

26/3/09

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

# ERNEST RENAN

AND

# JESUS CHRIST

BY

COLONEL R. G. INGERSOLL.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

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LONDON:  
R. FORDER, 28 STONECUTTER STREET, E.C.

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1892.

LONDON  
PRINTED BY G. W. FOOTR,  
AT 14 CLERKENWELL GREEN, E.C.

## ERNEST RENAN.

"Blessed are those  
Whose blood and judgment are so well co-mingled  
That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger  
To sound what stop she please."

ERNEST RENAN is dead. Another source of light; another force of civilisation; another charming personality; another brave soul, graceful in thought, generous in deed; a sculptor in speech, a colorist in words—clothing all in the poetry born of a delightful union of heart and brain—has passed to the realm of rest.

Reared under the influences of Catholicism, educated for the priesthood, yet, by reason of his natural genius, he began to think. Forces that utterly subjugate and enslave the mind of mediocrity sometimes rouse to thought and action the superior soul.

Renan began to think—a dangerous thing 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. He found the same mistakes, the same prejudices, the same miraculous impossibilities in the book attributed to God that he found in those known to have been written by men.

Into the path of reason, or rather into the highway, Renan was led by Henriette, his sister, to whom he pays a tribute that has the perfume of a perfect flower.

"I was," writes Renan, "brought up by women and priests, and therein lies the whole explanation of my good qualities and of my defects." In most that he wrote is the tenderness of woman, only now and then a little touch of the priest showing itself, mostly in a reluctance to spoil the ivy by tearing down some prison built by superstition.

In spite of the heartless "scheme" of things he still found it in his heart to say, "When God shall be complete, He will be just," at the same time saying that "nothing proves to us that there exists in the world a central consciousness—

a soul of the universe—and nothing proves the contrary." So, whatever was the verdict of his brain, his heart asked for immortality. He wanted his dream, and he was willing that others should have theirs. Such is the wish and will of all great souls.

He knew the Church thoroughly and anticipated what would finally be written about him by churchmen: "Having some experience of ecclesiastical writers I can sketch out in advance the way my biography will be written in Spanish in some Catholic review, of Santa Fé, in the year 2,000. Heavens! how black I shall be! I shall be so all the more, because the Church when she feels that she is lost will end with malice. She will bite like a mad dog."

He anticipated such a biography because he had thought for himself, and because he had expressed his thoughts—because he had declared that "our universe, within the reach of our experiment is not governed by any intelligent reason. God, as the common herd understand him, the living God, the acting God—the God-Providence, does not show himself in the universe"—because he attacked the mythical and the miraculous in the life of Christ and sought to rescue from the calumnies of ignorance and faith a serene and lofty soul.

The time has arrived when Jesus must become a myth or a man. The idea that he was the infinite God must be abandoned by all who are not religiously insane. Those who have given up the claim that he was God, insist that he was divinely appointed and illuminated; that he was a perfect man—the highest possible type of the human race, and, consequently, a perfect example for all the world.

As time goes on, as men get wider or grander or more complex ideas of life, as the intellectual horizon broadens, the idea that Christ was perfect may be modified.

The New Testament seems to describe several individuals under the same name, or at least one individual who passed through several stages or phases of religious development. Christ is described as a devout Jew, as one who endeavored to comply in all respects with the old law. Many sayings are attributed to him consistent with this idea. He certainly was a Hebrew in belief and feeling when he said "Swear not by heaven, because it is God's throne, nor by earth, for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is his holy city." These reasons were in exact accordance with the mythology of the Jews. God was regarded simply as an enormous man, as one who walked in the garden in the cool of the evening, as one who had met man face to face, who had conversed with Moses for forty days upon Mount Sinai, as a great king, with a throne in the heavens, using the earth to rest his feet upon, and regarding Jerusalem as his holy city.

Then we find plenty of evidence that he wished to reform the religion of the Jews; to fulfil the law, not to abrogate it. Then there is still another change: he has ceased his efforts to reform that religion and has become a destroyer. He holds the Temple in contempt and repudiates the idea that Jerusalem is the holy city. He concludes that it is unnecessary to go to some mountain or some building to worship or to find God, and insists that the heart is the true Temple, that ceremonies are useless, that all pomp and pride and show are needless, and that it is enough to worship God under heaven's dome, in spirit and in truth.

