

THE BELIEFS OF JESUS.

CHAPTER 18.

Christ set out on his Ministry, convinced that his vocation was to save the world. But suppose he was wrong? I think he was right, because looking back I am inclined to say that if he was not the Messiah, then the world will have to do without one. His like has never been seen again. But suppose he was wrong: he himself doubted whether he was the Messiah during his temptations in the wilderness, and there is nothing wrong in our doing the same. In the greatest of all his speeches, Winston Churchill in June 1940 had the wisdom to stare the prospect of defeat in the face, and to spell out for us what it would mean in practice, as an incentive to make sure that it did not happen. So there is nothing wrong in our doing the same, and considering briefly the consequences for the world and mankind if by any chance Jesus was mistaken.

Mohammed regarded Jesus as a prophet; but took the view that Jesus' revelation was incomplete, else there was no reason for him, Mohammed, to add to it. He disputed that the crucifixion occurred, which means disputing not only the accuracy of the Gospels, but also the purport of their message. This may have enabled Islam to be more successful initially; but did it store up trouble for the future? I find the reasoning of Goethe more persuasive. Goethe accepted the unique and majestic spirit of Jesus as revealed in the Gospels, but held the view that it is impossible for one man to reveal the Divine unfathomable mystery which is the Creator, which must include not only the mystery of Man, but also of Nature and of titanic World Events as well. Christianity tries to cope with the mystery of Nature, by calling Jesus the "Word" through whom all things were created. But what of world events, the clash of cultures and the clash of Empires? The Old Testament tried to account for these by treating them as God's way of chastising the sin of Israel. Well, maybe, but I find Jung's view that the phenomenon of Nazi Germany was the result of Hitler manipulating the collective

THE BELIEFS OF JESUS.

unconscious of the German people, so that it became thoroughly evil and bent on War, distinctly more convincing. The Hebrew Prophets appear naïve in comparison; unable to see that human character must grow to have any hope of mastering contemporary evils, they appear to have been imprisoned in the spirituality of their own generation. But Jesus came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets. So how did he treat the clash of Empires?

Jesus dismissed the secular world, and did not concern himself with it. That undoubtedly disappointing fact may simply mean he accepted the tradition of his people that titanic world events all revolved round God's punishing the backsliding of little Israel. I think it is more likely to be the other way round; that God was content that the backslidings of little Israel should fit in with titanic world events. Israel put the cart before the horse, as did Jesus. However that may be, Jesus' attitude was perhaps acceptable in his own generation, when Rome ruled the known world; but it will not suffice in our generation, when evil so nearly triumphed in the Second World War. One would need to be mad to think we should ever be allowed such a narrow escape again. My own opinion is that you have to give the secular world its due; there are certain Rules of Creation, and if you disregard them, your secular society disintegrates into chaos. The basic Rule of creation may be love; but there are other Rules as well, which governments disregard at their peril. Nowadays for an individual to preach that Love solves all problems is irresponsibly naïve.

So Mohammed was right in thinking that Jesus had failed to take account of world events; and his response was to inaugurate a militant religion. So successful were the conquests of Islam in the hundred years following the Prophet's death, that the Mediterranean ceased to be a Roman lake, and it must have looked doubtful if anyone could stop them. Although Islam was tolerant at that time, whereas Christianity was not; was this conquest achieved by forgetting one crucial message of the cross, that you should love your enemies?

THE BELIEFS OF JESUS.

And where has this forgetfulness led to? Is it to the suicide bomber? If it is, what a price to pay for denying that the crucifixion ever took place! The suicide bomber probably imagines he is doing the will of Allah. But is he? No doubt he discounts the popular idea of being rewarded in a paradise of sensuality. There could be no worse degradation; without humour, and without drama. But like Samson eyeless in Gaza, I expect he seeks to expiate his impotent inability to run a decent just society. If he does dream about paradise, my guess is that once dead, he will find it existed only in his imagination, and nowhere else. But surely the reality is that he will find himself shunned; shunned by those he knew in this world who are ashamed of him, and shunned by those he meets in the next? For who will trust him? If his fate is to be shunned by all who want peace for an eternity, I can think of no worse hell.

Even when being actually crucified, Jesus taught that we should love our enemies; and he was willing to try to save his enemies from themselves, by teaching that love is better than hate, goodness better than evil, life better than death. One cannot do much better than that! And doubting Thomas' punishment was to be told that others might be more blessed than he. In contrast the fundamentalists of any religion, and the Christian Inquisition of the Middle Ages and afterwards were within this group, have got themselves into the position that they are bound to condemn anyone who differs from themselves; and nowadays instead of trying to adjust to modern thought as Teilhard de Chardin urged them to do, they defy modern thought. How are they able to do this? By the simple expedient of not thinking.

