

THE TRIBUTE OF CRITICISM TO  
CHRIST

‘For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.’—DEUTERONOMY xxxii. 31.

‘He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? And they said, Some say that Thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; and others Jeremias or one of the prophets.’—S. MATTHEW xvi. 13, 14.

‘What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?’—S. MATTHEW, xxii. 42.

‘And there was much murmuring among the people concerning Him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay, but He deceiveth the people.’—S. JOHN vii. 12.

‘Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.’—S. JOHN vi. 67, 68.

## VI

### THE TRIBUTE OF CRITICISM TO CHRIST <sup>1</sup>

OF the investigations of modern criticism the most serious are those which have concerned the person of our Lord. It has been felt both by assailants and by defenders of the Faith that, so long as His supremacy remains acknowledged, Christianity has not been overthrown. Other doctrines once considered all-important may fall into comparative abeyance: whether they are upheld or rejected or modified, matters little to Christianity as Christianity. But more and more it has grown clear that Christ Himself

<sup>1</sup> In this Lecture are included some paragraphs from a sermon long out of print, *The Witness of Scepticism to Christ*, preached before the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale.

is the Article of a standing or a falling Church. If this doctrine is not of God, if He is not the Way, the Truth, and the Life, Christianity, whatever benefits may have been associated with its career, must be ranked among religions which have passed away. But so long as He is admitted to be the Authority and standard in the moral and spiritual realm, so long as His name is above every name, the work of destruction is not accomplished.

Hence, renewed attempts have of late been made to tear the crown from His brow, to reduce Him to the level of common men, to relegate Him to the domain of myth, even to deny that He ever existed. Although, in certain quarters at present, this last and extreme position is loudly asserted, it is hardly necessary to occupy much time in examining it, the trend of all criticism, even of the most rationalistic, being so decidedly opposed to

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it. To deny that He existed is commonly felt to be the outcome of the most arbitrary prejudice, the conclusions of Whately's *Historic Doubts relative to Napoleon Buona-partre* remaining grave and weighty in comparison. That Jesus of Nazareth lived and taught and was crucified, that, immediately after His Death, His disciples were proclaiming that He had risen, and was their living inspiration, these are facts which can be denied only by the very extravagance of scepticism. And the admission of these simple facts implies a great deal more than is commonly supposed.

## I

It is the fashion for hostile critics to say, 'Christianity is not dependent upon Christ: it is the creation of the semi-historical Paul, not of the unhistorical Jesus. There is at best no more connection between Christendom and Christ than between America and

Amerigo Vespucci.<sup>1</sup> See how much Christians have been obliged to give up: see how belief after belief has had to be surrendered; see how they are now left with the merest fragment of their ancient Creed, how evidently they will soon be compelled to part with the little to which they still desperately cling.' The conclusion is somewhat hasty and premature. The fragment which remains is after all the main portion of the Creed of the early disciples. Where that fragment is declared and held and lived in, there is the presence and the power of the Christian Faith. We need not trouble ourselves about sundry points which, at one epoch or another, have come to be denied or ignored: we need not say anything either for them or against them. We have to take our stand on what is accepted, not on what is rejected. And for the moment we may

<sup>1</sup> G. Lommel, *Jesus von Nazareth* (quoted in Pfannmüller's *Jesus im Urteil der Jahrhunderte*).

venture to take our stand only on what is accepted by the critics least biassed in favour of the traditional views of Christendom. Those who have come to imagine it to be a mark of advanced culture to break with all religion, to confine their attention to the fleeting present, to reject all that claims to have Divine sanction, may listen with respect to the words of some who appear in fancied hostility to Christianity. If it is made plain that the positive teaching of men unconnected with any Church, untrammelled by any creed, is a virtual assertion of much that is most dear to Christianity, if it is made plain that even where there is strong denial there is also much reference to Christ, it may have more weight than the most cogent arguments or the most glowing appeals of orthodox divines or devout believers. The Evangelists delight to record instances of unexpected, unfriendly, unimpeachable testimony to the power of Christ.

