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CRITICISM

THE

RESTORATION OF CHRISTIANITY.

A LETTER TO MR. THOS. SCOTT REVIEWING A
PAPER BY DR. LANG.

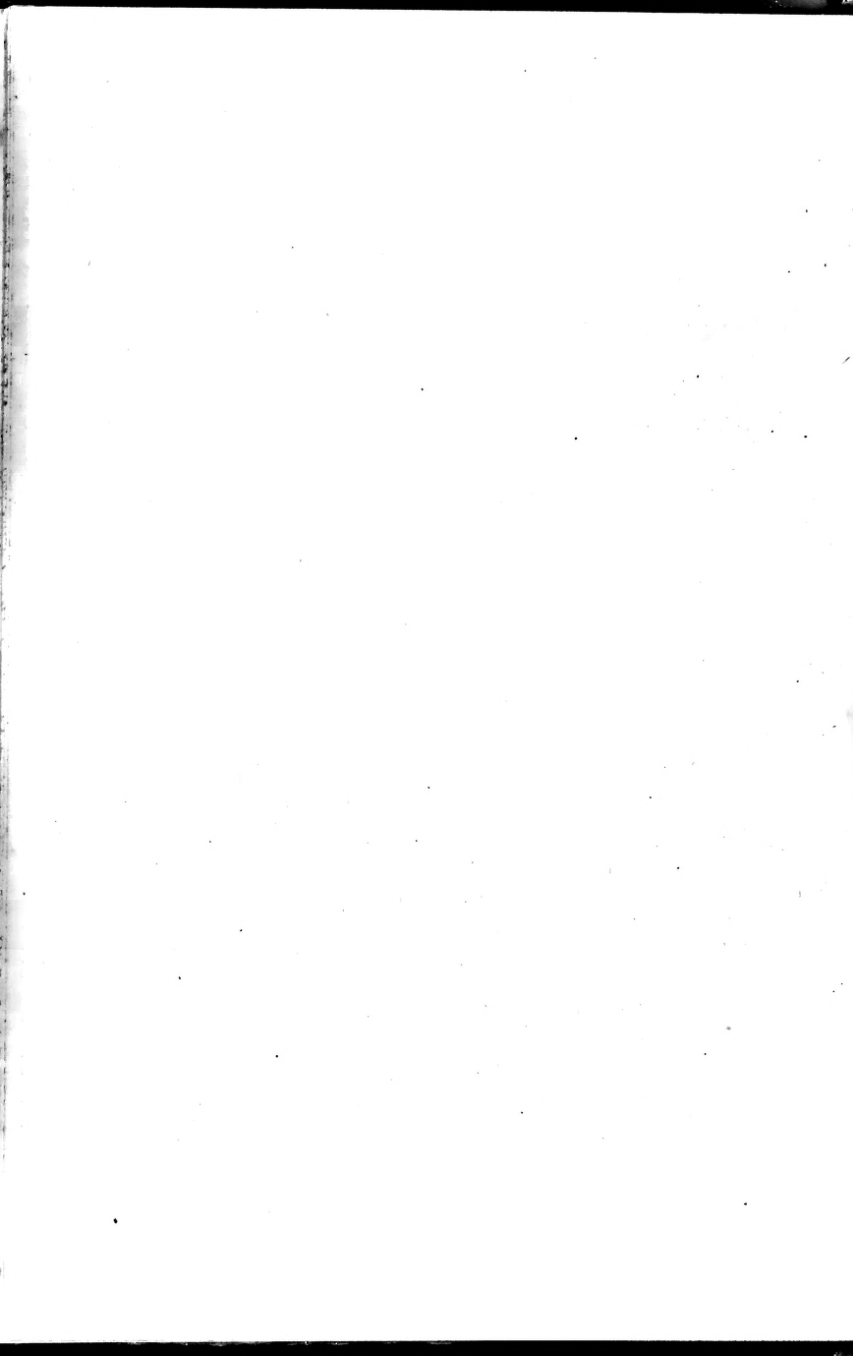
BY

A COUNTRY VICAR.



PUBLISHED BY THOMAS SCOTT,
NO. 11, THE TERRACE, FARQUHAR ROAD,
UPPER NORWOOD, LONDON, S.E.

Price Sixpence.



CRITICISM THE RESTORATION OF CHRISTIANITY.

MY DEAR MR SCOTT,—I have been reading the notice of your "English Life of Jesus," in *Theological Review* of Oct. '72. In it Mr Wright says, "But surely the suggestion of difficulties should be accompanied by the solution, if one can be found, and for this purpose some notice of the steps by which the synoptical gospels were produced would have been most useful." Now, I have also lately read with much interest the remarkable paper by Dr. Heinrich Lang of Zurich, which you sent me; and this seems to supply to a certain extent what is stated by Mr Wright to be wanting in your book.

Dr Heinrich Lang's paper presents in a short form the latest results of criticism on many questions of supreme importance; and more than this, it shows how a practical use may be made of them in the reconstruction of the religious teaching of Jesus himself, without the miraculous superstructure of a later age. The Church has been very confident for many centuries, that the doctrines she has taught, and the religious views she has held, are the authentic doctrines and views of Jesus and his first disciples. It is indeed well known that the entire system was not formulated for some centuries after his death, almost every doctrine of importance was assailed by the fire and steel of persecution, and watered with the blood of martyrs. There was in the earliest period of Christianity, considerable difference, not only between the Jewish and Christian religions, but between opposing parties in the Christian Church. Nevertheless, it was assumed that before

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these differences arose, there was a time of entire agreement in a form of doctrine and discipline, directly given by Jesus himself to his apostles, and by them to his Church. Whence, then, all our difficulties and all our differences? This divine unity of faith given to man must set them all at rest for ever. But where are we to find it? Each sect will say,—It is preserved pure and entire in the religion we profess, and so the real influence which the divine teaching of the gospels ought to have upon the world is lost, because we cannot agree what it is. The substantial value of a religion influencing all mankind for good is sacrificed to the maintenance of different forms of other worldliness; and after all we get no clear ideas of that other world, and that future state, which would be so precious to us if we could. This being the case, it is a consolation to find that the assumption of the unity of the faith in the apostolic age is a dream, and the pretension of any system of religion delivered by Jesus to his apostles, and by them to the Church, and by the Church to us, is a delusion. There was no unity of the faith in the apostolic age, and there is none in the writings of the New Testament taken as a whole. The miraculous religion of the Church was unknown to Jesus and his disciples. There was no substantial agreement about the Christ himself. The Jesus of the fourth Gospel is a different person from the Jesus of Matthew, of Luke, and of the apocalypse, especially from that Jesus Christ the Son of God, whom the great apostle Paul preached with such marvellous devotion and success to the world.

The New Testament has been erroneously supposed for many centuries to be the original authority for orthodox doctrines, whereas, in truth, the opposing orthodoxies of the first century gave rise to much of the Testament. Words which he never spoke, and deeds which he never did, have been ascribed to Jesus, as well as to his apostles. A later age was able to in-

roduce as original documents the narratives which we now have, and which are shown in this paper to have been, in part at least, arbitrarily constructed for particular purposes. A better text, and a more reverent and faithful use of the New Testament, has opened the way for these discoveries. It cannot be right to profess to derive the articles of the faith of Jesus from those parts of the New Testament, which can be shown as in this paper, to be the work of opposing parties in the next generation, written for the purpose of giving a supposed divine authority to their own divergent views. If our religion is to be the religion of Jesus, it is of paramount importance to ascertain how much of it belongs to his age and was taught by himself. It begins to be possible now to know something of the real Jesus, who taught in Galilee and suffered at Jerusalem, and to have a much more real appreciation of the actual doctrine which he taught.

