Christ than in Buddha," will become complete, being until then infinite in the sense of unfinished, like truth, according to Schiller, which 'always is a-being, never is.'"

These other passages may also be taken as examples of Renan's pantheistic tendency:-

"God, Providence, Immortality - good old words, a little clumsy, perhaps, which philosophy may, interpret in a sense more/

more and more refined." ("Etudes d'Histoire Religieuse," 1st series, p.46).

"Eternal beauty shall live for ever in this sublime name (Christ), just as in all those whom humanity has chosen in order to call to mind that which is, and to inebriate itself with its own image. Behold the living God, behold him who is to be adored!"

("Nouvelles études d'histoire religieuse" - Essay on "Les Historiens Critiques de Jésus," p. 230).

"The absolute of justice and of reason only manifests itself in humanity; regarded out of humanity, the absolute is only an abstraction; regarded in humanity, it is a reality. The infinite only exists when invested in a finite form." (Revue des Deux Mondes, Jan. 15, 1860). "A perfect God is only an ideal; as to a real God, He lives, He develops Himself in the immensity of space and the eternity of time, He appears to us under the infinite variety of the forms which manifest Him: it is the cosmos, the universe. So far as we are concerned, the world being nothing less than being itself, in the series of its manifestations through space and time, possesses infinity, necessity, independence, universality, and all the metaphysical attributes which theologians restrict exclusively to God." ("La Revue" p.386).

"The historical sciences," Renan remarks in another place, "presuppose that no supernatural agent disturbs the course of humanity; that there is no being superior to man to whom one can attribute an appreciable part in the moral conduct, more than in the material conduct, of the universe. For myself, I think that there is not in the universe an intelligence superior to that of man."

man; that the absolute of justice and reason manifests itself only in humanity. Viewed outside of humanity, this absolute is only an abstraction. The infinite exists only when it puts on form." ("La Revue," p. 384). The whole of the article on "Feuerbach" in Renan's "*Etudes d'Histoire Religieuse*" may be compared with these passages.

In that lengthy treatise of Renan's, composed in youth and published in ripe age, "*L'Avenir de la Science*," the source from which some of the most admired pages in his "*Vie de Jésus*" have been drawn, there are numerous passages which unmistakably reveal his pantheism. One or two are given. "The history of the being will only be complete when multiplicity is entirely converted into unity, and when from everything that exists shall issue an unique resultant of all the elements which compose it. God will then be the soul of the universe, and the universe will be the body of God, and life will be complete; for all the parts of that which is will have lived apart and will be ripe for unity. The circle will then be closed, and the being after having traversed the multiple, will anew rest in the unity." ("*L'Avenir de la Science*," pp. 293, 294). "What is God for humanity, if not the transcendent epitome of its suprasensitive wants, the category of the ideal, that is to say the form under which we conceive the ideal, as time and space are categories, that is to say forms under which we conceive bodies? Everything reduces itself to this fact of human nature; man in presence of the divine is no longer himself, he clings to a celestial charm, he lays aside his paltry personality, is carried away and absorbed." ("*L'Avenir de la Science*," p. 445). But one of the most striking illustrations of/

of Renan's pantheistic tendency, as well as one of the most beautiful and haunting passages in all his writings, and worthy to be placed beside the noble closing paragraphs of his "Vie de Jésus", is to be found in the heart of his "L'Avenir de la Science." It is so impressive a witness to his pantheism that we cannot forbear to quote it. "I am going to tell you about the most charming recollection of my early youth; the thought of it almost brings tears to my eyes. One day my mother and I in one of those short excursions in the stony byways on the coast of Brittany which leave such sweet memories with all those who wander there, came upon a small village church, surrounded as usual by the churchyard, and we sat down to rest ourselves. The walls of the church of rough hewn granite and covered with moss, the neighbouring houses built of primitive blocks, the closely serried tombs, the mouldering and overthrown crosses, the numerous skulls ranged in tiers on the steps of the tiny house which served as an ossuary, all these showed that people had been buried there from the most remote days, when the Saints of Brittany had made their appearance for the first time on these waves. On that day the terror-stricken feeling at the immense oblivion and the vast silence amidst which human life is swallowed up was such as to haunt me still, and to have become one of the elements of my moral existence. Among all these simple, humble folk that lie there, not one, not a single one will live in the future. Not a single one has stamped his acts on the grand movement of things, not a single one will count in the final statistics of those who have given the impulse to the ever-moving wheel. In those days I served the God of my infancy, and an upward look/

look at the stone cross on the steps of which I was seated, a glance at the tabernacle visible through the windows of the church, was sufficient to explain all this to me. And besides, the sea was but at a stone's throw, so were the rocks and the foam-crested waves; I could sniff the winds from heaven, which awakened a kind of indefinable feeling of freedom and expansion. My mother also was by my side; and it seemed to me that the humblest life was capable of reflecting heaven through pure love and individual affection. I considered those who lay there happy. Since then I have shifted my tent, and I account for this vast darkness in a different way. They are not dead those obscure children of the hamlet, for Brittany still lives, and they have contributed to the making of Brittany; they played no part in the great drama, but they formed part of the vast chorus, without which the drama would be cold and lifeless, and destitute of sympathetic actors. And when Brittany shall be no longer there, France will still be there; and when France is gone, humanity will remain, and people will go on saying, 'In days gone by, there was a noble country in sympathy with all that was beautiful, whose destiny it was to suffer for the sake of humanity and to fight in its behalf.' On that day the lowliest peasant who had but a few steps to go from his hut to his tomb, shall like ourselves, live in that immortal name; he will have contributed his small share in the great result. And when humanity is gone, God will remain, and humanity will have contributed to the making of Him, and in His vast bosom all that lived will live again, and then it will be true to the very letter that/

that not a glass of water, not a word that has furthered the Divine work of progress will be lost." ("L'Avenir de la Science," pp.205-207). To those who know the tenor of pantheistic speculation, no better, no clearer creed of pantheism could be displayed than in the citations which have been given. Renan exhibits, as we have observed, inconsistencies which are at times difficult to explain. His works are replete with a species of religious feeling. It is this that we may say gives them an exquisite charm. He is intoxicated, in a sense, like Spinoza, with the Divine. Regarding all high aspirations, all heroism and sacrifice, all religious faith, all forms and productions of beauty, all morality and truth, as but the emanations, the manifestations of the Divinity in man, he expatiates on them with delight and adoration. It is the ideal in man that he worships: but so saintly and fervid are his lyrics, so tenderly rich his sentiment, so reverent his homage, that his religiousness is felt to be sincere and profound. And yet behind all this there are Renan's two great regulative beliefs of Positivism and Pantheism, solemnly announced.

God, as a growing consciousness through the world, is "in the making." He is not yet fully: He shall be more and more. To help His self-realisation is to serve the one purpose of the universe, and to partake of eternal life. When God is perfect, He will be conscious of all the efforts that have made His completion possible; all the obscure workers/

workers towards the great end shall rise from their age-long sleep, which to them will be brief as an instant. Personal immortality may thus be the reward of those who have advanced the coming of the Kingdom. Religion therefore, consists in worshipping in spirit and in truth, without any personal hope or desire, and solely for the self-realisation of the Divine, or, in more orthodox phraseology, for the glory of God. And this was the religion of Jesus, as Renan views it, the "absolute and final religion."

## CHAPTER V.

### Legendary and Racial Influences.

#### Summary of Chapter:-

Renan's legendary theory regarding the Gospels.

The mythical theory of Strauss.

Application of the legendary theory.

Legendary lore of Brittany - its influence on Renan.

The fusion of Breton and Gascon in him.

Predominance of Breton element.

The Breton temperament characterised.

Its dreamy, poetic, idealistic nature.

Importance of Renan's "Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse" towards an understanding of the intellectual constituents of his character.

"Souvenirs" summarised as "How to account for the "Vie de Jésus."

Renan's acknowledgment of Breton influences in "Souvenirs."

Breton traditional literature, mythological and legendary lore, superstitions, worship of Saints.

Breton conservatism.

Places associated with Renan's early life-

Tréguier, his birthplace - rich in legends of Saints. Lannion and vicinity - a veritable cradle of romance. Legends of King Arthur.

Renan's tribute to Celtic influences.

His "La Poésie des Races Celtiques."

It has already been noted that with regard to the historical narratives in the Gospels, and especially the accounts of miraculous events, Renan adopts what may be styled the legendary, as distinguished from the mythical, theory of Strauss. The true interpretation of the Gospels, he informs us, is that which looks upon them as legendary biographies. "That the Gospels are in part legendary is quite evident, inasmuch as they are full of miracles and of the supernatural." (Introduction to "Vie de Jésus," p. xxxvii). The one fundamental axiom of his book, the axiom which he maintains to be the basis of all criticism, is, that there is no supernatural, and that therefore there is and can be no such thing as miracle. Discarding, as he does, whatever is miraculous as impossible in fact and untrue in record, Renan, in endeavouring to reproduce the true history and character of Jesus Christ, from narratives into which miracles are woven throughout the whole of their contents; which narrate miracles in simple, plain, honest, straightforward language; which state the object and value of their evidence, and connect them with a Being whose speech and whose whole bearing claim supernatural authority, - Renan must be prepared to say definitely and precisely what he regards the historical value of those documents to be which are naturally the main sources from which he draws his materials for the "Vie de Jésus."

"When, by whom, and under what conditions were the Gospels compiled? This is the chief question upon which the opinion/

opinion, it is necessary to form of their credibility, depends". (Introduction to "Vie de Jésus," p. xxxvii). The historian must be prepared to say how they originated and took their present form, and how, too, they have gathered to themselves the miraculous elements, as accretions of falsehood, which may be dissolved and cleared away without impairing their pristine integrity and veracity. There is a congruity, which yields the clearest evidence of truth, between the character, words, and works of Him whom the Gospels in their present form manifest to us. If their evidence as to the greater part of their contents be rejected, by what process is it to be rehabilitated in order to give a credible account of any portion of the life of Jesus? How are the select fragments, which, according to Renan, bear the stamp of truth, to be rhythmically arranged to offer a life, the inner and outer harmonies of which shall be evidence of its reality?

The first step towards the solution of this problem must be to decide on the genuine character of the four Gospels, and to explain their constitution and their universal acceptance in the early Church. Strauss, in his "Leben Jesu," declared that if the Gospels were written by the authors to whom they are ascribed, then the mythical nature of the events they recorded must be abandoned, and the old alternative with its rigorous dilemma must be accepted, namely, either the facts recorded were true, or the narrators, being/

being eye-witnesses, were dishonest. It was to save himself from this dilemma, that Strauss, by his mythical theory, delayed the composition of the present Gospels from the legendary stories current in the early Church, till the close of the second century; so that sufficient time might be given for the development of the myths, and for the decease of the first two generations of Christian disciples, who, from personal witness, or clear remembrance must have known these miraculous incidents to be imaginary and false.

Renan adopts another attitude. In his article on "Les Historiens Critiques de Jésus", ("Nouvelles études d'histoire religieuse") he disputes the accuracy of the distinction drawn by Strauss between myths and legends, and his application of that distinction to the Gospel narratives. Renan's language in that article gives us the keynote of his "Vie de Jésus". "A reflective mind", he writes, "sees things in the light of the great day of reason; credulous ignorance, on the contrary, sees them in the rays of the moon, deformed by a deceitful and uncertain light. Timid credulity in this half-light changes natural objects into phantoms; but it is entirely a hallucination to create beings out of everything and without any exterior cause. So nations only half-open to rational culture have been formed very much oftener by undecided perception, by the vagueness of tradition/

tradition, by hearsay magnifying, by the remoteness between the fact and the narrative, by the desire to glorify heroes, than by pure creation, as that has been able to form a foundation for almost the entire edifice of the Indo-European mythologies; or, to put it better, all the processes have contributed in indistinguishable proportions to the tissue of these marvellous embellishments, which put at fault all scientific categories, and at the formation of which the most imperceptible fantasies have presided. It is not, then, without many restrictions, that the denomination of myths can be employed, when it is used regarding evangelical narratives. That expression, which is used in its exact signification when applied to India and primitive Greece, which is yet incorrectly applied to the ancient traditions of the Hebrews, and of the Semitic people in general, does not represent the true colour of the phenomena for an epoch so advanced as that of Jesus, from a certain point of view. I would prefer, for my part, the names of legends and legendary narratives, which, by giving a large share of the work to opinion, have in their entirety the action and personal work of Jesus.<sup>"</sup>  
("Nouvelles études d'histoire religieuse" pp. 192, 193).

It was Renan's method of handling the New Testament writings which has constituted one of the principal points of attack by orthodox critics, their grievance being his separation of what he regarded as historical from what he considered legendary and of the nature of Aberglaube.

Renan's/

Renan's was a bolder, and in a sense, a more honest mind than Strauss's. He could not, for the sake of a theory, like Strauss, falsify history. Therefore Renan accepts the evangelical records as the product of the first century, and as constituting to a large degree the work of those who are generally accepted as their authors. Yet we are not to imagine that he believes, any more than Strauss, that these narratives are true and credible because he holds them to have been written so near the time of the events described, or because written to a large extent by those who were involved, and in a way identified, as spectators of or participants in these events. By no means. All these miraculous incidents are, in spite of that, mythical in Renan's mind, and the witnesses of the true and real life of Jesus are themselves, according to his opinion, the originators and manufacturers and writers of the myths. In our author's judgment, the legends, as he prefers to call them, grew in the minds of those very enthusiasts who had followed Jesus Christ about during His public ministry, and who had a very close and intimate knowledge of the manner of His life and teaching, until in the end these legends, the offspring of credulous and fervid imaginations, completely beclouded and eclipsed all that their memory retained. Renan takes the ground that, twenty or thirty years after Christ, his reputation had greatly increased, that "legends had begun to gather about Him like clouds," that "death added to His perfection, freeing Him from defects in the eyes of those who had/

had loved Him, that His followers wrested the prophecies so that they might fit Him. They said, "He is the Messiah." The Messiah was to do certain things; therefore Jesus did certain things. Then an account would be given of the doing." Their accounts were rather the transfiguration of fact, than a pure creation of pious enthusiasm. The events in the life of Jesus which appeared miraculous, wore this character partly through the blind enthusiasm of the Apostles, and partly through pious fraud in which they had an active, and their Master a consenting agency. "Beliefs which have a great deal that is legendary in them," writes R.H. Hutton, "do grow up in the course of years, as the hearts of those who have been laid hold of by a profound affection recover gradually from the first bewilderment and soreness of loss, rally from their dejection, and begin to blend with a certain indistinctness in their memory of the past, dreams and hopes and fancies which that past has produced." ("Theological Essays," Renan's "Christ," p. 137). Renan's contention is that these legends concerning Jesus, which are developed in the Gospel narratives of the conception and miracles of our Lord, began to shape themselves even during His life, and indeed with some countenance from Himself, and that Jesus Himself permitted the belief that He miraculously healed the sick and raised the dead. The result was that, in Renan's opinion, a few years after Christ's death, His followers agreed unanimously in crediting these recent fictions of their own imagination to have been the actual incidents which they had witnessed, and in which they had/

had taken part, without a single protest being raised by any person who possessed a keen and accurate memory; and that, in addition, they deliberately, though innocently, took up the work of narrating these legends for the benefit of their fellow-countrymen and others who were cognisant of the actual life of Jesus.

Such then, is the theory that Renan propounds in order to explain the formation of the Evangelical narratives and the origin of Christianity. Those records contain elements of history, but nothing more. They are not mere fictions, conscious (according to the old infidel view), nor unconscious (according to the modern mythical view); but neither are they credible historical narratives throughout. The legendary stories, as he calls the miraculous narratives, are the deposit of a later age, the offspring of credulous and fervid imaginations; and the remainder of the Gospel records may be so manipulated and humoured as to be fairly pieced together again after their miraculous portions are shred away, and may be made to exhibit something like the original lineaments of the person of Jesus, before these miraculous glosses daubed and obscured His true image. Starting out with this unproved assumption of his regarding the canonical Gospels, Renan is governed, in his beliefs and disbeliefs, in his acceptance and rejection of their statements; by no fixed rules. This part of the narrative is accepted, and that part thrown/

thrown out, when frequently there is no assignable reason beyond the critic's arbitrary will.

It will be understood, therefore, how large a place the legendary theory occupies in the mind of Renan in his attitude towards the Gospels. The "Vie de Jésus" was not intended to be a scientific work either for historians or theologians, but was simply a poetic retracing in the clearest and tenderest colours at his command of a picture which religious tradition had veiled the thought from many readers.

There can be no doubt but that Renan was influenced in this direction by the Celtic atmosphere in which he was reared in Brittany, that province which, perhaps more than any other spot in the modern world, has preserved in its legendary lore the "eternal youth of phantasy." He was steeped in what Matthew Arnold calls "Celtic magic." Renan's boyhood in that land of desolate moors and grey skies was an education in romanticism, and it left indelible impressions on his memory and his temperament. In his "L'Avenir de la Science," he tells how, with tedious enthusiasm "the little conscientious Breton (le petit Breton consciencieux) flying frightened from Saint Sulpice, because he thought he perceived that half of what his instructors had told him was perhaps untrue," spread his whole mind in disorderly fashion upon his pages and made an engaging exhibition which he now knew to be enormous in its faults. "Le Petit Breton" - that, in brief/

brief, was what counted in his character. In his extremely fascinating series of autobiographical papers in the "Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse," (a volume, which, as Renan tells us, he wrote, "in order to transmit to others the theory of the universe which he carries in himself") he has depicted his own early years with that antique candour which so greatly charms the reader in a very different book, Cardinal Newman's "Apologia pro vita sua." In the exquisite pages of that volume Renan delineates his childhood surrounded by legends of the saints and of the sea.

In Renan's father the racial element was pronounced, the name Renan being that of one of the oldest of the Armorican saints. He was a Breton of the Bretons, a man who mused, full of dreamy, unpractical fantasies, of silent tenderness of sentiment, and with a strain of melancholy in his nature. He transmitted to his son the dreamy imaginative tendency, the "tempérément chimérique," and the disinterested simplicity of his race. But Renan had also Gascon blood in his veins through his mother, whom he describes as lively, candid, and inquisitive, the strangest possible contrast to the dreamy melancholy of the sombre Breton her husband. She added to the Breton faith a fund of gaiety, verve, and gentle irony that were foreign to the Breton temperament, and which she transmitted to her son. From his mother he inherited his profound and sincere faith in the teachings of the Church and also his/

his imaginative faith. She was a living folk-lore. From her he first heard the legends of the Breton saints, to which she clung as a Breton, though as a Gascon she was inclined to laugh at them; but she deftly told these tales, "so as to leave the impression that they were only true from an ideal point of view." To his mother, as he tells us, he owed "une certaine habileté dans l'art d'amener le cliquetis des mots et des idées," and "le penchant gasçon à trancher beaucoup les difficultés par un sourire." His mother's half-joking, half-credulous way of telling the old stories helps to account for the tone of Renan's mind: "Elle les racontait avec esprit et finesse, glissant avec art entre le réel et le fictif, d'une façon qui impliquait qu'au fond tout cela n'était vrai qu'en idée." Of course it is easy to say that hundreds of other writers have been brought up by old story-telling mothers, and yet that none of these have felt themselves compelled to apply to their sacred books the method which accounted satisfactorily enough for nursery tales. Renan, however, chose to do so; and he accounted for the view which he took of life in its highest and most solemn relations by detailing the history of his early days. He grew up in an atmosphere of half-unreality, of illusion; and he implies that he never got mental backbone enough to see that, whatever childhood may be, life is real. By his own account he never "put away childish things." These Breton tales had from the first a profound influence on Renan's imagination, and inspired him with a fervent love for mythology. "The simplicity of spirit with which they were accepted/

accepted," he writes "carried one back to the early ages of the world." In the peaceful home circle, then, in Tréguier, his native town, the future historian of religions learned, as unconsciously as a child learns his mother-tongue, how the unknown becomes the supernatural in a rustic imagination, and how, in another way, a fact becomes a faith. The lessons he was taught by his mother, in this fashion, were not thrown away upon him when in after years he had to deal with legends infinitely more important and widely accepted than those of the obscure saints of Brittany. Renan himself would have us believe that both thought and style are, in him, the direct, inevitable product of two things - his race and his education. He was a Celt who became fully conscious of his Celtic nature; a man in whom French *savoir faire* and German science, were perpetually contending with alien and ineradicable habits of mind - "Comme cet animal fabuleux de Ctésias qui se mangeait les pattes sans s'en douter" he says. This mixed nature, the result of a modern intelligence working on a temperament that belongs to a far-off past, and making of him "un romantique protestant contre le romantisme, un utopiste prêchant en politique le terre-à-terre, un idéaliste se donnant inutilement beaucoup de peine pour paraître bourgeois", has rendered Renan's works unintelligible and displeasing to many readers. He is one of those authors whose personal history has exercised an unusual influence on his thought. An English weekly paper, remarkable/

remarkable for its accuracy, was misled some years ago into assuming that Renan was a Jew. A more curious mistake could hardly have been made. No one who is at all acquainted with the writings of that remarkable colony of Jewish scholars which inhabited Paris about the time Renan published his "Vie de Jésus", a colony which recalls the mediaeval glories of the school of Narbonne, could for a moment confuse its modes of thought and forms of language with those of a man who was, if ever there was one, a true child of Brittany, a native of the most intensely and conservatively Christian province in France. In this atmosphere, pious and mediaeval, but most profoundly Celtic, Renan drew his earliest breath. He was not reared like Munk or Cohen, upon that rabbinical learning which exercised so strange an effect upon the mind in its day, that a great German Orientalist declared that it seemed that a man, after passing through it, got a new kind of Verstand, different from, and less serviceable than, that of other men.

Renan, on the contrary was brought up on the legends of one of the most poetical districts of Europe. His early training was received in that province of France in which the archaic Christian Spirit was most congenial. The Breton race is a veritable storehouse of myth and legend. Every church is a shrine containing the relics of some wonderful superstition. Every barren plain bears, either visibly or beneath its brown soil, some mysterious token of an epoch long before history began, and frequently also of one or another of the various invaders, who, though they impressed their presence on/

on the hills, riversides, and barren heaths, yet left the ancient peasantry much as they found them. Brittany possesses for its children an inconceivable attraction; there is no country in all the world where man is more attached to his native soil.

"O landes! O forêts! pierres sombres et hautes,  
Bois qui couvez nos champs, mers qui battez nos côtes,  
Villages où les morts errent avec les vents  
Bretagne, d'où vient l'amour de tes enfants?"

("Les Bretons," Brizeux).

Brittany is a land by itself. Its inhabitants remain to a large extent unchanged in their manners, customs and habits; old legends and superstitions still retain their hold on the popular mind. A writer has said, "every nation of the earth has its superstitions and absurdities, but Brittany has those of all other nations united."

"At the first glance," says Renan, "one would be tempted to believe that the Breton peoples have no literature, because there would be a difficulty in giving an extensive catalogue of Breton books really and truly ancient and original. But the fact is that they have a complete traditional literature in their legends, their stories, their mythological ideas that are not written down; ideas rolling their current throughout the whole of the nation, filtering tradition through a thousand secret rivulets to which every one gives a form according to his own taste." ("L'Avenir de la Science," p.184).

The/

The Bretons present indeed, a curious picture of a primitive state of society. They are more unlike the French than the Welsh or the Scotch are unlike their English neighbours. "We are not French," the Bretons say; "we are the people of our own country." It is this special nationality that renders Brittany more interesting probably than any other part of France. And that is particularly the case in the three Departments of Morbihan, Finistère, and the Côtes du Nord the country of Renan, which is the true Brittany, the Bretagne Bretonnante of Froissart, who calls the Eastern part of the province "La Bretagne Douce," because the French language is spoken there.

Although the Cross now surmounts the ancient menhir, and the statue of the Virgin is niched over the fountain of remote date, yet the Breton worship is still full of superstition, a strange mixture of Christianity and of the paganism of the weird days when the sacred vervain could work miracles and the mistletoe was the emblem of the priests. The old stories of human sacrifices appear, according to some writers, to have been libels on the ancient Druids; yet it is impossible to contemplate the monstrous misshapen blocks of stone, scattered over the length and breadth of the province of Brittany, without an intense conviction that these stones have witnessed fearful rites, in which probably demons were worshipped and called on to consecrate the tombs, if tombs they are,/

are, of departed chiefs honoured by these colossal memorials.