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It is not only that the simple-minded people were astonished at His doctrine, but that the soldiers who were sent to silence Him returned, smitten with amazement, saying, 'Never man spake like this Man.' It is not only that a grateful penitent washed His Feet with tears, but that the unprincipled governor who sentenced Him to death declared 'I find in Him no fault at all.' It is not only that an Apostle confesses, 'Thou art the Christ the Son of the Living God,' but that the centurion who watched over His Crucifixion exclaimed, 'Certainly this was a Righteous Man: this was a Son of God.' It is similar unprejudiced witness that we may hear around us still, the witness of those who profess to have another rule of life than ours, and to be in no degree influenced by our traditions. We must not expect too much from this kind of evidence: we must not expect clear logical proof of every article rightly or wrongly identified

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with the popularly termed 'orthodox' Creed. It would destroy the value of the evidence simply to quote orthodox doctrines in orthodox language. What we rather offer is the testimony of those who have resigned their grasp on much that we may deem essential. It is because in a sense we may call them 'enemies' that we ask them to be 'judges' in the great controversy. It is exactly because they are incredulous, or sceptical, or irreligious that we cite them at all. We confine ourselves to the utterances of men who are commonly cited as hostile to the commonly accepted Faith of Christ, or who do not rank among the number of His nominal disciples, or who at least have discussed His claims by critical and historical methods, endeavouring fairly to take into account all the facts which the circumstances warrant. We say to those who disown the authority of Christ: It is not to the words of Evangelists or preachers that

your attention is sought : it is to the words of those whom you profess to respect, of those because of whose supposed antagonism to Christianity you are rejecting Him. We ask you to listen to them and to consider whether He of Whom such men speak in such terms is to be so lightly set aside as you have fancied.

## II

It will be strange if, accepting even that scanty creed, we do not find ourselves speedily accepting much more. When it is heartily acknowledged that Jesus of Nazareth lived and died, and that His first followers found strength and irresistible power in the conviction that He had conquered death and the grave, it is of necessity that we go further. The extreme sceptics who maintain that He never existed are, for the purpose of controversy, wise in their generation, for, once His existence is admitted, His mysterious power begins to tell. We are confronted

with an Influence by which, consciously or unconsciously, we must be affected, a knowledge which we must acquire, an Authority to which we must bow. Let us not think merely of those who have, in utter devotion, yielded their hearts and souls to Him through all the centuries, of the institutions and customs which owe their existence directly to Him; let us think of the manifestations which are so often visible in those who do not suspect whence the manifestations come, let us think of the tributes of affection, of homage, of devotion which are paid by those to whom the ancient faith in His Divinity appears to be an illusion or an impossible exaggeration.

Scarcely any critic of recent years has been regarded as more destructive than Professor Schmiedel. Indignant attack after indignant attack has been made upon him for arguing that only nine sayings attributed to our Lord can be accepted as genuine, that

all else is involved in suspicion. What Schmiedel really does maintain is that these nine sayings must of necessity be accepted as genuine, cannot be rejected by any sane canon of criticism, and that the acceptance of these nine sayings, these 'foundation-pillars,' compels the acceptance of a great deal besides. '*What then have I gained in these nine foundation pillars?* You will perhaps say "Very little": I reply, "I have gained just enough." Having them, I know that Jesus must really have come forward in the way He is said to have done. . . . In a word, I know, on the one hand, that His Person cannot be referred to the region of myth; on the other hand, that He was man in the full sense of the term, and that, without of course denying that the Divine character was in Him, this could be found only in the shape in which it can be found in any human being. I think, therefore, that if we knew no more we should

know by no means little about Him. But as a matter of fact the foundation-pillars are but the starting-point for our study of the life of Jesus.' <sup>1</sup> And this study, he concludes, gives us nothing less than 'pretty well the whole bulk of Jesus' teaching, in so far as its object is to explain in a purely religious and ethical way what God requires of man and wherein man requires comfort and consolation from God.' The standpoint of Professor Schmiedel is not the standpoint of the Church as a whole: he fearlessly and aggressively endeavours to remove any misconception on that subject: all the more remarkable that, renouncing so much, he incontrovertibly establishes so much, incontrovertibly establishes, we may not unreasonably contend, a great deal more than he admits: he cannot, we may think, stop logically where he does. All this may, or may not, be legitimately argued: there can

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus in Modern Criticism.*

be no doubt that one whose dislike of traditional dogmas is excessive, and whose scrutiny of the Gospel records is minute and unsparing, forces us to say of Jesus, What manner of Man is this ?

