



CHAPTER XXV.

THE SPIRITUAL PHILOSOPHY OF CHRIST.

Even now, after eighteen centuries of Christianity, we may be involved in some enormous error, of which the Christianity of the future will make us ashamed. — VINET.

The Necessity of Signs and Wonders. — Christ's Work was for all Time. — His Consummate Wisdom. — Signs and Wonders as Evidence. — His Perception of Spiritual Laws. — The Perceptive Powers of the Soul. — Propositions. — Presumptive Evidence of his Knowledge of Spiritual Laws. — Condition precedent to Immortality. — Faith the Essential Condition. — The Declarations of Christ. — He meant just what He said. — The Doctrines of the Church. — Literal Extinction of the Soul through Unbelief — Belief essential to Salvation. — Belief will not avert the Consequences of Sin. — Inherent Probabilities. — The Conscious Existence of the Soul. — The Law of Suggestion applied. — Scepticism constitutes a Fatal Suggestion. — Phenomena of Hypnotism illustrative. — Souls of Animals have no Conscious Existence; hence not Immortal. — Christ as a Saviour of Souls. — His Doctrine new to the World, but scientifically correct.

WHEN Jesus said to the nobleman of Capernaum, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe," he not only correctly summarized the then existing attitude of the public mind in reference to the doctrines which he proclaimed, but he declared with prophetic exactitude that which is as true to-day as it was when he uttered it in Galilee. He said it, not reproachfully, but as a statement of a condition inevitable from the nature of things, which must be recognized and dealt with in a practical manner. The wisdom shown in yielding to the demand for "signs and wonders" in that day is obvious. Without it the people could not believe; with it they

could not doubt. To them it was the power of God, working through miracle. It was to them a sign and symbol of puissance and authority. To doubt the word of one who was able to work such wonders was to doubt the evidence of their senses. Without that evidence the spiritual doctrines of Jesus would have been to them without sanction of authority. Logic and reason would have been wasted on the people of that age. Their belief that the signs and wonders were wrought in defiance of natural law was the only circumstance that could command their respect. Their idea was that the only way in which God could manifest his power was by some signal violation of his own laws. To attempt to show them that Christ healed the sick by a strict observance of natural law would have been as futile as to attempt to teach a new-born babe the principles of the differential calculus. To convince them of the fact would be to destroy their faith in the power of God. Jesus taught them all that they could understand, — all that it would benefit the world to know in that era of civilization. He was working, not only for the people of his own time, but for all future generations. He laid his foundations broad and deep, and with the most consummate wisdom. He not only conferred the benefits of his power upon the people of his own race and country, but he left indubitable evidences of the truth of his history and of his doctrines for all future generations.

Conceding, for the sake of the argument, that Jesus possessed the power to work a miracle, — that is, to work outside of the domain of natural law and in defiance of it, — his consummate wisdom in refraining from the exercise of that power is now manifest. If he had wrought his wonders by miracle, only the eye-witnesses of his works would have been benefited; for there would have been no means provided by which future generations could verify his history. But if he performed his works by and through the operations of natural law, it only remains for science to re-discover that law, in order to demonstrate the truth of his history. His consummate wisdom is, therefore, manifest

in that he did leave a record, told with such accuracy of detail, that the science of this generation can verify its truth.

The immediate necessity for showing signs and wonders to his people was what he declared it to be, — namely, “that they might believe” in him; that they might be convinced of his power, and have faith in his declaration.

But he had a grander and a nobler object still than the conversion of the few people of his own race and country. He foresaw the time when mankind would not be content to rest its faith upon the dictum of a history written by obscure and unknown men; when the world would refuse to believe in the possibility of miracles, and demand a reason for faith in him, in his works, and in his spiritual doctrines. We have already seen how amply the truth of the history of his physical manifestations has been vindicated by the discoveries of modern science.