There were also the marvellous legends of King Grallon, and his wicked daughter Abes or Dahut, and the submersion of the City of Is; the legends of the fierce Comorre, the Blue-beard of Cornuaille, of the marvellous Saints Corentin, Gildas, Ronan, Guenolé, and others, whose words seem to have been law to the land, and whose fame meets the traveller continually either in churches dedicated to them, or far more frequently in miracles wrought in their names, attested by pictures and legends.

Then we come to the "Flower of kings," whom ancient legends of Britain and Brittany declared would some day return to lead up the Golden year - King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, whose chief exploits, according to Breton chroniclers, transpired in Brittany; Avalon, the Ile de Sein, and the Forest of Brocéliande, where Merlin still lies sleeping, being all of them in Brittany.

The coast from Tréguier to Lannion that Renan knew and loved so well, is an iron-bound one, with grass-clad headlands, where the turf is close-cropped by the winds. All along it there are evidences of the eternal struggle with the elements which has been going on throughout the centuries. The peasantry,  
dour/

dour in temperament, timid with strangers, obstinate, reserved, and of somewhat hard features, possess an undying belief in the things of the past, and a distrust of those of the present. The Breton does not, as a rule, care for foreign news or for politics, unless these relate to his beloved hills and valleys and landes, or to the storm-beaten coast which he inhabits; but he loves to linger over legendary love, to recount old-time tales, to hear laments for "le temps passé", or ballads such as "Le Combat des Trente," or "Jeanne la Flamme," which recall the valour of his ancestors. Idealism, or what he calls "romantisme moral" is, Renan tells us the mark of the Breton race.

A traveller in Brittany, who desires to enter into full sympathy with the characteristics of the people, should carry with him the "Barzaz-Breiz," the outcome of the long-continued research of Hersart de La Villemarqué, which open one's eyes to the real, inner life, half mystic, half devout, that is the very quintessence of the Breton nature. Every event, every legend is there chronicled in verse, and many of these lays are very ancient. "Le Rossignol," on which Marie de France founded her lay, is said to be earlier than the 13th century; and yet, till La Villemarqué the Celtic archaeologist and philologist began his labours of love, it does not appear that much effort had been made to chronicle these dramatic legends and ballads and poems, which have lived for long centuries in the memories and on the lips of the people. What wonder that one finds local customs held in/

in high repute; religious beliefs holding firmly in an age in which such things appear to be perpetually cast into the melting-pot of criticism; and superstitions rites still being observed. One must remember that there is scarcely any other race which has lived so isolated an existence as that Celtic race from which the Bretons sprang. Their idiosyncracies are deeply rooted in the past. Those remote provinces of the west were hardly touched by the Roman colonisation; they pursued undisturbed their own development, and such was their originality, and so strong their attachment to superstition, that the most zealous propagandists of the Gospel could not eradicate entirely their pagan beliefs. The Christian evangelists who came to minister to them were compelled in many cases to close their eyes to older superstitions and compromise with them as best they could. The influence of paganism lingered long in those remote parts. Brittany is that corner of France which has preserved the ancient faith in its greatest purity, not only the Christian faith, but also the old popular religion anterior to the church, the roots of which go deep down into the period of mythology and paganism. Its true temples are the country chapels, with their local saints and their bizarre images which are more Druidical than Christian, and are much more closely related to the Richis and the Devatas of India than to the canonised saints of the established church. Rigidly orthodox/

orthodox, and deeply spiritual to the core, Breton Catholicism was covered with a thick, fantastic encrustation of legends and practices, many of which, no doubt, were of pagan and Druidic origin. The clergy were forced to tolerate, while endeavouring at the same time to discourage, these traditions. It is worthy of note that the religion of the Bretons was not so much a system of dogmas and a code of ethics, as a rich and naïve mythology. Hence arose a strange admixture of Paganism and Romanism; heathen deities were replaced by saints, of whom the number in Brittany exceeds that of any other part of Romanist Europe. Most of them are peculiar to the country, their names being unknown elsewhere. Almost every church has its curious legend, and every saint his special patronage, and on his fete-day a pilgrimage is celebrated. In Brittany, from end to end, from the channel coast on the north to the Atlantic coast on the west; from the quiet havens of the Côtes-du-Nord to the wave-beaten coastline of Finistère and Morbihan there still linger the quaint ceremonies and festal gatherings, partly religious, partly social, known as "Pardons," which have been so charmingly described by Anatole le Braz in his "Au Pays des Pardons." For centuries these have survived, fed by the inherent religious and superstitious temperament of the Bretons; the last remnant of the old-time Feasts of the Dead, honoured in Brittany after discontinuance in other parts of France. "Among the many peculiarities for which Brittany is noteworthy," says Renan, and his words have a significant bearing on his interpretation of the Gospel narratives, "its local/

local hagiography is assuredly the most remarkable. Going through the country on foot, there is one thing which immediately strikes the observer. The parish churches, in which the Sunday services are held, do not differ in the main from those of other countries. But in country districts it is no uncommon thing to find as many as ten or fifteen chapels in a single parish, dedicated to some saint unknown to the rest of Christendom. These local saints, who are to be counted by the hundred, all date from the fifth or sixth century. Most of them are persons who really existed, but who have been wrapped by tradition in a very brilliant network of fable. These fables, which are of the most primitive simplicity, and form a complete treasure of Celtic mythology and popular fancies, have never been reduced to writing in their entirety. The instructive compilations made by the Benedictines and the Jesuits, even the candid and curious work of Albert Legrand, a Dominican of Morlaix, reproduce but a very small fraction of them. Where, then, it may be asked, lies concealed the treasure of all these stories? Why, in the memory of the people! Go from chapel to chapel, get the good people who attend them into conversation, and if they think they can trust you, they will tell you with a mixture of seriousness and pleasantry wonderful stories, from which comparative mythology and history will one day reap a rich harvest." ("Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse," pp.70, 71). The earlier section of Renan's "Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse" teems with legends of Breton saints which deeply impressed/

impressed his mind. These are the saints whom the peasants really worship, and whom the clergy, reluctantly enough, are compelled to recognise. Again and again Renan refers to the very potent influence these ancient tales had upon his imagination. He was accustomed to dream for hours about the saints whom he venerated in youth. There were moods in which he loved no kind of literature so much as hagiology; Saint Theresa's mysticism took hold of him, and in certain states of his mind drew him as though up to heaven. He was full of sympathy with "les grands mystiques." Quite seriously, he sometimes said, in criticising his own conduct, "The saints would not have done this," or "done that." The Celtic side of Renan, which was, when measured by the crosses of blood in his veins, as three to one, remained in after years the dominant one. And yet, viewing his "Vie de Jésus" from the point of view of legendary and racial influences, the conclusion we come to is that Renan's Jesus is too Celtic; He is too much like Ernest Renan. Canon Barry has put the matter in words that cannot be improved upon. Renan "drew his portraits by looking in the glass. He stays with his readers and in front of them, hinting how like the picture is to the painter by subtle asides and a smile. Without books, having only Josephus and the Greek New Testament at hand, dreaming open-eyed in divine Galilee, the Breton fancied how things might have seemed to him, had he been among the disciples on the/

the Lake of Gennesareth, or as they went through the Sabbath fields, and plucked the ripe ears of corn. That which was instantly admired, and which alone will not be forgotten, in the Life of Jesus, was the Galilean episode. The landscape gave birth to the character. But again the character may be traced in Renan's own history with its varying stages; Brittany is the key to Nazareth, Paris shadows forth Jerusalem. By "gently soliciting" the inspired text, as he admitted, Renan put together, in mosaic fashion, a sentimental romance which was coloured from end to end by his own experience." (Barry's Ernest Renan pp. 113,114).

The neighbourhood of Tréguier, the quiet old town where Renan first saw the light, one of those dead communities of Brittany where there is so little stir that one can almost hear the people muse and pray in the silent streets, is rich in legends, beautiful or weird. Tréguier was then, as now, a dull town. It gently slumbered in an atmosphere of religious peace. There could not be a more "sleepy hollow" in France. And that exactly suited Renan's temperament, for he was a born dreamer, albeit well-rooted in practical affairs, and possessing a deep fund of commonsense and endowed with the keenest insight into life and human nature. One ought to become acquainted with Tréguier to realise in what a degree it was the essential cradle of the Renan that the world knows. None of the charm of his birthplace was lost upon the pensive child. The shadow of the old convent walls, the stillness, broken/

broken at intervals by the chiming of church bells, the distant moan of the sea, all were things to be pondered in his heart - subtle influences to mould his tender nature. Possibly, indeed probably, if he had spent his youth in a more lively place, he would not have grown up to be the marvellous literary artist that he shows himself to be in most of his works, but most strikingly in those in which he deals with Greek and Roman civilisation as being with Judaism the great sources of Christianity.

Devout feelings were nurtured not only by the old-world ecclesiasticism of the place, but by the whole country round about. Shrines of local saints are dotted all over the land, and there are picturesque old churchyards where Renan used, in what seemed his moping childhood, to sit dreaming about God, heaven, the saints, fairies, miracles, legendary tales, and other kindred themes, which he heard talked of by his own people. The quaint town with its ancient, granite Cathedral, the vicinity where all the peasant population lived in an atmosphere saturated with ancient lore, according to Renan, "as deeply penetrated almost with mythological fancies as that of Benares or Jaganata," the beliefs of his family, the lessons of the aged priests who taught him,— all these influences left an ineffaceable impression on the delicate, last born child of the Renans.

"Those who know nothing of Celtic places," says Madame Darmesteter, "must find it hard to understand him. Let them remember/

remember not only the gaunt and solitary aspect of the place, but the kind of persons who dwell in these small gray cities. There is great indifference to worldly things. And the dreamer - be he poet, saint, beggar - is capable of a pure detachment from material interests which no Buddhist sage could surpass. There is a vibrating "other worldliness" in the air; yet all around, in the high places and the country holy wells, Mab and Merlin, the fairies and the witches, keep their devotees. And over all the grey, veiled, melancholy distinction, there is the special, Celtic quality, the almost immaterial beauty which has so lingering a charm... The same quality clings about the people. This Breton race is a very storehouse of myth and legend, of song and story. The extraordinary strength of idealism, the infinite delicacy of sentiment, which form the inmost quintessence of the Celt, impose on him an image of seemliness, a pure decorum, to which he incessantly conforms the old Adam rebellions of his heart. Reserve and passion, prudence and poetry, are equally inherent in him." (Darmesteter's Life of Renan, pp. 4-7).

All about Tréguier stretched the Breton country, in wild solitudes of heather, studded with chapels and shrines in whose ritual certain older cults still penetrated through the Christian disguises which had been imposed upon them; or with farm houses, in some of which lingered the last traces of the old tribal nobility, the clan aristocracy of the soil, whose/

whose existence seemed to link the Brittany of the restoration with an immemorial antiquity. Within a short distance of Tréguier stood the chapel built close to Minihy the birthplace of St. Yves, the favourite lawyer saint and patron of Brittany and one of the most remarkable characters of the 13th century, whom local faith honoured by raising him to the position of defender of the weak and redresser of all wrongs. Hence he was called "the poor man's advocate." Every Breton saint is believed to possess some peculiar power of healing. But in St. Yves is deposited the power to cure all ills, and, in addition, he is regarded as an arbiter of unassailable fairness, and a perfect lawgiver. His truthfulness was such that he was called "St. Yves de Vérité." In many pictures he is represented as sitting between the poor man who presents a petition and the rich man who is a rogue. It is an artless, innocent piece of symbolism. In his simple faith in St. Yves, the Breton peasant exhibits his unquenchable hope and belief in the ultimate triumph of <sup>equ</sup>right<sub>s</sub>ness, a faith strongly marked in Renan's works as a religious historian, and a faith which many centuries of despair and disappointment have not quenched. Little wonder, therefore, that though other saints may have waned in popularity, St. Yves still holds so firm a sway over Breton imaginations, and is regarded with such trusting affection by Breton hearts. Defender of the poor, thaumaturgist, just redresser of wrongs suffered by/

by the humble at the hands of the rich, tender-hearted comforter, a wise adviser in life, in death St. Yves possesses all these attributes in the estimation of the simple-minded people whence he sprang. St. Yves, one might almost say, was a counterpart of Renan's conception of Jesus. In chapter XI of the "Vie de Jésus," entitled "The Kingdom of God conceived as the inheritance of the poor," he maintains that "the idea that God is the avenger of the poor and of the weak against the rich and powerful is found in every page of the books of the Old Testament. The prophets, the truest, and in a sense the boldest tribunes, had thundered incessantly against the great, and had established a close relation between the terms "rich, impious, violent, wicked," on the one hand, and between "poor, gentle, humble, pious," on the other." ("Vie de Jésus," pp. 105, 106). This gave rise to the severe doctrine which Renan represents Jesus as teaching regarding riches, and his exaltation of poverty, which assimilates early Christianity to Ebionism. It was within the magnificent cloisters of the noble Cathedral of Tréguier that St. Yves is said to have performed some of the greatest miracles for which he was famed, and for this reason they are held in deep veneration by the Bretons who live in and visit Tréguier. Year by year, Renan must have witnessed the spectacle of the narrow streets of the old-world town filled with their living, sombre stream out of whose midst rose all the gorgeous banners and reliquaries of/

of the Côtes-du-Nord, while chanting voices and chiming bells sounded forth the Canticle of St. Yves on 18th May, as the great procession of the Saint, whose memory even today lingers round every stone of Tréguier, made its way out to Minihy. Renan was taught from his earliest days to look on St. Yves and his miracles as on a level with the men and the miracles of the Gospels and the Book of Acts. As the years passed on, however, he saw through St. Yves, and rated at their proper value the professions of his votaries; and with French logique, he applied the same rule to Jesus and His first disciples. What was here in Brittany illusion and half-belief, and self-deception, merging by insensible shades into pious fraud, must have been the same there in the Gospels; for Galilean and Jewish man was then in much the same intellectual state in which the ordinary Breton man was in Renan's day.

Of the state of intellectual haze in which the young Renan grew up, the "Souvenirs" give many instances. Every Holy Thursday (Ascension Day) the children were taken up to what the lightning had left of St. Michael's Church near Tréguier, to see the bells go to Rome. "They blindfolded us; and then it was grand to see all the peal, ranged according to size, and, clothed in the fine lace dress that bells wear at baptism, go booming gravely through the air to be blessed by the Pope. C'était une atmosphère mythologique; on y nageait en plein rêve," - a phrase, one may note, almost the same in word, precisely/

precisely the same in spirit, as that which Renan uses of the little Christian company after the Lord had been crucified. A few miles away to the westward of Tréguier stands the sleepy old town of Lannion, to which the mother along with Henriette and Ernest removed after the father's unhappy end. The whole region between Lannion and the sea is a veritable cradle of ancient lore. The district is full of romantic beauty and the atmosphere is surcharged with the legendary spirit.

Lannion is in the very heart of the country associated with the memory of King Arthur, and teems with legends of him and his Knights of the Round Table, whose chief exploits, according to Breton chroniclers, happened in Brittany. Recent researches have tended to confirm the theory that the cycle of Arthurian legend was born in Brittany, and there King Arthur still lives in the minds and memories of the people. A few miles out of Lannion may be seen the Château of Kerduel, where, if tradition can be credited, Arthur and his brilliant train of knights resided, and on the strand near Plestin he fought the dragon. Near this spot and at a short distance from the land, lies the bleak and desolate little isle of Avalon, in which was forged the magic sword, "Excalibur," given by the fairies to Arthur. Launcelot and Elaine, Geraint and Enid, still in imagination tread the sandy shore. Here, the Bretons still believe King Arthur's mortal frame reposes, locked in the mighty spell of deep enchantment's power. It was off this coast, too, where as Mazzini says, "the shore of the vast ocean/

ocean dashes like a wave of eternal poetry, against the barren rocks of Brittany," and where, even on the calmest days the surges thunder, that the fabled city of Is stood; the beloved capital of King Grallon, the theme of many a legend, which was destined to disappear in the sea in the fifth century. "There are several places along the coast," says Renan, "which are pointed out as the site of this imaginary city, and the fishermen have many strange tales to tell of it. According to them, the tips of the spires of the churches may be seen in the hollow of the waves when the sea is rough, while during a calm the music of their bells, ringing out the hymn appropriate to the day, rises above the waters. I often fancy," says Renan, and his words are deeply significant, "that I have at the bottom of my heart a city of Is with its bells calling to prayer a recalcitrant congregation. At times, I halt to listen to these gentle vibrations which seem as if they came from immeasurable depths, like voices from another world." ("Souvenirs," preface, p.vii).

The city of Is represented his early education, his early faith, a state of mind that was peopled with spires and bells, but had long since sunk deep into the sea of time. Those carillons of Is sound more or less through all Renan's work - "that ghostly ringing from the bells of a buried past."

"Oh bells of Is,  
Deaf were the heart and ears  
That never heard you ringing  
Your psalm of vanished years."

The/

The coast line north and south of Lannion is of extreme grandeur and beauty. On it are wonderful rocks; so strange, indeed, are some said to be, that at twilight, especially, one can easily believe the ancient legends of the coast, and fancy one is witnessing the Titanic struggles of cave men and mammoths, and the battles of amphibians of pre-historic times. "A wanderer," says Trollope, "amid this strange and silent scene might fancy himself the only living thing in the midst of a world turned to stone. In every possible variety of uncouth form and capricious, strange positions, the endless masses were around us."

"All is rocks at random thrown,  
Black waves, bare crags, and banks of stone."

("Lord of the Isles.")

Here on these rocks and in these paths Renan formed plans and dreamed dreams, of which he tells us he had not realised a third or a quarter.

Outside Tréguier, as elsewhere in Brittany, with its most devout and superstitions of populations, clinging tenaciously to ancient worships and customs, there were in lonely and deserted places large numbers of half-ruined chapels, dedicated to local saints, unknown to the rest of Christendom, and to whom, worshipping them with strange rites, the Breton peasant prayed for a cure of this and the other disease. When writing his "Souvenirs", Renan remembered vividly his emotion when,/ .

when, through a half-ruined door of one of these chapels he gazed at the stained glass or the images of painted wood which decorated the altar. "The strange and weird physiognomies of those Saints, more Druid than Christian, savage, vindictive, haunted me like a nightmare." Most of them had been real persons, but their biographies had become the subject of wildest legends. A very strange one was connected with an incident in Renan's own family. He was told how his father, when a child, had been cured of a fever. On the day appointed, he was taken, before dawn, to the chapel of the saint from whom the cure was expected. At the same time came a blacksmith with forge, nails, and tongs. He lighted a furnace, made his tongs red-hot, and holding them before the image of the saint, said, "If thou dost not draw the fever from this child, I shall forthwith shoe thee as I would a horse!" The saint obeyed immediately.

Curious tales Renan has to relate of some of these saints. "St. Cadoc, St. Iltud, St. Conery, St. Renan (or Ronan) appeared to me as giants." One saint naturally attracted his attention more than the rest, his name being the same as Renan's. St. Ronan or Renan was one of the most original figures among all the Breton saints, and in Renan's pages the link between Brittany and Cornwall is furbished and made shining. He dwells with loving prolixity on the legendary tales of that holy man, his early Christian ancestor, who dwelt in Cornwall, near the place called after him/

him. "He was more a spirit of the earth than a saint, and his power over the elements was illimitable."

"Tales of this kind," says Renan significantly, "inspired me early in life with a love of mythology. The simplicity of spirit with which they were accepted carried one back to the early ages of the world." ("Souvenirs," p.75).

A childhood passed in such an environment, full of poetry and dreamy sadness, had its undoubted effect on Renan's future life and work. As Canon Barry remarks, "These things gave to the incomparable child of genius, a rich, dim background whereon to embroider his early ambitions and fantasies, and afterwards the whole world, Parisian, Greek, Oriental, which he conquered in thought and travelling." (Barry's Ernest Renan, p.10). "It was amid associations like these that I passed my childhood," writes our subject, "and it gave a bent to my character which has never been removed." Those who are familiar with no more than the mere outlines of Renan's career will understand how much he owed to Brittany. Among the Celtic races in Brittany and elsewhere, the love of the ideal assumes the form of religion. The sense of the supernatural causes a sentiment of life stronger than the obligations of duty. Hence the legends, miracles, and marvels which with effectual, though half-belief, permeate a Celtic race. "Chose curieuse," writes Gabriel Monod,

"ce/

"ce sont trois Bretons, trois fils de cette race Celtique sérieuse, curieuse et mystique, que ont en France représentée tout le mouvement religieux du siècle: Châteaubriand, le réveil du Catholicisme par la poésie et l'imagination; Lamennais, la reconstitution du dogme plus la révolte de la raison et du cœur contre une église fermée aux idées de liberté et de démocratie; Renan, le positivisme scientifique uni au regret de la foi perdue et à la vague aspiration vers une foi nouvelle." ("Les Maîtres de l'Histoire: Renan, Taine, Michelet," by Gabriel Monod, p.44).

Of Renan it could be said, as Mazzini said regarding Lamennais, that his intellect "developed its native sublimity and independence in the solitude. His imagination, nourished by the contemplation of nature, and the noble and severe poetry of the scenes by which he was surrounded, was alive to religious inspiration at a very early age." (Mazzini's Renan, p. 64). Renan was indeed a genuine Breton, and in him as in Lamennais and Châteaubriand before him, the qualities of his race were strongly marked. His fellow-countrymen genially summed him up as "un Breton bretonnant," or as we might say, "an Irishman Hibernicising." Like Lamennais, he was a native of Bas Bretagne, where attachment to tradition is intensely strong; and his early nurture in an atmosphere heavy with folk-lore which enveloped and saturated his opening mind, still/

still coloured and tainted his conceptions of all religious truth and history in his later years. The characteristics of the Breton were clearly stamped on his intellectual constitution, and the impress remained indelibly there. Chief of these was a vivid, yet chastened and inexpensive imagination, the heritage of the people dwelling in that land of mysterious ocean, melancholy plains, grey skies, and desolate rocks, which Renan himself so charmingly described not only in his "Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse," but also in his "La Poésie des Races Celtiques;" "Quelque chose de voilé, de sobre, d'exquis, à égale distance de la rhétorique trop familière aux races latines, et de la naïveté refléchie de l'Allemand." The latter production, "La Poésie des Races Celtiques,"<sup>ought</sup><sup>A</sup> especially to be read by those who desire to find a clue to the mind of the author, which is not so easily discovered elsewhere. It is instructive to study his description there of the feminine, inward shrinking character of the whole race, based upon the Mabinogion, and the legends of St. Brandan. In that work Renan has abandoned himself to his first predilections. Nowhere is he more unreservedly himself, than when he depicts that gentle romance, that half-humorous sentiment, that devout and pensive peace, which breathe alike in Breton, Welsh, and Irish legend. Those unforgettable pages of this beautiful essay on the dreamy melancholy of the Celtic races, reveal Renan at his best. It derives its value for students of Renan from its being the fullest exposition which he has given of his opinions regarding the race to which he belonged.

What/

What more congenial theme could he find than the poetry of mystery and romantic imagination which has been given to the world by his race, that race which he knew and loved so well? It was to the legends, the poetry, the religion of his boyhood, to his own forefathers, to St. Ronan and St. Peredur, to St. Brandan and St. Patrick that he devoted some of his most delicate criticism and most impassioned prose.

A year or two before he wrote the "Vie de Jésus," Renan published his volume of "Essais de Morale et de Critique." In the preface he describes the nature of his religious conviction. This preface would be a good introduction to a studious enjoyment of the "Vie de Jésus." Its temperate logic breaks out at the close into a hymn of praise and gratitude for the mystery of the Breton's heart and history. One cannot refrain from quoting his tenderly beautiful words:-

"O fathers of the obscure tribe by whose fireside I drank in faith in the unseen, humble clan of workers and mariners to whom I owe the vigour of my soul in an exhausted land, in an age when hope is dead - I doubt not that you wandered over those enchanted seas where our father Brandan sought the Land of Promise, that you gazed upon those green isles whose grass dipped in the waves, that with St. Patrick you traversed the circle of that world no longer beheld of the eyes of men.... Let us be consoled by our fantasies, by our nobility, by our disdain. Who knows but that those dreams are truer than reality? God be my witness, ancient fathers, that my only delight lies in this, that at times I feel that I am your conscience, that through/

through me you attain life and utterance."