We cannot indeed assume the right of deciding with certainty how much of the discourses of Jesus has come down to us in his own words, and how much has been put into his mouth by later writers for definite purposes of their own. But when we find two different versions of the same discourse, we are justified in maintaining that both cannot be faithful reports of the actual words. We see how the writers of the New Testament habitually quote the Old Testament: we know that there was in existence a book of the oracles of Jesus, which the synoptical evangelists appear to have manipulated, each in their own manner: we have a vast store-house of Jewish tradition, showing how carefully the Jews treasured up the sayings of their rabbin, in which, for instance, almost every sentence of the Lord's prayer may be found; while the way in which the words of ancient speakers and the doctrines of ancient philosophers were handed down to posterity, is abundantly shown in the works of classical writers still extant. So, while we have reason to believe in the

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general faithfulness of the reports of the sayings of Jesus, we are by no means compelled to accept every word of the Gospels as of divine authority; and to allow that the most difficult questions of religion and morality, about our present and future state, are to be decided for ever by one or two detached sentences, of which we know not whence they came.

A summary of the contents of Dr. Heinrich Lang's remarkable paper will show that love of the Bible and not enmity against it, is the characteristic of modern theological criticism. Strauss began the work in the year 1835. He took his stand upon the four Gospels, and set to work with such resources as he had to hand: no great advance however was made, because the ground on which he stood was not firm enough under his feet. This defect in foundation was recognized by Baur. He sought for a firmer standing ground, and found it in the four unquestioned epistles of Paul, Galatians, I. and II. Corinthians, and Romans. True, these epistles were not written until about twenty years after the death of Jesus, nevertheless, they are the genuine works of a man, who had been a contemporary of the master, and afterwards became the foremost champion of Christianity. These epistles faithfully represent the character of the writer, and throw a stream of light upon the controversies of their day. Here there is firm ground for the feet: Niebuhr had no such guide to help him in his researches into Roman History: with such a clue we ought to find our way through the labyrinth of early Christendom. These writings disclose to our view a scene of perpetual strife. The cause of this strife is that Christianity has already departed from its original principles and become another gospel. The teachers of this other gospel are the Church in Jerusalem with its chiefs, James, the Lord's brother, and the two apostles Peter and John. The strife broke out into open flame when Paul returned to Antioch from his first missionary circuit in Lesser Asia.

Certain brethren from Jerusalem stirred up the community of Antioch against Paul. Their enmity was so great that he determined to go to Jerusalem, and lay before the authorities there, the doctrine he preached to the heathen world. He succeeded in making some sort of reconciliation. They gave him the right hand of fellowship, and arranged that he and his party should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcision. But henceforth there was no substantial unity in the Church: the gospel of the Gentile and the gospel of the Jew received each a formal sanction. Soon after this outward reconciliation at Jerusalem, Paul found himself obliged to rebuke his fellow apostle Peter at Antioch. Wherever he went his enemies followed him. No sooner did he leave his new-born church in Galatia in order to preach elsewhere, than the Judaizers denied that he was an apostle, discredited his gospel, and tried to bring his converts under the yoke of Judaism. In this they had met with considerable success, when he wrote his epistle to the Galatians. Again, at Corinth he had built up from the elements of Greek civilization, a community full of hope and promise. Scarcely had he left the city for Ephesus, when a party rose up calling itself by the name of Cephas. They employed against him the resources of argument and intrigue. They disowned him as an apostle, showing their own authority from Jerusalem. They said Paul had never seen the Lord Jesus, whereas Peter knew him well in the flesh. They scoffed at Paul's visions, which he gave as the credentials of his call to the apostolate. They contrasted unfavourably his personal appearance and his want of eloquence with the claims set up in his letters. Where, then, is the unity of the apostolic age which has been so long assumed in the Church? Where is the supernatural halo with which the credulity of centuries has invested this period?

The Acts of the Apostles are closely connected with the Pauline Epistles: they give a historical representa-

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tion of the period with which these letters are concerned. Here, however, all is changed. The natural world of human agents and human agencies, which we find in the letters of Paul, has given place to the fanciful domain of miracle. Heaven interposes visibly in the affairs of earth. An angel comes down to lead Peter out of prison through the midst of his frightened guards. An earthquake breaks the chains from the hands and feet of Paul at Philippi. Both apostles scatter miracles on either hand. A supernatural element pervades the narrative, making it well-nigh unintelligible. Here, at one time Peter becomes the apostle of the Gentiles, and under remarkable circumstances baptizes a Gentile family, an action which he has to justify before the community at Jerusalem. At another time, Peter, James, and John, the pillars of the Epistle to the Galatians, take the gospel of Paul under their protection at the council, maintaining its complete harmony with their own. In this way the whole history of the period has been remoulded; and Paul has been best known to the Church for 1800 years through the representations of the Acts. Criticism, however, decides at once that the letters of Paul, as the spontaneous outpourings of a contemporary writer, deserve all credit, whereas the Acts are the legendary work of a later hand. But what could move this unknown author so thoroughly to change the actual history of things? His object seems to have been the reconciliation of the Petrine and Pauline factions in the Church. The Christian community required all its powers for united effort against Judaism and heathenism, and the unknown author of the Acts was a mediator between the two parties towards the end of the first, or about the beginning of the second century. He passes over in silence the difference between Paul and Peter at Antioch, and presents instead a contention between Paul and Barnabas, in order to withdraw the other controversy from the recollection of Christians. The

hostile Judaizers persecuted Paul under every kind of character and caricature. They represented him under the person of Simon the Samaritan sorcerer; they made him employ the collections he raised for the poor at Jerusalem, for the purpose of bribing Peter to confer upon him the apostolic privilege of giving the Holy Ghost by imposition of hands. The Pauline author of the Acts skilfully represents this Samaritan sorcerer as a historical personage, who tried to corrupt Peter, before Paul appears upon the stage of events. The exact resemblance produced in this book between Peter and Paul, in teaching as well as in life and character, is a very effectual method of reconciliation. Both are made apostles of the Gentiles, Paul by a vision at Damascus, Peter a short time before by a heavenly apparition at Joppa. Peter had to suffer the reproach of the circumcision for eating with Gentiles. According to Paul's account, fourteen years after this time, he exposed himself to censure on this question; but, according to the Acts, he makes a brilliant defence of his Gentile associations after the conversion of Cornelius. There is no trace in the speeches of Paul in the Acts of that peculiar teaching we find in his epistles. His individuality is suppressed, and he is made to think and speak just like Peter. So also with regard to his personal character, the Paul of the Acts is much more Judaizing than the Paul of history. The independence of the man is sacrificed; he is made to allow himself to be led away to a kind of dissimulation, of which he was quite incapable; the apostleship of the Gentiles, which was his own, is given to Peter. The man who went up to Jerusalem three years after his conversion, in full consciousness of a mission from Christ himself, and saw Peter only, is here made a dependent and companion of the other apostles (ix. 27, 28). And when fourteen years after he goes up to Jerusalem to communicate his gospel to the apostles, he sits silent at the council in the Acts, while Peter,

James, and John defend his doctrine. The Paul of history is an incomparably greater and more commanding character than the Paul of the Acts.