But he had a more far-reaching wisdom still. It would avail the world little, simply to know the truth of his physical history, if by that means he could not demonstrate the truth of his spiritual doctrines and philosophy. And it is just here that his utterance to the nobleman of Capernaum applies with equal force to the people of the present day, “Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.” It is now apparent that those signs and wonders were as necessary for the confirmation of the faith of the scientific investigator of to-day as they were to convince the people of his day that he was invested with power and authority. Without them there would have been no means by which we could prove even his probable existence. With them we are put into possession of data which, by comparison with the known facts of contemporary science, enable us to predicate with moral certainty his existence and the essential truth of his history.

They do more. They enable us to know with scientific certainty that he was in possession of an accurate knowledge of the laws which pertain to his physical manifestations; and they logically justify us in the conclusion that

by the same means he obtained possession of a knowledge of the laws which pertain to the conditions of immortal life. The subject-matter is the same. His physical manifestations were exhibitions of the powers of the soul. The philosophy of his psychic power is the philosophy of the soul in its relations to the physical man. The philosophy of immortality is the philosophy of the soul in its relations to God. A change in its environment does not change the nature or attributes of the soul; and hence we may infer with irresistible logic that Jesus was as correct in his inferences or knowledge concerning the life beyond as he was scientifically accurate in his knowledge of the laws of the soul in its relation to its physical environment.

In discussing the above proposition, the question as to how it was possible for Jesus to obtain a knowledge of the condition of the soul after the death of the body will first be considered. It has already been shown that under certain conditions the soul perceives with absolute accuracy the fixed laws of nature. It has also been shown that the soul does not possess during its sojourn in the flesh the power of inductive reasoning, but that its powers of reasoning deductively from any suggested premise are marvellous. I have ventured to use the expression in that connection, that “the subjective mind reasons deductively with extraordinary acumen.” I have not ventured the assertion that its deductions are infallible, though there is good reason to believe that under certain conditions the assertion would be substantially correct. The instances cited of mathematical prodigies would seem to bear out that assertion. The power of perception in them must be perfect, or there would be nothing to distinguish them from other mathematicians. Their answers to mathematical problems, to be remarkable, must be correct. That they are correct would seem to give us warrant for the inference that under favorable conditions the powers of the soul for correct deductive reasoning, or perception of fixed laws, are perfect. If it is true in mathematics, it must be true in all other matters governed by fixed laws, especially since all the

forces of nature are correlated, and all are governed by mathematical laws.

It has also been shown that the deductions of the subjective mind are always logically accurate, even though the premises may be false. Any one who has had experience in dealing with persons in a hypnotic trance will bear me out in that statement.

The question now arises, What are the conditions necessary to give us assurance of infallible deductions from given premises? Before proceeding to discuss that matter, it is proper to premise that it is difficult, in dealing with the subtle forces of the subjective mind, to draw a distinct line between its powers of perception of fixed laws and its powers of deduction from given premises. Its perceptions seem to be instantaneous, and to preclude the idea of the employment of any such processes of reasoning as are known to the logic of objective education.

The distinction seems to be this: If the premises are given from an extraneous source, in the form of a suggestion, the processes of deductive reasoning are employed. If the premises are the result of intuitive perception, the conclusion is also perceived simultaneously. In such a case the whole law pertaining to the subject-matter is perceived at once; and it is inconceivable to the finite mind how any processes of reasoning have been employed. Thus, in the case of Zerah Colburn, his answers to mathematical problems of the most intricate character were given instantaneously, and he was never conscious of employing any process of calculation whatever. Moreover, his answers were always correct.

Now, whether the processes of deductive reasoning employed by the subjective mind lead to infallible results, it is not my purpose to discuss. It is certain that they are marvellously accurate, whether the premises are true or false; but whether they may be relied upon as always correct when the premises are true, I am not prepared to say from the data before me; nor is it important, for my present purpose, to know.

It is certain, however, that where the powers of perception are employed, under proper conditions, the conclusions are infallible.

We have now a starting-point from which we may form a correct estimate of the scientific accuracy of the spiritual philosophy of Jesus.