To those who have never studied the literature of Wales or Brittany, Renan's "Poetry of the Celtic Races," opens up a whole world of new interest. He dilates lovingly there on the characteristic qualities of the Celts as reflected in their poetry, and the Celtic influences which aided in forming the character of Joan of Arc, the legends of the Breton saints, the wide diffusion of the fame of Arthur, and with pride of race exults over the profound influence which it exerted on the early literature of Europe.

If genius and enthusiasm could achieve such a feat, the Celt was certainly rehabilitated in Renan. For one distinctive feature of Renan's writings is that they are saturated with the tender religious sentiment of Celtic Christianity. Though he discarded the miraculous element in history, and broke away from the church in which he had been trained, he never lost sympathy with religion nor belief in Christianity as a necessary and permanent element in the life of civilised peoples. It is this unusual combination of religious sentiment and insight with fearless critical power, which gives Renan a special position among the historians of religion. And here it is in his "Poetry of the Celtic Races", which is among the most fascinating of all Renan's productions, that we discover his spiritual kinship among those saints and dreamers of old, whose fancy/

fancy is often too unrestrained, their emotion too femininely sensitive for commerce with the world.

M. Paul Bourget, in his "Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine," who was among the earliest to study the moral personality of Renan in his relations to the men of recent generations, has noted in particular his qualities of exquisite sensitiveness, his Celtic imagination, the poetry of his thought and style.

Turning his thoughts back over the past in 1865, when the "Vie de Jésus" had won for him a fame that he never dreamt of, Renan took pleasure in lingering over his descent "from sailors and adventurers in the misty seas of the West." Those people for ever cradled in the eddies of a terrible sea that is rarely smiling and always solemn, and in the mysteries of their superstitions and legends, were more grave, more spiritual and more profoundly thoughtful than any other people of France. "I sprang" he says, "from the old idealist race in its purest form. In the district of Goëlo or Avangour on the Trieux there is a place called the Ledano, because there the Trieux spreads out and forms a lagoon before it falls into the sea. On the brink of the Ledano is a large farm called Keranbelac or Miskanbelac. There was the centre of the clan of Renan, honest people who had emigrated from Cardigan under the guidance of Fragan about the year 480. They lived an obscure life there for thirteen hundred years, accumulating thoughts and sensations of which the stored-up capital/

capital has come to me. I feel that I think for them and that they live in me." In that fascinating volume which no one can read without delight, Renan's "Souvenirs," in which he admits us into his closest confidence, unfolds his ripest self, tells us all his secrets as only a Frenchman can, gives us his *Apologia pro vita sua*, describes the process of his unbelief for the purpose of exhibiting his mental, moral, and spiritual fitness to be the biographer of Jesus, and thus helps us to the analysis of a character which without such a key would be inexplicable - and it has been well said that the theme of that book might be summed up in a single sentence, namely, "How to account for the *Vie de Jésus*," - in his "Souvenirs" Renan writes, "My race, my family, my native place, and the peculiar circle in which I was brought up, by diverting me from all material pursuits, and by rendering me unfit for anything except the treatment of things of the mind, had made of me an idealist, shut out from everything else. The characteristic feature of all degrees of the Breton race is its idealism." ("Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse," pp. 66, 67).

In his complexity of origin Renan found the source to a great extent at all events, of his apparent contradictions. "I am double," he writes in humorous strain, "sometimes one part of me laughs while the other weeps. That is the explanation of my gaiety. As there are two men in me, there is always one who has reason to be satisfied." Renan's double ancestry does appear to explain to some degree the Chameleon-like shiftiness of /

of his mind, which sometimes seemed deeply and instinctively religious, as the word religion is understood by devout Bretons, and sometimes sceptical, ironical, and more in tune with the Essays of Montaigne than with the ascetic idealism of Thomas à Kempis. Perhaps Renan's auto-anthropology should not be taken too seriously, however. Whatever he may or may not have owed to race, Renan certainly owed much to the surroundings and atmosphere of his early years. To his education in that naïve and earnest environment, so different from that of the great cultivated cities, he attributed later his historical faculty, and his gift of reviving spiritual conditions different from those of his own day. He had there acquired, as he remarks, "a kind of habit of seeing underground and of hearing noises beyond the reach of other ears."

We are told that the advent of Renan into the world, as a weakly infant, at a time when his father's creditors were clamouring for payment, was generally looked upon as a misfortune; but the mother and sister longed for him to live. An old wife named Gode, to bring comfort to them, went and consulted the fairies about his future. She did this by taking a little shift that he wore to a fairy-haunted loch and throwing it, rolled up in a lump, into the water. The shift would sink were death impending. But the small garment floated on the surface, and with the sleeves filled out, moved away. The old woman came back with a face of triumph crying "He'll live, he'll live!" "The two little arms were stretched out, and you should have seen the/

the whole garment swell and float: he means to live!" The queen of the fairies was clearly a protectress of the child, and he was not merely to live, but to become famous. "Wise old dame," remarks Madame Darmesteter, "she saw from the first the strength and charm of Ernest Renan; a sort of natural magic, a sort of immaterial grace. There was the fairies' kiss! Renan almost certainly exaggerated his debt to a Celtic ancestry. But this much he owed them; this, and that obstinate sweetness, that rare fidelity of his, which contrasted so strangely with the liveliest impressionability of the nerves. And some whilom bard, most surely bequeathed him the peculiar music of his style, clear as the bell about the neck of Tristan's hound, which rang so sweet that whoso heard it forgot forthwith his cares and all his sorrow."

## Chapter VI.

### Ecclesiastical Influences .

#### Summary of Chapter:-

Renan's conception of Jesus coloured by his ecclesiastical education.

His early training at Tréguier

Destination for the priesthood

Nature of teaching at Tréguier.

Its directors and their characteristic qualities.

Renan enters the Seminary of St. Nicholas du Chardonnet.

Literary tone of education there - Dupanloup its Superior

Influence of reading Michelet, Lamartine, Victor Hugo.

Proceeds to Lower Seminary at Issy, Paris.

Issy an influential factor in his thought .

Philosophy there - Cartesian Scholasticism.

Nature of course and Professors - Gosselin, Gottofrey.

Renan's study of Malebranche, Descartes, the Scottish School, Hegel, Kant, Herder.

Gradual eclipse of his faith.

Enters Higher Seminary of St. Sulpice.

Theological and Biblical Exegesis chief line of study.

Renan's acknowledgment that here his "Vie de Jésus" was mentally written.

Absolutism of Catholicism - its hostility to modern thought

Religious situation in France in 18th. and 19th. centuries.

Renan's departure from orthodoxy.

Study of Hebrew - Influence of German thought.

His claim for free thought rejected by the Church.

Abandons idea of priesthood - leaves the Church.

Culmination of all this in the appearance of  
the "Vie de Jésus."

When Renan set out to give the world his theory of Christianity, he laid down a certain formula of competence. "To construct the history of a religion", he declared, "it is necessary first to have believed it (without this, we should not be able to understand why it has charmed and satisfied the human conscience); in the second place, to believe it no longer in an absolute manner, for absolute faith is incompatible with sincere history." (Introduction to "Vie de Jésus" p.lvi) This aphorism may be said to contain two-thirds of the truth. The axiom amended and completed would run, "no man can write the history of a religion, save he who <sup>has</sup> believed, disbelieved, and again believed." For only he who has experienced the grief of loss of faith, and the joy of its recovery, knows the full value and validity of his faith. It is a question, however, whether Renan possesses even the two-thirds qualification he professes. He presents himself as qualified by past belief and present disbelief. Yet a double doubt assails us, whether he ever did quite believe, and whether, in the "Vie de Jésus" he does quite disbelieve. To exhibit this uncertainty, one must examine the historian's account of his transition from faith to doubt, and from doubt to denial.

Renan has himself no doubt as to the genuineness of his pristine faith, though he may not be quite sure of his scepticism. And he has a very definite theory of the process by which he passed from belief to unbelief. "I am going to show" he writes in one of his books "how the direct study of Christianity/

Christianity, undertaken in the most serious spirit, left me not enough faith to be an honest priest, and on the other hand, too much respect to play an odious comedy with beliefs so sacred."

Turning to the "Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse", which is a portraiture and an analysis of character rather than the record of a life, in which the episode Renan has mainly to relate is the interruption of his clerical career, and in which his confessions have a curious interest for the student, we discover that the genesis of Renan's doubt was much more complex than he imagines, and the amount of transformation in his religious position much less than he fancies. The only way to analyse the complexity of his ideas is to trace their origin and their development.

The whole of Renan's education, up to his twenty-third year, was in the charge of women and priests. "J'ai été élevé par des femmes et par des prêtres; l'explication de mes qualités et de mes défauts est toute là. En Bretagne, les femmes sont supérieures aux hommes. Les prêtres avaient aussi autrefois une grande supériorité sur les laïques." ("Feuilles détachées", Preface p.xxx) In most that Renan wrote there is the tenderness of a woman, and now and then the touch of the priest showing itself, chiefly in his reluctance to spoil the ivy by tearing down some prison built by superstition.

Like his compatriot, Lamennais, he was a native of Bas-Bretagne/

Bretagne, where attachment to the Roman Catholic faith is peculiarly strong; and the early Catholic nurture, which enveloped and saturated his opening mind, coloured and tainted afterwards his conceptions of truth and history. From this source, in some measure, arose his idea of the character and life of Jesus. A womanly amiability of heart which dispenses with stern integrity, such as Catholicism has divinised in the Virgin Mary, and still more in the worship of the Saint Coeur; and a severe asceticism - a manichaeism which despises the good of this life in the hope of another, such as Catholicism apotheosises in its Calendar of the Saints; these two great poles of religious sentiment in the Catholic world, remained as the magnetic poles in Renan's soul, around which all religious life centres, and upon which it hangs. Not only did the priests, who gave him his early education, inspire him with sentiments of affection and respect which nothing could efface, and to which he makes frequent reference, but they fashioned his soul in the image of their own. The basis of Renan's character and his work is the qualities that led him to study for the priesthood, and the experience of a youth passed in Catholic seminaries.

"Le pli était pris" - "the bent was taken", as he says; in spite of changes, renunciations, a rupture with these early aspirations as complete as it was painful, he remained indefinably, ineffaceably, clerical. The higher education of a Catholic priest is an education of subtleties, and subtlety/

subtlety is the note of Renan's views of things.

It is undoubtedly the case, therefore, that the early training Renan received exerted a strong, directive influence upon the subsequent trend of his thought, and especially upon the form in which it manifested itself in his best known work, the "Vie de Jésus", and indeed had a psychological effect which operated perhaps to a large extent unconsciously, throughout his entire career.

Regarding the "Vie de Jésus" at least, it may be truly affirmed that no Protestant could have written that book. The difference between a Protestant and a Roman Catholic thinker who have been respectively trained in Protestant and Roman Catholic communities, is not to be measured by the mere divergence or antagonism of their religious opinions. There is a generic difference of religious emotion. The religious associations that have subtly woven themselves around the fibres of their moral nature; the form of religious truth that has occupied and coloured their imagination; the thoughts that have touched and thrilled the sensibilities of their hearts, - all these are radically different, and their combined influence goes to produce, even in men who have cast off the dogmatic faith in which they were nurtured, modes of religious sentiment which contrast vividly with each other, and which reveal their immense disparity in every conception they form of religious truth, and in the discussion of every problem/

problem in religious history.

A man whose Protestant training has brought his mind into immediate contact with the moral discipline and the spiritual truth of the Bible, and whose worship has been directed to the Father through the Son, can never assimilate himself to one whose first and strongest religious sympathies have been wound upon an image of the Virgin Mary, or of the Saint Coeur, and whose imagination has been fed by the mystic romances of the "Lives of the Saints."

The difference between the clear breeze of heaven and the warm incense of the oratory is not greater than the difference between the religious sentiments that may linger in the soul of these men even after the expiry of their faith. It may be confidently affirmed, therefore, that no Protestant could have written the "Vie de Jésus". It bears stamped upon it the impress of Renan's Catholic education and upbringing. Jesus, in Renan's hands, is a creature of ardent sensibilities.

Gaily tender, sublimely daring, rigorously fierce, and convulsively sad - he oscillates from one extreme to another. There is no formative principle, guiding, restraining, harmonising his conduct. No suspicion of the action of principle in man has dawned on Renan. It is, therefore, forbidden to Jesus. It is in this conception of a religious teacher whose religion is solely an *affaire du coeur*, a compost of moral poesy, idylls, aesthetic delights, mystic reveries, and stern asceticism, that we discover the malign influence of Renan's Jesuit training.

Only/

Only a mind emasculated of virile tone, and distempered by the softening influence of a religion which appeals almost exclusively to the imaginative and emotional sensibilities of human nature, could have conceived such a representation of the Founder of the Christian religion - a representation which is both a calumny against man, and a blasphemy against God. In order, therefore, to estimate and criticise Renan's work, we must endeavour to understand the influence of his Catholic training.

The point has already been emphasised that, if ever there was one, Ernest Renan was a true child of Brittany, the most intensely Christian province in France, yet nevertheless a province rich in heretical and heterodox natives, for, besides Renan, there were also born and bred in that conservative region, Pelagius, Descartes, Lamennais a contemporary of Renan, and, like him, a rebel against Rome, but with whom Renan has little in common. "Lamennais", he says, "merely exchanged one creed for another, and it was not until the close of his life that he acquired the cool temper necessary to the critic; whereas the same process which weaned me from Christianity made me imperious to any other practical enthusiasm." ("Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse," p.136) It was the curious fate of French Catholicism in the 19th century to produce two thinkers from whom the Roman Church hoped perhaps for more than from any other of its adherents. Lamennais set out as the protagonist of the Ultramontane theory; he ended as the founder of a democratic and modernist tradition in/

in which Loisy and Tyrrell were the chief exponents in the second half of the century. Renan was the hope of the Catholic Seminaries. He was expected to bring a superb historic equipment to the dissolution of German theological scholarship. But he ended as the author of a religious Pyrrhonism more corrosive in its subtle power than any other effort of the age. Both Lamennais and Renan were brought up in the midst of that Celtic Church of Brittany so different from the temper of Latin Christianity. They were the children not of traditional pomp and dramatic splendour as in the churches of Southern France, or of that peculiar intermixture of humanism and dogma it has been the effort of the Jesuits to produce, but of a Christianity which seemed to mingle a spirit of austere melancholy with the mystery of a Gothic cathedral. When this temper came into contact with an alien mood, it did not survive the novelty. It drove Lamennais in upon himself; it drove Renan back upon historical analysis. In neither case did Catholicism persist. Lamennais became an apostle of Communism. Renan turned to Positivism.

But a greater Breton than any of those mentioned was Abelard, who has been truly called "the unconscious precursor of the great spiritual conflict of this age," the conflict in which Renan took so distinguished a part, the struggle betwixt unreasoning faith and reverent reason, between absolutism and liberty, between ecclesiasticism and humanity.

To understand Renan one should become acquainted with Tréguier, his native town on the coast of Catholic Brittany, which had grown up under the shadow of a great monastery founded in the last year of the 5th century by St. Tudwal. The monastery disappeared, but the Cathedral remains, "chef d'œuvre de légèreté, fol essai pour réaliser en granit un idéal impossible." This architectural paradox, Renan informs us, was his first master. Under its vaulted roof, and especially in its noble cloisters, he passed long hours, breathing the monastic atmosphere in that highly unmonastic age. It was that Cathedral, in his opinion, which set him wrong at the start. It rendered him chimerical, a belated disciple of the old Celtic saints, incapable of any practical work. "The Cathedral made of me a dreamer, a disciple of St. Iltud, St. Cadoc, and the rest in whom the saints and their teaching are out of date."

The town presented the same ideal and religious character. It was of a truth a great school of faith and reverence, in which the formative period of Renan's career was passed. There was not a more clerical spot in all France than Tréguier, in the sense of its being a nest of priests and nuns. Nowhere else was the power of the priesthood so paramount. The nuns also had a considerable, though indirect, influence on the career of Renan, his sister Henriette, who, as we shall see, was an important factor in his life, having received from them as good an education as a young girl could then hope for.

"It was amid associations like these that I passed my childhood/

childhood," he writes, "and it gave a bent to my character which has never been removed."

From the repose of a Breton fireside at the age of eight Renan went to the little Cathedral seminary to receive his first education. His training there was wholly clerical. The church brought him up. "I was formed by the church," he says, "I owe all to her, and I shall never forget her." ("L'Avenir de la Science," p. 459). The Seminary was conducted by ecclesiastics - grave, venerable, well-instructed men, country priests of the old stock, excellent Latinists, respectable mathematicians, for whom French literature ended with the younger Racine. Their conviction, and it was that also of Renan's teachers at the Issy Seminary, to which he afterwards went, was that there had been no French literature of any real value since the death of Louis XIV. They were men who taught polite literature solidly and sensibly, too old to be affected by the encroachments of the clerico-romantic party, and with minds guarded against all unorthodox books. The Seminary at Tréguier was a religious establishment unvisited by any breath of modern fashion. "Of criticism the natural sciences, and philosophy, I as yet knew nothing," writes Renan. "Of all that concerned the nineteenth century and the new ideas as to history and literature my teachers knew nothing. It was impossible to imagine a more complete isolation from the ambient air. A thorough-paced Legitimist would not even admit the possibility of the Revolution or of /

of Napoleon being mentioned except with a shudder." ("Souvenirs" p. 22). Even Chateaubriand was distrusted, for, although he had written the "Genie du Christianisme," had he not also written such fictions as *Atala* and *René*? Lamartine was regarded with still stronger suspicion. The soundness of his faith was doubted. "All these views did credit to their orthodox sagacity, but the result was for their pupils a singularly contracted horizon. Thus the education I received in the years following the Revolution of 1830 was the same as that imparted by the strictest of religious sects two centuries ago." ("Souvenirs," p. 123).

Yet Renan was all his lifetime profoundly thankful for the memory of those early teachers of his. Long after he had ceased to believe in their narrow creed and had recognised the insufficiency of their programme of secular instruction, he cherished the warmest and most grateful regard for them. "They taught me," he writes, "the love of truth, the respect for reason, the earnestness of life. And these are the one thing in which I have never varied. I left their hands with a soul so tried and fashioned by them, that the light arts of Paris could only gild the jewel: they could not change it. I believe no longer that the Christian dogma is the supernatural epitome of the sum of human knowledge; but I do believe, I do still believe, that our existence is the most frivolous of things/

things, unless we conceive it as a grand and perpetual duty. Old and dear masters, nearly all of you dead today, whose image often visits my dreams - not as a reproach, but as a mild and charming memory, I have not been as unfaithful to you as you think! At heart I am still your disciple."

Not only did the priests inspire him with sentiments of affection and respect which nothing could efface, but they fashioned his soul in the image of their own. Just as melted wax takes the impression of the seal, Renan's natural devoutness took the shape given it by his spiritual pastors and masters. He, in truth, remained a priest all his life. "One could not meet him without being struck by his saerdotal appearance. Sleek and bland, he was better entitled than Sainte Beuve to the dignity of bishop "in partibus infidelium." (Sainte Beuve's reference to his diocese). His soul remained a "secularised Cathedral." Auerbach, speaking to Sir Mountstuart E. Grant Duff of Renan's "Vie de Jesus," said, - "Die Glockengelaüte hat er jedoch nichtüberstanden," - "he has not yet overcome the sound of the bells." It was perhaps owing to the good priests of Tréguier, and later on of St. Sulpice Seminary, that Renan possesses the most exquisite prose style of the later 19th century, a style which, in its suppleness and its subtlety, its familiar grace and easy beauty recalls sometimes the Greek of Plato, and which still remains a model for the best writers of modern times in France - Anatole France, Pierre Loti, Regnier and Hermant. Renan's early/

early teachers taught him to write with the frankness of high bred society, and to avoid straining after effect. "That which constitutes the essence of cleverness, the desire to show off one's thoughts to the best advantage, would have seemed to them sheer frivolity, like woman's love of dress, which they denounced as a positive sin." Naturally, a teaching which did not travel beyond Rollin's compendium of accepted tradition, and which expurgated the story of Telemachus, though it had been written by an archbishop, before the scholar was allowed to read it, left something to be desired on the side of freethought. Nevertheless Renan evidently considered that he gained more than he lost under the system generally.

From very early days Renan was destined to the priesthood of the Roman Catholic Church. "Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse," is the autobiography of a sincere and sensitive soul, encouraged to the priestly career by his family and his teachers to such a degree that he had conceived of no other career for himself, until at the age of twenty, under the influence of modern scientific doctrines and the criticism of the Biblical records, he found himself an unbeliever, certainly not a Roman Catholic, and not in the ordinary interpretation of that rather vague term, a Christian. The career of Renan reminds us of that of Joseph Blanco White. In many respects the two men resemble each other, but there is this difference/

difference. Blanco White shrank from an ecclesiastical career, and only entered it by compulsion and to avoid a mercantile career, which to him was even more repulsive. The priesthood was forced upon him as the indispensable condition of an intellectual life. Renan was not only educated in the Seminary of Tréguier, "kept by some honest priests;" but he avows that "he was born to be a priest, as others are born to be soldiers and lawyers." ("Souvenirs," p.139). "The possibility of a lay career," he writes, "never so much as occurred to me." The highest object of his early ambition was to be like his teachers, "professor at the college of Tréguier, poor, exempt from material cares, esteemed and respected like them;" ("Souvenirs," p.129). Doubtless, also, his shy reserve, his want of physical vigour, his growing thoughtfulness, and, above all, his absorption in books, seemed to predestine him to an ecclesiastical career. He spent delightful hours in the old Cathedral at Tréguier, and he loved to fancy himself a priest.

Good and devout, he accepted the faith of his fathers, as "the absolute expression of truth," "the supernatural summary of what man ought to know." His state of mind at 12, and even at 15, was precisely "celui de tant de bons esprits du XVII<sup>e</sup>. siècle, mettant la religion hors de doute."

Such was the prospect before Renan, when, at the age of fifteen, a slight incident completely changed his future.  
Whilst/

Whilst he was still a pupil at Tréguier, a brilliant young Abbé, Mgr. Dupanloup, afterwards the well-known Bishop of Orleans, and a most active leader in the ultramontane phalanx, was the vigorous Superior of the Petit Séminaire de St. Nicholas du Chardonnet in Paris. This Seminary had previously\* been a mere training school for priests, and the secular side of education was passed over entirely. The office of Superior was in the gift of the Archbishop of Paris, M. de Quélen, who had received no other cultivation "than that of a well-educated man of the world. Religion in his eyes was inseparable from good-breeding and the modicum of common-sense which a good classical education is apt to give." ("Souvenirs," p.149). The Superior of St. Nicholas, a mere clericalist, died, and M. de Quélen appointed in his place a man after his own heart, Dupanloup, one who by his well-bred piety was likely to attract the sons of the gentry and interest them with his brilliant but shallow rhetoric. Dupanloup is described by Renan as "a man of the world, well read, very little of a philosopher, and nothing of a theologian." ("Souvenirs," p.150). "The defects of his own mind were reflected in the education which he imparted. He was not rational or scientific." ("Souvenirs," p.160). Both he and his patron the Archbishop knew nothing of theology, which they had studied but little, and for which they thought it enough to express platonic reverence. Their faith was very keen and severe, but it was a faith which took everything for granted, and did not concern itself with the dogmas which must be accepted.

Dupanloup, "le jeune (il n'avait qu trente-six ans) et impetueux directeur" (Pommier's Renan p.17), had agents in the provinces charged to find young men of promise fitted to be recruits at St. Nicholas. In 1836 Renan, then in his fifteenth year, had won all the prizes in his class at the Tréguier Seminary. One of these agents saw the examination papers, and reported on them to headquarters. "Have him sent for," was the impulsive order of the Superior. Within twenty four hours Renan started for Paris. No shock could be more violent than Renan received in exchanging Tréguier for St. Nicholas. The crisis was tremendous. His going to Paris was, he says, the passing from one religion to another. There was no resemblance between the Christianity of Brittany and that of Paris. "No Buddhist Lama or Mussulman fakir," he writes, "suddenly translated from Asia to the boulevards of Paris, could have been more taken aback than I was upon being suddenly landed in a place so different from that in which moved my old Breton priests, who with their venerable heads, all wood or granite, remind one of the Osirian Colossi which in after life so struck my fancy when I saw them in Egypt, grandiose in their long lines of immemorial calm." ("Souvenirs" p. 154).

