

truths. A Deified Man is the central figure in the faith of Christendom.

From the very beginning, however, a legend, true or false (but whose truth or falsity has no relation whatever to our present subject), gathered about the personality of this particular Galilean peasant reformer. Reverenced at first by a small body of disciples of his own race and caste, he grew gradually in their minds into a divine personage, of whom strange stories were told, and a strange history believed by a group of ever-increasing adherents in all parts of the Græco-Roman Mediterranean civilisation. The earliest of these stories, in all probability—certainly the one to which most importance was attached by the pioneers of the faith—clustered about his death and its immediate sequence. Jesus, we are told, was crucified, dead, and buried. But at the end of three days, if we may credit the early documents of our Christian faith, his body was no longer to be found in the sepulchre where it had been laid by friendly hands : and the report spread abroad that he had risen again from the dead, and lived once more a somewhat phantasmal life among the living in his province. Supernatural messengers announced his resurrection to the women who had loved him : he was seen in the flesh from time to time for very short periods by one or other among the faithful who still revered his memory. At last, after many such appearances, more or less fully described in the crude existing narratives, he was suddenly carried up to the sky before the eyes of his followers, where, as one of the versions authoritatively remarks, he was “received into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God”—that is to say, of Jahweh, the ethnical deity of the Hebrew people.

Such in its kernel was the original Christian doctrine as handed down to us amid a mist of miracle, in four or five documents of doubtful age and uncertain authenticity. Even this central idea does not fully appear in the Pauline epistles, believed to be the oldest in date of all our Chris-