So was Jesus the Messiah? Generally speaking, a country's saviour knows there is nobody else capable of doing what he knows has to be done. The Elder Pitt, when out of power, and possibly suffering from manic depression, claimed that he could save England and nobody else could. Both statements were correct; and he did! But he was speaking of England's political future and what England stood for, not the overcoming of evil. In the wilderness, Jesus was tempted to doubt that he was the Messiah; he is not recorded as being

THE BELIEFS OF JESUS.

tempted to believe he was the Messiah. He evidently did believe it; and then had doubts, which is what you would expect. Suppose the truth is he was right to doubt it; because however correct he was in seeing that integrity is always dragged down by the men of Lilliput, it was irresponsible to teach men to seek a place in heaven, and throw the welfare of society contemptuously to the winds? How could the God of Newton and Einstein, of Darwin and Goethe who both grasped the truth of evolution, approve of throwing the future of society to the winds? Did Jesus misunderstand his mission; did he not understand God's purposes? Is it enough to say that your Kingdom is not of this world?

Of course if the Resurrection happened, as I believe it did, it is pretty obvious who had the Divine Writ. But suppose I am wrong; and that the resurrection was an apparition conjured up by those intoxicated by the charisma of the friend they had lost? Would they not have given anything to believe that the crucifixion was not the end? How much do we know about group hysteria? Do we understand how it was the German people, with their tradition of music, philosophy, and literature embracing Bach, Luther, and Goethe, could end up so intoxicated with Adolph Hitler as to call him "Saviour", and in SS units fight for him to the bitter end? Jung, who understood more of the German character than most of us, was fascinated by the topic of Flying Saucers. I was sceptical of everything about them, until I read a report in the papers of two smart young Police constables chasing one at 60mph. along country lanes in the South-West of England. And Jung's view was that many of the sightings were indeed genuine, although there was nothing there to be seen! In other words probably it was the phenomenon of a group hysteria in society, which manifested itself in a sighting by different people, now here now there. Is there a parallel with the resurrection? And there are more mysteries in heaven and earth than are commonly experienced in suburbia.

The early disciples believed he had risen from the dead, whether this belief was grounded on fact or illusion; they would never have embraced martyrdom if it had been

THE BELIEFS OF JESUS.

otherwise. St. Paul's vision of the risen Christ, vivid enough to blind him, was not a visual sighting, but was all in the mind and the imagination. Who understands that? One often has to act on the assumption that one's beliefs are correct; and we talk in a figure of speech about things being "blindingly obvious". But one's beliefs cannot always be correct; one must sometimes make a mistake. The cry of dereliction from the cross, must surely have stemmed from the fear that the whole thing had been a ghastly mistake. True it was followed by a cry that it was all finished; but there was nothing else he could say, and it killed him to say it. Suppose his fear was only too true: that he had completely misunderstood, and it had all been a mistake. We can all have similar thoughts. At the end of a career, even if it seemed a vocation at the time, one can still ask whether it was all worth it; would one not have done better to have chosen something else? Was not the sense of vocation just a fantasy in one's mind? Is there any defence against wishful thinking?

For a man to claim to be God, or a son of God in this world, is always a dangerous thing to do. Most people nowadays would regard it as a sign of madness; and in Jesus' time the Jews regarded it as blasphemy. We can choose between the Nicean Creed which agrees that it is blasphemy, by stating that Jesus was the only son of God, and the opening verses of John's Gospel, which say the opposite, that everyone who believes is a son of God. Indeed the Wisdom of Solomon says that every righteous man is a son of god. Yet we all recognise that if every Christian went around saying he was God incarnate, there would be pandemonium. Why was Jesus an exception to this sensible practical rule? His contemporaries clearly thought he was not.

He put his hearers into an impossible position; either they had to commit blasphemy in the eyes of their contemporaries, if they were to believe in him; or they had to say he was mad, when apparently he made the blind see, and the lame walk. Wisely he refused to give any sign from heaven (except his healings), which would have made things easier. He made

THE BELIEFS OF JESUS.

things harder by telling them they must eat his flesh and drink his blood. And if they did believe, how was anyone better off? This prophet was not interested in making a better society; he was hardly interested in society. They would be much worse off financially, and were supposed to abandon their infirm parents; simply to follow him. This was such a privilege that everything else had to be left behind.