If we are to concede that his doctrines are true, it is obvious that we must demonstrate the correctness of the following propositions: —

1. That Jesus was endowed with the power to obtain a perfect knowledge of spiritual law by perception or intuition.
2. To demonstrate this we must show, (*a*) that his knowledge of spiritual law was scientifically accurate; and (*b*) that it could not have been obtained by the ordinary processes of objective education.
3. To show that his knowledge was accurate, it must be demonstrated that the conclusions arrived at by the inductive processes of modern science are identical with the doctrines that he proclaimed.

It has already been shown that, as far as his physical manifestations are concerned, each of the statements embraced in the foregoing propositions is true. It has been shown that he must have had an intuitive perception of the law of healing by subjective power, for the reasons, first, that in the state of occult knowledge existing in his day, it was impossible that he could have obtained his knowledge by means of objective education; and, secondly, that his knowledge of the law of healing was scientifically accurate, as shown by the fact (*a*) that he proclaimed and constantly reiterated the essential condition of the exercise of the power of healing precisely as it is known at the present day; (*b*) that he constantly practised by the methods known at the present day to be the best; (*c*) that he surrounded himself and his patients with the best attainable aids to the exercise of his powers, — precisely such aids, the utility of which has been demonstrated by modern practice; and (*d*) that he constantly sought to secure the mental environment which is now known to be of the first importance, if not

absolutely essential, to successful mental healing. In short, it has been shown that he must have understood every principle and every law of mental therapeutics, the rediscovery of which has distinguished the present century.

Reasoning, therefore, from the premises which have thus been established, we have the logical right to infer that he understood all the laws which pertain to the soul. If he understood the laws which govern it in its relations to its physical environment, it is fair to presume that he knew the laws which pertain to its continued existence after it is freed from the trammels of the flesh. Without any further proofs, therefore, we have the logical right to consider the one as presumptive evidence of the other.

If I stopped right here, I might reasonably claim to have established the fact that the religion of Christ is founded upon a purely scientific basis. But I do not intend to rest content with mere presumptive evidence. I propose to show that his knowledge of the law of immortality did not rest upon inferential deductions from the facts known by him regarding the relations of the soul to its physical environment. I propose to show that the world is now in possession of facts from which we can reason inductively up to the same conclusions which he proclaimed, *ex cathedra*, as the law of immortality.

Before proceeding to do so, we must first inquire just what he taught. In doing so I intend to confine myself to the one essential proposition which he made regarding the condition essential to the soul's salvation; for I do not propose to be led into a discussion of the great fabric of doctrinal religion which has been built up since he ascended to the Father. I leave that to the theologian. What I intend to show is, that, viewed from a purely scientific standpoint, the declaration which he made regarding the condition precedent to the salvation of the soul is necessarily true.

The first question, therefore, is, What did Jesus declare to be the one essential condition necessary to the attainment of immortal life? When I say, "necessary to the attainment of immortal life," I mean literally what I say; for I hold that

if there is one principle laid down by the Master that is more clearly defined than any other, it is contained in his declaration, so often repeated, that faith — *belief* — is the one essential condition precedent to the continued life of the soul after the death of the body; and that, in the absence of belief in immortality, the soul itself will necessarily perish. That this was his doctrine, literally interpreted, no one will deny. That he meant exactly what he said, I shall attempt to show. That his declarations to that effect were statements of a scientific truth, I shall attempt to demonstrate by the process of inductive reasoning from facts known to modern science.

Before proceeding with the main argument, I hasten to say that the doctrine of future rewards and punishments will be left untouched. That question will stand just where it has always stood, — for each one to decide for himself according to his own interpretation of the Scriptures on that point, or his own sense of Divine Justice. I shall not even attempt to destroy the comfort and consolation which many good persons seem to derive from their belief in eternal fire. My only object is to show, from a purely scientific standpoint, that the history and essential doctrines of Jesus are confirmed by the facts and necessary inductions of modern science, and, incidentally, to harmonize certain passages of the New Testament which, through misinterpretation, have seemed to be at variance.