The first home-sickness over, and the first revolt of the young Breton against the Parisian temperament appeased, Renan learnt much from his new life. It brought him alertness; it supplied him with those literary weapons without which a writer has no chance of success in the struggle to be heard; and/

and it opened glimpses to him of the width of the world, which stirred his sensitive, many-fibred nature in ways hitherto unknown to it.

The chapters in Renan's "Souvenirs" on the two Seminaries in which he spent the first years of his residence in Paris, St. Nicholas and St. Sulpice, are full of the most acute perception of moral and intellectual conditions. The little Breton seminarist moved too fast, and, very soon transcended his instructors. Dupanloup he found to be "un eveilleur incomparable," absolutely unrivalled in the power of drawing out what was best in each of the young students. Each one of his two hundred pupils had a distinct existence in his thoughts. He was their ever-present inspiration, the motive power of life and work. To Renan, Dupanloup became, in his own words "a principle of life, a sort of god." "Only those who knew St. Nicholas du Chardonnet during the brilliant period from 1838 to 1844," he writes, "can form an adequate idea of the intense life which prevailed there. And this life had only one source, one principle: M. Dupanloup himself. The whole work fell on his shoulders. Regulations, usage, administration, the spiritual and temporal government of the college, were all centred in him. The college was full of defects, but he made up for them all." ("Souvenirs," p.158). Dupanloup, disliked by his fellow-workers, worshipped by his pupils made them desire goodness and learning if it were only for the sake of their master.

Those/

Those were indeed memorable evenings when, instead of reading from the lines of the Fathers, the Superior read reports of the pupils, intermingling the reading with words of praise or blame, so joyous or so sad, that they seemed charged with life or death, and rendered punishment unnecessary, for no punishment could equal the pain of causing sorrow to such a master; no reward could surpass the glowing richness of his smile. At the close of his third year in the Seminary, Renan wrote to his mother, "He is the most beautiful soul and the most lofty mind that I have so far known."

The education at St. Nicholas was literary to an extent quite unusual in Catholic Seminaries. Dupanloup had a passion for florid eloquence, intermingled with classical quotations, and had set himself the task of forming for the pulpit and religious controversy young men who might become skilled in the use of tongue and pen. He regarded classical and literary studies as part and parcel of religion, and just as necessary for those who were to be priests, as for those destined to occupy the highest social positions. It was his design to mould priests who would be not merely theologians "with Moses on the Mount," but "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" among whom their work was to lie. Dupanloup felt it to be his duty to turn out young ecclesiastics with the accomplishments and temper of mind that would render them effective in the world, able to serve the church in spheres where her interests could best be furthered.

As/

As a training school for priests there might be shortcomings in the education given at St. Nicholas du Chardonnet, but it certainly was of a high literary standard. In this place, Renan learned that something existed besides antiquity and the church; that there were contemporary authors worthy of some attention. Despite its claim to be a quiet retreat, the atmosphere of the century circulated very freely in St. Nicholas. To this Seminary, indeed, Renan owed that initiation into modern literature that was yet to exercise so potent an influence upon his style. Here he saw a new world open before him. He came into contact for the first time with the worldly Catholicism of Paris, which originated in Sainte-Beuve's lifetime, and grew under his eyes in strength and pomp; a Catholicism at once agitating and agitated, superficial and materialistic, always feverish, always in haste to profit by every cry, every reputation, every fashion of the day, and all the latest machinery for combat and enjoyment. A great revelation dawned on Renan. The words, talent, brilliancy, and reputation conveyed to him a new meaning. Discussions on romanticism found their way into the Seminary. The tide of the romantic movement, with Victor Hugo at its head, was at the time running breast-high, and it rushed through St. Nicholas like a torrent. To Renan's old Breton teachers at Tréguier the literature of the nineteenth century was a sealed book, but now he found himself in the very mid-stream of Parisian thought. Passionate discussions were/

were carried on by the students on Michelet, Lamartine and Victor Hugo, "those rising glories of the hour," as Renan calls them. All these were wonderful discoveries to him and filled him with new dreams. The young Breton was completely transformed under the powerful alchemy. His mind became open and alert. "I had come to Paris," he says, "with a complete moral training, but ignorant to the last degree. I had everything to learn. It was a great surprise for me when I found that there was such a person as a serious and learned layman. I discovered that antiquity and the church are not everything in this world, and especially that contemporary literature was well worthy of attention... I became imbued with ideas and sentiments which had no expression in antiquity or in the seventeenth century. So the germ which was in me began to sprout. Distasteful as it was in many respects to my nature, this education had the effect of a chemical reagent, and stirred all the life and activity that was in me. In proportion as the foundations of my religious faith had been shaken by finding the same names applied to things so different, so did my mind greedily swallow the new beverage prepared for it.... Here the atmosphere of the age had free course... My head was full of Hugo and Lamartine." ("Souvenirs," pp.163, 164). The mediaeval history of Michelet in particular, enraptured Renan to such a degree that he was unable to take any notes during the lectures. "Whenever the lecturer began to read from this book," he says, "my whole being seemed/

seemed to thrill with intoxicating harmony.... The book was Michelet's magnum opus l'Histoire de France, the passages which so affected me being in the fifth and sixth volumes. Thus the modern age penetrated into me as through all the fissures of a cracked cement." ("Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse," pp. 162, 163). The sections in Michelet on Joan of Arc, with their exquisite tenderness and pathos, their blending of sound historical criticism with loving reverence for the legendary, were the true model of Renan's "Vie de Jésus," and the earlier masterpiece, although by far the less important, has been estimated as perhaps the more perfect of the two.

The effect of all these new experiences on Renan was disquieting. The germ in him was being fertilised, the early naïveté of his faith was being shaken. He was as yet unaware of the change, but the contrast between the solid, rigid, narrow, antiquated training of Tréguier and the brilliant, free modern education of St. Nicholas was decidedly unsettling. In his "L'Avenir de Science," (p.296) Renan maintains that the poetry of Hugo and Lamartine presupposes all the work of modern critical scholarship, the last word of which is literary pantheism. As these poets, without having read the works of erudite investigators, yet propagated the influence which we call the modern spirit, so the youthful Renan absorbed this influence with no clear consciousness of its nature.

Time/

Time and again in his delightful "Souvenirs" Renan acknowledged that during those three years spent in St. Nicholas he was subjected to a profound influence that effected a complete transformation of his being. "M. Dupanloup had literally transfigured me," he writes. "The poor little country lad struggling vainly to emerge from his shell, had been developed into a young man of ready and quick intelligence. There was, I know, one thing wanting in my education, and until that void was filled up I was very cramped in my powers. The one thing lacking was positive science, the idea of a critical search after truth. This superficial humanism kept my reasoning powers fallow for three years, while at the same time it wore away the early candour of my faith. My Christianity was being worn away, though there was nothing as yet in my mind which could be styled doubt." ("Souvenirs," p.172). Renan sums up the results of his residence in St. Nicholas in this way, - he received an intellectual awakening that was permanent. He was introduced to modern literature, and in particular to the Romantic school. "I learned to know the meaning of the words talent, éclat, reputation, and I was lost to the modest ideal of my old masters." On the other hand this superficial culture " lulled my reason to rest, at the same time that it destroyed the pristine freshness of my faith." The literary element in him had been forced on prematurely; the scientific element was in danger of starving. Christianity, in spite of the modifying and chilling influences of /

of Paris, was still to him the great fact of the world and of his own inner nature.

After the usual three year's sojourn at St. Nicholas du Chardonnet, Renan went in due course to Issy, the country-house of St. Sulpice, the great clerical Seminary of the diocese of Paris. This was the most critical part of his career, and was a more influential factor on his after life and writings than almost anything else. It was here that Renan lost his faith, and yet from his surroundings one would have expected a totally different result. It was in St. Sulpice, on his own admission, that his "Vie de Jésus" was mentally written. Many of his fellow pupils at St. Nicholas had chosen a secular calling; but others, bent on the priesthood, resolved to prosecute their studies further in a purely ecclesiastical seminary. Renan was among the number of the latter, as well as his youthful friend, afterwards the Abbé Cognat; together they enrolled themselves as pupils at the "Succursale" of Issy, there to pass through two years of philosophical study. In this place Renan entered a completely new atmosphere, and lighted once more upon the repose and solidity of his early Breton training. St. Sulpice had remained practically unchanged since the days of Olier. Renan found himself therefore among divines of the old school, whose oracle was Bossuet, mystically inclined, some of them, almost half Jansenist. The Seminaries of Issy and St. Sulpice exhibited the old Gallicanism in its most perfect form. Sobriety of tone, solidity of doctrine, that unostentatious self-sacrifice which finds expression in courtesy and good works, were the/

the characteristics of this school in its best days. Its teachers did not defy the world nor trample noisily upon its prejudices, but they let it go on in its own way with a quiet conviction that all its triumphs were a mere flash in the pan. The Sulpicians had retained in 1842, the same reserved and dignified piety, the same modest industry, the same other-worldliness combined with reasonableness and learning which, two centuries before, had made their Seminary almost the peer of Port Royal. The philosophy which had obtained the sanction of the church was alone held in honour. The philosophy taught was scholasticism in Latin, not the barbarous scholasticism of the thirteenth century, but the Cartesian Scholasticism which was generally adopted for ecclesiastical instruction in the eighteenth century, and stereotyped, so to speak, in the work known as "La Philosophie de Lyon," a book imbued with a very commendable spirit of rationalism. "I owe," was the testimony of Renan, "the clearness of my intellect, and in particular a certain skill in division - an art of the first importance, for it is one of the conditions of the art of writing - to the scholastic exercises, and above all to geometry, which is the application par excellence of the scholastic method." He entered Issy with a passion for Catholic scholasticism. In leaving the literary training of St. Nicholas behind he had come now to the heart of things. "I had left words for facts. I was about to examine the foundations, to analyse in all its details this Christian religion which/

which appeared to me the centre of all truth." ("Souvenirs" p.196). While the majority of those who passed with Renan from St. Nicholas to Issy were weakened by the classical teaching of Dupanloup, and turned with disgust from the divinity of the schools, Renan appreciated "its bitter flavour," as he says, and became as fond of it "as a monkey is of nuts."

The two houses of Issy and St. Sulpice constituted one establishment which, according to Renan, was further removed from the present age than if encircled by thousands of leagues of solitude. Here, therefore, he was subjected to a totally diverse discipline from St. Nicholas. Talent was despised; anything like brilliancy was looked on with aversion and suspicion; rhetoric was abjured; modern literature ignored. Erudition was revered; logic reigned supreme; and in metaphysics and theology scholasticism held individual sway. Men who might have aspired to a far different ideal, chose mediocrity for its own sake. "Death wedded to emptiness," said Michelet, on hearing of an alliance of the Jesuits with the Sulpicians. The showy Neo-Catholicism of Lacordaire and Montalembert was abhorrent to them. It was their desire to play no tricks, but to be absolutely and rigidly honest in their conservative dogmatism. The first thing taught the student at Issy was to regard as childish nonsense what Dupanloup had directed him to prize the most. All the rhetorical exercises, all the literature of St. Nicholas, all the Latin verses, were regarded as mere trivialities at Issy/

Issy. "What," says Renan, "I was taught, could be simpler? If Christianity is a revealed truth, should not the chief occupation of the Christian be the study of that revelation - in other words, of theology? Theology and the study of the Bible absorbed my whole time, and gave me the true reasons for believing in Christianity, and also the true reasons for not adhering to it. For four years a terrible struggle went on within me, until at last the phrase which I had long put away from me as a temptation of the devil, "It is not true," would not be denied." ("Souvenirs," pp. 172, 173).

The paramount aim of the training at Issy was the destruction of the student's individuality and of the independence of his will, and the absolute submission of his soul to his director, who was believed to represent God. Here, as well as at St. Sulpice itself later on, no attenuation of the dogmas of Scripture was allowed, and the "theological buffooneries" of neo-Catholics had no effect on that institution. The ecclesiastics of Issy had perfectly simple ideas. - Christianity is revealed truth; the Roman Catholic church alone is Christianity; the only object of life is through the sacraments and prayer to obtain union with God in this life and in the life eternal; what they read in the Gospels and the Epistles men are to strive to be and to act. The one pervading lesson was, God is everything, man is nothing; God is sufficient/

sufficient, man must not appear. Complete self-obliteration was aimed at. Thus all eloquence must be avoided; the superiors must never command, yet the students must obey each one of them as God; all desire must be renounced; humiliation must be loved, not avoided; censure, however unjust must be coveted as a privilege; there must be no self-defence, no palliation, no self-exaltation; to be despised is a joy; to be calumniated is a privilege. There are immutable truths ruling all human life, and indeed the universe. Some are lovely and consoling, some grand, some awesome, some crushingly terrible, some wrapped up in mystery, and the recognition of all is necessary to the salvation of the human race. None of them requires profane ornament, but only to be sincerely accepted by the theologian.

Such was the Sulpician idea; not promulgated, as in the case of the Jesuits, for the selfish aggrandisement of their order, for the convenience of superiors, and to render the exercise of authority more easy; but simply because it was deemed the Evangel of Christ. What they enjoined they did. The priests of St. Sulpice were perfectly loyal to the ideal they taught, and their pupils were willingly moulded by their example. Nothing was done without seeking counsel of the Director. What he ordered was the breathing of God's behest over the soul. The power of the will was broken and crushed. The capacity for moral resistance was destroyed. Self-forgetfulness pervaded/

pervaded the entire life. In the "Souvenirs" Renan declared that he still found himself after a lapse of thirty eight years doing unusual things, getting into absurd difficulties, and yielding in a childish way in consequence of the impress of the Sulpician system upon his character. Literature was almost entirely excluded. The rule of the company was to publish everything anonymously, and to write in the most unpretentious style possible. In Renan's words, "they see clearly the vanity and drawbacks of talent, and they will have none of it. The word which best characterises them is mediocrity, but then their mediocrity is systematic and self-planned."

On the advice of a fellow-Breton, Abbé Trevaux, a pious and learned priest who was vicar-general to M. de Quélen, Renan chose as his tutor M. Gosselin, the Superior of Issy, whom he characterises as "one of the most amiable and polite men I have ever known.... He was more remarkable for his erudition than his theology. He was a safe critic within the limits of an orthodoxy which he never thought of questioning, and he was placid to a degree. The great number of ecclesiastics who had passed through his hands had somewhat weakened his powers of diagnosis. He classed his students wholesale." ("Souvenirs," p. 205). Two of his other tutors were in every respect a contrast to M. Gosselin. Gottofrey,  
one/

one of the professors of philosophy, would have been an accomplished man of the world, had not his sacerdotal training made him an extraordinary example of mental suicide through mystical orthodoxy. "L'Abbé Gosselin était un parfait exemplaire de Sulpicien," writes Jean Pommier. "Scrupuleusement modeste, il ne signait pas ses nombreuses publications. Il mettait au service de la religion, d'accord avec ses supérieurs et ses confrères, les ressources de son erudition, l'aisance, la clarté, la sobriété de son style, presque exempt de cette fadeur qu'exhale toujours le phrase onctueuse de l'abbé Tresvaux (qui n'était pas Sulpicien); une prudence qui, tout en argumentant comme de bonne foi, se garde de trop demander à la docilité des lecteurs; un ton modéré enfin, n'allant guère au delà de l'épithète d'"odieux" pour qualifier les adversaires." (Jean Pommier's Renan, p.31).

M. Pinault, the Professor of mathematics and natural philosophy, if he had not received a Catholic education, would have been a Revolutionist and a Positivist; as it was, Pinault was a man of earnest mysticism, concentrated passion, and quaint originality, and a leader of those who were full of ardent piety, the "mystics" as they were called. "His was a powerful individuality which faith kept under due control," says Renan, "but which ecclesiastical discipline had not crushed. He was a saint, but had very little of the priest and nothing of the Sulpician about/

about him. He did violence to the rule of the Society which is to renounce anything approaching talent and originality."

It was Pinault (and the incident shows his keen discernment of character and power of prognostication) who came across Renan one day sitting on a stone bench in the park at Issy, muffled up in his overcoat, reading Clark "on the existence of God." The quiet studiousness of the young Breton was not what his burning zeal approved. "Oh the dear little treasure," exclaimed Pinault, coming near and chaffing him with the kind of banter which was characteristic of him. "Mon Dieu! How nice he is there, so well bundled up! Don't disturb him! That is how he will always be.... He will study, study without ceasing; and when poor souls need and call for him, he will study still. Well wrapped up in his houppelande, he will say to those who want him, "Oh, leave me, leave me." Then, seeing the arrow had struck, he wrung his hand and said, with a half-repressed sneer, "He'll make another little Gosselin." Pinault's words came very near the mark. He was a good prognosticator. Renan himself declared that he was a born priest. But it is very questionable whether he would have proved more than a very indifferent parish priest, unless he had turned away from his engrossing studies. What he was born for was the library and the desk.

During/

During his two years at Issy, Renan entirely devoted himself to study; he never joined the other students in games, and though leave to enter Paris was granted, he never went there. The atmosphere of Issy was thoroughly congenial to the serious-minded young scholar; the "beautiful mystic park," as he called it, with the ancient peace of its formal and melancholy walks, was ever dear to his memory. His first year at Issy was devoted chiefly to philosophy. In the grounds around the Seminary he spent much time reading indefatigably and meditating to his heart's content. He declared afterwards that this demesne had been, next to the Cathedral at Tréguier, the new cradle of his thought. Here he spent hours, reading, meditating with his own mind, drinking deep draughts of philosophic doubt. "No sooner did he grasp the import of logic, with its immediate application to problems that he had never before dreamt of, than his whole being underwent a crisis. He had hitherto believed in his teachers as if they were the oracles of God. Now he resolved, in accordance with the maxims of Descartes, (the piety of Issy was strongly tinged with Cartesianism) to take nothing for certain that was not clear and evident to himself." (Barry's Renan, p. 31). His course of reading included, as already noted, the "Philosophie de Lyon." The physical sciences, especially natural history and physiology, powerfully attracted him, and/

and his studies in this department shook his confidence in metaphysics. He obtained considerable acquaintance with the philosophical writings of Cousin, Jouffroy, and German thinkers, but the authors he read habitually were Pascal, Malebranche, Euler, Locke, Leibnitz, Descartes, Reid and Dugald Stewart. Thomas Reid, the great Scottish philosopher, for some time remained his ideal. "My aspiration," he writes, "was to lead the peaceful life of a laborious priest, attached to his sacred office and dispensed from the ordinary duties of his calling in order to follow out his studies. The antagonism between philosophical pursuits of this kind and the Christian faith had not as yet come in upon me with the irresistible force and clearness which was soon to leave no alternative between the renunciation of Christianity and inconsistency of the most unwarrantable kind." ("Souvenirs," p.216). Among the French writers who occupied a large place in Renan's thoughts, one of the most outstanding was Cousin, particularly in his course of 1818 which is frequently quoted by Renan. Cousin as a lecturer and teacher had few equals for intense moral earnestness, eloquence of style, and faculty of clear exposition. His teaching was marked by a strong reaction against the doctrines of the previous century, which had given such value to the data of sense. Cousin abhorred the materialism involved in these doctrines, which he styled "une doctrine désolante," and he endeavoured to raise the dignity/

dignity and conception of man as a spiritual being. In the Preface to his Lectures of 1818, "Du vrai, du Beau et du Bien," published first in 1846, which Renan cites again and again, Cousin lays stress upon the elements of his philosophy, which he presents as a true spiritualism, inasmuch as it subordinates the sensory and sensual to the spiritual. He upholds the essentially spiritual nature of man, his liberty, his moral responsibility and obligation, the dignity of human virtue, disinterestedness, charity and justice. These fruits of the spirit reveal, Cousin maintained, a God who is both the author and the ideal type of humanity, a Being who is not indifferent to the welfare and happiness of his creatures. Cousin's aim was to found a metaphysic, spiritual in character, based upon psychology. While he did not agree with the system of Kant, he rejected the doctrines of the empiricists, and set his influence against the materialistic and sceptical tendencies of his time. Yet he cannot be excused from "opportunism" in thought. In order to retain his personal influence, Cousin endeavoured to present his philosophy as a sum of doctrines perfectly consistent with the Catholic faith. His efforts in this direction, however, dissatisfied both churchmen and philosophers. The vagueness, too, of his Spiritual teaching was largely responsible for the welcome accorded by many minds to the positivist teaching of Comte. Nevertheless, Cousin's spiritualism had a notable influence upon several important men, as for example Michelet and his friend Edgar Quinet/

Quinet and more indirectly upon Renan. The latter spoke of him in warm terms as "un des excitateurs de ma pensée."

"L'impression fut sur moi," says Renan writing of Cousin, "on ne peut plus profonde; je savais par cœur ces phrases aileées; j'en rêvais. J'ai la conscience que plusieurs des cadres de mon esprit viennent de là, et voilà pourquoi, sans avoir jamais été de l'école de M. Cousin, j'ai toujours eu pour lui le sentiment le plus respectueux et le plus déférent. Il a été non un des pères, mais un des excitateurs de ma pensée..... Certes l'effet qu'il produisit alors sur moi était bien moindre que celui que j'éprouvai à Issy en recueillant l'écho lointain de sa première parole. J'étais plus fait, moins susceptible d'être séduit, et lui, il avait perdu la plus grande partie de ses séductions. Mais quel charme encore! Quelle gaieté! Quel amour du travail! Quel respect de la langue et quelle conscience dans les recherches!..... En somme, Victor Cousin a été une des personnalités les plus attachantes du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Je ne sais s'il tiendra une grande place dans une histoire critique de la philosophie conçue sur le plan de Brucker ou de Tennemann; mais, certainement, il remplira un curieux chapitre de l'esprit français à un de ses moments les plus brillants." ("Feuilles détachées," pp. 299-301). In the brief "Essai psychologique sur Jésus Christ," Cousin is quoted by Renan again and again. Writing to Cousin some years afterwards, Renan says, "excusez la liberté que je prends de vous écrire sans avoir l'honneur d'être connu de vous. C'est un devoir pour moi, au début de ma carrière/

Malebranche certainly was a bold thinker, and yet he was a priest, nay more, a member of a religious congregation, and he lived in peace at an epoch when the secular arm and the spirit of the age united to give ecclesiastical authority even greater pride and power than it now possesses." ("Brother and Sister:" Ernest and Henriette Renan Correspondence, p.103). And nearly thirty years later, in his "Dialogues et Fragments Philosophiques," it was in the words of Malebranche, "Dieu n'agit pas par des volontés particulières," "God does not act by special providence," that he expressed the essential principle of his theodicy. This principle "Il n'y a pas de surnaturel particulier," not only lies at the foundation of all the works of Renan, but it is formally expressed in most of them.

The result of all these forces that were playing upon him was that Renan's faith was gradually being eclipsed, in fact, all but extinguished, by the new views in philosophy which he was deriving partly from Malebranche, that in the order of facts no special interpositions of the Divine Will could be allowed, in other words, that general laws must be identified with God's Providence. Malebranche, writes Jean Pommier, "habituaît Renan à la pensée que Dieu n'intervient pas incessamment dans le gouvernement du monde. Le disciple qui aura pénétré la doctrine ésotérique (Malebranche dans les Entretiens laisse entendre qu'il n'essaierait pas de donner cet enseignement à tous/

tous les hommes) comprendra que la "puissance et la sagasse de Dieu paraissent davantage...dans les effets les plus communs, que dans ceux qui frappent et qui étonnent l'esprit à cause de leur nouveauté," que Dieu est "bien plus admirable lorsqu'il couvre la terre de fruits et de fleurs par les lois générales de la nature, que lorsque, par des volontés particulières, il fait tomber le feu du ciel." Il ne lui demandera pas de miracles. Non que Dieu n'en fasse pas: Malebranche reste orthodoxe, et il faut que Renan ne l'ait pas tout lu ou l'ait trahi pour mettre sous son couvert, comme il fera plus tard, la négation du miracle." (Jean Pommier's Renan, p.38). Malebranche's essential principle appears again and again in Renan's works; it may be termed his great first truth, never proved, but assumed as undeniable. Followed out to its consequences, it seemed to make the name and idea of Deity superfluous. The order of facts is sufficient for itself. Miracle and revelation cannot be admitted since they would break the supreme, all-encompassing law and disclose personality other than our own in the universe. Thus Renan argued, substituting an idea-system for the living God. From this ground he never retreated and never advanced.