In a sentence: they were expected to use their eyes and their judgement. And this is exactly what God expects people to do today. No-one who abandons his judgement, in order to shelter behind some creed, whether it be pacifism or communism or anything else, need think that the living God has much time for him, or that he is a candidate for the Kingdom of Heaven. Even if you are an atheist, life says much the same thing, doesn't it? If you do not use your eyes and your judgement, you are lost. The religious person says that God seeks to open men's eyes and form their judgement, so that they choose aright. Viewing the situation more as a whole, is it legitimate to say that the whole of life seems to be a groping towards greater maturity, and greater consciousness? Jung would have agreed, I think, that God has little scope for achieving either of these things if men live by the Rule Book. It is the same now, as it was then. Man only evolves in the mental and spiritual worlds nowadays; his physical evolution was complete long ago. That means he must use his eyes and his judgement in order to mature.

Of course one has doubts about the resurrection; it is so far outside our normal experience. And even if one does believe it happened, is it wise to talk about reigning with Christ in glory as a result of it, as the new Easter Collect suggests? Much better to follow Cranmer, and talk about the difference it makes to one's daily conduct. And the most obvious difference is we should no longer consider ourselves bound by everyday experience. We should be prepared to entertain the idea of creating a new heaven and a new earth; and if it seems practicable, set about doing so, even on a small scale. Even with one other person,

THE BELIEFS OF JESUS.

particularly if you are in the Romeo and Juliet situation. But this is as daunting for us, as following Jesus was for the Jews of his own day. Most people would say it would be madness even to contemplate it; and this was what most of the Jews at the time thought about following Jesus. This I suspect is what Christ hoped that Bethsaida and Capernaum would do: be willing to create a new heaven and a new earth. He quickly realized it was beyond them. So what he did instead was to set man's spirit free; and he saw that only his death could open the doors of the prison house.

Even if the resurrection is beyond our comprehension, yet there are cogent reasons for thinking it did happen. My own view is that the two most cogent arguments are the fearlessness with which the disciples preached the resurrection within weeks of the death, and the failure of the Authorities in Jerusalem to provide an answer to the empty tomb. I have listened intently to men telling stories in the witness box for 40 years: some true, some false; and in my judgement, it is beyond most men's ability to steal a body from a tomb and boldly assert a few weeks later, falsely, that the body rose from the dead. You might get a few rascals sufficiently brazen to do it, but a rascal would be hardly likely to cling to such a story in the face of the threat of torture and execution. And anyway the public would quickly see through him. People are not such fools as to be taken in for long. The accusation that the disciples stole the body, and then preached the resurrection, is ludicrous; and though I feel sure the accusation was made, I am equally sure everyone in Jerusalem at the time knew it was ludicrous.

When you consider how a group of cringing cowards, hiding for fear after the crucifixion, became the incomparably bold men who preached the resurrection a few brief weeks later, only one conclusion is possible: namely something dramatic had occurred to give them the courage. Unless the entire New Testament is a fictitious novel, the men themselves say it was Christ rising from the dead. No-one has sensibly suggested anything else. I

THE BELIEFS OF JESUS.

suppose anything in this world is possible, and it may all have been group hysteria; but the Gospel writers go to considerable lengths to make plain it was real, and not illusion. They describe Christ eating a meal, and allowing himself to be touched and handled. Do you believe the evidence of your own eyes; or don't you? Besides the Authorities never said to the disciples, "Hang on a minute, before you get carried away, please remember we can take you to the tomb, and there will be a body inside". Nor did they say, "Hang on a minute, we can show you the tomb, and everyone knows you stole the body". They cannot have said that, if Gamaliel said (as he is reported to have done, Acts Ch.5 v.34), "Leave them alone; if it is from God it will last; if not it won't". He would never have said that, if everyone knew they had just stolen the body. Although the accusation was most probably made, everyone knew it was rubbish. The truth is that the Authorities in Jerusalem had no answer to the empty tomb. And the only answer nowadays is to ignore the question, and talk about something else. So I will assume it happened.

