

WAS CHRIST A POLITICAL
AND SOCIAL REFORMER?

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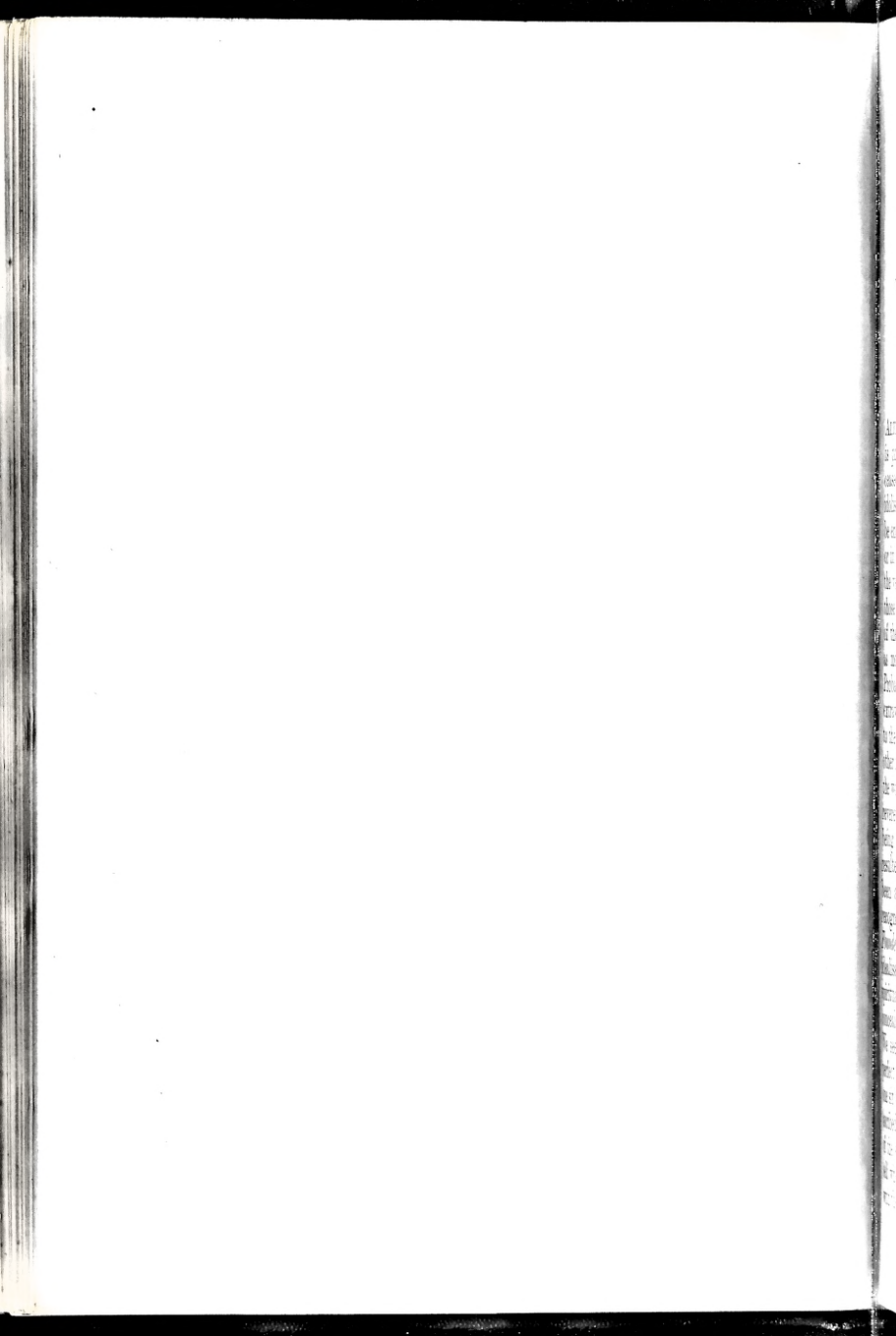
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WAS CHRIST A POLITICAL AND SOCIAL REFORMER ?