Every kind of miracle which is assigned to Peter in the first part of this legendary book is ascribed to Paul in the second. Peter begins his miracles with the healing of a man born lame, and so does Paul. The shadow of Peter falling on the sick works miraculous cures, so do handkerchiefs or aprons from the body of Paul. Peter is said to have cast out devils, so the evil spirit himself testifies at Ephesus and Philippi to the power of Paul. As an enemy to sorcerers, Paul is not inferior to the adversary of Simon Magus. Both apostles occasionally inflicted miraculous punishment. Peter raises Tabitha from the dead, and Paul Eutyches. Peter is made an object of divine worship by Cornelius, and the idolatrous inhabitants of Lystra and of Melita are ready to offer sacrifice to Paul. Both apostles decline the superhuman honours in nearly the same language. The question before us is not the possibility of miracles—this has been long settled for thinking men of the present day—but the resemblance between Peter and Paul. Actual history does not repeat itself in this way; it must be ascribed to the author of the book. So far from being an actual history of the apostolic age, it is only the development of Church ideas down to the second century, represented in the persons of the two foremost characters.

Soon after the death of Jesus, a clearly defined difference arose in the Church. The contest lay between works and faith, authority and independence, tradition and progress, Peter and Paul. Judaism as represented by Peter prevailed at first, but it was impossible to ignore the gospel of Paul. While the Jews became every year more hardened against the gospel, the Gentile Churches were daily increasing in numbers and influence. Jerusalem, the seat of early Christianity, and the future seat of Christ on his return from

Heaven, according to the prevailing view, was destroyed in the year 70. The early Church raised Peter to the highest place. Afterwards, when the doctrines maintained by Paul began to prevail, it was necessary to acknowledge his claims and reconcile them with Peter's. This the Pauline author of the Acts undertook to do. By assigning to Peter in the first part of the work the apostleship of the Gentiles, and by representing the Judaizing community at Jerusalem as in full accord with the principles maintained by Paul, he prepares the way for his purpose, which was to present Paul to the eyes of the Church in all the glory of the apostolate, as united in work and will with Peter, in the unbroken unity of the Catholic faith.

One fabrication followed quick upon another. Every important Church like Corinth, Rome, and Antioch insisted on the honour of being founded by both of these illustrious apostles; they claimed to have received their first bishops from the hands of both, though in the apostolic age bishops were none. In Antioch, Evodus is said to have been established by Peter, Ignatius by Paul; in Rome, Linus by Paul, Clement by Peter. Both apostles, after founding churches and sees together, close their career at Rome. The researches of the last ten years have done much to show the utter groundlessness of the traditional legends about Peter and Paul. But let us turn from these apostles to another figure surrounded also with mysterious halo.

One more name stands prominently forward in the original Church, John the Apostle and beloved disciple. We have in the New Testament three works that bear his name. The Apocalypse, the Fourth Gospel, and the three Epistles, and over and above the New Testament a mass of tradition. These writings offer a rich field of discovery to the scientific enquirer, above all the Apocalypse, a book dear to the early Church, and understood by it, though sealed with seven seals

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against the curiosity of later times. Theologians have been accustomed to regard this book as a faithful prophecy of the history of the world from the time of Christ to the end of days. Each breaks the seals for himself, and interprets the book according to his own will ; but the key to its real meaning may be found. The city of seven hills, the whore, Babylon, which was made drunk with the blood of saints during the Neronic persecution in 64, the woman with seven heads, or as the author explains with seven hills and seven kings, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Galba, Vespasian, all this points to Rome. The beast also who was one of the seven heads or kings, wounded to death but healed of his wound, now no more a king, but about to return again to the throne, this is Nero who perished in an insurrection of the people, but according to a widespread legend was still living in concealment, and would return again to power. The number of the beast, 666, is the numerical value of the Hebrew letters composing Nero Cæsar. The number 616 found in some manuscripts supports the view. The rest of the seals fall away of themselves.

The Apocalypse was written about the year 68, after the persecution and death of Nero, and before the reign of Vespasian. The author believes that Nero already healed of his deadly wound, is living among the Parthians, and will soon return with an army to level Rome with the ground. After this Nero, or Antichrist will march against Jerusalem ; but when he has already overthrown a great part of the city, Christ will appear in the clouds of heaven, on a white horse, with a great sword proceeding from his mouth, and destroy Antichrist with his army. Now begins upon earth the millennial reign at Jerusalem : The faithful dead raised from their graves, keep the marriage feast of the lamb with the faithful living. But after the thousand years Satan breaks loose from the chains and darkness in which he has been held since the fall of Antichrist.

He appears again upon earth and summons Gog and Magog, the remnant of the Heathen, to a last attack upon Christ. Fire and brimstone fall from heaven and destroy the whole army. Now comes the end of the world ; God creates a new heaven and a new earth : Sun and moon and stars vanish away, and the only light is God : Jerusalem comes down from above shining with gold and jewels.

Such is the meaning of this strange book : Criticism has not been deterred by the solemn denunciations of its author. The fundamental idea of the triumph of Christianity in the world, has alone been fulfilled. The prophetic dreams are in strange contrast with the actual truth. Happily for the world, Nero the anti-christ, who is the chief figure after Christ himself, has never come back. The real king who reigned in the place of the resuscitated tyrant, was Titus, the delight of mankind. The race of Heathens consigned by the prophet to the abyss of hell, produced from its bosom Nerva Trajan, and the Antonines, unsurpassed by any of the Christian emperors. Constantine closed the list of Heathen emperors by handing down the empire to Christians. Rome, over whose fall the prophet triumphs, did not become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird (xviii. 2). Jerusalem, on the other hand, the beloved city, that was to be protected by the angel of God from ruin, and to become the seat of the millennial kingdom, was levelled with the ground within a year or two of the appearance of this book. The Jews did not finally receive Christ, nor the Heathen reject him. Where Christianity has conquered Heathenism, it has been by the doctrines of the crucified one, not by miracles and vials and trumpets.

Nevertheless we have reason enough to value this book very highly. Next after the Pauline Epistles to which it is opposed, it is the most ancient and impor-

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tant document of early Christendom. The four Pauline Epistles are the memorial of the Gentile Church, the Apocalypse of the Petrine and Judaizing Christians. Taken together they furnish us with authentic accounts of the development of the Christian idea from the death of Jesus to the end of the Apostolic age. We have a natural picture of the views of the first Christians, amongst whom the appearance of Paul caused so much bitterness. The book is full of real Jewish hatred against Gentiles. The unbelieving Jews are to be converted by the judgments which precede the coming of Christ: but the Gentiles, in the eyes of the Judaizer, will find no deliverance. The enmity of the author against Paul is strongly displayed. The Church of Ephesus is praised for unmasking and rejecting those that say they are apostles and are not. The licence granted by Paul to sit at Gentile tables, and eat meat from Gentile shambles, and intermarry with Gentiles, is stigmatized as the doctrine of Balaam and of Jezebel. Some of the characteristics of Paul are assigned to the false prophet, who did homage to Nero, and wrought miracles before him, and was cast with him into the pit (xix. 26). Paul's name was not one of those that were written on the foundations of the walls of the city (xxi., 14). However, notwithstanding their differences, there are many points of agreement. Both Paul and the author of the Apocalypse believe in the same Christ; and he is not the Jesus of history, but the supernatural Christ of imagination and faith: he is the divine king in heaven who will return at the last trumpet to judge the world. Although Paul does not mention the millennium, nevertheless his representations of the kingdom to come agree in essential points with the Apocalypse. According to him the dead rise from their graves when Christ comes, to live for ever upon the earth, and the living are changed by divine magic into heavenly beings. Christ overcomes all antagonisms, Satan, death and sin, and at last delivers

up the sceptre to God, who is then all in all. Both alike look for their consummation as close at hand, about to begin in their own lifetime.