What then did God the Father, the Divine Unfathomable Mystery, expect of Jesus? And was he satisfied with the outcome? Did He expect Jesus to have heard of Aristarchus, and to have immediately preferred his opinion that the earth revolved and went round the sun, to the prevailing idea that the sun went round the earth? Or did He expect the Word of God, as he wandered about Palestine talking to simple men, to be fully conversant with the idea that Newtonian gravitation would one day be superseded by a field theory of gravitation, which was better? In other words, was He content that Jesus should be as completely mistaken about contemporary knowledge as all his friends were? Was he content that Jesus' general knowledge should be that of a well-informed carpenter in Nazareth? The point is not academic. If God the Father was content that Jesus should be mistaken about much of his knowledge of the natural world, and of the world of organised society, then it is inconceivable that God should have expected him to pronounce significantly on these

THE BELIEFS OF JESUS.

matters. If Jesus' profound learning was confined to the scriptures and everyday life, then God the Father will only have expected him to pronounce on the scriptures and on everyday life, insofar as these reflected his own personal experience.

So it is inconceivable that God should have expected Jesus to preach a salvation which embraced this world, because that would have meant pronouncing on matters of which he knew little. Jesus therefore had to preach an other-worldly kingdom, to remain within the world in which he had authoritative knowledge. But he could still preach about a world in which character would mature and grow. And in fact he did; one of the last things he said was that his followers should carry on from where he left off. There followed his final prayer, Gethsemane and the final conflict. Now we are in a different position from Jesus; society has changed out of all recognition, and our problems are very different from his. So it would not be surprising if our solutions too had to be very different. We do understand something about the organisation of society: enough to grasp that we have reached that stage in evolution when evil, if unchecked, can subvert the whole world. And the Second World War should teach anyone, who bothers to read his history books with any attention, that you either submit to evil, or fight it tooth and nail. It is useless trying to appease evil, except to gain time when you have previously wasted it.

So what does God expect of us in the present world situation? In principle, the same as He expected of those people who met Jesus in the flesh: to use our eyes and to use our judgement. And if this means taking up arms, then we must take up arms. And if Clausewitz was right: that war is the continuation of political intercourse by other means; then we may have to resort to War. Weapons are now so terrible, that many people think the only justification for war is survival; yet only when you have looked into the abyss of defeat and seen what that involves, as Churchill did, can you decide if it is worth while fighting. In the same way, it is only when you have contemplated that Jesus may have been mistaken, and

THE BELIEFS OF JESUS.

peered into the abyss of a world without a Saviour, that you begin to understand who he was, and to have a true measure of his greatness. The man in the street, who leaves the pews empty, may say he has done this; but does he want to live in a world where evil always triumphs? If Jesus taught us one thing more clearly than any other, it was that you surrender to evil only if you want to do so. You can always sacrifice your life for others. If the man in the street relegates Jesus to the past, then it looks as though he has made up his mind to surrender to evil, to any extent that evil says is necessary!

Was God satisfied with the outcome of Christ's Ministry? If the resurrection happened, presumably he was. But did it happen? It is always dangerous to base a system of belief on an historical event, because if someone disproves the event the system crashes. Yet for better or worse, Christianity does it, and has done it for 2000 years. However many faults orthodoxy had, it clung to the resurrection; and was right to do so. And it is no more difficult believing in the resurrection, than it is making up your mind what God wants you to do today. Even if you make up your mind that you have a vocation, this too may be the wildest fantasy. There can never be any proof that it is wisdom. There is never any safety from self-deception: you can only believe. Even after it is all over, you may be in the same position as Jesus on the cross, wondering whether it was not all a ghastly mistake.

One gets great insight into human nature, watching power getting its hold on men. When a man is first given power, whether it be a little or a lot, he may seem so reasonable, he may be so reasonable; yet when he is asked to let go that power, he may cling to it ever more desperately. You see it in judges when they are not up to the job. Their bad habits get worse, and worse, and worse. We are all affected to some degree. When someone is up to the job, his self-confidence grows with experience; yet all too easily is he caught off guard and brought down. It is impossibly difficult to be lowly in one's own eyes, and confident in the world of

THE BELIEFS OF JESUS.

affairs; as difficult as it must have been for the contemporaries of Jesus to believe in him in defiance of most public opinion. Creation was not designed to make life easy.

If Jesus' mind was like ours, it must have been the same for him. He too must have gained in confidence with success. Once he had set out on his Ministry, his Vocation was behind him. He could not possibly doubt it once he had begun; so he became more and more confident about it. Until, that is, he was on the cross, and it was all over. Then he was free to doubt; and how ghastly it must have been hour after hour in the blazing sun, until Nature was kind for once, and tradition says there was an eclipse. Doubting one's career is mild in comparison. If Jesus was the Messiah or Redeemer, his mind must have worked in the same way as ours; otherwise we could not possibly follow his example.