It is impossible to harmonise these views unless we admit that Christ was the subject of growth and change; that in consequence of growth and change he modified his views; that, from wanting to preserve Judaism as it was, he became convinced that it ought to be reformed. That he then abandoned the idea of reformation, and made up his mind that the only reformation of which the Jewish religion was capable was destruction. If he was in fact a man, then the course he pursued was natural; but if he was God, it is perfectly absurd. If we give to him perfect knowledge, then it is impossible to account for change or growth. If, on the other hand, the ground is taken that he was a perfect man, then, it might be asked, was he perfect when he wished to preserve, or when he wished to reform, or when he resolved to destroy, the religion of the Jews? If he is to be regarded as perfect, although not divine, when did he reach perfection?

It is perfectly evident that Christ, or the character that bears that name, imagined that the world was about to be destroyed, or at least purified by fire, and that, on account of this curious belief, he became the enemy of marriage, of all earthly ambition and of all enterprise. With that view in his mind, he said to himself, "Why should we waste our energies in producing food for destruction? Why should we endeavor to beautify a world that is so soon to perish?" Filled with the thought of coming change, he insisted that there was but one important thing, and that was for each man to save his soul. He should care nothing for the ties of kindred, nothing for wife or child or property, in the shadow of the coming disaster. He should take care of himself. He endeavored, as it is said, to induce men to desert all they had, to let the dead bury the dead, and follow him. He told his disciples, or those he wished to make his disciples, according to the Testament, that it was their duty to desert wife and child and property, and if they would so desert kindred and wealth, he would reward them here and hereafter.

We know now—if we know anything—that Jesus was mis-

taken about the coming of the end, and we know now that he was greatly controlled in his ideas of life, by that mistake. Believing that the end was near, he said, "Take no thought for the morrow, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink or wherewithal ye shall be clothed." It was in view of the destruction of the world that he called the attention of his disciples to the lily that toiled not and yet excelled Solomon in the glory of its raiment. Having made this mistake, having acted upon it, certainly we cannot now say that he was perfect in knowledge.

He is regarded by many millions as the impersonation of patience, of forbearance, of meekness and mercy, and yet, according to the account, he said many extremely bitter words, and threatened eternal pain.

We also know, if the account be true, that he claimed to have supernatural power, to work miracles, to cure the blind and to raise the dead, and we know that he did nothing of the kind. So if the writers of the New Testament tell the truth as to what Christ claimed, it is absurd to say that he was a perfect man. If honest, he was deceived, and those who are deceived are not perfect.

There is nothing in the New Testament, so far as we know, that touches on the duties of nation to nation, or of nation to its citizens; nothing of human liberty; not one word about education; not the faintest hint that there is such a thing as science; nothing calculated to stimulate industry, commerce, or invention; not one word in favor of art, of music or anything calculated to feed or clothe the body, nothing to develop the brain of man.

When it is assumed that the life of Christ, as described in the New Testament, is perfect, we at least take upon ourselves the burden of deciding what perfection is. People who asserted that Christ was divine, that he was actually God, reached the conclusion, without any laborious course of reasoning, that all he said and did was absolute perfection. They said this because they had first been convinced that he was divine. The moment his divinity is given up and the assertion is made that he was perfect, we are not permitted to reason in that way. They said he was God, therefore perfect. Now, if it is admitted that he was human, the conclusion that he was perfect does not follow. We then take the burden upon ourselves of deciding what perfection is. To decide what is perfect is beyond the powers of the human mind.

Renan, in spite of his education, regarded Christ as a man, and did the best he could to account for the miracles that had been attributed to him, for the legends that had gathered about his name, and the impossibilities connected with his career, and also tried to account for the origin or birth o

these miracles, of these legends, of these myths, including the resurrection and ascension. I am not satisfied with all the conclusions he reached or with all the paths he travelled. The refraction of light caused by passing through a woman's tears is hardly a sufficient foundation for a belief in so miraculous a miracle as the bodily ascension of Jesus Christ.

There is another thing attributed to Christ that seems to me conclusive evidence against the claim of perfection. Christ is reported to have said that all sins could be forgiven except the sin against the Holy Ghost. This sin, however, is not defined. Although Christ died for the whole world, that through him all might be saved, there is this one terrible exception: There is no salvation for those who have sinned, or who may hereafter sin, against the Holy Ghost. Thousands of persons are now in asylums, having lost their reason because of their fear that they had committed this unknown, this undefined, this unpardonable sin.