It is the same with the general tendency of modern criticism. From the day that Strauss accomplished his destructive work, the Figure of Jesus as a Historical Reality has been more and more endowed with power.<sup>1</sup> No age has so occupied itself with Him, none has so endeavoured to recall the features of His character, to apply His teachings to the solution of social questions, as this age of ruthless inquiry. The inquirers may have abjured tradition, but almost without exception they have profoundly revered, if they have not actually worshipped, Jesus of Nazareth, and they have found in His Gospel moral and spiritual light and life.

<sup>1</sup> H. Weinel, *Jesus im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*.

Some thirty years ago, M. André Lefèvre, a fervid disciple of Materialism, an uncompromising and bitter opponent of every symptom of religious manifestation, could not help discerning 'with the clairvoyance of hatred,' the influence of Christianity in modern thought. 'Descartes, Leibnitz, Locke, Condillac, Newton, Bonnet, Kant, Hegel, Spinoza himself, Toland and Priestley, Rousseau, all are Christians somewhere. . . . Voltaire himself has not completely eliminated the virus: his Deism is not exempt from it.'<sup>1</sup> The same thing is still occurring. In the most unexpected quarters we find the fascination of Christ remaining. Men not acknowledging themselves to be His followers, defiantly proclaiming that they are not His followers, that they can hardly be even interested in Him, are yet perpetually returning, in what they themselves will confess as their higher moments, to the thought of

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in E. Naville, *Le Témoignage du Christ*.

Him, trying to make plain why it is that for them there is in Him no beauty that they should desire Him. For example, this is how Mr. H. G. Wells, the popular author of so many imaginative works, attempts frankly to explain his attitude :

‘ I hope I shall offend no susceptibilities when I assert that this great and very definite Personality in the hearts and imaginations of mankind does not, and never has, attracted me. It is a fact I record about myself without aggression or regret. I do not find myself able to associate him in any way with the emotion of salvation.’ But Mr. Wells goes on to say: ‘ I admit the splendid imaginative appeal in the idea of a divine human friend and mediator. If it were possible to have access by prayer, by mediation, by urgent outcries of the soul, to such a being whose feet were in the darknesses, who stooped down from the light, who was at once great and little, limitless in power

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and virtue, and one's very brother, if it were possible by sheer will in believing to make and make one's way to such a helper, who would refuse such help? But I do not find such a being in Christ. I do not find, I cannot imagine such a being. I wish I could. To me the Christian Christ seems not so much a humanised God as an incomprehensibly sinless being, neither God nor man. His sinlessness wears his incarnation like a fancy dress, all his white self unchanged. He had no petty weaknesses. Now the essential trouble of my life is its petty weaknesses. If I am to have that love, that sense of understanding fellowship which is, I conceive, the peculiar magic and merit of this idea of a Personal Saviour, then I need some one quite other than this image of virtue, this terrible and incomprehensible Galilean with his crown of thorns, his bloodstained hands and feet. I cannot love him any more than I can love a man

upon the rack.' 'The Christian's Christ is too fine for me, not incarnate enough, not flesh enough, not earth enough. He was never foolish and hot-eared and inarticulate, never vain, he never forgot things, nor tangled his miracles.'<sup>1</sup>

There is no disputing about tastes; and it is impossible to refute one who tells us that he cannot see and cannot understand, though we may lament and be astonished at his disabilities. Why a man upon the rack should not be loved, or why the prime qualification for the Saviour of mankind should be the plentiful possession of petty weaknesses, or why it should be necessary for Him to be sometimes foolish and to have a bad memory, or what necessary connection there is between hot-ears and the salvation of the world, need not detain us long. For in spite of this apparently curious longing for a Deliverer who shall be weak and vain

<sup>1</sup> *First and Last Things: a Confession of Faith and Rule of Life.*

and forgetful and hot-eared, and foolish, and of the earth earthy, Mr. Wells shows us that the urgent outcry of his soul is for a Being limitless in power and virtue and one's very brother; and though he says that he does not find such a Being in Christ, it is exactly what Christians have in all ages been finding. 'We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in times of need.'