According to the Gospel of Saint John, the first declaration by Jesus of his doctrine of immortality was made to Nicodemus in the following words: —

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up:

"That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."¹

¹ John iii. 14-16.

Again, in John vi. 40, 47, he makes the same declaration in the following clear-cut sentences: —

“And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life. . . .

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”

Again: —

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.”¹

“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

“And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”²

Other passages might be quoted to the same effect, but these must suffice.

The question now is, Did Jesus mean just what he said; or were these idle words, having no significance taken in their literal sense? Jesus was not in the habit of uttering idle words, or of making statements that did not contain the elements of eternal truth. If these are exceptions, they are the only ones recorded in his history. I hold that they are not exceptions, but that they are authoritative statements of a literal scientific truth.

I have already shown that in formulating the doctrine of faith as the essential condition prerequisite to successful healing, he gave utterance to a scientific principle which it has taken nineteen hundred years for the world to understand and appreciate. It is equally true that, in formulating the proposition that *belief* is the essential prerequisite to the attainment of immortality, he gave words to a scientific principle of far greater importance than the other.

I am aware that one portion of the Christian Church believes that by the words “eternal life” Jesus meant that reward in heaven which is promised to the just, and that by

¹ John v. 24.

² John xi. 25, 26.

“eternal death” he simply meant the punishment which the wicked must undergo for their sins. On the other hand, there are those of the Church who hold that the literal death of the soul is the punishment meted out to all who die in their sins, while “eternal life” is the reward promised to all who are good. Neither of these sects has, however, satisfactorily explained to unbelievers why it is that belief or unbelief enters as a factor in the case, since man is not supposed to be able to command his belief.

It is to the reconciliation of these conflicting theories that I shall now address myself.

The first proposition of my theory is that the death, or practical extinction, of the soul as a conscious entity is the necessary result of unbelief in immortality.

The second proposition is that the soul, having attained immortality through belief, is then subject to the law of rewards and punishments “according to the deeds done in the body.”

The same propositions are more sententiously expressed in Romans ii. 12: “For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.”

In other words, the condition precedent to the attainment of immortality, or salvation, — that is, the saving of the soul from death, — is *belief*. The condition precedent to the attainment of eternal bliss and the avoidance of the punishments incident to sin, is righteousness.

It will thus be seen that if it can be shown that these two propositions are necessarily true, we shall avoid, on the one hand, the incongruous idea that *belief* will atone for all sin; and, on the other, the equally incongruous idea that the extinction of the soul is the necessary consequence of all sin.

In discussing the first proposition we shall first inquire what are the inherent probabilities regarding the meaning which Christ attached to the words which are quoted above. Is it probable, or even possible, that he could have taught that *belief* alone was a sufficient atonement for the sins of

the wicked? Knowing, as all must know who have followed his career and noted his sayings, his utter abhorrence of all wickedness; reading, as all may read, his sublime code of ethics and morals, together with the awful maledictions pronounced upon all violations of that code, and the punishments which he held before the world as a consequence of sin,—it is simply impossible rationally to conceive the idea that he taught that all consequences of a life of sin could be avoided by *belief*. It is a self-evident proposition that a man may believe in Christ, may believe in immortality, and at the same time be steeped in all manner of wickedness and crime. No more devout believers can be found in all Christendom than those of an unfortunate race in America who are proverbial alike for their devoted piety and for their propensity to steal on their way home from prayer-meeting; unless we except the bandits of Italy, who are as noted for their strict observance of the forms of the Church as they are for the fact that they live by the perpetration of murder and robbery. Unfortunately, our illustrations cannot be drawn exclusively from any one race or nation. In every Christian society there are all too many devout believers who live in constant violation of every law, human and Divine. It is an insult to the intelligence of Christ and of humanity to hold the monstrous doctrine that the belief of these men can shield them from the punishment due to infamy, or that they can be adequately punished, "according to their deeds," by annihilation.