The Revelation of John and the Gospel of John can no more be the work of the same author and the same age, than the Epistles of Paul and the Acts. The gospel is the final development of the ideas introduced by Paul. Judaism lies behind the author as a thing of the past; and christianity has no longer to struggle for bare existence, as in Paul's writings. He speaks of the Jewish law as gone by. He accuses the Jews of ignorance and obstinacy—of hatred and wickedness in their conduct towards Jesus. Jesus himself is no longer a Jew, but the Eternal Word; who was with God in heaven before the foundation of the world; incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth; revealing the grace and truth of the Godhead for a time upon earth, but soon to return to the glory which he had with the Father. The Judo-christian dreams which were common to Paul and his enemies, of an actual return of Jesus, and of a reign for a thousand years upon earth, are quietly set aside. Jesus comes again only in the Spirit, which he left with his disciples to guide them into all truth. There is no longer any idea of the establishment of the divine kingdom upon earth. Christ is in heaven; and the desires of the faithful follow him thither. No talk of the waiting of those who have died in faith, for the hour when Christ is to come, that they may return with their Lord to this world, and reign with him even over the angels as Paul thought. They who die in faith go straight to their Lord in the mansions of his Father's house, where he has prepared a place for them, that they may be with him where he is. My kingdom is not of this world,—is no saying of the historic Jesus, nor an idea of early christianity; it is rather the word of a Christian Platonist, in the middle of the second century.

The author chose the form of a life of Jesus for the

representation of his own philosophical ideas. He draws his materials to a great extent from the synoptic gospels before him, but he makes a free use of them. All that does not suit with his higher views of the person of Christ, he discards ; so he passes over the birth of Jesus, his baptism by John, his temptation in the wilderness, his agony in Gethsemane, the institution of the Lord's supper, and he changes the day of his death. The sayings of Jesus and of other persons, he constructs from his own philosophical ideas. He alters the scene of his ministry : Judea is his country instead of Galilee, and Jerusalem his chief abode instead of Capernaum. He adopts in great part the miraculous narratives of his predecessors, but he produces some that are entirely new, and exalts the others to the highest pitch of thaumaturgy, in order to bring them down to means of representation of higher ideas reflected in them. From beginning to end, he wages war against merely outward miracles, which close the eyes to the miracles of the Spirit. As to the great miracle of the bodily resurrection of Jesus, he expresses his meaning in a striking sentence,—Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed, *i.e.*, who believe in the spirit and truth of ideas, without requiring the outward guise of a risen body, who believe that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, without the need of an outward miracle of resurrection. The fiat of later German criticism pronounces this book to be the work of a Christian of the Hellenistic school, about the middle of the second century. With respect to the Apostle John, to whom the Church has assigned the fourth gospel, and the apocalypse, and the three epistles, neither more nor less is known, than that Jesus called him from his fisher's net to the Apostolate ; and that after the death of Jesus, with Peter and James he became a pillar of the Judochristian community at Jerusalem. So far as regards opinions, being of the school of Peter, he might have written the Apocalypse ; but the authorities decide

with increasing clearness against his authorship. The fact that the author of the Revelations ascribes his book to John, the servant of Jesus, is no proof that John wrote the book. It was a common custom in those days to publish works under the name of some important personage. Cicero justifies his ascription of the *De Amicitia* to a great man of a former age, by the words, *Genus hoc sermonum, positum in hominum veterum auctoritate et eorum illustrium, plus nescio quo pacto videtur habere gravitatis.* The testimony of the fathers, who represent John as the author, is of no value without further authority; for as Ritschl says of them, they knew very little of the apostolic age, and that little was mostly false. Unsparing criticism has swept away the mass of tradition about the Apostle John, preserved by Irenæus and other fathers, as unworthy of credit. Much of it rose from the assumption that he wrote the Apocalypse, and from a misunderstanding of a passage in that book, chap. i. 9. I, John, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. The use of the same words in the second verse plainly shows that he was in the island for the sake of receiving and recording divine revelations. The Church tradition erroneously inferred that he was banished to Patmos by Domitian, and returned thence to Asia Minor, because he addresses himself to the seven Churches.

The same criticism which has done so much to throw light on the age immediately after Jesus, may be used with equal effect on the life of Jesus himself. Much labour has been lost in trying to reconcile the fourth gospel with the synoptics; now that the unhistorical character of the fourth gospel is fully recognized, the work is greatly simplified. Moreover, the landmarks which have been discovered for the history of the apostolic age, are of great use in ascertaining the history of the previous age. We find everywhere in the gospels tokens of the same state of party feeling that we have

found in the generation after. Matthew traces back the genealogy of Jesus to David, Luke to Adam, and both in such a marked way as to show that Jesus is to one—the Messiah of the Jews, to the other the Messiah of all mankind. Matthew makes Jesus say to his disciples, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (chap. x. 5-6): and again, Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine (chap. vii. 6): and Jesus himself avoids Samaria, going up to Jerusalem by the pilgrim route through Peræa. Whereas, Luke leaves out these sayings altogether, and fixes upon Samaria, as the scene of especial energy on the part of Jesus. There he rebukes his disciples for wishing to call down fire from heaven on the Samaritans, and shows by parable their equal fitness for the kingdom of heaven; thence he sends out the seventy disciples, one for every nation of the earth, according to the notion of those times.

In Matthew and in Luke alike Jesus condemns certain persons who called him Lord, Lord; but in Matthew these are Christians, who prided themselves on prophesying in Christ's name, and casting out devils, and doing wonderful works; and they are condemned by him for not keeping the Jewish law, as ἐργαζόμενοι ἀνομίαν; whereas in Luke they are Christians, who have eaten and drunk in his presence, and heard him teach in their streets, and are condemned for want of that righteousness which Paul requires in the Romans from Jew and Gentile alike as ἔργαται ἀδικίας: the distinction is lost in our translation, but is none the less important. Now this is the very language used by the original apostles against Paul; they said they had seen Jesus and lived with him; that they had received their distinctive doctrines from his own mouth; that they had known him after the flesh, all which he had not. (1 Cor. i. 5-16; ix.) Paul

appeals in proof of the equality of his apostleship to his prophesying, 1 Cor. xiv., to his casting out devils, *i.e.*, to his great success in converting the Gentile world, Gal. ii., and chiefly to the signs of an apostle, which were wrought by him in all patience in signs and wonders, and mighty deeds, 2 Cor. xii. 12. The questions and the difficulties of the apostolic age are described as arising in the lifetime of Jesus, and receiving their solution from his own mouth. He gives his eleven apostles a positive command, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned, Mark xvi. 15, 16. This is just the doctrine Paul taught; Faith, not the works of the law, is the condition of salvation; Baptism, not circumcision, is the outward sign of Christians; and so salvation is given for all creatures, not for Jews only. Nevertheless, twenty years after this supposed command, the twelve confined their ministry to the circumcision, according to Gal. ii:

The Jesus of our gospels foretells in unmistakable language the fall of the Jewish people for their obstinate unbelief; the vineyard is to be taken from the wicked husbandmen and given to others; men are to come from the east and west, the north and south, to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. Whereas, nearly forty years afterwards, the author of the apocalypse regards Jerusalem as the holy city, and the Jewish people as the rightful possessors of gospel privileges; whilst the converted Gentiles are the proletariats of the kingdom, and the unconverted the objects of the endless wrath of God. Eating with Gentiles was the chief cause of offence with Jews and Judaizers against Paul. So late as the year 50 eating even with Gentile Christians was considered an abomination by James, the chief of the Christian community at Jerusalem, and his adherents; and Peter had to make amends for his weak compliance in this

respect at Antioch. According to the Acts Peter could not enter into the house of a Gentile and sit at his table, without an extraordinary revelation from heaven; and incurred the reproach of the community for so doing. Nevertheless, according to the gospels Jesus must have set all questions of this kind at rest for ever. In Mark ii. 14 Jesus and his disciples are said to have sat at meat with many publicans and sinners; the Jews murmured, but Jesus said, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick; I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. Again, in Luke xv. Jesus answers the reproach of the Pharisees, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them, with the three parables of the lost sheep, the lost shekel, and the prodigal son. And in Luke xix., in the case of Zaccheus, he answers the same kind of questioning with the words, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. This question which was scarcely set at rest after the struggles of 50 years, and such great historical events as the destruction of Jerusalem, the hardening of the Jews, and the conversion of great masses of the Gentiles, is here anticipated and decided by Jesus himself. If this were the case, what are we to think of the apostolic age? It becomes entirely unintelligible, its difficulties quite unmeaning, and its foremost men incomprehensible. Criticism at once decides, Jesus did not speak and act in this way; this Jesus of the gospels is not the Jesus of history. The same Pauline writer, who paulized in the Acts the time immediately after Jesus, paulized in his gospel the life of Jesus himself; in order to defend the disciple by the influence of the Master.

When the Life of Jesus was first written tradition had preserved little more than its main features, and several characteristic events and discourses. The greatest part of his life was spent in obscurity. His

public ministry was comprised in one year according to three gospels, in three according to the other; and even this time, great as it was in results, had less interest for the first Christians than we should suppose. They lived with their thoughts fixed more on the future than on the past. The return of Christ was their chief idea. Capernaum by the sea where Jesus loved to dwell, had less interest for them than the new Jerusalem. What then was the use of history? That no apostle or eyewitness had written a Life of Jesus may be inferred from the preface to Luke's Gospel. The want rose in the Pauline circle. They required to rest their views of Christianity on the authority of Jesus, no less than their adversaries. Convinced that they were acting and speaking in the spirit of Jesus, they reproduced, in his discourses and parables, the great results which had been achieved in the Gentile world.

Thus, while the gospels derived one portion of their material from the experience of the apostolic age, they found another in the Old Testament. If Jesus was Messiah, he must fulfil what was foretold of him by the prophets, according to the interpretation of the day. For example, there was no record of the circumstances of the birth of Jesus; Mark, who was in all probability the earliest of our evangelists, passes them over in silence. The later evangelists, Luke and Matthew, furnish accounts in detail. They are chiefly drawn from the Old Testament. Jesus was known to be a Nazarene; but the prophet Micah had said, Thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel. This passage speaks of some powerful prince of the line of David; but as it was determined to be Messianic, Jesus must be born at Bethlehem. There are two ways of harmonizing these data, that Jesus was a Nazarene, but born at Bethlehem; first, the parents of Jesus might be

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assumed to have first lived at Bethlehem, and afterwards migrated to Nazareth. But why should they move? Herod issued an edict against Jesus, as Pharaoh did against Moses. He was informed of his birth by the eastern Magi, who came with gifts to worship him, according to Isaiah ix.; and they knew of it by the star that rose out of Jacob according to Numbers xxiv. 17. In consequence of the persecution of Herod, the parents of Jesus went down into Egypt, with their new-born child, to fulfil Hosea xi. 1: they came back when the danger was over, but settled at Nazareth, being still afraid to live at Bethlehem. This is the account of Matthew; Luke on the other hand makes them live originally at Nazareth; but they came to Bethlehem because of the decree of Augustus, that all the world should be taxed, which took place from six to ten years after the birth of Jesus. The Inns being filled, the child was born in a manger; but supernatural light, Is. lx. 1, and a choir of angels, made the manger a palace. The shepherds of Bethlehem were the first to acknowledge him; then the child was publicly recognized as Messiah in the temple by Simeon and Hannah; after this his parents returned with their child in peace to Nazareth. It is unnecessary to remark that these two accounts exclude each other on almost every point. In like manner, other passages from the Psalms and Prophets, and especially the typical histories of Moses and Elijah, furnish material for the life of Jesus. Paul in 1 Cor. xv. 3-4, and Peter in his Pentecostal speech, both acknowledge that the Christians derived their views of the significance of the death of Jesus, as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, and of his resurrection from the dead, and ascension into heaven, from the Old Testament. If, then, the evangelists have so often mistaken the creations of the imagination for historic truth, what shall we say about the real life of Jesus? It must be confessed that little is known, even less than is thought by many

who have followed with assent the researches of criticism. However, this little is enough; the general framework of his life is incontrovertible. The home at Nazareth, the carpenter's trade, the family of brothers and sisters, the entrance upon public life in consequence of the ministry of John, the baptism of Jesus in Jordan, the commencement of his own ministry upon the imprisonment and death of the Baptist, Capernaum as the central point of Messianic agency, the circle of disciples, the great influence of Jesus over all classes of the people, the journey to Jerusalem, the death there upon the cross, all this general framework is indisputable. We are also able to reproduce many of the most essential features of his character. No doubt Jesus declared himself to be Messiah, and his conception of Messiah was that of his own people. No doubt he thought the Messiah's kingdom to be, as the prophets said, a reign of God upon earth, beginning with faithful Israel, and extending over all nations, in which the love of God, and the love of man, should remove the limitations and the sufferings of mortal existence. The early Christians remained faithful to the thought of Jesus; since they all, Paul as well as the writer of the apocalypse, the authors of the epistles and first three gospels alike, looked to the second coming of Christ to accomplish what had been expected from his first coming, the creation of a new heaven and a new earth, a state of existence without sin and without death.

Jesus adopted this idea, that he was called of God to be Messiah, by virtue of remarkable fitness and peculiar religious gifts. The thought that he was Messiah rose in the heart of Jesus from his conception of God, which made him choose the name of Father from all his names; from a trust in God which held all things possible to him that believeth; from his self-renunciation which sacrificed all self-interest to the cause; from his love for man which made him seek the deliverance of the whole race, and treat the youngest

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and the lowest with utmost tenderness ; from his moral purity which enjoined upon his disciples the duty of being saints, a name adopted by them soon after his death. He was Messiah by virtue of this peculiar fitness, and in this lies the personal character of Jesus.

Thus we learn to understand the age which followed after Jesus. His idea was a Messianic kingdom beginning with Israel and embracing all nations ; this also was the idea of his disciples after his death. Now in the first place this implied the necessity of bringing all Israel to believe in its Messiah ; and so the apostles felt themselves bound to confine their gospel preaching to the Jews. But in the second place it involved no agreement as to the conditions upon which the non-Jewish nations should be received into the kingdom ; whether they should adopt Jewish ordinances or not. This question had no practical significance in the lifetime of Jesus ; it had not yet come into existence as a problem requiring solution. When Paul brought it forward the apostles were taken by surprise. Jesus had lived amongst them as a Jew : he kept the Sabbath and refrained from forbidden meats, and observed the law. The life and teaching of Paul were not the life and teaching of Jesus. They did not see why Paul should not submit himself to them, as the original disciples of Jesus who best knew his will. When after fourteen years of missionary work among the Gentiles, he communicated to them his gospel and its success, they reached him the right hand of fellowship ; because the conversion of the Gentile world had also a place in their programme of the Messianic kingdom. But the prerogative of Judaism was not surrendered ; and the question whether the Christian should live as Jew or Gentile, was not decided ; so that afterwards during his stay at Antioch, Peter might well have been in some uncertainty how to act. Paul must have learnt in his days of persecution, the almost invincible obstacles to the Gospel in the heart of a Jew ; he might well

have had his own feelings towards Gentiles softened by his early residence amongst them at Tarsus. When he became a Christian he saw in the cross the downfall of the law and all Jewish privilege. His resolution was taken to be the apostle of the Gentiles ; and he so far changed the earlier Christian programme as to endeavour to provoke the Jews to emulation by the conversion of the Gentiles. Paul set Christendom free ; but he is not on this account the original founder of Christianity. The religion of love and of freedom, the consciousness of being the Son of God and of the possession of the divine Spirit, he learnt from Jesus.