So what was it he achieved? Leaving Jewish thought behind, and expressing it in the idiom of contemporary thought, what was it he achieved? A scientist's view of Christ's Ministry would be that he had performed the one essential act necessary for man's evolution to proceed. Most species go down a cul-de-sac, and from then on it is impossible for them to develop into a higher form of life. The Dinosaurs could never have developed into man, however long Nature had allowed them! And today, ants and bees could never evolve into a higher form of life; yet their social life is wonderfully complex, more so than any creature's except ours. It must be a limited social life; not many jokes in the ant world. I like to think that bees derive some happiness from their incessant labour; perhaps bumping into the odd fairy in a cowslip as Shakespeare poetically suggested. But still not many jokes. So too among the Pharisees and Sadducees of the Gospels, not many jokes recorded. One of the few flashes of humour in the Gospels was in the answers of the blind man who washed in the pool of Siloam to recover his sight. When questioning persisted, he had the courage to ask his questioners if they too wanted to become disciples? They did not have the grace to laugh at

THE BELIEFS OF JESUS.

themselves, or concede they had lost that exchange. They were abusive. What a narrow, grim, limited world, it must have been. And how Jesus must have longed to free mankind from it?

What then was this essential act? He freed man's spirit, and with it his imagination, so that he was no longer content with the world around him. He opened up the possibility of almost limitless development of the human spirit. And the attraction of scientific thought is that it would never have allowed man's spiritual evolution to end with the Saviour nailed to a cross, which was probably official theology's worst mistake. It would have insisted that man's spiritual evolution would continue till completion.

With man's spirit freed, as he grew in maturity, he wanted to build a better world. At first it was a cloistered world. The stolid Roman lack of imagination no longer satisfied him. The Romans did lack imagination; for example, they never discovered how to harness a cart-horse properly; their collars pressed on the horse's windpipe, and restricted the amount of work the horse could do. In the hundreds of years in which they built their huge engineering works, they never discovered they were using horses inefficiently. What a limited imagination! It is strange that Greece, for all her brilliance, never made much headway with empirical science; great strides in some parts of mathematics, but little in science. Rome made none at all. Their genius seems to have been confined to discipline, law, administration: not enough for the human soul. So to begin with Man's spiritual freedom was within a cloistered imagination, working out the path to heaven and the correct relationship of man to God. The Church used the psalmist's word – Salvation. It was the only thing that mattered till the Empire crashed. Then it was a question of survival.

In the Middle Ages, it was still a cloistered imagination, but Church and State went hand in hand. Yet not cloistered only; the soaring buttresses and towers of the cathedrals must have seemed like castles in heaven to those who built them and worshipped in them. Buildings never to be repeated. Plenty of imagination there! However in the end the dream

THE BELIEFS OF JESUS.

faltered; and political science and natural science took its place. It is remarkable how modern and how moderate were the political views of the Marquis of Montrose, who raised Scotland for the King in the Civil War; and how little they differed from those of the Parliamentarians in the earlier years. The difficulty was not in seeing what reforms were needed, but in putting those reforms into practice. And at the same time as those views and reforms were gradually being implemented, natural science too began. As the human spirit began to embrace the entire world in the 18th century, England learned to regard religion with Edward Gibbon's polite contempt.

Jesus freed man's spirit and imagination; and he prophesied that any man who believed in him would achieve more than ever he had done. How right he was. I think it is common experience that when you fire someone's imagination, your pupil is likely soon to leave you far behind. A lesson all parents have bitterly to learn. Maybe Bach had to walk 200 miles to listen to Buxtehude, before his imagination in the composition of organ music was aroused; but once aroused he quickly left Buxtehude far behind. It is as though the artist's creativeness is exhausted by the creation; the development or exploitation of his ideas has to be left to others. The world is full of examples of this. General Guderian, the Panzer Leader, is an uncomfortable example. His imagination was fired by his reading a paper by General Fuller, a tank expert of the First World War. Guderian put the idea into practice with devastating effect in May 1940, and very nearly put the entire British Expeditionary Force "into the bag", which would have finished the War in Germany's favour. Jesus too was humble enough to see that anyone who believed in him would overtake his achievements. It is the same idea: anyone whose imagination was fired by his would achieve far more. Maybe it is such a titanic achievement to open the door or reveal the way forward, that it has to be left to others to exploit success. Probably it is condescending to say he could not have achieved more; nearer the truth to say he did enough, and that social conditions at the time

THE BELIEFS OF JESUS.

did not allow him to do more. He clearly regretted that Bethsaida and Capernaum did not repent; and I suspect his view was it would have avoided the need for his crucifixion. Anyway from our point of view, he set our spirits free, he enables us to walk with a lighter and more joyous step; and in Cranmer's phrase that is an inestimable benefit.