On the other hand, it is impossible to believe that Christ summarized all the virtues, human and Divine, in the one word *belief*, or that by the employment of that word he simply meant that all who live pure and virtuous lives before God and man will be entitled to the rewards of heaven. If this was all that he meant, he taught nothing new, either to the Jewish nation or to any other civilized nation then in existence; for the Hebrews had been taught the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, of heaven and of hell, long before the appearance of the Messiah. It is true that Moses did not teach the Israelites any doctrine

of the future world, and very vague mention is made of it in the later books of the Old Testament. It is a historical fact, nevertheless, that before the advent of Jesus the Jews had become imbued with the Greek doctrine of Hades, which was an intermediate waiting station between this life and the judgment. In this were situated both Paradise and Gehenna, the one on the right and the other on the left, and into these two compartments the spirits of the dead were separated, according to their deserts. Jesus found this doctrine already in existence, and in enforcing his moral precepts and in his parables he employed the symbols which the people understood, neither denying nor affirming their literal verity. I remark, therefore, that in simply teaching the doctrine of future rewards and punishments he taught nothing new; and, in that sense, he is no more entitled to be considered the Saviour of mankind than would be any other successful teacher of the same doctrine.

We are, therefore, forced back to a literal interpretation of the statements under consideration. In this sense they can have but one meaning, and that is, that *in the absence of belief in immortality, the soul cannot have a conscious existence*. Reasoning from known facts, there is no other rational conclusion. In explanation of the meaning of "conscious existence" in the sense in which I have employed that phrase, it is only necessary to direct the attention of the intelligent reader to the accepted definition and doctrine of consciousness. "In taking a comprehensive survey of the mental phenomena," says Sir William Hamilton, "these all seem to comprise one essential element, or to be possible only under one necessary condition. This element or condition is consciousness, or the knowledge that I — that the ego exists, in some determinate state."¹ Again, he compares consciousness to "an internal light, by means of which, and which alone, what passes in the mind is rendered visible."²

The existence of a man without the knowledge of sensations or of mental operations would be one without con-

¹ Metaphysics, p 125.

² Ibid.

sciousness, and would constitute a purely vegetative existence as long as it continued. One can readily understand this condition in the objective mind from the observation of physical phenomena. It is equally comprehensible how the subjective mind, or soul, may be deprived of a conscious existence when we remember the fundamental law of its being, the law of suggestion. We have already seen how the law of suggestion operates upon the soul in cases of cataleptic trance, where the suggestion is made that the patient is dead. In that case the suggestion was believed implicitly, and the preparations for the funeral did not disturb the equanimity of the patient in the least. Nor did the incongruity of the situation suggest itself to the patient; namely, the idea of being dead and of thinking of being dead at the same time.

The suggestion to the patient's subjective mind that he was dead, rendered that mind unconscious of its own mental operations, and he was, to all intents and purposes, dead.

This is, obviously, but a feeble illustration of the principle involved. It is, however, sufficient to show how the soul may be deprived of a conscious existence. A life-long scepticism regarding the existence of the soul, and a consequent disbelief in immortality, constitute a suggestion that must operate to deprive the soul of a conscious existence, if the law of suggestion is universal in its operations.

The phenomena of experimental hypnotism also demonstrate the truth of the proposition. Every hypnotist knows that a suggestion to a deeply hypnotized subject that he is dead will produce a condition of such profound lethargy or catalepsy as closely to simulate death, and were the impression not removed, it would doubtless end in death. When the subject remembers what has passed, he testifies that he believed himself dead, and saw no incongruity in the situation. A settled belief that the death of the body ends all, and the absence of any belief or knowledge of the subject, must each operate to the same end.

It is this principle which constitutes the difference between men and animals, and which gives the one the power

and potency of immortality, and leaves the other to perish. Animals, in common with men, are possessed of a duality of mind; the subjective in the former being proportionately stronger than in the latter, as is shown in their stronger instincts. Objective reason being weak, and the power of speech being absent, there is no possibility of the idea or suggestion of immortality being imparted to the animal. Hence its soul can have no conscious existence after the death of the body. It has the instinct of self-preservation in common with man, but it is the preservation of the life of the body. If the animal has any definite idea regarding life and death, it all pertains to the body. An animal certainly can have no idea of the possession of a soul, much less of its immortality.