### III

The instance which we have cited is exceptional among modern doubters, among those who have deliberately set themselves without violent prejudice to study the claims of Christianity. Be it in poetry or prose, in scientific criticism or in imaginative

biography, with remarkable unanimity, while stubbornly refusing to accept the Creed of the Church, they so depict Him that the natural conclusion of their representation is, 'Oh, come let us adore Him.' There is scarcely any of them who would not sympathise with the admission and aspiration of R. Wimmer in his confession, *My Struggle for Light*: 'I cannot but love this unique Child of God with all the fervour of my soul, I cannot but lift up eyes full of reverence and rapture to this Personality in whom the highest and most sacred virtues which can move the heart of man shine forth in spotless purity throughout the ages. Even if many a trait in His portrait, as the Gospels sketch it for us, be more legendary than historical, yet I feel that here a man stands before me, a man who really lived and has a place in history like that of no other man: indeed I feel that even the legends concerning Him possess a truth in that they spring from the

Spirit which passed from Him into His Church. I know what I have to thank Him for. I would in my inmost self be so closely united with Him that He may live in my spirit and bear absolute sway in my soul. I will not be ashamed of His Cross and I will gladly endure the insults which men have directed, and still often enough direct, against Him and His truth.'

That is the characteristic and dominant note of the more recent criticism. The almost universal conclusion is that the Perfect Ideal has been depicted in the Christ of the Gospels, and has been depicted because the Reality had been seen in Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>1</sup> Is it not allowable to declare that the writers, let them say what they will about their rejection of the doctrine of the Church concerning the Incarnation and the Atonement of Christ, are practically His disciples, that the ardour of their faith in Him not infre-

<sup>1</sup> Appendix XXIII.

quently puts to shame the coldness of us who call Him Lord? <sup>1</sup> There is scarcely extravagance in the assertion that, as we recognise the part which Strauss and Renan played, and the unconscious help which they rendered, 'we may well say now "*noster*" Strauss and "*noster*" Renan. They were, in their measure, and, according to their respective abilities, defenders of the Faith.'<sup>2</sup> While it is possible to lament that among Christian apologists there are timid surrenders and faithless forebodings, it is yet more possible to reply that 'Whereas our critics were at one time infidels and our bitter enemies, they are now proud of the name of Christian and ready to be the friends, as far as that is permitted, of every form of orthodoxy in Christianity.'<sup>3</sup>

The language in which, at any rate, they express their conception of Him is sometimes

<sup>1</sup> Appendix XXIV.

<sup>2</sup> *Leux Hominum*, Preface.

<sup>3</sup> *Leux Hominum*, p. 84.

more devout, more exalted, than the language which used to be employed by professed apologists. The Hindu Theist, Protab Chandra Mozoomdar, who stood outside the fold of Christianity, joyfully proclaimed, 'Christ reigns. As the law of the spirit of heavenly life, He reigns in the bosom of every believer. . . . Christ reigns as the recogniser of Divine humanity in the fallen, the low, and the despicable, as the healer of the unhappy, the unclean, and the sore distressed. Reigns He not in the sweet humanity that goes forth to seek and to save its kin in every land and clime, to teach and preach, and raise and reclaim, to weep and watch and give repose? He reigns as sweet patience and sober reason amid the laws and orders of the world; as the spirit of submission and loyalty He reigns in peace in the kingdoms of the world. . . . Christ reigns in the individual who feebly watches His footprints in the tangled mazes of life.

He reigns in the community that is bound together in His name. As Divine Humanity, and the Son of God, He reigns gloriously around us in the New Dispensation.’<sup>1</sup>

Or listen to the rhapsody with which Mrs. Besant, once an Atheist, now a Theosophist, depicts His influence from age to age: ‘His the steady inpouring of truth into every brain ready to receive it, so that hand stretched out to hand across the centuries and passed on the torch of knowledge, which thus was never extinguished. His the Form which stood beside the rack and in the flames of the burning pile, cheering His confessors and His martyrs, soothing the anguish of their pains and filling their hearts with His peace. His the impulse which spoke in the thunder of Savonarola, which guided the calm wisdom of Erasmus, which inspired the deep ethics of the God-intoxicated Spinoza. . . . His the beauty that allured Fra

