

Corot's "Orpheus"¹

By Sara King Wilev

The forest is enwrapped in mysteries,
 The trees are shadowy in the lingering night,
 Dim and immeasurable the twilight skies,
 Across the hills the silver morning light.
 The temple walls are pallid, far away,
 Where in the east the spreading luster gleams.
 The poet waits the dawning of the day,
 And knows not if he lives or if he dreams.

A clearer vision comes, a glorious birth
 And deepening waves of sense upon him roll
 Till all the beauty of the quiet earth,
 As sweet as distant music, fills his soul.
 The chains that hold his speech are strained and riven,
 And whirling words arise that beat and ring;
 With burning heart he lifts his lyre to heaven
 And praises God that he was born to sing!



The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

By Lyman Abbott

Rev. Lyman Abbott:

Dear Sir—Quoting from *The Outlook*, January 6, page 33, from the article entitled "The First Sin," you say: "I regard the story of the Fall as . . . legendary, the value of the story to consist not in a historic revelation. . . . I see no sufficient reason for regarding it otherwise than as imaginative." This meets my hearty approval, for, while it preserves all the real worth of the story, it puts aside all of those fatal hindrances which prevent so many good men from being helped by it. I cannot think of any way to adequately thank you for your courage and honesty in giving utterance to such sentiments, which so many good people need to save them from the pitfalls of skepticism. I confess, however, that I am unable to imagine why the same reasoning which you apply to *Genesis* cannot be made to apply also to the legends concerning the birth and resurrection of Jesus. I do not even suspect what data or logic you would make use of by which you arrive at the conclusion that the resurrection of Jesus is veritable history, while the story of the Garden of Eden is a compilation of legends.

C. S. C.

No doubt many entertain a similar opinion. They fancy that the motto, "False in part, false in all," applies: if there are some legends in the Bible, why shall we not suppose that the whole Bible is legendary?

I cannot adequately answer this question in a page of *The Outlook*; I can only suggest the answer.

The most conservative scholars suppose that Moses wrote the Book of *Genesis*. Four centuries intervened between the coming of Jacob into Egypt and the exodus. If the Gospel narratives were equally remote from the Gospel events, the first written record of the resurrection would have been penned three-quarters of a century after the Council of Nice. Moderate modern scholarship fixes the date of the writing of the oldest of the narratives of which *Genesis* is composed at about 800 B.C. This would be, according to popular chronology (Usher's), sixteen hundred years subsequent to the Deluge. If the Gospel narratives were equally remote from the Gospel events, the first written record of the resurrection would have been penned about the time of Queen Elizabeth. If the Four Gospels had not been written until the time of Queen Elizabeth, recording a resurrection supposed to have taken place sixteen centuries previous; or not until three-quarters of a century after the Council of Nice, recording events supposed to have occurred four centuries previous, we should not attach the same credence to these narratives which we now attach.

¹ A reproduction of this beautiful painting will be found on the title-page. We are indebted for it to the courtesy of Messrs. Cottier & Co., of this city.

What are the facts?

There lies before me an English translation of Tatian's "Diatessaron." It is a life of Christ composed of the Four Gospels woven together into one narrative. Tatian was born about A.D. 120, and edited the "Diatessaron" about A.D. 150. But he edited it out of four narratives which he found already existing. It is thus certain that these narratives existed, in substantially their present form, as early as A.D. 100—that is, in less than seventy-five years after the resurrection. If we had a narrative of the Deluge written within less than seventy-five years after the Deluge occurred, we should not regard such a narrative as a legend. It takes a longer time for a legend to grow. The story might be a fiction, but it would then be a deliberate fiction.

About A.D. 60 a body of men and women were living in Corinth who called themselves, from the name of their chosen leader, Christians. One Paul, a missionary, who had devoted his life to making converts to this leader, wrote a letter to these Christians at Corinth. I have not room here to state how the date and authorship of this letter are fixed; it must suffice to say that practically all scholars agree in fixing the date at about A.D. 60, or a little earlier, and the author as Paul. Doubts as to the immortality of the soul had grown up among some of these Christians, and Paul endeavored to remove their doubts. His chief argument was that Christ had risen from the dead; he assumed this as a fact which they all knew, and drew from it the conclusion that Christ's followers would also rise from the dead. This letter establishes the fact that already by A.D. 60—that is, within less than thirty years after the death of Christ—belief in his resurrection had become firmly established among even the skeptically inclined of his followers. If we had a record of the Deluge written within thirty years after the Deluge, and so written as to establish the fact that there was a substantially universal belief in the Deluge among all the descendants of Noah, and that this belief was the foundation of a school or sect who called themselves Noah's followers, we should think the notion that the story of the Deluge was a tradition, which had grown up gradually and unconsciously, an entirely incredible notion. If we found an author writing within thirty years after the Declaration of Independence, and appealing to the American Nation to be true to that Declaration as the foundation of their liberties, we could not suppose that the notion of a Declaration of Independence was a legend which had grown up unconsciously,

either without any basis of fact or upon a slight and uncertain basis.

There are three witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ which the unprejudiced student must take account of: the character of Christ, the existence of the Christian Church, and the change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week.

I. It has been finely said by Professor Fisher that we believe, not merely in a resurrection, but in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His character as portrayed in the Gospels is unique. That it is historical; that its supreme excellence is not due to the imagination of the narrators; that they did not idealize him, but, on the contrary, derived all their ideals from him, is apparent to all unprejudiced students.¹ The Christian faith in the resurrection begins in faith in Christ himself. Believing that this man came from God, we easily believe that he not only went to God again, but gave to his disciples a visible attestation of that fact. Believing that every death is also a resurrection, we find no difficulty in believing that this resurrection was so manifested that even dullards could be assured of it. We do not suppose, at least I do not, that Jesus Christ was the only one who ever rose from the dead. On the contrary, I suppose that all his followers experience a like resurrection, which is synchronous with death. What was unique in the resurrection of Jesus Christ was the fact that either his spirit returned to animate his body, or his spiritual body was made apparent to the opened eyes of his followers, that they might see what we should see at every death-bed if we had equally open vision. In brief, the resurrection of Jesus Christ was not a unique phenomenon; it was only a unique manifestation of a universal phenomenon. And there is that in the character and mission of Jesus Christ which makes such a unique manifestation, however unexpected to the disciples, not unreasonable or incongruous to us.

II. The death of Jesus Christ left his disciples utterly disheartened. They abandoned their faith in him as the expected Messiah. They began to scatter, and some of them resumed their abandoned fishing occupation. They were common peasant folk, had derived all their courage and inspiration from their leader, and with his death that courage and that inspiration died. And yet in a quarter of a century after his death his Church was winning converts to his Messiahship, not only throughout Palestine, but throughout the Roman Empire. The Christians of Rome had become, according to Livy, "a very great multitude." And in three centuries after the resurrection Christianity had become the dominant religion of the Roman world. This victory of Christianity was not due to the beauty of its ethical precepts, which do not differ materially from those expressed by the best pagan moralists; nor to the death or even the character of Christ, whose character was but little comprehended even by his own half-converted followers, and whose death was a stumbling-block to both Jew and pagan. It was due to faith in his resurrection. That this was the basis of the Christian Church is evident from the narratives in the Four Gospels, the history in the Book of Acts, the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, and the early post-Apostolic history. This faith made its way in spite of prejudice both Jewish and pagan, and in spite of a despairing incredulity among Christ's immediate disciples. This faith must have been founded either on some deliberate fraud, impossible to account for, on some deliberate fraud on the part of his disciples, or on an actual occurrence. The hypothesis of fraud has been long since abandoned. The hypothesis of a delusion created out of the hopes and imaginations of the disciples (Renan's theory) is refuted by all that history tells us of their despondent attitude, confirming what we might well expect. The hypothesis of legend or myth (Strauss's theory) is refuted by the conclusive evidence that faith in the resurrection had already become victorious in thirty years

after the death of Christ; for thirty years do not afford time for the growth of a legend. The only rational explanation of the power of the primitive Christian Church is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

III. These considerations are reinforced by the change of the Jewish rest-day from the seventh to the first day of the week. Let any one imagine the difficulty which would be encountered in changing the Fourth of July to the Fifth of July. But this Sabbath change was made quietly, almost unconsciously, without any claim of divinely revealed authority, without any edict of either civil or ecclesiastical authorities—simply because the Christians could neither be joyful on the day of Christ's entombment nor silent on the day of his resurrection.

To sum all up: The primitive Church was not a mere ethical society. Its message was not, Be virtuous and you will be happy. Its message was, A Deliverer has come into the world; if we follow his leadership we can redeem the world. The evidence that He was such a Deliverer was his resurrection. The demonstration of that resurrection was so effectual that within thirty years after it occurred the Church was rapidly winning its way to its future dominance, in spite of persecution, in spite of skepticism, and in spite of prejudice both Jewish and pagan; and was already establishing a witness to its victorious faith, in the Lord's Day, usurping the place in the world's religious festivities both of the Jewish Sabbath and the pagan Sunday. To disbelieve in the reality of the resurrection is to believe that the greatest moral and religious reformation the world has ever seen was founded upon a fiction, if not a fraud. And this is to undermine the very foundations of belief, and to deny the trustworthiness of all history by denying both the trustworthiness of human testimony and the practical vitality and efficacy of the moral law in human affairs.



The Rights of Reformers

By the Rev. J. H. Ecob, D.D.

I have for many years belonged to the minority in various "righteous but unpopular reforms." During this time I have become quite hardened to the slings and arrows of outrageous majorities. But there comes a time when even a worm will turn. That time has come for this particular worm. I hereby serve a notice on all conservatism that one reformer will not hear with the "least degree of allowance" the common cry of "negative work," and the stock demand for "something to put in the place of it." No sooner does one lift his hand against a great evil than the whole host of conservatives begin to cry to heaven, "You radicals do nothing but destructive, negative work. Give men the good, and the bad will drop away of itself." When they are tired with this cry, they rest themselves by a change of work, and begin to howl for "something to put in the place of what you destroy."

Now, I, for one, am absolutely indifferent as to the name you give my work. And I refuse point-blank to go into your pet business of substitution. Even reformers have rights which white people are bound to respect. While I am engaged in hewing down this upas-tree, you Respectables may stand round in a ring and with the voice of one man declare my work negative, and that I am bound to set out a grove of sugar-maples or a peach-orchard in place of the tree which I destroy. I answer, "This one thing I do," and hew away. "Gentlemen, stand from under; this tree is coming down. If you want maple or peach trees in place of it, you get a good ready, and as soon as it is down fly at your positive and substitutional work. One thing is certain: you can't do anything till I get this tree down."

We have had some queer history in this line. In the old slavery contest the Abolitionists were abjured by all the gods at once to desert from their destructive work—first, because it was purely negative; second, because they provided nothing in the place of the institution which they proposed to destroy. All conservatism cried, Do you not

¹ Who among his disciples or among their proselytes was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee; as certainly not St. Paul, whose character and idiosyncrasies were of a totally different sort; still less the early Christian writers, in whom nothing is more evident than that the good which was in them was all derived, as they always professed it was derived, from the higher source.—*John Stuart Mill*.