After Reid and Malebranche, came Hegel, Kant and Herder. These bolder and more universal thinkers had an irresistible attraction for Renan. The German schools at this period had reached a high level, and Henriette Renan, his gifted sister, who was/

was an influential factor in her brother's mental sphere, and to whom he confided his fondness for the German philosophers, earnestly advised him to study German more thoroughly. "What you tell me," she writes to her brother, "of your liking for the German philosophers pleases but does not surprise me. Germany is the classic home of quiet reverie and metaphysical argument. The other European nations will find it hard to bring their schools of philosophy to the level reached by the German thinkers. The French mind, quick as it is, and fascinating, and prompt at grasping an idea, is too volatile, generally speaking, to be profoundly philosophic. The Englishman is cold and calculating, submitting everything to the chilliest argument. But the German, who carries his native simplicity and good-nature everywhere, allows himself to feel and think over <sup>every</sup>thing. If you prosecute your studies in the tongue of Kant and Hegel, of Goethe and Schiller, you will discover many delightful charms in its rich and varied literature." ("Brother and Sister," *Lettres Intimes*, pp. 93, 94 - letter dated October 30th. 1842). The study of the German language and of German thought had indeed for Renan an irresistible attraction. German philosophy was just commencing to be known, "and what little I had been able to pick up," he says, "had a strangely fascinating effect upon me." Especially, was this the case with Hegel, who set intuitional consciousness over against the experimental philosophy of a previous period reducing the whole domain of human knowledge as the source of knowledge, and thought to an intellectual system, and whose pantheism, as we have already seen, was one of the main influences on Renan's "Vie de Jésus."

At Issy that great German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, had also a strong attraction for Renan. Kant had thrown into severe logical forms the old pantheism, or mystery of the All-and-one which colours every Teutonic writer of name from Eckhart and Behmen to Angelus Silesius. The title of Kant's great work, "The Critique of Pure Reason," reminds us that the spirit of his method, which became the spirit of his time, was critical and scientific. He demanded an exact account of man's knowledge and capacity of knowledge. At a time when speculation of a dogmatic and uncritical kind was current, he called attention to the necessity for examining the instrument of knowledge itself, and thereby discovering its fitness or inadequacy, as the case might be, for dealing with the problems which philosophy proposed to investigate. On the basis of a criticism of consciousness alone could a structure of certainty be built up. Hume had asserted that there was no other source of knowledge than experience. Condillac had described the human mind as nothing but a bundle of transformed sensations. Locke had, in the spirit of common sense, examined the human understanding, and laid the foundations of psychology. But Kant demanded a more profound study of the laws of thought, and the result was a system which, while exalting reason, at the same time humbled it; for by placing the great beliefs of man, - in God, immortality, and human freedom, - in the region of the transcendental, it declared them beyond observation/

observation, and called them back into the practical reason as axiomatic truths or assumptions, which have a regulative place in the human mind, but not a speculative place, being incomprehensible, and involving insoluble contradictions. While therefore Kant did good service to the cause of truth in the way of unsparing criticism of false methods and clear definition of the boundaries of exact knowledge, and nobly asserted the moral law and the necessity of religion, he promoted incalculably the spirit of rationalistic criticism and philosophical theology. Germany, from the time of Kant, was the chief seat of religious unbelief. It is true that Christianity was vigorously defended. Such names as those of Euler, Haller, and Schleiermacher, and others are evidence that, whilst reason was appealed <sup>to</sup> by many in the cause of doubt, it was also summoned to the support of a devout and earnest faith. The destructive Spirit, however, still survived. The philosophy of Germany, developed by such men as Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, exalted the claims of human reason more and more, until the only foundation required was the laws of thought, which were substituted for all reality, whether it were the reality of God or the reality of the external world. The influence of both Kant and Hegel on Renan at Issy was very potent, according to his own repeated acknowledgments. Although, as a figure in the intellectual life of his time, Renan is difficult to estimate. In the actual working out of/

out of his ideas and their publication, the very subtlety of his intellect betrayed him, as we have already seen, into an oscillation which was far from admirable and prevented his countrymen in his own day from "getting to grips" with his ideas. His conceptions were kaleidoscopic. His humanism kept him from dogmatism, but his mind fluctuated so that his general attitude to the ultimate problems was one of reserve, of scepticism, and of frequent paradox and contradiction. Renan appears to combine the positivist scorn of metaphysics with the idealism of Kant. At times, however, his attitude is emphatically Hegelian, and he profoundly believes in universal change which is an evolving of spirit, the ideal or God, call it what we will. Another German philosopher who wielded from the very first an irresistible influence upon Renan's mind, according to his own admission, was Herder. Herder, the elegant philosopher, the Christian archaeologist and philologist, the man of feeling and ideas, moulded by his age and largely moulding it, was a man after Renan's own heart. Renan refers to him in these glowing terms, - "My king of thought, reigning over all, judging all, and judged by none." ("Cahiers," p. 243, n. 30). The influence of Herder is to be seen in Renan's conception of Jesus. According to Herder, the distinctive character of Jesus was, that he bore in his heart the ideal of man as the child of God, exemplified it in his life and death for our imitation, and at the same time trained up men of God and established a society of them, a kingdom/

kingdom of God among men, in which will be realised the purpose of providence with the human race. The "Divine Sonship" of Christ is only another expression for this ideal "man of God," who knows God as his Father and all men as his brethren. Precisely this, according to Herder, was the ruling idea of Jesus, and the object of his life. "In his heart was written: God is my Father and the Father of all men; all men are brothers. To this religion of humanity he dedicated his life, which he was ready wholly to offer up, if his religion might be that of all men..... The truest humanity breathes in the few speeches of Jesus which have come down to us; it is nothing else than humanity which he manifested in his life, and sealed by his death, just as the chosen name by which he called himself was the Son of Man. As a spiritual Saviour of his race, he sought to train up men of God, who would labour from pure motives for the good of others and reign by their patience as kings in the realm of truth and kindness. An object such as this must evidently be the sole purpose of providence with our race; and all the wise and good on earth must and will co-operate to this end, in proportion to the pureness of their thought and endeavour; for what other ideal could man have of perfection and happiness on earth, save this universally operative humanity?" Alongside of this there may be set a great deal of what Renan wrote in Chapter V of the "Vie de Jésus" regarding Jesus' ideas of a "Father God" and of a pure religion. How similar the thought of Renan is to that of Herder, as indicated/

indicated above, may be clearly seen in the paragraph p.45 of the "Vie de Jésus," commencing "we must place Jesus in the first rank of this great family of the true sons of God &c.," and in the paragraph, p.46, "God, conceived simply as Father, was all the theology of Jesus .," and in the paragraph p.51, commencing "A pure worship , a worship without priests" &c..

Madame Darmesteter has summed up concisely the German influences on Renan: "At the two remotest poles of human thought there are situate two opposite conceptions of the universe. Orthodox and traditional transcendentalism shows us a definite act of creation, a living God, a Providence army of the immortal souls of men. At the furthest which guides the world, and the infinite extremity of metaphysical science exists the mystical doctrine of immanence, which, in place of a definite creation, explains the universe by the gradual evolution of a germ. All Being is Becoming: an eternal process, an infinite continuance, over which an unconscious deity broods in the Abyss. The universe is animated by one single Soul, in whom all living beings share, but of which, so to speak, they only enjoy the usufruct, since they fade and vanish like sparks that fly upwards, while it remains eternal." (Darmesteter's Renan). Of these two creeds, Renan was bound in honour to believe the first. Little by little, he inclined towards the second. The retentive and tenacious mind of Renan let nothing slip of those early readings of his at Issy Seminary. All his philosophy is there in germ. The mystical pantheism of Herder, the Hegelian idea of development, supplied him with the theory of evolution - of/

of a world perpetually in travail of a superior transformation. Kant renewed for him the impelling principle of Duty. And years after, as already noted, in his "Philosophical Dialogues," it was in the words of Malebranche, "Dieu n'agit pas par des volontés particulières: God does not act by special providences," that he expressed the essential principle of his theodicy.

In the shape of religious books, Renan's preferences at the Issy Seminary were for Bossuet's sermons, and, the "Elevations sur les mystères"; he was familiar, also with the writings of Francis de Sales; he forgot, he says, "the very existence of such a thing as modern literature." A rumour reached Issy that contemporary writers existed, and the Seminarists had, as we have seen, some knowledge of Cousin, Jouffroy, and Pierre Leroux, from the writings of those who opposed them. "Le Télémaque," in an edition not containing the "Eucharis" episode, was the only specimen of light literature which came into Renan's hands, until M. Gosselin one day called him aside, and after much beating about the bush, told him he had thought of letting him read a book which some people might regard as dangerous, and which, as a matter of fact, might be perilous in certain cases, on account of the vivacity with which the author expresses passion. He had, however, decided that Renan might be trusted with this book. It was a novel by Abbé Gerard, "Le Comte de Valmont; ou les Egarements de la Raison." Under the cover of a very innocent plot, the author refutes the doctrines of the 18th century, and inculcates the doctrines of an enlightened religion. The Christianity set forth in it is no more than Deism/

Deism, the religion of "Télémaque," a sort of sentiment in the abstract, without being any particular kind of religion.

All this blending of the shallow training of Dupanloup in St. Nicholas du Chardonnet, the inquiring orthodoxy of Gosselin, the travestied philosophy of Gottofrey, the mystical metaphysics, mixed with scepticism, of Pinault, the fundamentally sceptical principles of Locke and of the Scottish school, the rationalism of the "Philosophie de Lyon," and the Deism of "Télémaque" and "Le Comte de Valmont," seem to afford a solution of the problem, "How to account for the "Vie de Jésus". Renan does not describe the "Phases of his Faith" in the manner in which the brothers Newman describe theirs, with the minute analysis and lucid narrative which distinguish both F.W.Newman's "History of his Creed" and J.H. Newman's "Apologia"; but he tells us that Positive science then appeared to him to be the only source of truth. In after years he felt quite irritated at the idea of Auguste Comte being dignified with the title of a great man for having expressed in bad French what all scientific minds had seen for the last two hundred years as clearly as he had done. "The scientific spirit was the fundamental principle in my disposition. M. Pinault taught me enough of general natural history and physiology to give me an insight into the laws of existence. I realised the insufficiency of what is called Spiritualism; I became an idealist, and not a spiritualist, in the ordinary acceptation of the term./

term. An endless fieri, a ceaseless metamorphosis, seemed to me to be the law of the world; nature presented herself to me as a whole, in which creation itself has no place, and in which therefore, everything undergoes transformation.... But I cannot honestly say that my faith in Christianity was in reality diminished. My faith has been destroyed by historical criticism, not by scholasticism or philosophy." ("Souvenirs" pp. 219, 224).

This state of fancied security was however suddenly disturbed. Among the privileges enjoyed by the youthful Seminarians of Issy was a considerable liberty of discussion. Although the theological teaching given was of the most dogmatic orthodoxy, every Sunday the students assembled to hear theses defended or impugned. At other times one of the most silent of the community, Renan appears to have been generally an impugner, and his aggressive attitudes caused Gottofrey to keep a vigilant eye on the champion who thus delighted in contesting the supporters of orthodoxy. Sensitive and acute, Gottofrey discerned the direction in which his mind was moving, and he already saw in Renan what his youth, his want of logic and criticism prevented him from seeing in himself. At length a crisis came. On a certain occasion Renan was engaged in a public disputation on some philosophical matter, when the vigour/

vigour of his objections to the orthodox position, his manifest dissatisfaction with the arguments traditionally accredited and received, provoked a smile from some of his listeners, and Gottofrey, who was presiding, stopped the argument. In the course of the evening the Professor sent for the too candid disputant, and, with the eloquence of deep earnestness, warned him that overweening confidence in reason was contrary to the spirit of Christianity, that rationalism was incompatible with faith. Growing strangely animated, Gottofrey went on to reproach the young man with too exclusive devotion to study. It was not by knowledge that men's souls were saved. "Research? What is the good of it? All that is essential has already been found!" And then, gradually becoming more excited, he said in passionate accents, "You are no Christian!" This reproach had on Renan the effect which the reading of Augustine's sentence "securus judicat orbis terrarum" had on Cardinal Newman - the words rang in his ears and ate their way into his heart. "I have never in all my life," Renan says, "felt more fright than that which I experienced on hearing those words uttered in a ringing voice. I tottered as I left the room. And all night long "you are no Christian" resounded in my ears like a great peal of thunder."

But the flash which shot through the mind of Gottofrey led to no immediate consequences. John Keble counselled Thomas Arnold to take accuracy in order to believe the doctrines he was/

was to teach, and called the dishonest stifling of thought in action "holy living." In the same way, Gosselin was of opinion that religious doubts "are of no gravity among young men when they are disregarded, and that they disappear when the future career has been finally entered upon. He enjoined me not to think of what had occurred. He did not in the least understand the character of my mind, nor divine its future logical evolution. M. Gottofrey did. He saw clearly enough. He was right; a dozen times over, as I can now plainly see. Writing thirty years afterwards, I discern the deep penetration of which he made proof. He alone was clear-sighted, for he was quite a saint. It needed the transcendent lucidity of this martyr and ascetic to discover that which had quite escaped those who directed my conscience with so much uprightness, so much goodness in other matters." ("Souvenirs," p. 227).

This Issy episode has been related at some length as offering a genuine clue to after events in Renan's career. "Toutes ces discussions," writes Pommier, "sur le fondement de la certitude, sur l'autorité du témoignage humain, avaient porté d'un coup Renan jusqu'à l'extrême du scepticisme. Mais il n'avait pu rester dans cet état violent." (Jean Pommier's Renan, p. 35). Renan's faith was being darkened, in fact all but quenched, by the new views in philosophy which he was deriving from Malebranche, and yet more from what he could ascertain of German metaphysics, though probably he was not/

not at the time fully conscious of any approaching crisis. The delicate equilibrium between faith and reason which constitutes normal Christianity was disturbed. It has been well said that, in the Waterloo of Renan's beliefs, philology was Blücher, the last comer who decides the issue, but Rationalism was Wellington, the first constant and principal adversary, the legitimate hero of the field.

Renan's studies at Issy led him to two decisive conclusions. He lost all faith in Metaphysics as a means of reaching truth, which could be attained, if at all, only through the positive sciences. From these, again, he acquired the conviction that the law of the universe was an eternal becoming, an endless transformation, in which there was no place for particular creation. He was therefore already, at this early stage of his career, a Hegelian pantheist, and thus in Issy Seminary there had taken possession of his youthful mind that conception of the universe which is a fundamental principle in his "Vie de Jésus." Though he failed to realise the full significance of the change, he was in truth, as Gottofrey informed him, no longer either a Catholic or a Christian.

After his two years of classical and philosophical studies at Issy Seminary were completed, it was decided that Renan should pass into the higher theological Seminary at St. Sulpice/

Sulpice, and by following the prescribed course, qualify himself for the priesthood. Renan accepted the decision and went thither with gladness of heart. He was admitted in 1843 into the main house of St. Sulpice, there to spend three fruitful and momentous years, studying theology and laying the foundations of his vast philological erudition. The two chapters in his "Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse" in which he has traced the history of those years in St. Sulpice will live, we imagine, as long as anything Renan has written. They carry us with an extraordinary clearness and moderation of statement through an experience which was by no means typical of his time. No literary instance, at any rate, can be pointed out of such complete investigation of the Christian claims, followed by such complete rejection of them. Renan's modes of thought were still to a great extent religious, and his philosophy was nothing if not spiritualist. But the result on him of seven years close study of the Christian system from the Christian point of view was the formation of the habit of mind which produced the "Origines du Christianisme."

St. Sulpice was destined to exercise a tremendous influence upon Renan, and on his own acknowledgment, definitely decided the entire trend of his after life. "I amuse myself," he wrote in his "Souvenirs" years after, "very often like M. Aurelius on the banks of the Gran, in counting up what/

what I owe to the diverse influences that have crossed my life and have woven the tissue of it. Well, St. Sulpice has always seemed to me the principal factor among them." In particular concerned as we are here mainly with those influences that affected his "Vie de Jésus," it is of the utmost importance to note that it was whilst he studied at St. Sulpice, as he himself declares, that the "Vie de Jésus" was mentally written. ("Souvenirs," p. 274). It was the spirit of that Seminary which in reality moulded his mind, altered the current of his life, and prepared him for the writing of that book which in after years, beyond any other of his writings, was destined to bring him world-wide fame.

Time and again he expressed his gratitude to the teachers of that college, and, when later he reviewed his career, and endeavoured to determine the various influential factors which had affected it, he recognised St. Sulpice to have been among the most potent. The moral education of that famous Seminary had imbued his whole nature, and his anxious love for those from whom his conscience had obliged him to part caused him to declare with some exaggeration, "Since I left St. Sulpice, I have done nothing but degenerate."

The custom was that, when a student quitted the lower for the higher Seminary, his old teachers preceded his arrival with a letter commenting on his character and conduct, for the benefit of his new teachers. Renan has described the Superior at/

at Issy as having treated his doubts lightly. But this same Superior pointed out in his prevenient letter to the head of St. Sulpice the existence of certain dangerous intellectual inclinations in Renan, and advised a watchful supervision of the new student.

In Renan's day St. Sulpice was essentially a 17th century institution; nothing could remind one more of Port Royal or the old Sorbonne than this college did, where time seemed to have stood still. The studies were extremely serious, there was a healthy amount of freedom, and the moral tone was of the highest. The theological teaching was rigorously honest; no attempt was made to create proselytes by means of equivocation nor to dispose of dogmatic difficulties or textual contradictions by sleight of hand. The instructors acted according to the truth as they saw it, and Renan followed their admonitions, though the light which he saw was more distant and drew him reluctantly farther away from them. At St. Sulpice the rule of liberty prevailed. A young student, left very much to the freedom of his will, might pass years without receiving direction from his superiors. There was a coldness, too, in the atmosphere of the place; friendships were not easily formed between strangers brought together as in a hostelry from all quarters of the land. Renan, therefore, led a lonely life in St. Sulpice. He had few friends in it. This reacted on his mental development. His time was spent chiefly/

chiefly in reading and meditation, in writing home and in concentrating his mind on the problems of history which were violently agitating him. His conduct was irreproachable, as it had been throughout the whole of his previous career, and in due time he received the tonsure and was admitted to minor orders.

Theology and Biblical exegesis were at this stage his chief subjects of study, with results which all the world knows. The theological studies at St. Sulpice were divided into two sections, - the study of dogma and the study of moral philosophy. At the basis of the former, - dogmatic theology, - as taught in this Seminary, lay the thesis "De Vera Religione," the object of which was to prove the supernatural character of the Christian religion - that is, of the canonical scriptures and the church. In the latter course, twelve treatises were studied, all firmly united together and asfirmly united to the dogmatic teaching of the Seminary. The whole made up one entire system, in which it was perilous in the highest degree to move the smallest part, seeing that every proposition was vouched for by the church, and the challenging of any single one of them meant damage to the credit of the church's authority which maintained the absolute certainty of the whole system.

It/

It would be impossible to form a true estimate of the religious attitude and atmosphere of St. Sulpice without taking into consideration the ecclesiastical situation in France during the 18th. and 19th. centuries. In chapter III, when dealing with Positivism, reference was made to the attempt of the Traditionalist party after the Revolution to recall their fellow countrymen by a perfectly natural reaction to the Christian faith as presented in and by the Roman Catholic Church. The endeavours to do this which were made by Chateaubriand, Lamennais, Lacordaire and others, did not meet with the success they had hoped for; yet, in spite of that, a fairly strong current of loyalty to the church and the Catholic religion set in. Much of this loyalty was the expression of a deep spiritual reaction directed against the materialistic and sceptical doctrines of the 18th. century. *The human heart was now earnestly seeking for comfort and consolation.* It had been denied that in the previous century, and revolution and war had but added to the cup of bitterness. Thus there dawned an era of Romanticism in religion in which the sentimental orthodoxy of Chateaubriand was a sign of the times. It was this which marked the great difference between the 18th. and 19th. centuries in France. The 18th. century was one in which scoffing at religion was the dominant attitude. The rationalism of the period took its cue from Voltaire. But in the first half of the 19th. century the pendulum swung in the opposite direction. Romanticism in literature, philosophy/

philosophy, and religion became fashionable. There was a seething unrest which uniformity and authority found annoying. Lamennais and other liberal-minded men desired the separation of church and state, and were tolerant of those who were not Catholic. They claimed, along with their own "right to believe," that of others "not to believe." The Pope denounced liberalism absolutely as an absurd and erroneous doctrine, a piece of folly sprung from the "fetid source of indifferentism." The iron hand of the Vatican over intellectual freedom was very strong. The methods of the Catholic Church have always been conservative, its discipline rigid and based on tradition and authority. The believer's freedom of thought is restricted; he can neither read nor think what he likes, and the church, having made the 13th century doctrines of Aquinas its official philosophy, <sup>has</sup> ~~hurled~~ its anathemas at ideas scientific, political, philosophical, or theological which have appeared since. No half measures are allowed; either one is a loyal Catholic or one is not a Catholic at all. There is no via media between Catholicism and free personal thought. This was a point which Renan felt very keenly, and of which his own spiritual pilgrimage that took him out of the bounds of the church of his youth, is a striking illustration.

In this relentlessly uncompromising attitude, it may be said,

said, lies the main strength of Catholicism; but herein also is revealed its weakness, or at least that element in it which makes it manufacture its own greatest adversaries. Over against all this, and in vital opposition to it, there were the humanitarians, who, rejecting the doctrine of human corruption, maintained that human instincts and human reason themselves make for goodness and for God. While Catholicism looked to the past, humanitarianism looked forward, believed in freedom and in progress, and regarded the immanent Christ spirit as working in mankind.

Such were the two dominant notes in religious thought in France at the period with which we are dealing. Catholicism strenuously resisted humanitarianism and strengthened its power. The church and the Vatican became more staunch in their opposition to all doctrines of modern thought. The French clergy profited by the alliance with the aristocracy, while religious orders, particularly the Jesuits, grew in numbers and in power. Meantime the Pope's temporal power was decreasing, whilst his spiritual power was increasing in extent and intensity. Centralisation went on within the church, and Rome (that is, the Pope and the Vatican) became omnipotent. As France had heard the sentence, "L'Etat, c'est moi," from the lips of one of its greatest monarchs, it now heard from another/

another quarter a similar principle enunciated, "L'Eglise, c'est moi." As democracy and freedom cried out against the one, they did so against the other. Undaunted, the Vatican continued in its absolutism.

It was against this background of ecclesiastical and political affairs that the play of ideas upon religion went on. Such was the environment, such the tradition which surrounded Renan, and it is only by recognising that his religious and national milieu was of such a type as has been indicated, that the real significance of his religious thought can be understood. It is only when we have grasped the essential attitude of authority and tradition of the Roman Church, its ruthless bearing towards modern thought of all kinds, that we can comprehend the religious position of men like Renan. For Renan, religion is essentially an affair of personal taste. He claims that freedom is essential to religion, and that it is absolutely necessary that the state should have no power whatever over it. Religion is as personal and private a matter as taste in literature or art. The worst type of organisation in Renan's judgment was the theocratic state, like Islam, or the ancient Pontifical state in which dogma reigns supreme. There ought to be what Spinoza was wont to call, "liberty of philosophising." The days of the dominance of dogma were passing. "Religion has/

Religion has become for once and all a matter of personal taste." It was this temper, produced by the study of documents, by criticism and historical research, which drove Renan out of the Roman Catholic church. His rational mind could not accept the dogmas laid down by the church. In Renan we find a striking illustration of the working of the spirit of modern thought upon a religious mind.