<sup>1</sup> *The Oriental Christ.*

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Angelico and Raphael and Leonardo da Vinci, that inspired the genius of Michael Angelo, that shone before the eyes of Murillo, and that gave the power that raised the marvels of the world, the Duomo of Milan, the San Marco of Venice, the Cathedral of Florence. His the melody that breathed in the Masses of Mozart, the sonatas of Beethoven, the oratorios of Handel, the fugues of Bach, the austere splendour of Brahms. Through the long centuries He has striven and laboured, and, with all the mighty burden of the Churches to carry, He has never left uncared for and unsoled one human heart that cried to Him for help.'<sup>1</sup>

When we read sentences like these by themselves we say, Here is unqualified acceptance of the Christian Faith. And even when we are told that we must not take the sentences in their literal and natural meaning, that they apply not to Him Whose earthly

<sup>1</sup> *Esoteric Christianity.*

career is sketched in the Gospels, but to an Ideal Being evolved out of the writer's imagination, we are surely entitled to answer, It is of Jesus that the words are spoken, whether their meaning is to be taken literally or figuratively; if they have any meaning at all, they indicate a Being without a parallel. That there should be so extraordinary a conflict of opinion regarding Him, that the greatest intellects as well as the simplest souls should hail Him as Divine, that the most critical should still find their explanations insufficient to account for the impression which He made upon His contemporaries and continues to wield to this day, at least renders Him absolutely unique. Men may disbelieve a great deal; they cannot disbelieve that this Amazing Personality has a place in the heart of the world which no other has ever occupied. The alleged imaginary Ideal has had on earth only one approximate Embodiment. Nay, we are

forced to confess, without the actual Character disclosed from Nazareth to Calvary, the Ideal would never have been conceived.

## IV

Robert Browning has described in his *Christmas Eve* a certain German professor lecturing upon the myth of Christ and the sources whence it is derivable. But as the listeners wait for the inference that faith in Him should henceforth be discarded, 'he bids us,' says the supposed narrator of the story, 'when we least expect it take back our faith':

Go home and venerate the myth  
I thus have experimented with.  
This Man, continue to adore Him  
Rather than all who went before Him,  
And all who ever followed after.

This is a correct though humorous summary of much prevalent scepticism. While critics destroy with the one hand, they build up

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with the other; while they seem intent on rooting out every remnant of trust in Christ, they frequently conclude by passionately beseeching us to make Him our Model and our King, our Pattern and our Guide. If there is anything which is calculated at once to arouse us who profess and call ourselves Christians and to make us ashamed, it is that the diligence with which His Example is followed, the earnestness with which His words are studied, by some whom we hold to have abandoned the Catholic Faith, throw into the shade the obedience, the love, the earnestness which prevail among ourselves. They who follow not with us are casting out devils in His name. It is with us, they are careful to say, and not with Him that they are waging war. They may dispute the incidents of His recorded Life: they may insist on reducing Him to the level of humanity, but they also insist that in so doing they act according to His Own

Mind, that they refuse, for the very love which they bear Him, to surround Him with a glory which He would have rejected. Devoid of the errors which have led astray His successors, exalted far above the wisest and the best of those who have spoken in His Name, it is the function of criticism to show Him in His fashion as He lived, to sweep away the falsehoods which have gathered round Him in the course of ages.<sup>1</sup>

We do not seek to read into the emotional language of such writers a significance which they would repudiate, but we are surely entitled to point out that in spite of themselves they are bringing their tribute of homage to the King of the Jews, the King of all mankind. They grant so much that, it seems to us, they must grant yet more. We, at any rate, cannot stop where they deem themselves obliged to stop. We must go further, we hear other voices swell the

<sup>1</sup> Appendix XXV.

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chorus of adoration, we have the witness not only of those who, in awe and wonderment have exclaimed, 'Truly this was a Son of God,' but we have the witness of those who from heartfelt conviction are able to say, 'The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me.' And to them we humbly hope to be able to respond, 'Now we believe not because of the language of others, whether honest doubters or devout disciples, for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.'