ALTHOUGH Thomas Carlyle has said that "in these days it is professed that hero-worship has gone out and finally ceased," thousands of the professed followers of Christ idolise his memory to such an extent that they appear to be entirely oblivious of any defect either in his character or in his teachings. They regard their hero as having been the very embodiment of truth, virtue, and perfection; and those persons who are compelled to doubt the correctness of these assumptions are regarded by orthodox believers as most unreasonable and perverse members of society. Probably the principal cause why such erroneous and extravagant notions are entertained of one who, according to the New Testament, was very little, if at all, superior to other religious heroes can be accounted for by the fact that the worshippers of Christ were taught in their childhood to reverence him as an absolutely perfect character, and as being beyond criticism. Thus youthful impressions resulted in fancied creations which, in matured life, have been accepted as realities. The Rev. James Cranbrook recognised this truth, for in the preface to his work, *The Founders of Christianity* (page 5), he observes: "Our own idealisations have invested him (Jesus) with a halo of spiritual glory, that by the intensity of its brightness conceals from us the real figure presented in the Gospels. We see him, not as he is described, but as the ideally perfect man our own fancies have conceived. But let any one sit down and critically analyse the sayings and doings ascribed to Jesus in the Gospels—let him divest his mind of the superstitious fear of irreverence, and then ask himself whether all those sayings and doings are in harmony with the highest wisdom speaking for all ages and races of

mankind, and with the conceptions of an absolutely perfect human nature, and I am mistaken if he will not find a very great deal he will be forced to condemn."

Even the sons of Labor, the apostles of Democracy, and the advocates of Socialism appear disposed to adopt Jesus as their Patron Saint. Conjectures are being constantly made by professed modern reformers as to what the Carpenter of Nazareth would say upon the many political and social questions that agitate the public mind in this the latter half of the nineteenth century. These hero-worshippers seem to overlook the apathy of Jesus in respect to the evils of his own time. Of course, it is not difficult for an impartial observer to learn why the name of Christ is invoked to support the various schemes that are now put forward to aid the regeneration of society.

However little Christianity is practised among us, it is extensively professed, and it is thought by many a virtue to assume a belief, whether there are sufficient grounds for doing so or not. This slavish adherence to fashion is an undignified prostration of mental freedom and independence, and it is also a fruitful source of the perpetuation of error. My purpose in examining the claims set up for Jesus as a political and social reformer is to ascertain if the records of his life, doings, and teachings justify such claims. If Jesus were judged as an ordinary man, living nearly two thousand years ago, my present task would be unnecessary. If we assume that such a man once lived, and that what he said and did is accurately reported, he should, in my opinion, be considered as a youth possessing but limited education, surrounded by unfavorable influences for intellectual acquirements, belonging to a race not very remarkable for literary culture, retaining many of the failings of his progenitors, and having but little regard for the world or the things of the world. Viewed under these circumstances, I could, while excusing many of his errors, recognise and admire something that is praiseworthy in the life of "Jesus of Nazareth." But when he is raised upon a pinnacle of greatness, as an exemplar of virtue and wisdom, surpassing the production of any age or country, he is then exalted to a position which he does not merit, and which, to my mind, deprives him of that credit which otherwise he would, perhaps, be entitled to.

The contentions which it is my purpose to dispute are : that Jesus was a political and social reformer, and that his alleged teachings contain the remedies for the wrongs of modern society. Before directly dealing with these points it may be necessary to glance at the various aspects of reform that have, at different times in our national history, been presented to the community ; also to briefly consider the nature of the required reforms, and some of the principal methods that have been adopted to secure them.

In quite primitive ages important struggles took place to establish greater equality in the conditions of life. In the time of Moses, according to the Bible, the land, for instance, was not merely the subject of "tracts for the times," but the laws and regulations relating to it were practically dealt with. It did not, however, cease to be *property*, and its *inheritance* was recognised as a rightful thing. The stock-in-trade of many modern reformers is the denunciation of those who "add house to house, field to field, and grind the faces of the poor." If this condemnation is one of the many features of Socialism, then Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel may, in this particular, be fairly termed Socialists—a name foreign to their language and to the ideas of their day.