It is said that a Roman Emperor went through a form of publishing his laws or proclamations, posting them so high on pillars that they could not be read, and then took the lives of those who ignorantly violated these unknown laws. He was regarded as a tyrant, as a murderer. And yet, what shall we say of one who declared that the sin against the Holy Ghost was the only one that could not be forgiven, and then left an ignorant world to guess what that sin is? Undoubtedly this horror is an interpolation.

There is something like it in the Old Testament. It is asserted by Christians that the Ten Commandments are the foundation of all law and of all civilisation, and you will find lawyers insisting that the Mosaic Code was the first information that man received on the subject of law; that before that time the world was without any knowledge of justice or mercy. If this be true the Jews had no divine laws, no real instruction on any legal subject until the Ten Commandments were given. Consequently, before that time there had been proclaimed or published no law against the worship of other gods or of idols. Moses had been on Mount Sinai talking with Jehovah. At the end of the dialogue he received the Tables of Stone and started down the mountain for the purpose of imparting this information to his followers. When he reached the camp he heard music. He saw people dancing, and he found that in his absence Aaron and the rest of the people had cast a molten calf which they were then worshipping. This so enraged Moses that he broke the Table of Stone and made preparations for the punishment of the Jews. Remember that they knew nothing about this law and, according to the modern Christian claims, could not have known that it was wrong to melt gold and silver and

mould it in the form of a calf. And yet Moses killed about thirty thousand of these people for having violated a law of which they had never heard; a law known only to one man and one God. Nothing could be more unjust, more ferocious, than this; and yet it can hardly be said to exceed in cruelty the announcement that a certain sin was unpardonable and then fail to define the sin. Possibly, to inquire what the sin is, is the sin.

Renan regards Jesus as a man, and his work gets its value from the fact that it is written from a human standpoint. At the same time he, consciously or unconsciously, or may be for the purpose of sprinkling a little holy water on the heat of religious indignation, now and then seems to speak of him as more than human, or as having accomplished something that man could not.

He asserts that "the Gospels are in part legendary; that they contain many things not true; that they are full of miracles and of the supernatural." At the same time he insists that these legends, these miracles, these supernatural things do not affect the truth of the probable things contained in these writings. He sees, and sees clearly, that there is no evidence that Matthew, or Mark, or Luke, or John wrote the books attributed to them; that, as a matter of fact, the mere title of "according to Matthew," "according to Mark," shows that they were written by others who claimed them to be in accordance with the stories that had been told by Matthew or by Mark. So Renan takes the ground that the Gospel of Luke is founded on anterior documents and "is the work of a man who selected, pruned and combined, and that the same man wrote the Acts of the Apostles and in the same way."

The Gospels were certainly written long after the events described, and Renan finds the reason for this in the fact that the Christians believed that the world was about to end; that, consequently, there was no need of composing books; it was only necessary for them to preserve in their hearts during the little margin of time that remained a lively image of him whom they soon expected to meet in the clouds. For this reason the Gospels themselves had but little authority for 150 years, the Christians relying on oral traditions. Renan shows that there was not the slightest scruple about inserting additions in the Gospels, variously combining them, and in completing some by taking parts from others; that the books passed from hand to hand, and that each one transcribed in the margin of his copy the words and parables he had found elsewhere which touched him; that it was not until human tradition became weakened that the text bearing the names of the Apostles became authoritative.

Renan has criticised the Gospels somewhat in the same



spirit that he would criticise a modern work. He saw clearly that the metaphysics filling the discourses of John were deformities and distortions, full of mysticism, having nothing to do really with the character of Jesus. He shows too "that the simple idea of the Kingdom of God, at the time the Gospel according to St. John was written, had faded away; that the hope of the advent of Christ was growing dim, and that from belief the disciples passed into discussion, from discussion to dogma, from dogma to ceremony," and, finding that the new Heaven and the new Earth were not coming as expected, they turned their attention to governing the old Heaven and the old Earth. The disciples were willing to be humble for a few days, with the expectation of wearing crowns for ever. They were satisfied with poverty, believing that the wealth of the world was to be theirs. The coming of Christ, however, being for some unaccountable reason delayed, poverty and humility grew irksome, and human nature began to assert itself.

In the Gospel of John you will find the metaphysics of the Church. There you find the Second Birth. There you find the doctrine of the Atonement clearly set forth. There you find that God died for the whole world, and that whosoever believeth not in him is to be damned. There is nothing of the kind in Matthew. Matthew makes Christ say that, if you will forgive others, God will forgive you. The Gospel "according to Mark" is the same. So is the Gospel "according to Luke." There is nothing about salvation through belief, nothing about the Atonement. In Mark, in the last chapter, the Apostles are told to go into all the world and preach the Gospel, with the statement that whoever believed and was baptised should be saved, and whoever failed to believe should be damned. But we now know that that is an interpolation. Consequently, Matthew, Mark, and Luke never had the faintest conception of the "Christian religion." They knew nothing of the Atonement, nothing of salvation by faith—nothing. So that, if a man had read only Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and had strictly followed what he found, he would have found himself, after death, in perdition.

Renan finds that certain portions of the Gospel "according to John" were added later; that the entire twenty-first chapter is an interpolation; also that many places bear the traces of erasures and corrections. So he says that it would be "impossible for anyone to compose a life of Jesus, with any meaning in it, from the discourses which John attributes to him, and he holds that this Gospel of John is full of preaching, Christ demonstrating himself; full of argumentation, full of stage effect, devoid of simplicity, with long arguments after each miracle, stiff and awkward discourses, the

tone of which is often false and unequal." He also insists that there are evidently "artificial portions, variations like that of a musician improvising on a given theme."

In spite of all this, Renan, willing to soothe the prejudice of his time, takes the ground that the four canonical gospels are authentic, that they date from the first century, that the authors were, generally speaking, those to whom they are attributed; but he insists that their historic value is very diverse. This is a back-handed stroke. Admitting, first, that they are authentic; second, that they were written about the end of the first century; third, that they are not of equal value, disposes, so far as he is concerned, of the dogma of inspiration.

One is at a loss to understand why four gospels should have been written. As a matter of fact, there can be only one true account of any occurrence, or of any number of occurrences. Now, it must be taken for granted that an inspired account is true. Why then should there be four inspired accounts? It may be answered that all were not to write the entire story. To this the reply is that all attempted to cover substantially the same ground.

Many years ago the early Fathers thought it necessary to say why there were four inspired books, and some of them said, because there were four cardinal directions and the Gospels fitted the north, south, east, and west. Others said that there were four principal winds—a gospel for each wind. They might have added that some animals have four legs.

Renan admits that the narrative portions have not the same authority; "that many legends proceeded from the zeal of the second Christian generation; that the narrative of Luke is historically weak; that sentences attributed to Jesus have been distorted and exaggerated; that the book was written outside of Palestine and after the siege of Jerusalem; that Luke endeavors to make the different narratives agree, changing them for that purpose; that he softens the passages which had become embarrassing; that he exaggerated the marvellous, omitted errors in chronology; that he was a compiler, a man who had not been an eye-witness himself, and who had not seen eye-witnesses, but who labors at texts and wrests their sense to make them agree." This certainly is very far from inspiration. So "Luke interprets the documents according to his own idea; being a kind of anarchist, opposed to property, and persuaded that the triumph of the poor was approaching; that he was especially fond of the anecdotes showing the conversion of sinners, the exaltation of the humble, and that he modified ancient traditions to give them this meaning."

Renan reached the conclusion that the Gospels are neither biographies after the manner of Suetonius nor fictitious legends in the style of Philostratus, but that they are legendary biographies like the legends of the saints, the lives of Plotinus and Isodore, in which historical truth and the desire to present models of virtue are combined in various degrees; that they are "inexact"; that they "contain numerous errors and discordances." So he 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 all defects in the eyes of those who 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." All of which of course shows that there can be maintained no theory of inspiration.

It is admitted that where individuals are witnesses of the same transaction, and where they agree upon the vital points and disagree upon detail, the disagreement may be consistent with their honesty, as tending to show that they have not agreed upon a story; but if the witnesses are inspired of God then there is no reason for their disagreeing on anything, and if they do disagree it is a demonstration that they were not inspired, but it is not a demonstration that they are not honest. While perfect agreement may be evidence of rehearsal, a failure to perfectly agree is not a demonstration of the truth or falsity of the story; but if the witnesses claim to be inspired, the slightest disagreement is a demonstration that they were not inspired.

Renan reaches the conclusion, proving every step that he takes, that the four principal documents—that is to say, the four Gospels—are in "flagrant contradiction one with another." He attacks, and with perfect success, the miracles of the Scriptures, and upon this subject says: "Observation, which has never once 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." He further takes the ground that no contemporary miracle will bear inquiry, and that consequently it is probable that the miracles of antiquity which have been performed in popular gatherings would be shown to be simple illusion, were it possible to criticise them in detail. In the name of universal experience he banishes miracles from history. These were brave things to do, things that will bear good fruit. As long as men believe in

miracles, past or present, they remain the prey of superstition. The Catholic is taught that miracles were performed anciently not only, but that they are still being performed. This is consistent inconsistency. Protestants teach a double doctrine: That miracles used to be performed, that the laws of nature used to be violated, but that no miracle is performed now. No Protestant will admit that any miracle was performed by the Catholic Church. Otherwise, Protestants could not be justified in leaving a Church with whom the God of miracles dwelt. So every Protestant has to adopt two kinds of reasoning: that the laws of Nature used to be violated and that miracles used to be performed, but that since the apostolic age Nature has had her way and the Lord has allowed facts to exist and to hold the field. A supernatural account, according to Renan, "always implies credulity or imposture"—probably both.

It does not seem possible to me that Christ claimed for himself what the Testament claims for him. These claims were made by admirers, by followers, by missionaries.

When the early Christians went to Rome they found plenty of demigods. It was hard to set aside the religion of a demigod by telling the story of a man from Nazareth. These missionaries, not to be outdone in ancestry, insisted—and this was after the Gospel "according to St. John" had been written—that Christ was the Son of God. Matthew believed that he was the son of David, and the Messiah, and gave the genealogy of Joseph, his father, to support that claim.

In the time of Christ no one imagined that he was of divine origin. This was an after-growth. In order to place themselves on an equality with Pagans they started the claim of divinity, and also took the second step requisite in that country: First, a god for his father, and second, a virgin for his mother. This was the Pagan combination of greatness, and the Christians added to this that Christ was God.

It was hard to agree with the conclusion reached by Renan, that Christ formed and intended to form a church. Such evidence, it seems to me, is hard to find in the Testament. Christ seemed to satisfy himself, according to the Testament, with a few statements, some of them exceedingly wise and tender, some utterly impracticable and some intolerant.

If we accept the conclusions reached by Renan we will throw away the legends without foundation; the miraculous legends; and everything inconsistent with what we know of Nature. Very little will be left—a few sayings to be found among those attributed to Confucius, to Buddha, to Krishna, to Epictetus, to Zeno, and to many others. Some of these sayings are full of wisdom, full of kindness, and others rush to such extremes that they touch the borders of insanity.

When struck on one cheek to turn the other, is really joining a conspiracy to secure the triumph of brutality. To agree not to resist evil is to become an accomplice of all injustice. We must not take from industry, from patriotism, from virtue the right of self-defence.

Undoubtedly Renan gave an honest transcript of his mind, the road his thought had followed, the reasons in their order that had occurred to him, the criticisms born of thought, and the qualifications, softening phrases, children of old sentiments and of emotions that had not entirely passed away. He started, one might say, from the altar and, during a considerable part of the journey, carried the incense with him. The farther he got away, the greater was his clearness of vision and the more thoroughly he was convinced that Christ was merely a man, an idealist. But remembering the altar, he excused exaggeration in the "inspired" books, not because it was from heaven, not because it was in harmony with our ideas of veracity, but because the writers of the Gospel were imbued with the Oriental spirit of exaggeration, a spirit perfectly understood by the people who first read the Gospels, because the readers knew the habits of the writers.

It had been contended for many years that no one could pass judgment on the veracity of the Scriptures who did not understand Hebrew. This position was perfectly absurd. No man needs to be a student of Hebrew to know that the shadow on the dial did not go back several degrees to convince a petty king that a boil was not to be fatal. Renan, however, filled the requirement. He was an excellent Hebrew scholar. This was a fortunate circumstance, because it answered a very old objection.

The founder of Christianity was, for his own sake, taken from the divine pedestal and allowed to stand like other men on the earth, to be judged by what he said and did, by his theories, by his philosophy, by his spirit.

No matter whether Renan came to a correct conclusion or not, his work did a vast deal of good. He convinced many that implicit reliance could not be placed upon the Gospels, that the Gospels themselves are of unequal worth; that they were deformed by ignorance and falsehood, or, at least, by mistake; that if they wished to save the reputation of Christ they must not rely wholly on the Gospels, or on what is found in the New Testament, but they must go farther and examine all legends touching him. Not only so, but they must throw away the miraculous, the impossible and the absurd.