I myself accept the conventional view that Jesus, the man, tried to share himself with us; that was why he used the gruesome symbolism of the corn and wine gods of antiquity. He wanted to share his godhead, if he had it, and his immortality if he did not. And it hardly matters whether he tried to share a literal immortality, or a metaphorical and poetic one. He tried to share his very self; hoping, trusting, believing that we, his followers, would carry on from where he left off. But many people nowadays may not find it easy to accept such a view. So I have offered an interpretation of the Passion, which is nearer to the scientist's idea of an evolving world, and which is consonant with our experience of human genius. I hope some people will find it easier to accept this interpretation.

After all, both are only descriptions. That is what an interpretation is: a description of events which have happened. I am old-fashioned enough to think that science describes, but does not explain. This is the traditional view; that a scientific equation tries to correlate the known sense-perceptions, or if you prefer it the measurements from experiments, in the simplest possible way. In this way, it tries to be the best description possible at the moment. I understand, maybe incorrectly, that modern scientists particularly mathematical physicists tend to regard their equations as somehow being "reality". I fear they are falling into the trap that Plato inadvertently set for them, of thinking that ideas have a permanence that substance does not. My opinion is that their ideas only exist in their imaginations. None the worse for that; but so far from being permanent, scientific research has shown so far, that a better hypothesis always comes along eventually, which is or appears to be a closer approximation to the truth. And no interpretation alters the events which have taken place; it describes them.

THE BELIEFS OF JESUS.

Science claims to be investigating the material world, and to be leaving human events out of consideration. But in my opinion when one studies human events, and in particular theology which is the study of human religious events, it is still true that an interpretation is only a description. If it is objected that theology is the study of the Divine, I venture to suggest that studying the Inscrutable, as opposed to His works, is not likely to get very far. The early Church, and indeed Bishop Gore in the 19th Century, may have thought the Creeds were immortal truth. But I think it is nearer the truth to say they were codifications of the general experience of Christians at the time they were drafted. And experience changes, even if the Church refuses to modify its dogma. So my opinion is that any interpretation of the Passion is merely an interpretation, and one person may find one description more helpful, and another person may find another. And a Church is unwise, in these days of falling attendance, to turn away potential believers because they see things slightly differently from lovers of tradition, like myself. But it is not sensible to deny the crucifixion ever took place.

Or could it be that the supreme truth for us is that Jesus' greatest achievement lay not so much in what he did, as in what he was; that in him man's evolution reached its culmination, because he set our spirits free? That in his three brief years of Ministry and one week of Triumph and Passion, all the countless ages of Evolution reached their fulfilment? He himself knew nothing of evolution, and would never have described the significance of his life in that way; he described it in terms of fulfilling the Law and the Prophets, which meant that his thought was largely confined to the relatively parochial thought of the Jewish nation at that time. Hence his mistaken notion that he would be returning soon. So if evolution culminated in him, he was unaware of being its culmination. But it is not so for us, and may be a better description than fulfilling the Law and the Prophets; inasmuch as evolution takes in its stride the clash of Empires which are themselves relatively parochial in comparison with it. And after all, Canon Raven, regius professor of Divinity at Cambridge,

THE BELIEFS OF JESUS.

said much the same thing in his Riddell Lecture to Durham University in 1936: that Christ fulfilled Evolution. There is no disrespect in saying Jesus was unaware of his greatest achievement; most of us are in the same position. The good we do is largely by example; and few of us ever know the influence our example has exerted on others. Nor does it belittle him to say that History since has been the working out of that achievement. It even makes sense of the European wars of the 20th century, and shows us in proportion the limited relevance of other religions. Even better it gives hope for the future, inasmuch as the Divine purposes are unlikely to be thwarted by the dying screams of bigotry and ignorance. This is not to say it is the Creator's preferred description, because His ways are higher than ours. But it is enough for us that there is a grander conception in the design than we can conceive, which makes it highly improbable that His will could be so thwarted, provided we all do our duty. We might even hear less from the clergy of the C.of E. of what Jesus said and did 2000 years ago in the different social conditions that then pertained.

Note:- Gamaliel's speech is much abbreviated and paraphrased.