'Restate our doctrines as we may,' to sum up all in the words of one who began his career as a teacher in the confidence that Jesus of Nazareth was merely a man, but whom closer study and deepening experience have brought to a fuller faith, 'reconstruct our theologies as we will, this age, like every age, beholds in Him the Way to God, the

Truth of God, the Life of God lived out among men: this age, like every age, has heard and responds to His call, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest": this age, like every age, finds access to the Father through the Son. These things no criticism can shake, these certainties no philosophy disprove, these facts no science dissolve away. He is the Religion which He taught: and while the race of man endures, men will turn to the crucified Son of Man, not with a grudging, "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!" but with the joyful, grateful cry, "My Lord and my God."<sup>1</sup>

## V

He who was lifted up on the Cross is drawing all men to Himself, wise and unwise, friend and foe, devout and doubting, is ruling even where His authority is disavowed, is

<sup>1</sup> J. Warschauer, *The New Evangel*.

causing hearts to adore where intellects rebel. The patriotic English baron, Simon de Montfort, as he saw the Royal forces under Prince Edward come against him, was filled with admiration of their discipline and bearing. 'By the arm of S. James,' he cried, recalling with soldierly pride that to himself they owed in great measure their skill, 'they come on well: they learned that not of themselves, but of me.' The Church of Christ, when confronted with the benevolence, the integrity, the zeal of some who are arrayed against her, may naturally say, 'They live well indeed: they learned that not of themselves, but of me.' 'You are probably,' was the homely expostulation of Benjamin Franklin with Thomas Paine, 'you are probably indebted to Religion for the habits of virtue on which you so justly value yourself. You might easily display your excellent talents of reasoning upon a less hazardous subject, and thereby obtain a rank amongst

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our most distinguished authors. For among us,' continued Franklin satirically, 'it is not necessary, as among the Hottentots, that a youth, to be raised into the company of men, should prove his manhood by beating his mother.' The blows inflicted on Christianity come from unfilial hands and hearts, from hands and hearts which have been strengthened and nurtured on Christianity itself, from hands and hearts which, but for the lingering Christianity that still impels them, would soon be paralysed and dead. The ideals which systems intended to supersede Christianity set before them are, to all intents and purposes, only Christianity under another name. Where the ideals go beyond ordinary Christian practice, they are only a nearer approximation to the Supreme Ideal which has never been fulfilled save in Jesus Christ Himself. Wherever there is truth in them which is not generally accepted, or which comes as a surprise, investigation

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will show that it is an aspect of Christianity which Christians have been neglecting, that it is a manifestation of the mind of Christ, a development of His principles. Look where we will, the men that are making real moral and spiritual progress are those who are in touch with Him. Their beliefs about Him may not be accurate, their conception of His nature and work may be defective, but it is His Name, His Spirit, His Power, it is Himself that is the secret of their life. One part of His teaching has sunk into their hearts, one element of His character has mysteriously impressed them. They have touched the hem of His garment, the shadow of His Apostle passing by has glided over them, and they have been roused from weakness and death. 'He that was healed wist not Who it was, for Jesus had conveyed Himself away.' So it happened in the days of His flesh: so is it happening still: they that are set free may not yet know to Whom

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their freedom is to be ascribed. Now, as on the way to Emmaus, when men are communing together and reasoning, Jesus Himself may be walking with them, though their eyes are holden that they do not know Him. John Stuart Mill, whose acute intellect, whose spotless rectitude, whose public spirit, whose non-religious training naturally made him the idol of those to whom Christianity was a bygone superstition, came in his later days, not indeed to accept the orthodox creed, but yet to stretch out his longing hand to Christ, believing that He might have 'unique commission from God to lead mankind to truth and virtue.' George Eliot, whose genius was ever labouring to fill up the void which the rejection of her early faith had made, consoled her dying hours, as she had inspired her most ennobling pages, with the *Imitation of Christ*. Matthew Arnold, most cultured of critics, joins hands with the most fervid of evangelists in maintaining that

‘there is no way to righteousness but the way of Jesus.’ The name of Christ—none other name under heaven given among men will ever prove a substitute for that.