We have next to enquire what results we have at the present time from the researches of criticism in the early history of Christianity. Criticism has discovered in the New Testament such a Christianity as our time requires, such alone as it will receive, a religion freed from miracles. The obstinacy with which the Churches have striven to force upon an altered world the miraculous religion of a bygone age, has done much to discredit Christianity. Men are weary of long disputes about the possibility, reality, necessity of miracles. Criticism has taught us to recognise in the miracles of the New Testament, the natural and significant results of the intellectual condition of mankind. Impartiality forbids us to acknowledge the miracles of Scripture as actual events, while we refuse similar stories in other books as idle dreams : especially when we find upon examination that many of the miraculous tales of classic literature are so nearly the same as those of Scripture, that they evidently spring from the same source. There was at first some disagreement as to the interpretation of miracles, and the rationale of their appearance. Men were so entangled with the ecclesiastical tradition of the apostolic authorship of the writings in which the miraculous stories are found, that they took them for truth even while they divested them of their miraculous character. The events were

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supposed to have really taken place, but the narrators being uneducated and credulous persons, more influenced by imagination than critical discernment, overlooked natural causes and involved them in a halo of miracle. They admit that Jesus fed five thousand men with five loaves, but it was not till he had supplied the deficiency from the resources of a passing caravan. Jesus rescued Peter when he leapt into the sea, but he himself was walking on the shore, and only the darkness of the night made his disciples think he was walking on the sea. No doubt he raised up the son of the widow of Nain, and the daughter of Jairus to life, but this was because they were only apparently dead. In this way the whole history of Jesus and his apostles has been rationalized piecemeal in an arbitrary manner. The narratives are supposed to be true in the main, but all the heart of them is cut out, all that gave them value and significance in the eyes of the writer, as conspicuous instances of the triumph of the spirit of Christianity over all the limitations of nature. Many minds are alienated from the Bible by its miracles; but more are brought into a state of indifference and depreciation by the rationalistic explanation of them.

Strauss, in his *Life of Jesus*, pronounces the miracles to be myths, the half-unconscious result of popular feeling, which adorned the life of Jesus with images of the fancy, for which the prevailing Messianic ideas furnished the material. Poetry must be understood to be poetry; and this explanation is enough to account for much of the supernatural over-growth of gospel history, but not for all. Advancing criticism discovered that the series of parallel miracles, which runs through the Acts, is due to an intentional purpose of raising Paul to an equality with Peter, and has found in the fourth gospel an entire book, to show how men invented miraculous stories for themselves, or used those they found to hand, as emblems of religious ideas and Christian truths. The following examples will show the way in

which this was done. The disciples of John and the Pharisees accused the disciples of Jesus of neglecting the customary fasts. Jesus defended them with the two figures of the presence of the bridegroom, and of new wine which must not be put into old bottles (Mark ii. 18). The author of the fourth gospel makes out of this a marriage feast at Cana, where the guests were fasting for want of wine, until Jesus changed the water (of the law) into the wine (of the gospel): thus he expressed in a figure the excellence of the gospel above the law. To take another instance (Luke xvi. 27), the parable of the rich man and Lazarus ends with the petition of the rich man to Abraham, that he would send Lazarus to testify to his brethren; and with Abraham's answer, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead. The fourth gospel makes out of Lazarus a real personage; associates with him two sisters, Martha and Mary, and creates a family circle in which Jesus is at home. Lazarus dies and Jesus raises him from the dead, to the great astonishment of the Jews; but instead of believing, from that day forth they took counsel to put Jesus to death, thus showing the truth of the saying, That if they believed not Moses and the prophets, they would not believe though one rose from the dead: out of which the fourth Evangelist worked up this touching narrative. There are also legends of a later time, which he introduces as scenes in the life of Jesus. We have only to read chap. xxi. 15-24 to see how he, or the later hand that wrote this appendix to the gospel, reproduced the legends of the crucifixion of Peter at Rome, and of the survival of John to the second coming of Jesus, in a conversation between these disciples and their risen Lord.

In the fourth evangelist, this rise of miracles, when once pointed out, is as clear as day—it is equally clear in the other three, except to determined prejudice. For instance, Mark relates the call of the first apostles with-

out miracle : Jesus took them from their nets with the promise they should become fishers of men, i. 16. Luke changes the natural account into a supernatural story. Peter tells Jesus that they have toiled all night and taken nothing. Jesus bids him launch out into the deep and let down his nets for a draught : and now they enclose so great a multitude of fish that their net breaks, and believing, in consequence of the miracle, they receive the call to become fishers of men. The fourth evangelist places this narrative after the resurrection, and gives the number of fish one hundred and fifty-three, and adds, that the net brake not. The method of gospel narrative is quite plain in this case : the Pauline author of the gospel that goes by the name of Luke, wrote at a time when the results of the preaching of the first apostles to the Jews were very small, as compared with the results of Paul's mission to the Gentiles. Jesus bids them launch out (as Paul does) into the deep (the Gentile world) and become fishers of men, not merely fishers of Jews. This filled the net until it broke ; and here is expressed the original schism caused by Paul in Christendom, when he launched out into the deep. The fourth evangelist understood the meaning of the miraculous draught related in Luke ; and after the manner of his day, expresses the name of Peter in the number of fishes, thus showing the reconciliation in his time of the former serious division in the Christian community.

Again, one of the common figures of gospel preaching is the bread of life : was this to be given to Jew or Gentile ? We have seen the diverging opinions on this point ; now we may see how skilfully the evangelists employ the figure. The rich man of the parable (the Jew) who fared sumptuously every day, is damned ; the poor man (the Gentile), content with the crumbs that fell from his table, is saved. Whereas Jesus, when surrounded by the multitude in the wilderness, feeds five thou-

sand with five loaves ; but twelve baskets full are left ; a significant number, one for each of the tribes of Israel, that they might not complain of want, when the desert inhabitants of the Gentile world were filled with heavenly food. Another time Jesus goes into the land of the Gentiles, and a Gentile woman prays him for mercy and help. When Jesus harshly answered her, That it is not good to cast the children's bread to dogs, she meekly replied, That the dogs might eat the crumbs that fall from the children's table. These words of lowly faith prevailed : Jesus grants the mother's prayer and heals the daughter from afar, without going to the house. Now, we understand this story : we know the Gentile woman ; we know her daughter's illness, she was vexed with devils ; we know who applied those harsh words in the age after Jesus to the Gentiles, calling them dogs and swine before whom pearls are not to be cast. We know the Pauline talisman of faith, which saves the Gentiles ; and the cure by Jesus from afar, denotes the fact that he did not himself convert the Gentiles by entering into their houses, but Paul and his companions worked in his name. Thus rose the miraculous stories of the gospels. They are the incorporation of Christian views and Christian experiences in outward signs, the representation of the work of the Spirit of Jesus in his community after his death, referred to events in his lifetime.

