

**REGNI EVANGELIUM. A  
SURVEY OF  
THE TEACHING  
OF JESUS CHRIST**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649386000

Regni evangelium. A survey of the teaching of Jesus Christ by Edwin Pinder Barrow

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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**Regni Evangelium.**

“Church Establishments and liberty of thought cannot co-exist; or, if they do, those in the Church who exercise that liberty will always expose themselves to a reasonable suspicion of their intellectual, if not of their moral dishonesty.”—*Skeats*.

# Regni Evangelium.

A SURVEY OF THE TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST.

BY

EDWIN PINDER BARROW, M.A.

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WILLIAMS AND NORSGATE,  
14, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON;  
AND 20, SOUTH FREDERICK STREET, EDINBURGH.

1892.

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HCW

## PREFACE.

Sooner or later there comes to every thoughtful student of the Christian religion a twofold desire. First, to search for the true image of "the man Christ Jesus" under the false colouring of sacred art. The figure familiar to us in picture and poem is not, we know at last, the real form of Jesus of Nazareth, of the work-shop and of the fishing-boat, provincial in habit and dress and speech, stamped with the marks of a roaming life, hardened by rough usage, scorched by wind and sun, stained with road-side dust, or wet with mountain dew.<sup>1</sup> In a ruder age, no doubt, the soft

<sup>1</sup> It will be said of course by some that Christian art is conventional and symbolic, that its object is to present the spiritual and not the historical aspects of things, and that for this reason it shrinks from realistic reproduction. There would be more weight in this objection if Christian art, with Christian hymnody, had always kept to the early symbolic images of the Passion and had never descended to the coarse realism of later representations of the Crucifixion. If realistic treatment is permitted here, why not in other scenes of Gospel history? But we venture to go further and to say that the temper of the present age—an age in which religious emotion is but little excited by the images of art—values, as antiquity did not, fidelity to fact, and finds both moral incentive and spiritual elevation in the endeavour to realise the plain realities of a life really loved because really human. It is the hard literalism of the Evangelist, rather than the softened symbolism of the artist, which has driven the story of that earthly life deep into the hearts of men.



imaginings of Christian art were not without use to teach a gentler life; but it is time, we feel, that all conventionally false, though tender, delineation should cease, if in the portraiture of Christ there is to be left one touch of his masculine strength. And, indeed, the facts of his life are majestic enough without being idealised. There is more to move men's hearts in the rough image of the living Christ "travelling in the greatness of his strength," than in the softly pictured scenes of his helplessness and woe. We are of those who "would see Jesus" as they saw him who knew him best. The circling halo, the rich robes, the soft colouring, the delicate outline, the outward grace, the hints of inner mystery—these were unknown to the men who saw and heard and looked upon and handled the Word of Life. But these true reverence needed not then. Does it need them now?

The second desire is a longing to find the actual gospel of the great Teacher under the false rendering of sacred science. A gospel was conceived, was preached, was believed, was counted sufficient for salvation, in which the birth and the death of Christ held no place.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The intimations of impending suffering and death—Matt. xvi. 21. Mark viii. 31. Luke ix. 22. Matt. xvii. 12, 22. Mark ix. 12, 31. Luke ix. 44. Matt. xx. 18, 22. Mark x. 33, 38. Luke xviii. 31—are no part of Christ's public teaching, and are in all cases said to have been given to the disciples privately. Against this clear and united testimony, the veiled announcements reported to have been made to 'the Jews' and to 'the multitude' in John viii. 28; xii. 32, can hardly be allowed to weigh.

It was "the gospel of the kingdom." Can this gospel be recovered ?

Modern criticism is doing something every day to encourage and to satisfy this double desire. The critic once sat amidst the ruins of buried religions and tried from scattered hints to depict the unknown. The past was reconstructed in the light of the latest theory. The problems of thought, as of language, were solved by ingenious conjectures. But the day of speculative fancy is over, and the age of exploration has begun. The student works now with pick and spade. He takes his own corner in the field and does his best. His business is not to reconstruct, but to lay bare. His learning need not be very profound, but he must have a quick eye and a patient, honest hand. The result of his labour will never be anything more than a contribution, and its value cannot be known until the whole has been examined and arranged. And, as in the ruined heaps of Chaldean cities the unearthed tablets give the inscriptions of earlier and of later periods of religious belief in one disordered mass, so in early Christian literature we have to deal with a body of fragmentary records, once of certain date and authorship, but now strangely thrown and heaped together ; of great historical worth, though in many parts without historical sequence. But, as the tablets now in our museums have rewarded the research of scholars by falling into chronological order and by revealing the development of creed out of creed, so, under the patient

handling of modern inquirers, not only the separate writings of the New Testament, but the separate portions of those writings, have in some measure been reduced to a right series both in time and in value. Putting it broadly, there are four stages in the history of early Christian teaching; first, the period of oral utterance by Christ himself in his own country and in his own tongue; then the period of oral narration by his friends and followers at various centres in translated form; then the period of free literary compilation, in a highly literary language, of current spoken narratives; and, lastly, the period of still freer literary comment on these written summaries, with the use of ecclesiastical and philosophic terms. Evidence of each of these stages may be discovered in unequal proportions in each of the Four Gospels, and out of these successive layers of matter thrown into one confused aggregate we have to separate the contributions of the first speaker, of the reporter, of the compiler, of the commentator. The result and the reward will be a clearer view of the person, action and character of Christ, and a closer grasp upon the essential and permanent elements in his religion. For, indeed, Christianity is not a religion of the Person of Christ addressed to him, but his own personal religion reproduced in us. Not what we think and feel about him, but what he thought and felt about God and human life—that is the essence of the Christian faith, and the practice of it is the test. Not without pain and loss, at first, do we reach this