Renouncing faith in Christ, is there life, is there salvation for man to be found in the doctrines, the names, the influences which are so vehemently extolled? Is there one of them which so satisfies the cravings of the heart, which enkindles such glorious hopes, which inspires to such holy living, which inculcates so universal a brotherhood, as Christianity? Is there one of them which, at the best, is more than a keeping of despair at bay, than a resolute acceptance of utter overthrow, than a blindness to the tremendous issues which are involved? <sup>1</sup> Will the culture which is devoted, and cannot but be devoted, exclusively to the outward, which imparts a knowledge of Science or Art or Literature, be found sufficient to

<sup>1</sup> Appendix XXVI.

rescue men from the slavery of sin or from the torment of doubt? Will the progress which is altogether occupied with the material and the physical, with providing better houses and better food and better wages, produce happiness without alloy and remove the sting and dread of death?<sup>1</sup> Will the reiteration of the dogma that we are but fleeting shadows, that there is nothing to hope for in the future, that we are all the victims of delusion, tend to elevate and benefit our downcast race? Will the attempt to worship what has never been made known, what is simply darkness and mystery, be more successful in raising men above themselves than the worship of the Righteousness and the Love which have been made manifest in Christ? Will the attempt to supplant the worship of Jesus Christ, in Whom was no sin, by the worship of Humanity at large, of Humanity stained with guilt and crime as

<sup>1</sup> Appendix XXVII.

well as illumined here and there with deeds of heroism, of Humanity sunk to the level of the brutes as well as exalted to the level of whatever we may suppose to be the highest, seeing that there is really no higher existence with which to compare it—will this worship of itself, with all its baseness and imperfection, this turning of mankind into a Mutual Adoration Society, make Humanity divine? Will even the assurance that far-distant ages will have new inventions, fairer laws, more abundant wealth be any deliverance to us from our burdens, any salvation from our individual sorrow and guilt and shame? Can we to whom the likeness of Christ has been shown, can we imagine that any of these efforts to answer the yearning of mankind for deliverance from the body of this death will prove an efficient substitute for Him? And if we forsake Him, it must be in one or other of these directions that we go.

## VI

But the signs of the times are full of hope. In social work at home, in the progress of missions abroad, in revivals of one kind and another, in growing reverence for holy things, in a renewed interest in religion as the most vital of all topics, even in strange spiritual manifestations not within the Church, we have, amid all that is discouraging and depressing, indication of the coming kingdom. The cry, 'Back to Christ,' with all the truth that is in it, is only half a truth if it does not also mean 'Forward to Christ.' He is before us as well as behind us, and the Hope of the World is the gathering together of all things in Him. Should there be, as there has been over and over again in days gone by, a widespread unbelief, a rejection of His Divine Revelation, of this we may be sure—it will be only for a time. When the sceptical physician, in Tennyson's poem, murmured :

'The good Lord Jesus has had his day,'

the believing nurse made the comment :

‘Had? has it come? It has only dawned: it will come by and by.’

A thought most sad, though most inspiring. ‘Only dawned.’ Why is Christianity after all these centuries only beginning to be manifested? It is at least partly because of the apathy, the divisions, the evil lives of us who profess and call ourselves Christians, because we have wrangled about the secondary and the comparatively unimportant, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, because we have so left to those beyond the Church the duty of proclaiming and enforcing principles which our Lord and His Apostles put in the forefront of their teaching. We have narrowed the Kingdom of Christ, we have claimed too little for Him, we have forgotten that He has to do with the secular as well as with the spiritual, that He must be King of the Nation as well as of the Church. But now in the growing

prominence of Social Questions, which so many fear as an evidence of the waning of religion, have we not an incentive to show that the social must be pervaded by the religious, that our duties to one another are no small part of the Kingdom of Christ? For all sorts and conditions of men, for masters and servants, for rulers and ruled, for employers and employed, there is ever accumulating proof that only as they bear themselves towards each other in the spirit of the New Testament can there be true harmony and mutual respect; that only, in short, as the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ will men in reality bear one another's burdens; that only as the Everlasting Gospel of the Everlasting Love prevails will all strife and contention, whether personal or political or ecclesiastical or national, come to an end; that only as men enter into the fellowship of that Son of Man Who came not to be

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ministered unto but to minister and to give His Life a ransom for many will the glorious vision of old be fulfilled : I saw in the night vision, and behold One like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven and came to the Ancient of Days and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages shall serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.