The greatest difficulty is the chief miracle—the resurrection of Jesus himself. It is not enough simply to deny it, on the ground of the contradictions of the authorities. It is better to examine closely what Paul, the foremost champion of this doctrine, really says. In that crucial passage 1 Cor. xv. 3-9, he reminds his readers that he had delivered to them that which he himself received.—1. That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures ; 2. That he was buried and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures ; 3. That he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve, then of more

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than five hundred brethren at once, after that he was seen of James, then of all the Apostles, then of Paul himself. The early Christians saw certain appearances of Christ, from which they concluded that he was alive and so risen from the dead. Of the nature of these appearances we know nothing in the case of the other Apostles, as we have no written testimony from their own hand ; but we do know from Paul's own writings, the way in which Jesus appeared to him. He often says that he had seen the Lord ; he appeals to visions and revelations of the Lord which were vouchsafed to him, and he gives an example of one, 2 Cor. xii. He was caught up into Paradise, and heard there unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Paul was a visionary ; and the appearances of the Lord which he saw were visions, that is, mental processes of such a kind, that the image called up by the entranced spirit, presented itself to the bodily eye, and became perceptible to the bodily ear. It is plain from Paul's letters, that the image he saw was the glorified Christ from heaven in a Spiritual body. He argued with himself, that God had shown Jesus, whom once he persecuted, to be Messiah by raising him from the dead, and exalting him into heaven ; whence he appeared to himself, and before him to other disciples, as the Lord that Spirit. This was the case with Paul himself ; and there ought to be no question whether it was the case with the other disciples also. Paul places the appearances of Christ to the others, entirely on the same ground as those to himself, saying, "last of all he appeared to me also : " there is not a word to show that there was any difference between them. Indeed, in other passages of his epistles, he expressly excludes any such difference, making himself not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles. He answers the question, How are the dead raised and with what body do they come, by showing that they did not come in their former material body, but in a heavenly and spiritual body ; for flesh

and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. The bodily resurrection of Jesus, the coming out of the grave with the same body that went in, to eat and drink and be touched once more, to walk with earthly feet from Jerusalem to Emmaus, and speak human words with a human mouth—all this which is the groundwork of the later narratives of the Evangelists, and of the doctrine of the Church, Paul most decidedly excludes. Apparently he had never heard a word of it. The faith of Paul and of the early Christians was this: Jesus went down like all the dead into the under world, out of which he was raised into heaven by the Almighty power of God, in a way withdrawn from human ken; where he sits at the right hand of God, and whence he has appeared in a glorified form. Accordingly Paul knew nothing of an ascension of Jesus as distinct from his resurrection. Both were the same act to him: and the earlier evangelists originally held nearly the same view, for they placed the resurrection from the dead and the ascension into heaven upon the same day. It is passing strange that the author of the Acts, who places both on the same day in his gospel, should say that the ascension was forty days after the resurrection, in his later work. When once their visions of a glorified Lord from heaven had degenerated into the carnal idea of a bodily resurrection, it was natural for the early Christians to say that he had remained with his disciples for a time upon earth.

Thus, also, this most difficult question of Christian history has been solved by criticism. The original design has been separated from the superstructure; and the result is that Christianity, without miracles, is now presented to the world. Much, indeed, has been taken away, that for eighteen centuries has been a rich fountain of spiritual and intellectual life; but it has been taken at the right time, at the very moment when aversion to a miraculous Christianity, was threatening

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to bring on aversion to Christianity altogether. The best religion has been given back to us that the world has ever seen, the religion of Jesus Christ himself. Lessing asked when Christendom would be reasonable enough to distinguish between the religion of Jesus, which is so clearly portrayed in the gospels, and about which all pious hearts are at one, from that religion about Jesus which is so obscure and uncertain, that scarcely two heads agree upon it, and which has filled the world with wrangling and hatred. Criticism has given us the means of effecting this distinction with all requisite certainty. The lofty figure of Jesus stands forth in fuller grandeur than ever, as the man who felt himself called of God to be the Christ, and to establish upon earth a kingdom of God, embracing all mankind. The New Testament is the record of the impression which his glorious appearing made upon his disciples. We hold these books to be inspired, because they are the testimonies to a great revelation of God, written by men who tried to reproduce in word and deed, in poetry and in prose, the effect of the spirit upon themselves. But we are freed from the bondage of the letter, while we drink of the spirit; because we see how freely the writers dealt with the material which they used. Such a Church as the Church of the past can never again be built upon these well-known and carefully criticised books; but a fresh stream of spirit and freedom will flow into the veins of the Church, from the proper use of these time-honoured records. We may call ourselves Christians because we hope by growing up into the likeness of Christ, to be sons of God, as he was. We can keep Christmas because we have recognised in the gospel narrative of the nativity the fragrant growth of the Spirit given by Christ himself. We can keep Good-Friday, although we do not believe in the death of a God, who quenched his own indignation in his own blood, because Jesus taught no such doctrine as this, but by sacrificing himself for the

kingdom of God, gave an example of self-devotion which is the saving of the world, and the supreme law of human society, and is worthy of everlasting remembrance. We can keep Easter although we do not believe that a dead body ever came back to life upon earth, because we do believe, as Paul did and the earliest Christians, that Jesus, when he had laid aside the flesh and blood which cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, was raised from the darkness of death to the bright heaven of the spiritual world, revealing himself there to his disciples and working upon them to the end of time.

Criticism has discovered in the New Testament the Christianity of Jesus Christ, upon which we may hope a new church will be founded. The New Testament is the foundation of the Protestant Church, but the New Testament which we have now is not the same as the New Testament which Luther and Zwingli had; neither is the Jesus of history the God of the Church. Nevertheless, in the midst of all our social miseries, we cannot remain cold and indifferent to the Jesus of history, the man who lived and died to found a kingdom of God upon earth.

Such are the chief points of the paper before us. Undoubtedly this criticism is destructive; and there are many excellent people who blame religious criticism for destroying much that they once held to be true, and giving them nothing in exchange. This is a serious objection, especially in the uncertainty which surrounds the whole question, and seems likely enough to continue. We have no right, it is said, to receive one part of Scripture as historically true, and dispute another part. We cannot decide for ourselves what is the word of God, and what is not. Unless we accept the whole as it has been handed down to us, we reject the whole. The religion of the Church either is the religion which Jesus gave to his disciples, or it is not; if it is, we are bound to keep each sacred doctrine pure and undefiled;

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if it is not, we are equally bound to reject the whole. Such arguments have a great sound of reality about them; but there is more sound than substance. Destructive criticism is more conservative and more reverential than blind credulity. It is the merest assumption to say we must accept all or none. Criticism knows of no such canon; truth and fiction are often interwoven in the same writings. Her office is to discover the truth, and maintain it wherever it is found.* The science of astronomy was not destroyed when the errors of ancient systems were proven; and the religion of Christ will suffer no loss, if we can but find what it is, and what it is not.

The chief reason why the truths of the gospel have had as yet so little effect for the salvation of the world, is the fact that they have been overlaid and identified with so much that men have been unable to believe and agree upon with an intelligent and practical acceptance. It has been found impossible to unite the whole New Testament into one universal system, and reproduce it in actual life. Our author's summary of the results of criticism shows us that we have the best reasons for believing that the overgrowth of miracles and other-worldliness that we see before us, was not the teaching of Jesus, but was imported into his life and doctrine after his death, for the sake of getting larger acceptance for the discordant opinions of a later age. The miracles are the more serious difficulty; for they must be one and all matters of fact, or the reverse. Nevertheless in our day they are of no kind of use as proofs of the truth of Christianity. We cannot receive the Bible on the authority of miracles, and the miracles on the authority of the Bible. So we do not lose much if we are compelled to admit that they do not rest on incontestible evidence, and have been from the first misunderstood. Even if we are obliged to give up our early faith in the bodily resurrection of Jesus on the third day; we gain more than we lose in an increased