Here, in St. Sulpice, Renan was brought face to face with the Bible and the sources of Christianity, and devoted himself specially to theology and biblical exegesis. According to Sir James Stephen, Biblicalists maintain "that in every passage of Holy writ we are listening to the words in which the Deity himself has condescended to afford to us solutions, at once complete and unambiguous, of all the problems in which, as responsible moral agents, we have any concern," while Traditionalists contend "that these sacred truths are not in the Bible, either systematically or logically established, nor even categorically propounded; that they are announced by the inspired writers in language usually so popular and poetical, often so mythic and abrupt as must unavoidably have induced endless diversities and invincible errors, if there had not been in the mind of every reader a pre-conceived scheme of hereditary doctrine, into the complex harmony of which all scriptural revelations might be first received, and then be adjusted and reconciled.... They who adhere with severe/

severe consistency to traditionist opinions generally take refuge in the Roman Catholic fold, as the one secure place of shelter from fatal error." ("Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography," p. 464). This was the case with Cardinal Newman, who regarded it as "often a most hazardous process to attempt to enumerate faith and morals out of the sacred text which contains them. It is not work for individuals." "They, on the other hand," continues Sir James Stephen, "who pursue to their consequences Biblical opinions, for the most part find themselves at length astray on the bleak mountains of scepticism without a track, a resting-place, or a guide." This was the case with Renan, as it was also with F. W. Newman. Renan never entertained any objection to such dogmas as the Trinity and the Incarnation, regarded in themselves. "These dogmas," he says, "occurring in the metaphysical ether, do not shock any opposite opinion in me." ("Souvenirs," p. 259, 260). Nothing in the polity and tendency of the church would have been obstacles to his faith if he had had no material reasons for disbelieving the Catholic creed.

The cause of his faith's shipwreck, Renan assures us, was neither personal, nor ecclesiastical, nor doctrinal, nor philosophical; but simply and solely the historical and critical exegesis of the Bible. "My faith was destroyed by historical criticism, not by scholasticism, nor by philosophy." This assertion he reiterates over and over again. He is persistent, almost passionate, in his determination to convince us that his unbelief was due entirely to his discovery of contradictory/

contradictory statements, impossible dates, spurious authorship, and general inaccuracy in the records of revelation. Study forced upon him the conviction that "the Bible contains fables, legends, and other traces of purely human composition." "At St. Sulpice I was brought face to face with the Bible, and the sources of Christianity, and I immersed myself in this study, and through a series of critical deductions, which forced themselves upon my mind, the bases of my existence, as I had hitherto understood it, were completely overturned." ("Souvenirs," p. 229). "The question as to whether there are contradictions between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics, is one which there can be no difficulty in grasping. I can see these contradictions with such absolute clearness, that I would stake my life, and consequently my eternal salvation, upon their reality without a moment's hesitation." ("Souvenirs," p. 260). The unsettling process had certainly begun before Renan studied Hebrew and German. But what happened now was that the balance of his mentality, so heavily weighted at the outset to faith, swung definitely to the poise of reason only when critical study had become with him as much a fixed habit as piety had ever been. His admiration, hope, and love had gradually shifted to new centres. Renan's diagnosis of himself is substantially sound. It was as a critical scholar that he definitely became a son of reason instead of a son of the faith. It needed the growth and gymnastic of the mental muscles, so to speak, to detach him from the clinging hold of dogmas/

dogmas upon his naturally receptive temperament, though the innate critical faculty, already silently developed in his sister Henriette had spontaneously begun the process.

It was therefore gradually and by a series of critical deductions which forced themselves upon Renan's mind that, as he confesses, the "bases of his existence, as he had hitherto understood them, were overturned." He became by degrees, convinced of the impossibility of demonstrating that the Christian religion was, more especially than any other, divine and revealed; nay further, it appeared to him certain, that in the field of reality accessible to human observation, no supernatural event, no miracle had ever occurred. He was led to the conclusion of Littré, that "investigate as you will, you will never find that a miracle has been wrought under conditions where it could be observed and verified." Historical facts seemed to Renan absolutely irreconcilable with the theory that the doctrines of Christianity, as they were defined at Trent, or even at Nicaea, were what the Apostles originally taught.

Renan did not formulate his opinions with the logical precision and accuracy of F. W. Newman, but with Newman he reached these "three inevitable conclusions": - that

1. "The moral and intellectual powers of man must be acknowledged as having a right and duty to criticise the contents of the Scripture."
2. "When so exerted, they condemn portions of the Scripture as erroneous."
3. "The /

3. "The assumed infallibility of the entire Scripture is a proved falsity; and it remains for further inquiry how to discriminate the trustworthy from the untrustworthy within the limits of the Bible itself." (F.W. Newman's "Phases of Faith," p. 70).

In spite of the gradual eclipse of his faith, however, the memory of human virtue and simple-hearted piety ever remained with Renan, surrounding with a halo of beauty a past at once sacred and sad. After Orpheus, having lost his ideal, was torn to pieces by the Thracian women, his lyre still repeated Eurydice's name. "It took me," says Renan, "six years of meditation and hard study to discover my teachers were not infallible. What caused me more grief than anything else when I entered upon this new path was the thought of distressing my revered masters; but I am absolutely certain that I did right and that the sorrow which they felt was the consequence of their narrow views as to the nature of the universe."

The Superiors of St. Sulpice were frankly speaking, unfit and unable to guide so powerful, acute, and restless a mind as Renan's through the mazes of an ever-increasing scepticism. They were ecclesiastics of the old school, "worthy continuators of a respectable tradition." They were not in the least, inclined to underrate their pupil; they were prepared to make almost any sacrifice in order to keep him where his talents were so greatly needed. They hoped, also, doubtless, that further/

further study would counteract the undesirable tendencies he was displaying, that science would prove a happy counter-irritant, likely to allay the excess of German metaphysics. But all to no purpose. Renan was too honest. "In his experience science had confirmed the doubts raised by speculation." He knew what was the essential minimum of Catholic belief; and he knew that he did not possess it.

Among all the Professors of St. Sulpice, Renan cherished a lasting sense of gratitude to Le Hir, his teacher of Semitic languages, a Breton, and a man of vast learning as well as a saint. In Renan's estimation he was the most remarkable cleric that France had produced in modern times, and united to the faith of an ultra montane the clear perception of every difficulty which rationalism could suggest, and of all the greatness of every difficulty. Acquainted with the critical labours of the Germans, Le Hir initiated the young seminarist into the study of Hebrew and of German exegesis, and through him Renan became acquainted with the perplexing problems of Biblical criticism. "This initiation" he wrote, "marks an epoch in my mental being." The youthful Celt seemed as if he had discovered his true spiritual Fatherland. "I felt as if I had entered some temple when first I gained the power of realising its purity, its nobility, its morality, its religiousness, if I may take that word and use it in its very highest sense. How noble is the German conception/

conception of man, and of man's life! How far removed from the paltry standpoint which reduces human aims to the mean proportions of mere pleasure or personal benefit! To me it typifies the inevitable reaction of the human mind against the spirit of the eighteenth century, replacing the too realistic thought and material positivism of that period by the purest and most ideal morality." ("Lettres Intimes," p. 251). In his "Souvenirs" Renan has declared that "M. Le Hir determined my career.... I was by instinct a philologist and I found in him the man best fitted to develop this aptitude. Whatever claim to the title of savant I may possess I owe to M. Le Hir. I often think, even, that whatever I have not learnt from him has been imperfectly acquired." ("Souvenirs," p. 252).

There was not one of the objections of rationalism which escaped the attention of Le Hir, but he did not make the slightest concessions to any of them, for he never felt the shadow of a doubt as to the truth of orthodoxy. "Holding entirely aloof from natural philosophy and the scientific spirit, the first condition of which is to have prior faith and to reject that which does not come spontaneously, he remained in a state of equilibrium which would have been fatal to convictions less urgent than his. The supernatural did not excite any repugnance in him. His scales were very nicely adjusted, but in one of them was a weight of unknown quantity - an unshaken faith. Whatever might have/

have been placed in the other, would have seemed light; all the objections in the world would not have moved it a hair's breadth. A water-tight compartment prevented the least infiltration of modern ideas into the secret sanctuary of his heart, within which burnt the small unquenchable light of a tender and sovereign piety. "As my mind," continues Renan, "was not provided with these water-tight compartments, the encounter of these conflicting elements, which in M. Le Hir produced inward peace, led in my case to strange explosions." ("Souvenirs," pp. 240, 242). The master was able, by reason of the inextinguishable flame of piety that burned in his heart to face these difficulties with unshaken faith. It was different with the disciple. Hebrew and Old Testament exegesis completed, or rather ripened and revealed, what ambition and metaphysics had already accomplished.

Chafing against the restraints of an ecclesiastical career, fascinated by the impetuous sweep and vast vistas of German speculation, and infatuated by dreams of glory, Renan yearned for freedom to attempt similar flights of soaring thought, and to attain a niche in the temple of fame. These Semitic and German studies were fruitful in their results. Indeed, they introduced Renan to a new world. The study of Hebrew helped to wipe from his mind what was meretricious in the Dupanloup education, and to make one who was naturally graceful and light of touch, one of the strongest writers of his time. Whilst the earnest and competent work of the scholarly Germans of the period/

period, facing their problems with a thoroughness hardly known in France since the Restoration, and wholly unknown in orthodox Catholic work, was to Renan as the opening of a new era of truth, a new manifestation of "ideal Christianity." It was here, therefore, in St. Sulpice that Renan passed through the gate of liberal learning, into freer regions of thought than those of the great communion to which he belonged. The Germans showed him the possibility of a more liberal exegesis than that taught at St. Sulpice, and he often envied the position of those Protestants who could reconcile their religious spirit with the critical method. But he did not dare to entertain the hope of a similar compromise for himself; his Catholic and Cartesian education precluded such a possibility. Herder's principle had been that the books of the Bible must be read and criticised as human productions. In his "L'Avenir de la Science," that massive production of his early years, Renan declares that "the metaphysical speculations of the French school (excepting, perhaps, Malebranche) have always been paltry and timid..... Theological development has been quite null in France; there is no country in Europe where religious thought has been less active. Strange to say, the very men who have been so delicate, so swift to note the slightest shades of difference in real life, are regular simpletons in metaphysics, and accept without question enormities which to the critical sense are simply revolting.

Religion/

Religion in France has always been a stereotyped form, a dead letter." ("L'Avenir de la Science," pp. 296, 297). "L'Avenir de la Science" glows with ardent belief in the assured progress of reason and its ultimate triumph. "Our creed," Renan declares, "is the reasonableness of progress. God forbid that I should speak slightingly of those who, devoid of the critical sense and impelled by very powerful religious motives, are attached to one or other of the great established systems of faith. I love the simple faith of the peasant, the serious conviction of the priest.... The first basis of that sort of Catholicism is scorn, malediction, and irony; malediction against anything which has caused the human mind to progress and which has broken the old chain. Compelled to hate whatever has aided the modern spirit to shake itself free of Catholicism, these frenzied partisans are full of hatred for everything and everybody." ("L'Avenir de la Science," p. 410). The result of his new studies was a revelation to him. His Semitic research, above all, convinced him that inspiration, as the church conceived it, was out of the question, and that the Bible must bear the same critical treatment as any other great literature. He came to recognise the fallacy of the circular argument of dogmatic Catholicism, that the infallibility of the church rests on that of the Bible, but that the infallibility of the Bible rests on that of the church. The upshot of it all was that "the/

"the traditional thesis" as to the date, authorship and inerrancy of the ~~sacred~~ books + a thesis which Renan had been taught to consider essential to Christianity - soon grew incredible to him. His own statement on the matter is that "The careful study of the Bible which I have undertaken, while revealing to me many historical and aesthetic treasures proved to me also that it was not more exempt than any other ancient book from contradictions, inadvertencies, and errors. It contains, fables, legends, and other traces of purely human composition.... The mildest Catholic doctrine as to inspiration will not allow one to admit that there is any marked error in the sacred text, or any contradiction in matters which do not relate either to faith or morality.... This theory of inspiration, implying a supernatural fact, becomes impossible to uphold in the presence of the decided ideas of our common sense." ("Souvenirs," pp. 255-257). Renan anticipated the well-known experience of Bishop Colenso. The church, he says, taught that the Bible was infallible. If there was a single error in the Bible, the church was wrong. But the claim of the church was to be infallible. If the church was in error on a single point, the edifice of the Christian religion fell to the ground. But he could not shut his eyes to what seemed to him clear inconsistencies in the Bible. The more closely he studied the sacred books the more certain and undeniable became the discrepancies, the contradictions, between these books themselves, and between/

between them and the ascertained facts of history. It was this discovery that made Renan an unbeliever. He maintained that he would not have been troubled by difficulties about the orthodox dogmas or by the moral perplexities of revelation. It was criticism, Biblical and historical, which shook his faith. When, after a time, he surrendered all faith in miracles, it was not on account of any *a priori* conviction of the impossibility of the miraculous, but because he found no sufficient proof of a single miracle having occurred. The conclusion of the whole matter for Renan was that his direct study of Christianity, taken up in the most serious spirit, did not leave him faith enough to be a sincere priest; while, on the other hand, it inspired him with too much respect to allow his resigning himself to playing an odious comedy with beliefs most worthy of respect.

Under the light of his new found knowledge, and applying it to the Bible narratives, in his own words, "the supernatural faded away; every form of Christian dogma persisted; of religion itself nothing was left save some scattered moral elements, without transcendent source, or divine sanction, or scope beyond this world. My inward feelings were not changed, but each day a stitch in the tissue of my faith was broken." Unfortunately his philological research had made it increasingly difficult to accept the dogmas which had hitherto been the fixed stars of his thought. At first he had only been troubled by metaphysical difficulties, but such could be evaded, or at least, it was possible to cherish the illusion of evading them; the study of the/

the original texts now revealed to him the existence of "inadvertencies, errors, and contradictions." Once these hard facts had been faced, there was no honest way of shunning them, and Renan's conscience was a prey to unremitting distress. For a time, however, he hoped against all hope that it would remain possible to reconcile them with his faith; and may be Renan would have succumbed to his intense desire for such reconciliation, to his passionate love of the church in which he had been brought up, to his fear of saddening the hearts of his teachers and of his beloved mother; he might have succeeded in persuading himself that it was his duty to silence the doubts of his mind and to follow the road which the traditions of his family, his own inclination, and fate itself had traced for him from the beginning. Even the best of men have at times been tempted to sacrifice the essential duty of their life to some immediate duty the importance of which was more tangible. Not so Renan. We have already noticed the potent influence Malebranche had on Renan during his earlier studies at Issy Seminary. He still adhered to the rules of Malebranche, whose basal principle had been that man's sole duty was to follow the light of reason and to stand before the truth, free from all personal bias, and ready to let himself be led whether the balance of demonstration wills it. Renan's passage from orthodoxy to scepticism was a painful following of what he conceived to be the path of truth. His vacillation during the whole period of his stay at St. Sulpice was continuous and distressing. It was a struggle between heart and head, in which the heart often deluded the head with agreeable sophistries/

sophistries and subterfuges, only to be again inexorably brought to terms by implacable reason. In the inmost recesses of his mind Renan was beginning to be disquieted by a doubt whether his theory of the universe and the conclusions at which he was arriving concerning the dogmas of Roman Catholicism, could be honestly reconciled with the taking up of even the slenderest ecclesiastical functions. The film was falling off from his eyes, and the student was beginning to see that God's heaven was higher and God's earth wider than the Catholic Church. Renan confided his difficulties to his director, who replied in just the same terms as Gosselin at Issy: "Inroads upon your faith! Pay no heed to that; keep straight on your way. These temptations are but afflictions like unto others." The doubt that is only skin deep can be salved over by pleasant ointments of this kind; but, for a Newman, a Clough, or a Renan, in whose estimation to believe rightly is the highest function of life, the questions of doubt are the voice of God within the soul. The authorities at St. Sulpice Renan found extremely deficient in wisdom and sympathy. They endeavoured to hurry him into binding himself by the irrevocable tie of holy orders. So far as the first steps of the ecclesiastical state were concerned, he obeyed his director, yet he confesses "when I was going up to the altar to receive the tonsure, I was already terribly exercised by doubt, but I was forced onwards, and I was told that it was always well to obey. I went forward, therefore, but God is my witness, that my inmost/

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inmost thoughts and the vow which I had made to myself was that I would take for my part the truth which is the hidden God, that I would devote myself to its research, renouncing all that is profane, or that is calculated to make us deviate from the holy and divine goal to which nature calls us." ("Souvenirs" Appendix, p. 354).

After yielding so far as to accept the tonsure, Renan was urged by his director to be ordained to the sub-diaconate, which would have bound him as by a vow to a single life and permitted no turning back again, but he refused point blank. The holy week of 1845 he found particularly distressing, for, as he wrote to a fellow Seminarist, "every incident which bears me away from my ordinary life revives all my anxious doubts." Renan might now have claimed for himself the phrase, in which Cardinal Newman described his position: "I was on my deathbed as regards my membership with the Catholic Church, though at the time I became aware of it only by degrees." (Newman's *Apologia* p. 257).

The vacation of that year he spent as usual in Brittany; there, he says, the grains of sand of his doubts accumulated into a mass. What follows can best be described in his own words: "The task of logic was done, that of honesty was about to begin. For nearly two months I was Protestant; I could not make/

make up my mind to abandon altogether the great religious tradition which had hitherto been part of my life. I mused upon future reforms, when the philosophy of Christianity, disengaged of all superstitious dross, would be left the great school of humanity and its guide to the future. My readings in German gave nurture to these ideas. Herder was the German writer with whom I was most familiar. His vast views delighted me, and I said to myself, with keen regret, if I could but think like a Herder and remain a priest, a Christian preacher. But with my notions at once precise and respectful of Catholicism, I could not succeed in conceiving any honourable way of remaining a Catholic priest while retaining my opinion. I was a Christian, after the fashion of a professor of Halle or Tübingen. An inward voice told me, "Thou art no longer Catholic; thy robe is a lie; cast it off." I was a Christian, however; for all the papers of that date which I have preserved, give clear expression to the feeling which I have since endeavoured to portray in the "Vie de Jésus;" I mean, a keen regard for the evangelic ideal, and for the character of the Founder of Christianity. The idea that in abandoning the church I should remain faithful to Jesus got hold of me, and if I could have brought myself to believe in apparitions I should certainly have seen Jesus saying to me, "Abandon me to become my disciple." This thought sustained and emboldened me. I may say that from that moment my "Vie de Jésus" was mentally written. Belief in the eminent personality/

personality of Jesus, - which is the spirit of that book, - had been my mainstay in my struggle against theology. Jesus has in reality ever been my Master. In following out the truth, at the cost of any sacrifice, I was convinced that I was following Him and obeying the most important of His precepts." ("Souvenirs" pp. 272-274).

Renan's years of study at Issy and St. Sulpice, externally so happy and calm, busy with hard but congenial work, were now overshadowed by the sense of the impending crisis. It was evident from the first that he would not sacrifice his freedom of thought. "There are two kinds of intellectual freedom," he declared, when writing to his sister Henriette in 1843, "one is bold, presumptuous, carping at all reverence. That kind is forbidden me by my priestly office, and even were I to embrace a different life, my conscience and my sincere love of truth would still forbid it me. So there can be no question of that sort of independence in my case. There is another kind, wiser, respecting all things worthy of respect, despising neither persons nor beliefs, inquiring calmly and straightforwardly, using the reason God has bestowed because it was given for that purpose, never accepting nor rejecting any opinion on merely human authority. This is a freedom permitted to all men." ("Lettres Intimes," pp. 117, 118).

As he advanced in his studies he realised more and more clearly/

clearly that the results of independent speculation and research were incompatible with orthodoxy. The clerical habit became intolerable, now that it covered a creed so incongruous. By training him in comparative philology and criticism, and by encouraging the scrutiny of the sacred writings, the priests of St. Sulpice had placed in the hands of their young disciple the most formidable instrument of negation. His quick intelligence, lucid, penetrating, and sincere, perceived at once the weakness of the theological structure upon which rested the whole weight of Catholic doctrine. The Romish doctrine of a mechanical inspiration crumbled away beneath his feet. With it disappeared the fundamental dogma of the church's infallibility. Reared under the influences of Catholicism, educated for the priesthood, yet by reason of his natural genius, Renan began to think. Forces that utterly subjugate and enslave the mind of mediocrity, sometimes rouse to thought and action the superior soul. He began to think a dangerous thing it was for a Catholic to do. Thought leads to doubt, doubt to investigation, investigation to truth - the enemy of all superstition. He lifted the Catholic extinguisher from the light and flame of reason. He found that his mental vision was improved. He read the Scriptures for himself, examined them as he did other books not claiming to be inspired. Possessing a sincere and penetrating intellect, Renan could not, like so many people, learned people among them, keep his religious ideas and his reason in separate water-tight compartments. Men of this sort /

sort Renan likened to mother-o'-pearl shells of François de Sales "which are able to live in the sea without tasting a drop of water." Yet he realised the comfort of such a method. "I see around me, " he says, "men of pure and simple lives whom Christianity has had the power to make virtuous and happy..... But I have noticed that none of them have the critical faculty, for which let them bless God."

Renan had already demonstrated the sterilising effect of orthodoxy in his work on "Averroës and Averroism", which brought him his first reputation as a thinker. He well understood the contentment which, springing sometimes from dulness of mind or lack of sensitiveness, excludes all doubt and all problems.

Three considerations, however, held him back: the instinctive horror of a pious soul at the thought of breaking with the church and the religion of his youth; his love for his mother, who had set her heart on seeing him a priest; and his evident vocation to the clerical life, his unfitness for any other. "Even if Christianity were but a dream, the priesthood would always be a type of the Divine," he wrote to Henriette as early as September 1842. Henriette's influence, on the other hand, as we shall see later on, was wholly on the side of spiritual enfranchisement.

But the great crisis of his career, to which all had been leading up, and which was indeed the directive influence on the events that were to follow, was now close at hand. On 6th. September 1845 he wrote to his director a letter, in which he related at some length, and in what he describes as "a somewhat inconsistent and feverish tone, the long story of his inward struggles," intimating that he was at times both Catholic and Rationalist," and declaring his decision - "Holy Orders I can never take, for once a priest always a priest." On the score of his unalterable need for freedom in the intellectual life, he announced, after much painful conflict with the claims of the past, that he could not go forward to the priesthood. He wrote in the same strain to Dupanloup. French divines were narrow, forensic, curiously ignorant of the laws upon which ecclesiastical growth had gone forward. Time and change they did not allow among their categories; they assumed that all men everywhere moved on the same level of understanding. When, therefore, Renan brought his new idea of science face to face with their old theology, conflict was inevitable and speedily broke out. Of the modern criticism of Scripture Dupanloup was profoundly ignorant; "Scripture, in his eyes, was only useful in supplying preachers with eloquent passages."

Tactless and choleric in temperament, when informed confidentially of the struggle that was going on in Renan, he came boiling over with anger and accused him of giving way to temptation because proud of his learning. The best thing he could/

could do would be to leave the masters whom he was deceiving. The interview between them Renan describes thus:- "I explained the nature of my doubts, and he informed me of the judgment which, from the orthodox point of view, he would feel it his duty to pass upon them. The priests of St. Sulpice were not nearly so emphatic in their views, and held that I must still regard myself as tempted to renounce the faith. M. Dupanloup was very severe, and plainly told me that it was not a question of temptations against the faith, but of a complete loss of faith; secondly, that I was beyond the pale of the Church; thirdly, that in consequence I could not partake of any Sacrament, and that he advised me not to take part in any outward religious ceremony; fourthly, that I could not, without being guilty of deception, continue another day to pass as an ecclesiastic, and so forth. In all that did not relate to the appreciation of my condition he was as kind as anyone could possibly be." ("Souvenirs," Appendix - letter to Abbe Cognat, pp. 349, 350.)

Renan resolved to yield to the stern decree of Dupanloup. On 6th October 1845, three days before John Henry Newman received "admission into the One Fold of Christ," Renan went down the steps of the Seminary of St. Sulpice never again to remount them in clerical garb. With a courage and an honesty that are to his credit, he quitted a calling whose obligations he could not meet, and whose rewards he could not honourably win. The struggle had been long and bitter. When he left St. Sulpice for /

for the last time, it was not pride, levity, nor wordly wisdom that had won the day for free-thought, but conscience alone, and at a heavy cost.

Renan grows even more attractive with the lapse of years. At this distance and in historical perspective, the break with his church seems even more courageous than it did then. Lamennais, Tyrrell, and Döllinger, had after all a host of eager disciples to define and explain their motives; Renan stood alone without recorded achievement behind him. He departed from the Seminary, leaving the faith which he had once hoped to teach. It was with Renan as with the patriarch of old, "when with his staff he passed over Jordan." He parted with all that his heart loved, and turned his face towards a strange land. He went with the doubt whether he should have bread to eat or raiment to put on. "Ceux que me connaissent," he wrote to his Confessor, "avoueront, j'espère, que ce n'est pas l'intérêt qui m'a éloigné du Christianisme. Tous mes intérêts les plus chers ne devaient ils pas m'engager à le trouver vrai ? Les considérations temporelles Contre lesquelles j'ai à lutter eussent suffi pour en persuader bien d'autres; mon coeur a besoin du Christianisme; l'Evangile sera toujours ma morale, l'Eglise a fait mon . éducation, je l'aime. Ah! que ne puis - je continuer à me dire son fils! Je la quitte malgré moi... Le Christianisme suffit à toutes mes facultés, excepté une seule, la plus exigeante de toutes, parce qu'elle est de droit juge de toutes les autres."