When, therefore, Jesus proclaimed the law that belief was a condition precedent to immortal life, he formulated a scientific proposition then new to the world, and at the same time proclaimed himself master of the science of the soul. He had declared the law of faith as it applied to the power of the soul to heal the sick, and he knew that the same law governed the soul in its relations to eternal life. He did not formulate his propositions in the terms demanded by the science of the nineteenth century, nor did he give such reasons for his conclusions as inductive processes require. The time for that had not yet come. Reasons would not have been appreciated in his day and generation. Nor was it necessary for the accomplishment of his mission — which was to proclaim the law of immortality — to show that the man whose soul has not been aroused to consciousness dies as the brute dieth. This was his mission; and in so far as he has accomplished that mission is he entitled to be called the Saviour of the souls of mankind. He preached no new doctrine other than this. His code of ethics was sublime and godlike in its purity and simplicity, but it was not new. He taught the doctrine of future rewards and punishments; but the symbols which he employed to describe the condition of the soul after death — the rewards bestowed and the punishments inflicted — were

those which were current among the people with whom his earthly lot was cast; nor does this fact argue for or against his omniscience. It would, obviously, have been impossible for him to convey to the world any adequate idea of the modes of spiritual existence in terms which could be understood. He used the current coin of expression to convey to mankind the broad idea that the soul that is "saved" to immortal life through "belief" will then be punished or rewarded according to the deeds done in the body. It would, obviously, have been useless and confusing to his hearers had he attempted to employ any new symbols, or any language to which they were not accustomed, to convey that idea.

His mission, therefore, as the Saviour of the souls of men was accomplished when he revealed to the world the essential condition of immortal life. His mission as a moral teacher was secondary in importance. The one doctrine was new, the other old. The one was a scientific fact, the other a code of ethics. The one was essential to the attainment of man's ultimate destiny as an immortal entity, the other a standard of right and justice in this world, and a condition of felicity in the world to come.

It is said that when Hillel, who flourished in the century preceding Christ, was asked whether he could give the whole Jewish law in one sentence, he answered: "Yes, perfectly well. What you do not want anybody to do to you, do not you to them. That is the whole law; everything else is only commentary."

The same may be truly said of the New Testament doctrines and the law of faith. The only thing wholly new was the doctrine of faith. That is the whole law; everything else is commentary.



CHAPTER XXVI.

THE MISSION OF CHRIST; FUTURE REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS.

The Success of Christ's Mission. — Chaotic State of Spiritual Philosophy in His Time. — The Various Doctrines in Vogue. — Jesus the first to simplify the Doctrine of Immortality. — He gave it a Definite Status in Philosophy. — The Doctrine of Future Rewards and Punishments. — God will "render to every Man according to His Deeds." — Spiritual Penalties for Violations of Spiritual Law. — The Sin against the Holy Ghost. — The Sin of Unbelief. — The Status of a Lost Soul. — Possible Reincarnation. — The Means of Punishment for Sin. — Affections. — Conscience. — Memory. — General Conclusions. — Scientific Basis of Christianity.

IT is often charged by the sceptical world that the mission of Jesus has thus far proved a failure, for that only about one third of the inhabitants of the earth have ever heard the name of Christ; that of Christian nations but a limited proportion of the inhabitants belong to the Christian Church; and that of the church membership there is but a limited number who so live as to entitle them to the rewards of heaven. Measured by the common idea of what constitutes salvation, there may be good ground for that criticism. But measured by the number of those who believe in the immortality of the soul; by the number who have a hope of a life beyond the grave; by the number who have a consciousness of the existence within them of the transcendental ego; or by the number of those who have risen, directly or indirectly, through the teachings of Christ so far above the level of the brute creation as to have a consciousness of the possibility of immortal life, and a consequent hope and subjective belief in