He also has shown that the early followers of Christ endeavored to add to the reputation of their Master by attributing to him the miraculous and the foolish; that while these stories added to his reputation at that time, since the world

has advanced they must be cast aside or the reputation of the Master must suffer.

It will not do now to say that Christ himself pretended to do miracles. This would establish the fact at least that he was mistaken. But we are compelled to say that his disciples insisted that he was a worker of miracles. This shows, either that they were mistaken or untruthful.

We all know that a sleight-of-hand performer could gain a greater reputation among savages than Darwin or Humboldt; and we know that the world in the time of Christ was filled with barbarians, with people who demanded the miraculous, who expected it; with people, in fact, who had a stronger belief in the supernatural than in the natural; people who never thought it worth while to record facts. The hero of such people, the Christ of such people, with his miracles, cannot be the Christ of the thoughtful and scientific.

Renan was a man of most excellent temper; candid; not striving for victory, but for truth; conquering, as far as he could, the old superstitions; not entirely free, it may be, but believing himself to be so. He did great good. He has helped to destroy the fictions of faith. He has helped to rescue man from the prison of superstition, and this is the greatest benefit that man can bestow on man.

He did another great service, not only to Jews, but to Christendom, by writing the history of *The People of Israel*. Christians for many centuries have persecuted the Jews. They have charged them with the greatest conceivable crime — with having crucified an infinite God. This absurdity has hardened the hearts of men and poisoned the minds of children. The persecution of the Jews is the meanest, the most senseless and cruel page in history. Every civilised Christian should feel on his cheeks the red spots of shame as he reads the wretched and infamous story. The flame of this prejudice is fanned and fed in the Sunday-schools of our day, and the orthodox minister points proudly to the atrocities perpetrated against the Jews by the barbarians of Russia as evidences of the truth of the inspired Scriptures. In every wound God puts a tongue to proclaim the truth of his book.

If the charge that the Jews killed God were true, it is hardly reasonable to hold those who are now living responsible for what their ancestors did nearly nineteen centuries ago.

But there is another point in connection with this matter. If Christ was God, then the Jews could not have killed him without his consent; and, according to the orthodox creed, if he had not been sacrificed, the whole world would have suffered eternal pain. Nothing can exceed the meanness of the prejudice of Christians against the Jewish people. They

should not be held responsible for their savage ancestors, or for their belief that Jehovah was an intelligent and merciful God, superior to all other gods. Even Christians do not wish to be held responsible for the Inquisition, for the Torquemadas and the John Calvins, for the witch-burners and the Quaker-whippers, for the slave-traders and child-stealers, the most of whom were believers in our "glorious gospel," and many of whom had been born the second time.

Renan did much to civilise the Christians by telling the truth in a charming and convincing way about the "People of Israel." Both sides are greatly indebted to him: one he has ably defended, and the other greatly enlightened.

Having done what good he could in giving what he believed was light to his fellow men, he had no fear of becoming a victim of God's wrath, and so he laughingly said: "For my part I imagine if the Eternal in his severity were to send me to hell I should succeed in escaping from it. I would send up to my Creator a supplication that would make him smile. The course of reasoning by which I would prove to him that it was through his fault that I was damned would be so subtle that he would find some difficulty in replying. The fate which would suit me best is Purgatory—a charming place, where many delightful romances begun on earth must be continued."

Such cheerfulness, such good philosophy, with cap and bells, such banter and blasphemy, such sound and solid sense drive to madness the priest who thinks the curse of Rome can fright the world. How the snake of superstition writhes when he finds that his fangs have lost their poison.

He was one of the gentlest of men—one of the fairest in discussion, dissenting from the views of others with modesty, presenting his own with clearness and candor. His mental manners were excellent. He was not positive as to the "unknowable." He said "Perhaps." He knew that knowledge is good if it increases the happiness of man; and he felt that superstition is the assassin of liberty and civilisation. He lived a life of cheerfulness, of industry, devoted to the welfare of mankind. He was a seeker of happiness by the highway of the natural, a destroyer of the dogmas of mental deformity, a worshipper of Liberty and the Ideal. As he lived, he died—hopeful and serene—and now, standing in imagination by his grave, we ask: Will the night be eternal? The brain says, Perhaps; while the heart hopes for the Dawn.

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 Published every Thursday.

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