In his transition from Christian faith to an exclusively scientific/

scientific career, there was nothing of the convulsion which preceded the revolt of Lamennais. Renan was yet unpledged and had fewer ties to break: moreover, Lamennais had thrown himself into a great cause in which he believed the interests of humanity to be at stake; Renan desired nothing better than to leave humanity to cherish its old beliefs, while he and those who sympathised with him philosophised at leisure under their breath. So he came out of the conflict without a scar, though with wounds, which, according to his subsequent admission, still bled inwardly.

It had been a severe contest for him between ecclesiastical authority and reason. We must not grumble, however, Renan reminds us, at having too much unrest and antagonism. The great object of life is the development of the mind, and this requires liberty. The worst type of state, according to him, is the theocratic state, or the ancient pontifical dominion, or any modern replica of these in which dogma reigns supreme. He found it impossible to reconcile the Catholic faith with free and honest thought.

In Catholicism he saw a bar of iron which would not reason nor bend. The practical dilemma was presented to him of unquestioning obedience to an infallible Church on the one hand, or the attitude of libre - penseur on the other. It was the harsh, unrelenting dogmatism of the Roman Church that drove Renan out of its fold. He loved the moral beauty of Catholic doctrine (which in Renan's eyes, let us remember, never appeared ridiculous or jejune, as it did in the eyes of Voltaire) but he dreaded its narrowness. "I can only return to it," he writes, by/

by amputation of my faculties, by definitely stigmatising my reason and condemning it to perpetual silence."

The crisis when it came was a purely intellectual one, The priesthood had no repulsion for him; none of its moral obligations seemed to him burdensome; he looked forward to it with pleasure. The life of the world seemed terrible to him; the life of the Church was sweet. He had no taste for trifling or frivolity. But by training him in comparative philology and criticism, and by encouraging the scrutiny of the sacred writings, the priests of St. Sulpice had placed in the hands of their young disciple the most formidable weapon of negation. All that he had learned at Issy of natural science and philology served to reinforce the doubts inspired by historical and linguistic criticism as to the infallibility of the Church and the Scriptures, and the teaching which makes the Christian revelation the central fact of history and the explanation of the universe. It was a heart-breaking process. since it was to carry disappointment and dismay, not only to the teachers he venerated but to the mother whom he tenderly loved; yet not for a moment did he hesitate to take the step imposed on him by honesty and conscience.

Renan, although he broke off his career in the Church and his connection with organised religion, retained, nevertheless, much of the priestly character all his life. He never ceased to carry the surplice under the academic gown; he was a priest in/

in every fibre of his nature, though he could not minister at the altar. He confesses, "I have learned several things, but I have changed in no wise as to the general system of intellectual and moral life. My habitation has become more spacious, but it still stands on the same ground. I look upon my estrangement from orthodoxy as only a change of opinion concerning an important historical question, a change which does not prevent me from dwelling on the same foundations as before." It was this fundamental sincerity, and not the love of pleasure, not revolt, not sensuality, not even the love of liberty, but the most genuine and intense religion that severed him from the Seminary of St. Sulpice and sent him out into the world to earn his bread.

He left the Church without hatred and anger. From any violent rebound of feeling, from any bitterness against his former ideals, he was protected by two things - the ardour of his own passion for knowledge and a certain generous and grateful quality of nature in him. His clerical teachers, however they might have failed to impress him intellectually, had won his affections and it would seem that he also had won theirs. He obeyed the sole commandment of an enlightened conscience which forbade him to commit the sacrilege of serving a God who still possessed his heart, but no longer dominated his reason.

His break with the Church made him an enemy of all superstition, and/

and his writings raised against him the hatred of the Catholic Clergy, who regarded him as a deserter. In the customary terms of heated theological debate he was styled an atheist. This was grossly unfair. As a matter of fact, Renan was one of the most profoundly religious minds of his time. His early religious sentiments remained in essence, if not in form, with him throughout his life. These were always associated with the tender memories he had of his mother and beloved sister and his virtuous teachers, the priests in Tréguier. Much of the Breton mysticism clung to his soul, and much of his philosophy is a restated, rationalised form of his early beliefs.

The feeling, as of one going out on the open sea, which had beforehand agitated J.H Newman, was experienced after the fact by Renan - "The days which followed were the darkest in my life. I was isolated from the whole world, without a friend, an adviser, or an acquaintance, without anyone to appeal to about me . . . Here I am alone in the world, and a stranger to it".- ("Souvenirs", Appendix p.344).

Dark days, indeed, followed Renan's separation from the Church; - solitude and trial, which might have been unbearable, but for the clear purpose which guided his mind like a star in the night.

A Celt, idealistic, his rich imagination haunted with legendary/

legendary lore, but with a strain of Gascon scepticism in him; a Catholic priest by training and vocation, lofty in purpose, and disinterested; a rationalist, who never fully shook off the yoke of Descartes and Malebranche; an enthusiastic disciple of the Germans in religion, metaphysics, and scholarship; such was the young man who, in 1848, freed from all bonds, began the wonderful career that culminated in the appearance of his "Vie de Jésus", the great task which had floated before Renan's mind during his studies at St. Sulpice and ever since he quitted that Seminary, and which had acquired consistency during years of preparatory study carried on in the midst of multifarious intellectual and literary labours.

## CHAPTER VII.

### HENRIETTE RENAN'S INFLUENCE.

#### SUMMARY OF CHAPTER.

Renan's "Ma Soeur Henriette".

Her fine intellect and great force of character.

Henriette's early life - discordant elements in the home -  
her sympathy with her father - his tragic end.

Abandons inclination to a conventional life.

Teaches in Paris - removes to Poland.

Correspondence between brother and sister.

Foundations of her faith shaken.

Anxiety lest her brother should enter the priesthood.

Attracted to German thought - introduces her brother to  
philosophy of Herder, Hegel, and others.

Illustrative excerpts from Correspondence.

Renan's rejection of an ecclesiastical career.

Brother and sister reside together in Paris -

union of their minds - Henriette's wide knowledge of  
history - her invaluable aid in research - acts as her  
brother's amanuensis.

Renan acknowledges his debt to Henriette in the matter of  
form and style.

"A radical factor in my intellectual existence".

Henriette accompanies him on the Phoenician Expedition.

She urges him to write the "Vie de Jésus".

His daily confidante regarding progress of his work.

Her/

**Her counsels and criticism.**

**The "Vie de Jésus" a memorial of Henriette -**  
**her legacy to Ernest Renan.**

**Henriette's death - Renan's dedication of his book to her.**  
**Panegyric on Henriette in "Ma Soeur Henriette".**

An investigation into the influences that were brought to bear on Renan would be incomplete were attention not directed to the very potent influence upon him of his noble and sympathetic sister, Henriette.

True, he makes but few and scanty references to her in his "Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse", yet in the preface to that work, and doubtless as an atonement for this reticence regarding her, he speaks of Henriette as "the person who had the greatest influence on my life", and as his "invaluable friend". (Preface to "Souvenirs", p.X.).

In 1862, nevertheless, Renan wrote with rare tenderness and charm, for an intimate circle of friends, a brief memoir of his sister, entitled "Henriette Renan. Souvenir pour ceux qui l'ont connue". Only one hundred copies of this pathetic monograph were privately printed at the time when the impression of her death was fresh upon him.

It was not issued to the general public, in spite of urgent entreaties, until after Renan's death. He felt that to put the appreciation of his sister in a book to be sold, would be like sending her portrait to an auction room.

He shrank from exposing ("je ne dois pas exposer") a memory which was sacred to him to the criticism which became the right of any buyer of a book. "My sister was so modest, she had such an aversion to the noise of the world, that I should have fancied I saw her reproaching me from her grave, if I had surrendered these pages to the public." (Preface to "Souvenirs", p.X.).

In 1896 there was published by Heinemann a translation into English by Lady Mary ~~Loyd~~ of this brief memoir, as well as of the letters. ("Lettres Intimes") with their preoccupied prolixities and their untiring interest in expatiation on his own affairs, that passed between brother and sister during the most critical period of Ernest Renan's career, namely 1842-1845. The work was entitled "Brother and Sister".

The brief sketch of Henriette Renan in the translation of but sixty eight pages, is one of the most beautiful and tender pieces of writing that ever proceeded from Renan's pen.

Indeed, it may be called his most exquisite work, one of the purest masterpieces of French prose, and in it he has given his sister's portrait to posterity and made us share his loss. Jean Pommier describes it as "la plus sulpicienne des productions de Renan" (Pommier's Renan, p.96).

The five brief chapters contain recollections of early days, of Henriette's return from Poland, their life together, the anguish caused by the brother's marriage, and then the Syrian expedition ending in her death. He recalls her learning, her taste and skill in composition, her appreciation of beauty in art and nature, her simple goodness, her self-sacrifice, her retiring disposition, her forceful personality, her existence and succession of acts of devotion, and her pure and lofty soul. The little book is, as Jules Simon remarks, a masterpiece.

Gabriel Monod in his volume on "les Maitres de l'Histoire; Renan, Taine, Michelet", writes, "Dans le petit opuscule biographique consacré à sa soeur Henriette, la plus belle de ses œuvres/

oeuvres, et un des plus purs chefs-d'oeuvre de la prose fran<sup>s</sup>aise, E. Renan a gravé pour la postérité l'image de cette femme supérieure et dit avec une éloquence poignante ce que sa perte fut pour lui". (G Monod's Renan, pp.17,18).

Here and there one may gather details from it that can serve no other purpose than to widen the range of our sympathies with the writer.

The impression left upon the mind of the reader of these pages, the most touching surely that ever came from the heart of the writer, is that Henriette Renan must have been a person of most transcend-ent merit, a woman as remarkable for her force of mind and character as for her passionate tenderness of heart. Her plain features hid an exquisite soul, and her devotedness to her brother knew no bounds. For the kindest things in life he was indebted to his sister. She had a fine mind and a character of unyielding firmness. By nature she was one of those persons who have been described as "Upright and downstraight", qualities in which her illustrious brother was deficient in his direct relations with others occasionally, although he could in some things evince Breton obstinacy, and did show extraordinary firm-ness in following the course of life that suited him, in preserv-ing his integrity, and in never allowing himself to be shaken in the seat of reason. This sister of Renan's was destined, as he himself wrote in his pathetic monograph, to serve as a pillar of fire to him, lighting his way in darkness and guiding him in the direction in which he should go.

Nothing/

Nothing can seriously discount the force of his testimony to her influence on him as a writer and a thinker. Into the path of reason, Renan was led by Henriette, to whom he pays a tribute that has the perfume of a perfect flower.

She was her brother's wise and firm adviser in religion and in literature. "The general plan of my career", he says, "the scheme of inflexible sincerity I had mapped out, was so essentially the combined product of our two consciences, that, had I been tempted to fail in any particular of it, she, like a second self, would have been found beside me to call me back to duty. Thus her influence in my mental sphere was very great". ("Ma Soeur Henriette": memoir P.26). "She was a radical factor in my intellectual existence, and with her a part of my actual being passed away. On all Philosophical subjects we had grown to see with the same eyes and feel as with one heart". ("Ma Soeur Henriette", p.28).

Brought up in Tréguier in an environment full of poetry and dreamy sadness, Henriette's strong inclination was towards a life of religious retirement. But there were discordant elements in the Renan household. The father was a republican; the mother entertained Royalist sympathies. Henriette was extremely sensitive to the conflicting forces in the home, and with a natural instinct championed the father, disappointed as she was, with those who misunderstood the nature so akin to her own. "My sister", writes the brother, "was the hourly spectator/

spectator of the ravages made by anxiety and misfortune on that good and gentle spirit, strayed into occupations of an order to which he was utterly unfitted. This bitter experience led to her precocious development. By the time she was twelve years old, she was grave in thought and appearance, borne down with anxiety, haunted by anxious thoughts and melancholy presentiments". ("Ma Soeur Henriette". p.9.).

The domestic drama developed into a tragedy; failure succeeded failure. A fateful day dawned - the father's boat returned without its skipper. A corpse had been found on the Breton coast at Erqui. It proved to be the father's body. Henriette's grief was profound. She had inherited her father's nature. Her love for him had been most tender. Her every mention of his name was accompanied with tears. The confiding daughter was persuaded that his sorely-tried soul stood justified and pure for ever in the sight of God. ("Ma Soeur Henriette", p.11.). To Henriette, her parent's death was, however, not a crushing sorrow only, but also a challenge to carry on the responsibilities left by a father whom the girl had cherished and understood. A young person of remarkable strength of character, she was henceforth morally the head of the household. She determined to help her mother, to educate her little brother Ernest, and she made it a solemn duty for twenty years to clear off creditors' claims, and did so little by little at regular intervals and at the cost of bitter sacrifices. Her mother and she along with Ernest removed shortly after the father's/

father's death from Tréguier to Lannion. She banished from her mind the idea, fostered by the Catholic atmosphere of Treguier, of following her early dreams of a conventional life. But for her brother she would undoubtedly have adopted a state of life in evident accordance with her native piety and the customs of her country. Her inclination had indeed been specially directed toward the Convent of Ste Anne at Lannion.

"Très pieuse, elle serait entrée," writes Jean Pommier, "si elle avait suivi son inclination, au convent de Sainte Anne, qui joignait le soin des malades à l'education des demoiselles. Car elle se sentait du goût pour l'enseignement. Mais, dès ce moment, elle comprit qu'elle avait un plus haut devoir: payer les dettes du père, élever Ernest. Elle resta dans le siècle, parce qu'elle se sentait une tendresse sans bornes pour son jeune frère." (Jean Pommier's Renan, p.6). Had she but followed her bent of mind, she might perhaps have worked more successfully for her own ultimate happiness. But she was too good a daughter and too devoted a sister to prefer her own peace to her duty. The mainstay of her family, she shaped her life for its sustenance and her brother's advancement. "From that time forth," writes the brother, "she looked upon herself as responsible for my future." ("Ma Soeur Henriette," p. 13). "Henriette attached herself to me with all the ardour of a shy and tender nature, endued with an immense longing to love something." ("Ma Soeur Henriette," p.10). She watched with a sort of motherly solicitude the progress of/

of her young brother, whose gifts she had already recognised. She was one of the cardinal shaping influences in his life. It was her strong attachment to him that determined his and her way in life. Henriette Renan was born to guide, to soothe, and to educate, and when she was but twelve years old she began the education of her brother. She watched over him as a child with intense affection. Her devotion, indeed, knew no bounds. She excused her jealous affection for her brother by saying, "Je t'ai aimé comme on n'aime pas." What neither of the pair ever lacked was the deep and unchanging love of each for the other. To her Ernest was her "sweet idol," to him she was the friend of his very heart.

Renan presents us with a very charming and touching picture of those happiest moments in their lives, when on winter evenings they would wend their way to church together, the tall sister of seventeen walking closely beside the little brother of five, and completely sheltering him from the biting cold under the ample folds of her Breton cloak. "What a delight it was to me," he writes, "to trample the snow, thus sheltered on every side." That was, as Mdm. James Darmesteter so beautifully indicates, still to continue to be their relationship in the years that were in front; "on the one side a tender guidance, on the other a confident and happy clinging; and, as long as she lived, the cloak of Henriette Renan comforted her brother in this frosty world." (Darmesteter's Renan, p. 18).

There is the pathetic story, too, which Renan relates of Henriette's tears over her brother's threadbare clothes, and of the girl's resolution to be through life as far as she could his protector from poverty and hardship. Henriette Renan would appear to have had no small measure of the temper of the Brontës in her. Like them, she sprang from a strong and taciturn stock; her reserve, like theirs, was but the mask of affections all the stronger from habitual repression; and her nature, too, was at once inclined to the widest intellectual freedom and attempered to the lowliest offices of human service.

Teaching appealed to her, and it was this profession she chose, thinking in course of time to pay off debts and to help to keep her mother and small brother. The management of the studies in a scholastic establishment in Paris was entrusted to her. "She used to work," writes the brother, "sixteen hours a day. She passed all the public examinations prescribed by the regulations. This labour did not have the same effect on her mind as it might on a more mediocre intelligence. Instead of exhausting, it strengthened it, and produced a prodigious mental development. Her information, already very considerable, became exceptional. She made a study of modern history, and in later years a few words of mine would suffice to enable her to seize the sense of the most delicate criticism." ("Ma Soeur Henriette" p.18).

Ernest/

Ernest Renan was, meantime winning honours in his Breton School. He had been accepted as a student at the Seminary of St. Nicholas du Chardonnet, Paris. Here Henriette came to visit him. It was indeed a satisfaction to the sister that her young brother was again under her wing and in a position where his genius, which she had early divined, would be recognised. She was however beginning to entertain feelings of regret because of the clerical bent which his education was taking. She beheld with considerable misgivings his progress towards the altar. How could a boy of fifteen appreciate the sacrifice demanded of him? The lips said "Abrenuntio," but the youth knew not what he renounced. Henriette's instinctive fear was lest he might cut himself off from liberty; but meanwhile she said not a word that might turn him from his chosen ecclesiastical career. Her own Catholic connection was beginning to weaken. Already, at Lannion, on the very morrow of her religious vocation resisted, she had begun to doubt the truth of Christianity. Considering her environment, and the instruction she had received from her earliest days, this independence of thought is remarkable, and shows the great strength of character which in the years to come was so noteworthy. In Paris she found time to read modern books which opened her eyes to the "historic insufficiency of every particular dogma," according to her brother's account. "The paradise of her old dreams," writes Renan, "appeared to her as a poor piece of man's work - a projection of the human fancy; and/

and the adorable Mary, the hierarchies of the saints, in whom she had believed, seemed so many sacred and pitiful ghosts. But out of the ashes of this old faith, reverently lifted on to the high places of the soul, there leapt a brighter flame, a new religion, without text or dogma - a belief in the vast order of the universe, speeding through cycles of time towards some Divine intent, and furthered in its grand and gracious plan by every private act of mercy or renouncement."

Life had shaken the very foundations of her faith. Her own thoughts and studies had brought her thus early to negative views regarding the Catholic religion, though she had steadily avoided unsettling her brother's mind with her doubts.

Her life in Paris was very miserable. Her reserved nature repelled friendship, and her strong features found no admirers. Like Charlotte and Emily Brontë in Brussels, an acute homesickness made her days a continual unhappiness.

Finding her situation in the capital distasteful, she accepted a post as governess in the family of Count André Zamoyski at the castle of Clemensow in Poland, which involved exile from her family and country during ten years. By the Polish noble family she was held in high esteem, and she travelled much with them in Europe, visiting Warsaw, Vienna, Dresden, Venice, Florence/

Florence, and Rome, to which last city she was specially attached. There, her brother informs us, she learned to face with much serenity "the separation which every philosophic spirit is obliged to make between the basis of religion and its particular forms," and to view with indulgence the aspects of "silliness and puerility" which belonged to the modern papacy.

With her pupil, she paid frequent visits also to Germany, and acquired a strong taste for German philosophical speculation. The result was a deep sympathy with her brother in his efforts at this stage to shake himself free from the fetters of Catholicism. The correspondence between Henriette and Ernest Renan while she sojourned in Poland lightened those dreary years of her life. When, on leaving for Poland, she bade farewell to her brother, little did she dream that from that remote region she was about to become in an even more familiar sense than ever before his confidante, "far more intimately his guide and true Egeria, than in the happiest days of their companionship. All that Jacqueline Pascal was to the great tormented soul of her brother, Henriette was gradually to grow to Ernest Renan." (Darmesteter's Renan, p. 36).

During this whole period of painful uncertainty in Renan's career, Henriette was through her correspondence his constant guide and comforter. "Her exquisite letters," says the brother, "were at this moment decisive for my life. They were my consolation and support." ("Ma Soeur Henriette," p. 29). "In the indecisions/

indecisions that played over the surface of a fundamentally stedfast nature, Renan somewhat resembled one conception of Hamlet," says Prof. L. Freeman Mott, "and Henriette, with her practical good sense and self-sacrificing affection, was far more to him than ever Horatio was to the Dane." From her Polish Steppes, Henriette Renan exercised a most potent influence upon her distant brother, and her letters reveal a mind almost equal, a moral nature superior, to his own. She lived in his life, directing and encouraging him, and the brother in return wrote to her with the utmost frankness and freedom from restraint.

"You are perhaps," he says, "the only person to whom I tell my thoughts, beside one single friend, my faithful and understanding Berthelot. When I talk to other people, I simply agree with them."

Henriette attracted his attention to German thought ("les penseurs allemands," as he writes to her), bringing him into contact with the philosophy especially of Herder and Hegel whose sway over him was to be so powerful. "Je crus enter dans un temple," he was constrained to confess. Meanwhile Renan's mind was being agitated by the question whether in going forward to the priesthood with its obligations and its bonds he was doing what was honest and what was just to reason. In his correspondence with Henriette, from time to time he indicated his mental and spiritual difficulties, and she in turn replied frankly declaring that/

that her sympathies were not with a priestly vocation, although she scrupulously refrained from endeavouring to influence her brother against his original purpose. Not one word from her ever urged him to renounce his belief, not one argument did she advance against creed or priestly career. The final step, she tells him, whilst he is still hesitating on the brink, ought to come, not from external influences, but from enlightened reason and free will. Ernest Renan's own admission is, "she had outstripped me in the path of doubt, and her faith in Catholicism had completely disappeared, but she had always refrained from exercising the slightest influence over me in that respect." Of the momentous change that had taken place in her own life she whispered not a syllable in the hearing of her brother. If he was to go the same way, he must find it out for himself.

There appears, therefore, to be no truth in the allegation that has sometimes been made, that Henriette Renan influenced her brother in advance by conveying to him German rationalistic ideas which she had assimilated during her visits to Germany. What she then did, with her already clear view of the untenability of the Christian creed, was to warn him earnestly against binding himself down to the priestly vocation, inasmuch as it would debar him from the mental freedom which he craved. He with his life-long capacity for cherishing religious sentiments alongside of intellectual disbelief in narratives and dogmas, might possibly have drifted too far but for her quiet pressures.

A strong light is cast on both Henriette and Ernest Renan's personality in the letters that passed between them during this period. Diffuse and somewhat rambling those from the brother's pen are at times, yet they reflect with perfect accuracy the varying emotions produced in him during the severe conflict between Faith and Doubt through which he went. Citations from the mutual correspondence of brother and sister will clearly reveal how their minds were working through those momentous years. For example, in answer to Ernest's letter from Issy, dated September 1842, the sister writes, "ever since I received your letter, my Ernest, I have been pondering it deeply. I cannot help shuddering as I read of the questions which agitate your mind, and realise that you are absorbed by these solemn thoughts at an age when life is generally so frivolous and careless..... Is an ecclesiastic a free agent? Is he not forced to follow the direction of his superiors? I will not contest what you say about the dignity of the office. Truly, if all who entered it took your view, nothing could be greater, more worthy of a noble nature, than to devote one's life to softening sorrow, to preaching and practising the sublime truths of the Gospel.... I only suggest these questions to you; may your reason and your conscience help you to solve them. I have had much experience in life; I love you with all the strength of a devoted heart, and yet

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I shrink from giving any direct advice in this particular." ("Brother and Sister," Correspondence, pp. 88-91). Replying to her from Issy in January 1843, Renan writes, "Your letter has plunged me yet deeper into solemn thought. The picture you draw of the innumerable difficulties to which my choice of the priesthood would expose me is no more than what my own imagination had traced. A distrustful and often bigoted authority, an indissoluble vow, the obligation (if indeed it is one), to follow beaten tracks even if they be tortuous, the frequent necessity of calling those whom one is driven to despise by the name of brother and colleague - all this had occurred to me. I have often wished some decisive blow might fall from one side or the other to end my painful doubts. And oftener still I have rejoiced to think my liberty - the most precious thing we have, and for that reason the hardest to preserve - is still my own." ("Brother and Sister:" Letters, pp. 97, 98).