The contention with some is, that Christ was a successor to all these prophets, that he took the same kind of objection as they did to the then existing state of things, and that he used the same form of speech in denouncing them. The general reply to this is, that Christ was, if anything, only a prophetic reformer, not a real one. In proof of this many facts in his alleged history may be cited. For instance, he did not rescue the land from the control of the Romans, who held it from the people very much in the same way as landholders do now ; he did not attempt to render any aid to the laborers of Rome, who in his day were resisting the injustice of the capitalists ; he did not deliver his brethren of "the royal house" from their foreign rulers ; he did not redeem the Jews from their social evils, or restore justice to their nation. In a word, he entirely failed to do the reforming work that was expected of him. About the year 1825 the "Christian Socialists of London" called special attention to the question

of land as regulated by Moses, and the living in common by the early Christians ; but no practical issue arose out of the discussion. From that period down to the present the same subject has been more or less agitated, and still the matter is very far from being settled. Now, if it is alleged that Christ sought to bring about a just settlement of the land problem, then the existence of the present oppressive land laws proves that he failed, and that his most devout followers have been equally unfortunate. If Christ had been a practical reformer, we should not have in our midst the deplorable injustice, the wrongs, and the inequalities that now afflict society. These evils and drawbacks—the growth of centuries during which Christianity was in power—will doubtless be lessened, if not altogether destroyed ; but the work will be achieved by a moral revolution, inaugurated and conducted by men who will possess ability and experience that it is evident Jesus never had.

It must be borne in mind that there are two kinds of revolution—one that is gradual and intellectual, and therefore useful ; the other that is sudden, born of passion, and therefore often useless as an important factor in securing permanent reforms. We know that every change of thought, or condition of things, involves a revolution which, if controlled by reason and regulated by the lessons of experience, must aid rational progress, and tend to build up a State, and secure its permanence. But there is another kind of revolution, which is sought to be produced by Nihilism and Anarchism, both of which aim at the destruction of the State. I am not in favor of either of these “isms,” believing, as I do, that in our present condition of society some form of government is necessary. Law and order, based upon the national will, and the principle of justice, appear to me to be essential in any scheme that is accepted for the purpose of furthering the political and social progress of the world. Then we have Socialism, which concerns itself with economic, ethical, political, and industrial questions. The principal subject, however, dealt with by Socialists is the accumulation and distribution of wealth. State Socialism dates from the time of the eminent French writer, Claude, H. Count de St. Simon, whose works were published in 1831. He

tried to secure the amelioration of the condition of the poor, and aimed at the organisation of labor and the distribution of the fruits of industry, upon the principle of every man being rewarded according to his works. Socialism is, in fact, an attempt (whether it is the best that could be made is with some persons a debateable point) to regulate the social relations, making them more equal than they are at present, either by individual combination, by municipal or co-operative action, by a philanthropic policy of the Church, or by the control of the State. This last phase of the Socialistic scheme means the complete regulation by law of the equality of individuals, the State being the owner of the land, and of all the instruments of industry that are at present possessed by individuals, public companies, etc., who now regulate, in their own interest, production and distribution.

Having thus briefly stated the general conceptions and aims of political and social reformers, the next step is to inquire in what relation Jesus stands to any or all of them. Of course there is only one source of information upon the subject at our command—that of the four Gospels. From these it will not be difficult to demonstrate that Jesus was no mundane reformer. Although he was surrounded by poverty, slavery, oppression, and mental degradation, he made no effort to rid society of these curses to humanity. As John Stuart Mill observes, in his work upon *Liberty* (pp. 28, 29), in referring to Christian morality: "I do not scruple to say of it that it is, in many important points, incomplete and one-sided, and that, unless ideas and feelings, not sanctioned by it, had contributed to the formation of European life and character, human affairs would have been in a worse condition than they now are."

Professor Huxley, in the *Nineteenth Century*, No. 144, pp. 178-186, points out that Christians have no right to force their idealistic portraits of Jesus on the unbiassed scientific world, whose business it is to study realities and to separate fiction from fact. The Professor's words are: "In the course of other inquiries, I have had to do with fossil remains, which looked quite plain at a distance, and became more and more indistinct as I tried to define their outline by close inspection. There was something there—

something which, if I could win assurance about it, might mark a new epoch in the history of the earth ; but, study as long as I might, certainty eluded my grasp. So has it been with me in my efforts to define the grand figure of Jesus as it lies in the primitive strata of Christian literature. