

*Jesus, The Last
Great Initiate*



JESUS, THE LAST GREAT INITIATE

BY

EDOUARD SCHURÉ

TRANSLATED BY

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THE MISSION OF THE CHRIST

"I came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them."—Matthew v. 17.

"The Light was in the world, and the world was made by it, but the world knew it not."—John i. 10.

"As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."—Matthew xxiv. 27.

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indisputable is the testimony of Paul. Wishing to explain to the Corinthians the reason of his faith and the basis of the gospel he preaches, he enumerates in order six successive appearances of Jesus: those to Peter, to the eleven, to the five hundred, "most of whom," he says, "are still living"; to James, to the assembled apostles, and finally, his own vision on the way to Damascus. These facts were communicated to Paul by Peter himself, and by James, three years after the death of Jesus, just after Paul's conversion, at the time of his first journey to Jerusalem. Accordingly he received them from eye-witnesses. Finally, the most indisputable of all these visions is by no means the least extraordinary; I refer to that of Paul himself. He continually alludes to it in his Epistles as being the source of his faith. Given the former psychological condition of Paul and the nature of his vision, we see it is from without, not from within. Of an unexpected and terrifying character, it completely changes his whole being. Like a baptism of fire, it descends upon him, clothes him in a new and impenetrable armor, and establishes him in the sight of the whole world as the invincible champion of the Christ.

Paul's testimony accordingly possesses a double authority, in so far as it confirms his own vision and corroborates those of the others. Whoever might feel inclined to doubt the sincerity of such affirmations would be obliged to reject *en masse* all historical testimony, and to renounce the writing of history. Note, too, that if critical history is incompatible with an exact weighing and well-thought-out selection of all the documents, philosophical history would also be impossible, if greatness of effects could not be referred back to greatness of causes. It would be possible with Celsus, Strauss, and M. Renan to refuse all objective value to the resurrection, and consider it as a phenomenon resulting from pure hallucination. If so, one is obliged to found the greatest religious revolution of humanity on an aberration of the senses and a mere delusion of the mind.¹¹ There can be no denying that faith in the resurrection is the basis of historical Christianity. But for this confirmation of Jesus' teaching by a dazzling fact, his religion would not even have had a beginning.

This event effected a complete revolution in the souls of the apostles. In consequence of it their whole mental attitude, from being Judaic, became Christian. The Christ is living in glory, he has spoken to them. The heavens have opened; the life beyond has entered into the life within, the dawn of immortality has touched them and kindled their souls with a fire which nothing can extinguish. Above Israel's tottering earthly kingdom they have caught a glimpse of the world-wide heavenly kingdom in all its glory. Hence their eagerness for the strife, their joy in martyrdom. Jesus' resurrection gives birth to this mighty impulse and hope which carries the gospel to all nations and the good tidings to the utmost limits of earth. For the success of Christianity two things were necessary, as Fabre d'Olivet has said: that Jesus should be willing to die, and that he should have the power to rise again.

¹¹ Strauss says: "The fact of the resurrection is explicable only as 'ein welthistorischer humbug.'" The expression is rather cynical than witty, and does not explain the visions of the apostles and of Paul.

To form a rational idea of the fact of the resurrection, and understand its religious and philosophical bearing, one must consider only the phenomenon of the successive appearances, and, from the very outset, remove from one's mind the absurd idea of the resurrection of the body, one of the greatest stumbling-blocks of Christian dogma, which, in this particular as in many others, has remained at quite a childish and rudimentary stage. The disappearance of Jesus' body can be explained by natural causes, and it is worthy of note that the bodies of several great adepts have disappeared quite as mysteriously and without leaving the slightest trace. It has never been discovered what became of the bodies of Moses, Pythagoras, and Apollonius of Tyana. Possibly the brothers, known or unknown, who kept watch over them, destroyed by fire their master's body, to prevent pollution at the hands of enemies. In any case, it is only when regarded from the esoteric point of view that the scientific aspect and spiritual grandeur of the resurrection really appear.

By Egyptians as by Persians, of the religion of Zoroaster, both before and after Jesus, by Israelites and by Christians of the first and second centuries, the resurrection has been interpreted in two ways, the one material and absurd, the other spiritual and theosophical. The first is the popular idea, finally adopted by the Church after the repression of gnosticism; the second is the profound idea of the initiates. According to the first view, the resurrection signifies the return to life of the material body; in a word, the reconstitution of the decomposed or dispersed corpse, so it was imagined, was destined to take place at the coming of the Messiah, or at the Last Judgment. It is useless to insist on the gross materialism and absurdity of this conception. To the initiate the resurrection has a far different meaning. It refers to the doctrine of the ternary constitution of man. It signifies the purification and regeneration of the sidereal, ethereal, and fluidic body, which is the very organism of the soul. This purification may take place commencing from the present life, through the inner work of the soul, and a certain method of existence; although, for the generality of mankind, it finds accomplishment only after death, and then for those only who, in one way or another, have aspired towards justice and truth. In the other world hypocrisy is impossible. There souls appear as they are in reality, they fatally manifest themselves under the form and color of their essence dark and hideous if they are evil; radiant and beautiful if they are good. Such is the doctrine given by Paul in the Epistle to the Corinthians, where he formally says: "There is an animal body and there is a spiritual body."¹² Jesus states this symbolically but with greater profundity for those who can read between the lines in the secret conversation with Nicodemus. Now, the more a soul is spiritualized, the farther will it be from the earthly atmosphere; the farther away the cosmic region which attracts it by the law of affinity, the more difficult its manifestation to men.

Accordingly, superior souls seldom manifest themselves to man, except in a state of ecstasy or profound slumber. Then, the physical eyes being closed, the soul, half detached from the body, itself sees souls at times. Nevertheless, it sometimes happens

¹² 1 Cor. xv. 39-46.