To this Henriette's answer, dated March 12, 1843, proceeds, "You are perfectly right to say the taste and inclination of each man are the proper basis of any decision as to his ultimate fate.... Yet be sure of this, anxious as I am that your decision should be absolutely free, I am just as resolved to tell you my opinions and my fears without exception - I have never thought of forcing them upon you; I never shall. I desire merely to call your attention to the points which strike me, leaving you the most perfect liberty of action as regards taking my advice."

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In a letter dated May 9, 1844, she says, "Let me beseech you never to join any society which would destroy your liberty of action, thus denying you the enjoyment of your own intellect. Never forget that by the very act of joining such an association you abdicate all right of personal judgment. It would be the bitterest sorrow of my life to see you forced into a line unnatural to you." ("Brother and Sister," Correspondence, pp. 148, 149).

On March 12th, 1843, above the tumult of the conflict that was waging in the soul of Renan, the sister's voice is heard calling, "Courage, then! Go on in truth and wisdom and prudence, and be your choice what it may, at all events you will always be an honest man! Never let your confidence in me waver; be sure I shall always hold it sacred and most dear." ("Brother and Sister," Correspondence, p.109). On August 5th. 1845, she writes, "Brother, Friend, Beloved child! Lean ever on my heart and on my arm, sure that neither will ever fail you.... Listen patiently to all that is said to you, but let nothing shake your resolution. Above all, let nothing induce you to swerve from the path your duty bids you follow." ("Brother and Sister," Correspondence, p. 218). One of the most remarkable of all the wonderful series of letters that passed between Henriette and Ernest Renan, is that dated February 28th. 1845, and written by the sister, in which are debated the brother's plans for/

for entering the priesthood. The letter is too lengthy to quote here. It will be found at p.180 of "Brother and Sister." Canon Barry has characterised it as "a model of passionate but restrained eloquence, not stirring the deep chord of doubt by so much as a finger-tip, but insisting that he cannot act until he has arrived at a "clear and individual decision." Unlike Ernest, the sister knew her own mind, while he could perceive reasons on both sides and was "cruelly perplexed."

But for the vehemence and tenderness of Henriette, Renan would, no doubt, have given way. With her keen insight, her wide outlook, her innate capacity for compromise in a case of conscience, she was for ever exhorting him, remonstrating with him. At times he seemed to have resolved that the doubts which tormented him made it a positive duty to relinquish a career which demanded the most unquestioning faith; then, again, he would go back to the dreams of his boyhood, and half decide to fulfil them. More than once his heart failed. "Ah, Henriette, I am weak!" he cried. But she had no mercy. She saw and felt all that was ignoble and hypocritical in the life and mind of an unbelieving priest. That vocation which Renan beheld on its ideal side only, she saw in all the formidable consequences of its limitless subordination. By the time Renan left the Seminary of St. Sulpice, he had to own that/

that his religious views were completely shaken. He had endured seasons of great mental agony. The struggle he passed through was a severe one between vocation and conviction; and it was owing largely to Henriette that conviction won the day. For his mother's sake, who cherished the dream of seeing him a priest, he longed to be able to gratify her wishes. "I still believe, I still pray," he wrote to Henriette in one of his most bitter moments of torture. "I repeat the Pater with rapture. Pure, simple, artless religion touches me profoundly. ... I feel the perfume of God. Yes, I am pious, fervently pious sometimes, in spite of all my doubts. I sometimes think I could be quite happy in a simple, common life. Then I think of you and I look higher," he wrote to the sister, who fully realised the trial her brother was undergoing. A tremendous relief, indeed, it was to write to her who understood, but was there not something of the child remonstrating against a stronger power - a child who would break away but dare not?

It will be inferred from the correspondence between the brother and sister that Ernest Renan had not Henriette's strength of character; he was lacking in decision, and seemed to need some one to lean upon, some one to decide for him. In point of fact, the brother was very much what his sister made him. Without her untiring help and guiding wisdom it is a question whether the world would ever have heard of Ernest Renan.

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At last, in despair, he confessed the truth to Henriette. He must renounce the priesthood. Renan waited in anxious suspense for her answer. To his intense relief, she gave him consolation and encouragement informing him that she had already preceded him in his views, that she had indeed far outstripped him in the path of doubt, and that her faith in Catholicism had completely disappeared. Religious and ascetic by nature, she had nevertheless attained long before her brother, an advanced liberalism in opinion. "When I had made known to her the doubts which tormented me," he writes, "making me feel it a duty to relinquish a career which indisputably demands the most unquestioning faith, she was overjoyed, and offered her aid to support me on the thorny road." She warmly encouraged him to be done with Christian dogma and to refuse the priesthood, so that in the step which he was contemplating he had the earnest approval of his dear and cultivated sister to counterbalance in some degree at least the regretful anticipations of their simple-minded mother. Henriette's high intelligence Renan acknowledges to have been like a pillar of fire which lighted his path, and on her advice he was confirmed in his resolution which was taken in September 1845.

Henriette herself had already absolutely rejected the supernatural, but she preserved the deepest attachment to the Christian practice. She was a saint, minus the saint's precise faith in religious symbolism and its narrow observances.

"She/

"She would fain have checked my inclination towards the formulated conception of an impersonal Deity and a purely ideal immortality. Without being what is vulgarly called a Deist, she could not tolerate the thought of reducing religion to a mere abstract idea." ("Ma Soeur Henriette," p. 29). Now, however, that the inner workings of the minds of brother and sister had been mutually disclosed, Henriette in almost every epistle encouraged him to refuse the priesthood. It was fortunate at this most critical time, this parting of the ways, that Renan received the assistance of his sister. Partly because of her experience, partly because of her great decision and the simplicity of her character, she saw more clearly than her brother his main duty; there could be no compromise with truth when seen; to evade the dictates of conscience on a matter of fundamental importance was cowardice, however generous the reasons for evasion might be.

It would be futile to imagine what Renan's course would have been without his sister's help and counsel; it is questionable, indeed, whether the "Vie de Jésus" would ever have been written if Henriette's powerful influence had not made itself felt by her brother. All her thoughts, and, in truth, her very life, were given to him in selfless devotion. Renan was honest; and at the other end of Europe there was Henriette ceaselessly encouraging him in the way of honesty.

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At any rate, her unparalleled courage and attachment made it easier for him now to do the only thing which was completely honourable. "The friendship of M. Berthelot, and the approbation of my sister," he says, "were my two chief consolations during this painful period, when the sentiment of an abstract duty towards truth compelled me at the age of three and twenty to alter the course of a career already fairly entered upon." ("Souvenirs" p. 301). "I thank God fervently," wrote Henriette, on Sept. 12. 1845, "for having roused the thoughts which have brought you to this decision before it was too late. Ernest, console yourself in your present position by considering what would be the condition of an upright man, bound by irrevocable vows to teach and impose on others things which his reason, and perhaps his conscience even, forbid him to accept. That might have been your unhappy fate! How can I thank Heaven enough for having saved you from it? Be of good courage, then: the path is full of thorns, I know, but as at the outset, so at every step you will find support in the love and tenderness of your sister, your earliest friend." "Brother! Friend! Beloved child! lean ever on my heart and on my arm, sure that neither will ever fail you... Listen patiently to all that is said to you, but let nothing ever shake your resolution. Above all, let nothing induce you to swerve from the path your duty bids you follow."

"There/

There will be a great clamour over you, of course, but pray do not let that alarm you. What is it, after all, but empty talk, which will be forgotten before many weeks are out, and short-lived anger, easily despised by one who feels his conscience clear, and knows one faithful loving heart approves him!"

The sister's counsels prevailed, and Renan wrote on April 11, 1845, from Paris, "In accordance with your advice, and with what appeared to me my duty, I have refused to become a sub-deacon this year. This step, as you are perhaps aware, is looked on as irrevocable.... I do not remember ever having set forth the reasons which have made me cease to incline towards the ecclesiastical career. I should like to do so today with all the clearness of a frank and upright nature addressed to an intelligence capable of understanding it. Well, here it is in a nutshell. I do not believe enough."

After his secession from the church and having shaken off the dust of orthodoxy, Renan took up tutoring in the Quartier Latin, Paris, and there he struck up that friendship with Marcellin Berthelot which was to be so influential upon his thought. Both were idealists of the purest type, consecrated men, who in early life, had pledged themselves to the service of truth. Henriette returned from Poland, and brother and sister/

sister lived together, as happy a pair as any in the capital. They rented in an out-of-the-way quarter of Paris a small abode and devoted themselves there to a life of thought, of toil, and of frugality that recalls the memory of William and Dorothy Wordsworth.

There brother and sister lived and laboured in harmonious solitude. "L'Appartement de la rue Val-de-Grâce," says Jean Pommier, "d'où Renan partait, chaque jour à heure fixe, pour la Bibliothèque Impériale, avait vue sur le jardin des Carmélites de la rue d'Enfer. Pendant qu'Ernest était à la Bibliothèque, Henriette lui copiait ses manuscrits (ainsi celui de l'Histoire des langues sémitiques), et réglait sa vie sur celle de ces recluses. Elle avait pris comme devise le mot de Thomas à Kempis, que lui avait appris son frère: In angello cum libello." (Jean Pommier's Renan, pp. 96,97).

During the quiet years of their joint household, Ernest and Henriette Renan followed the old paths, and found in them the old joys. The life of ideas, of wholesome and fruitful effort, brought with it its own reward. From all the frivolous struggle to outshine and to enjoy, these two French people with an instinct rare in the French character, withdrew themselves so far as they could, and it is to the simplicity of life thus founded, the nobility of temper thus fostered, that Renan owed more than to anything else his unique position in French thought.

His/

His work meant everything to Henriette. Their minds moved in complete unison; words were often an unnecessary means of communication. She was the Mary, the Martha, and the philosophical and literary guide of her brother. Their theories on life and religion were identical. She frankly criticised his writings, and Renan would sacrifice whole sentences to her critical ear. Henriette was as the right hand of the scholar. She watched over his literary work, as over other departments, and found his style still overcharged, unduly neological, wanting in balance and measure, and too prone to irony; and there Henriette played the good fairy to him, inculcating tastes which were to make him one of the accepted masters of French prose in his day. He writes, "Her power of work was prodigious. I have known her never quit her self-imposed task from morning till night for days together. She assisted in editing several educational journals. She never signed her articles, and such was her modesty that she gave herself no opportunity of gaining anything beyond the esteem of a small minority." She was content to sit beside him through long hours of silence while he worked, living for him, thinking with him, learning with him; now making notes for him on Gallic art, or criticising his proofs, now bending all her woman's ingenuity to the wants of the frugal household, which, but for her savings and her economy could scarcely have existed. And she had her reward  
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in the formation and permanence of one of those beautiful ties, detached alike from passion and from interest, which are the fruits of self-forgetting and noble aims pursued in common.

"Elle était une organe de ma vie, de ma vie intellectuelle," Renan wrote of his sister. For six years they lived together, Renan wondering at her great capacity for work, for always her mind was directed towards the subject in hand with the same unswerving force. Her judgment manifested itself in a taste for "the solid and the real." "So perfect was the union of our minds, that we scarcely needed to communicate our thoughts. Our general views concerning the universe and the deity were identical. There was not a delicate shade in the theories I was then evolving which she did not appreciate. She surpassed me in knowledge on many points of modern history which she had studied at the fountainhead. The general plan of my career was so essentially the combined product of our two consciences, that, had I been tempted to fail in any particular of it, she, like a second self would have been found beside me to call me back to duty. Thus her influence on my mental sphere was very great. She was my incomparable amanuensis. She copied all my works, and understood them so thoroughly that I could trust to her as to the living index of my own intelligence. In the matter of form I owe her an immensity. She read everything I wrote in/

in the proofs, and her invaluable criticism would discover delicate shades of negligence in style which might otherwise have escaped me. She had formed an admirable one of her own, modelled on the classics, so severely correct that I doubt whether, since the days of Port Royal, any writer has ever set himself a loftier ideal of perfect diction. This made her a very severe critic... She convinced me that everything may be clearly expressed in the simple and correct style of the best authors, and that novel forms and violent imagery always denote either misplaced pretension or ignorance of the writer's real resources. Thus a fundamental change in my own style dates from this period. I formed a habit of composing with an eye to her remarks, writing various passages to see what effect they would produce on her, and resolved to sacrifice them should she demand it..... She was a radical factor in my intellectual existence, and with her a part of my actual being passed away. On all philosophical subjects we had grown to see with the same eyes and feel as with one heart. She so thoroughly comprehended my method of thought that she almost always anticipated what I was about to say, the idea striking us both at the same moment.... Her religious worship of the truth suffered not the smallest note of discord. One quality of my work which gave her pain was the sarcastic spirit which possessed me, and which I was apt to carry into my best work. Never having known real suffering, I took the cautious smile which human vanity or weakness will provoke to be a sort of token/

token of my philosophy. This habit of mine distressed her, and I relinquished it little by little for her sake. I now see how right she was. Good men should be simply good." ("Ma Soeur Henriette," pp. 26-29). "Her religion had reached the acme of simplicity. She absolutely rejected the supernatural, but she preserved the deepest attachment to the Christian practice. She was a saint, minus the saint's precise faith in religious symbolism and its narrow observances.... She would fain have checked my strong inclination towards the formulated conception of an impersonal Deity and a purely ideal immortality. Without being what is vulgarly called a Deist, she could not tolerate the thought of reducing religion to a mere abstract idea." ("Ma Soeur Henriette," p.29).

Meanwhile Renan was earning an audience by his essays on philology and criticism, and later on there appeared the first series of his "Essais d'Histoire Religieuse," and the delightful "Essais de Morale et de Critique."

In his research work Henriette rendered her brother invaluable assistance. "She it was," he writes, "who collected for me all the notes for the paper on the condition of the Fine Arts in the 14th. century which will be incorporated in the 24th. volume of the "Histoire Littéraire de France." For this purpose, and with the most admirable patience and care, she examined every great archaeological work published during the last half century, and collected every item that could serve our purpose. Her own conclusions/

conclusions, which she noted down at the same time, were remarkable for their accuracy, and I almost invariably had to adopt them in the end. During all this inquiry, in which she took the deepest interest, she displayed extraordinary activity. She never did anything by halves. Her fine taste for absolute truthfulness proved the accuracy of her judgment." ("Ma Soeur Henriette," pp. 30-32).

Then came the archaeological mission to Phoenicia, that memorable episode in Renan's career. He was commissioned by the Imperial Government to explore ancient Phoenicia in search of inscriptions and monuments. Henriette urged him to accept the commission, and he acceded to her wish. The Phoenician sojourn afforded him an opportunity of travel far more momentous to himself and to the world than his excursions in search of monuments and inscriptions, namely, the long-desired privilege of visiting the Holy Land and of familiarising himself with the regions and places associated for ever with the life of the Founder of Christianity.

Henriette, his affectionate and keen-minded sister, accompanied him on that mission which was one of the outstanding events of his life. Her intimate knowledge of her brother's methods of work made her the most invaluable of secretaries. "Without her help," Renan confesses, "I certainly could not have carried through my self-imposed task - too elaborate a one, perhaps, within so short a space of time. She never left my side. If I had/

had died, she could have told the story of my travels as well as I could have related it myself. The terrible mountain tracks, the privation inevitable in this sort of exploring expedition, never checked her. A thousand times I felt my heart tremble as I watched her swaying on the edge of some precipice. Her steadiness and endurance were surprising. Her health, naturally, somewhat frail, withstood the strain by dint of her strong will." ("Ma Soeur Henriette," p. 44). "But her most passionate interest was claimed by our journey in Palestine. When I first showed her," says the brother, "from Kasyoun, above Lake Huleh, the whole region of the Upper Jordan, with the basin of the Lake of Gennesaret, the cradle of the Christian faith, far away in the distance, she thanked me, telling me that sight had been the most precious joy her life had known. Jerusalem, with its unrivalled memories, Naplousa and its lovely valley, Mount Carmel carpeted with spring flowers, and Galilee above all - that earthly paradise laid waste, on which the Divine breath lingers yet, held her spellbound for six enchanted weeks." ("Ma Soeur Henriette," p. 47).

When they arrived in Palestine, she accompanied her brother everywhere, step by step, following him up the steepest slopes of Lebanon, and traversing the wilderness of Jordan, seeing everything that he saw himself. She never hesitated before rough and wild tracks and dire privations. Henriette had indeed never shown herself more active or more helpful. This expedition had become for her, as well as for her brother, a sacred quest.

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It was truly the culmination of her life's work. Her active, impressionable mind received all the sensations aroused by the exquisite beauty of the Holy Land. Often she rode eight or ten hours a day, regardless of physical weakness. The charm of the country in spring and autumn with its myriad flowers, its wide horizons, its perfumed air, was to her a stimulus and an enchantment. When the sister and brother, returning from some fresh expedition, came in sight of their abode in the evening, Henriette would break forth into song. Her soul seemed full of sheer gladness because of the things she had seen.

Renan was now meditating one of the boldest acts of the 19th. century - that act which was to be a memorial of the unknown Henriette, whose legacy to her brother, as he often declared, was the "Vie de Jésus." It was in Palestine that he conceived the idea, which he immediately began to execute, of writing the Life of Jesus. It was mainly at the urgent instigation of Henriette that he took up the task, and together brother and sister gave utterance to their inspirations in the great production that was to be described as "one of the events of the century." "The memory of those days," writes Renan, "is inexpressibly precious to me. The unavoidable delay connected with such work as we were occupied in winding up left me much leisure. I resolved to note down all the thoughts concerning the life of Jesus/

Jesus which had been stirring in my brain since my sojourn in the Tyrian country and my journey into Palestine. The personality of that great Founder had risen very clearly to my mind as I perused the Gospels in Galilee itself. Buried in the deepest conceivable retirement, with the help of the Gospels and of Josephus, I wrote a Life of Jesus, while I was at Ghazir, carrying the story as far as the last journey to Jerusalem. Exquisite hours, departed all too quickly! I pray eternity may be as sweet... Henriette was the daily confidante of the progress of my labour. As fast as I could write a page, she copied it. "I shall love this book," she said, "because we have done it together, first of all, and then because I like it in itself." The elevation of her thoughts had never struck me more. In the evening we used to walk on our terrace under the stars. Then she would give me the result of her reflections, full of tact and wisdom. Some of them were absolute revelations to me... Our intellectual and moral communion had never been so intimate." ("Ma Soeur Henriette," pp. 51, 52).

Then came a crushing blow for Renan in Henriette's tragic death. By 17th September they were at Amschit, a day's journey from Ghazir, on some business connected with the mission, and Henriette had shown signs of illness. Her physical strength was wearing out. Too weak often to rise from her bed, she was carried out to the verandah where she lay overlooking the plain. There beside her brother she assisted him in the writing of his/

his great book. By the 19th. she grew worse, and Renan himself had been attacked with similar symptoms to hers. A few hours more, and both were in the strong grip of Syrian fever. On the morning of the 25th., Henriette was gone, and her brother lying unconscious near her, knew nothing of her last hours. She died alone.

In desolation and in deep sorrow of heart he writes "I had looked to her to relate the unscientific details of our journey in the East. Alas! the history of that aspect of my enterprise, which I had confided to her care, has perished with her.... She had studied deeply for the purpose of this work and had brought a critical acumen to bear upon it. She never did anything by halves. Her fine taste for absolute truthfulness proved the accuracy of her judgment." ("Ma Soeur Henriette," pp. 31,32).

But Henriette's work was destined to endure through her brother. Though Renan declared that it was a great part of his being which had entered with her into the grave, her influence still inspired and guided him in the years to come. Indeed, as Mdme Darmesteter declares, not only did her brother act as she would have him act, "but - far rarer triumph of love! - he thought as she would have bid him think, in all seriousness, in all tenderness, with a remote and noble elevation - checking as they/

they rose those impulses towards irony, towards frivolity, towards scepticism, which Henriette had not loved." (Darmesteter's Renan, p.146).

The completion of the "Vie de Jésus" he now felt to be a sacred duty which he must fulfil. "I saw an imperative revelation in the counsel of a beloved person who appeared to me haloed in the sacred aureole of death" he reverently explained to the assembled Academy in his inaugural address as Professor of Hebrew at the Collège de France. The day so long anticipated by Henriette had arrived, and the brother, returned to France, set to work with an exalted ideal until the volume was completed and published in 1863.

Henriette's memory will long be kept green by her brother's exquisitely pathetic and beautiful dedication of the "Vie de Jésus" to her, already quoted. It is one of the most tender and delicately phrased examples of literary art of its kind.

Not so well known, yet worthy to be set beside it, is Renan's nobly expressed panegyric on Henriette at the close of his brief memoir, "Ma Soeur Henriette," which one cannot forbear to cite. It is a most moving piece of work. "We know not the exact relationship between great souls and the principle/

principle of Eternity. But if, as all things lead us to believe, conscious existence is but a passing communion with the universe, designed to carry us more or less close to the divine essence, surely into such souls as hers it is that immortality is breathed! If it be true that man possesses the power of shaping a great moral personality, after a divine model, not of his choosing, compact in equal parts of his own individuality and the ideal pattern, absolutely instinct with life, it must be so. Matter is not, because it has no separate existence. The atom does not live, because it has no consciousness of life. The soul it is that lives when it has left a faithful mark on the eternal history of goodness and of truth. Was this destiny ever more perfectly accomplished than in my sister's person? She never could have developed a higher degree of perfection than she had attained when she was taken from us in all the full maturity of her nature. She had reached the acme of the virtuous life. Her view of earthly things could never have been broader - the cup of her devotion and her love was full to overflowing. Ah! what she ought to have had there is no gainsaying it - is a happier life. I had dreamt of all sorts of sweet delights - I had woven a thousand fancied pleasures for her. I pictured her in her old age, honoured like a parent, proud of me, resting at last in unalloyed repose. I had vowed her good and noble heart, so tender it was apt to bleed/

bleed, should rest at last in calm - I had almost said  
in selfish peace, God only permitted her the steepest,  
hardest paths. She died well-nigh without reward. The  
harvest-hour, wherein men sit them down to rest and look  
back over the weariness and suffering of bygone days, never  
struck for her. To say truth, she never gave reward a thought.  
That spirit of self-interest which so often mars the devotion  
inspired by positive religious beliefs, and provokes the  
idea that virtue is only practised for the sake of what it  
is likely to produce, had no place in her great soul. When  
her religious faith failed her, her faith in duty never  
flinched, because it was the echo of her innate nobility.  
Virtue was no result of theory in her case; it was the out-  
come of the unconscious bent of all her nature. She did  
good for the sake of doing good, and not to earn her  
ultimate salvation. She loved all goodness and beauty  
without any of that calculating spirit which seems to say  
to God, "If heaven and hell had no existence, I would not  
love Thee!" But God will not permit His saints to see  
corruption. Oh, heart that ever nursed a flame of tenderest  
love! Oh, brain, the seat of thought so exquisitely pure!  
Oh, lovely eyes, shining with tender light! Oh, long and  
dainty hand, so often clasped in mine! - the thought that  
you/

you are fallen away to dust thrills me with horror! But sublunary things are all only types and shadows. The true eternal part of every living soul is that which binds it to eternity. Man's immortality is in God's memory. And there my Henriette, in everlasting radiance and eternal sinlessness, lives, with a life a thousand times more real than when she wrestled, in her feeble strength, to create her spiritual personality, and, cast upon a world which never knew how to understand her, strove obstinately to attain the perfect state.

Let us hold fast her memory as a precious demonstration of those eternal truths whereof every virtuous life contributes proof. Personally, I never doubted the reality of the Moral Law. But now I see clearly that all the logic of the universal system must come to nought if such lives as hers were nothing but a delusion and a snare." ("Ma Soeur Henriette," pp. 65-68).

When, years after, Ernest Renan was elected to a seat in the French Academy in 1878, Alfred Jean François Mézières, the French literary historian, delivered the address of welcome with a grace and a delicacy that even Renan himself could not/

not have surpassed. In the course of his oration, Mézières recalled the years when the young scholar lived with his sister in the Rue du Val-de-Grâce, Paris, and in these choice terms referred to her: "Mlle. Henriette Renan who has left you the recollection of an exquisite writer and critic, deserves to be named along with you on the day when the brother she so loved and for whose glory she laboured, receives the highest of literary rewards." (Address to be found in Académie Française, receuil de discours 1870-1879).  
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