appreciation of our union with him in sonship to the one God and Father of all. For we learn to believe that he rose just as we shall rise, and that God who raised him will raise us too. We cannot, as before, receive the bodily resurrection on the authority of the apostles and evangelists, and then acknowledge the apostles and evangelists on the authority of the resurrection. Our author has shown with remarkable force the way in which Paul conceived the doctrine of the Resurrection and Ascension. The whole argument of the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 1-28, requires us to understand that Christ rose from the dead in the same way that his people rise; so when we know how his people do not rise, we know how he did not rise. A miraculous resurrection of the kind afterwards introduced into some of the evangelists would destroy the whole force of the passage. We are taught to believe that Jesus rose, as we shall rise; and so his resurrection is a pledge to us of our own; but we are not meant to understand that our bodies will rise on the third day, and continue in a spiritualized state for a greater or less period upon earth. The orthodox doctrine of resurrection breaks up the union between Christ and man, and leads us rather to question than believe our own resurrection. The apostle says, Christ rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and this may show the way in which the Gospel narrative grew up. It is nowhere said in any Scripture already written when Paul wrote, that Christ would rise on the third day. But a wholly irrelevant passage in Hosea vi. 2 (after two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight) received a Messianic interpretation and suggested the idea, which is also supposed to be prefigured and foretold by the three days and three nights which Jonah is said to have passed in the whale's belly. By rightly understanding this greatest of miracles, we remove it from the extraordinary to the ordinary course of Providence; and we

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do not depart from Scripture authority, but return to the real doctrine held at first by the greatest preacher of the resurrection of Christ and man. Nothing is really lost to the believer, except some cherished delusions of early faith ; this is a loss, for faith which has once been abused and then opened to conviction will have parted with some of its freshness and fragrance. But for all that is taken much more is given back. If the miracles are shown to be poetical fictions, they become like the parables, each one enshrines some sacred truth under a figure, and conveys a real spiritual lesson instead of a doubtful historical verity. If the bodily resurrection and ascension of Jesus are shown to have been adopted by the Church on insufficient authority, to have been propagated by inconsistent, even irreconcilable narratives of the same event, and to be opposed to the most genuine works of the earliest writer in the New Testament ; if this be the case, we need not over much regret the convictions that are forced upon us, when we find the sole honour that is His own given back to God the Father, and the real unity of man with Jesus established on firmer grounds than before. The miraculous conception and the bodily resurrection on the third day separate our Divine Master from us in this world and in the world to come. Unless he was born of a human father and mother like ourselves, he did not take our nature upon him in this world ; and unless he rose from the dead by the power of God in the same way as his brethren, his resurrection is no pledge to us of our own ; we have no part with him in the resurrection world.

The other-worldliness or supposed spirituality of the Church system is a far less serious difficulty. None need complain of much loss to their faith, if they are obliged to surrender the cloud land, which they think they hold with such secure possession. It may be a great consolation to the orthodox Christian to say, when I die I shall go to heaven, and my unathanasian

neighbour will go to hell ; but it would be no loss to him to have to consider which of the two is in heaven now, and which is in hell now. And with regard to the after-world, it might be enough for the most orthodox and most catholic Christian to know that when he and his neighbour, whom he loves so much according to the command of his Lord, depart this life, they will both go to Him, who was first fully revealed as the Father of all in the teaching of Jesus. All the beautiful imagery with which the truths of the other world are spoken of in Scripture remains as before for the devout contemplation of each disciple according to the measure of his enlightenment. All the profane and sensual fables about the world to come may be given up as human conceptions of things beyond our ken. Jesus brought life and immortality to light, not by telling us in definite and intelligible language about a world of which he perhaps knew no more than ourselves, but by showing us that the knowledge of God in Christ, that is, as taught by Jesus, is eternal life, and that whosoever liveth and believeth in Him shall never die.

When criticism has done its utmost, no real harm can be done. The same sacred book is before us with a purer text and larger means of interpretation : and, more rather than less, is known of the earliest age of Christianity. The practical use we have to make of it, is the same as in the paper before us. We hope for the rise of a Church without miracles, a religion without superstition, a brotherhood of man with man upon a foundation acknowledged by all. This is clearly possible, and it seems to be the only hope of the restoration of happiness to man. The restraints of religion are even more necessary to society, than the restraints of law and civilization : besides, religion is a constraining, not merely a restraining power ; it urges what is good before it condemns what is wrong. False religions have taken away far more than they have given. It is a

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cruel and wicked thing to cheat the poor and the ignorant, out of the share they ought to have of heaven upon earth, with delusions about another world. The souls and bodies of men are enslaved with a superstition which they do not more than half believe. They have a right to have the full results of criticism communicated to them by authority. The learned and capable men who occupy the highest positions in our Church, are in a situation of great difficulty; nevertheless, they seem to me bound by their office, either to establish by argument the claims of orthodoxy, or to acknowledge the results of criticism: and, in the meantime, to give their sanction to a reverential statement of such truths as are here contained, by such of the clergy as have conscientiously embraced them, in the pulpit and elsewhere. Not only might they give their sanction; they might themselves take the lead, and by handling such difficult subjects with the great learning and enlightened wisdom they possess, prevent the mischief which will infallibly be caused, by the truth being forced in, mixed with mud from below, instead of being poured down, well filtered from above. Public opinion in the Church, and the state of the law would occasionally introduce painful complications. No doubt, the bishops will generally concede to the rank and file of their profession, so far as they can, the liberty which some of them are now asserting for themselves, in so judicious and determined a manner. But the office of the bishop may be promoted against opinions which the bishop himself does not wholly condemn. The cardinals are said once to have come to the Pope with a strange sentence, according to the words of the old chronicler, which remain in my memory, though I cannot recal the names: *Judica te cremari, quia hæreticus es, Papa judicavit se cremari, et crematus est.* Surely the bold unflinching statement of the Archbishop of Canterbury, in convocation about the Athanasian creed, is a more definite and distinct contravention of the VIIIth article,

than Mr Voysey's doctrine of the atonement, was of the second. It was made a chief point against him by the court, of which the primate is so distinguished a member, that he taught that Christ did not die to reconcile his Father to us. The article says that he did : so does the Lord Chancellor ; and I suppose the Archbishop says the same. But the second Testament does not say so from one end to the other, and in effect does say the contrary. Neither is the language of the second article altogether at variance with Mr Voysey's doctrine, if we assume that the English idiom at the time, like the Latin and Greek, makes little or no distinction between reconciling the Father to us, and us to the Father. But the VIIIth article cannot be explained into consistency with an authoritative disclaimer of belief in one of the three creeds. The Archbishop in the privy council must needs pronounce his own condemnation, if required ; the only escape seems to be in the usual ambiguity of the language : the bishops may know they ought to believe the creeds, only they don't. If martyrs are still necessary, they have always been the seed of the Church. Martyrdom, indeed, no longer consists in fire and fagot, but in social ostracism, the forfeiture of valued friendships, and the loss of their only means of subsistence to men in middle life, this is quite enough punishment for daring to believe the truth. Besides, it is an infinite humiliation to go about the world as the supposed representative of doctrines which having been shown to be delusions, have lost their power over mankind, and are only held under reservations. Let the orthodox religion of the future establish itself by argument, and the orthodox religion of the past be no longer upheld by pains and penalties. It would be far better to abolish preaching for a time and confine our public worship to prayer and praise and reading of the Bible, than to go on as we are now doing, necessarily avoiding most important subjects, for fear of deposition on the one hand, and on the other of insidi-

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ously undermining the Church while we eat her bread. The Church has overlaid Christianity ; but truth must in the end prevail, and falsehood fall to the ground ; but our lives are passing fast away : the world is suffering for want of the true religion of Jesus ; and his great maxim is forgotten, that we ought to render to God the things that are God's, and to man the things that are man's.

Yours most truly,

A COUNTRY VICAR.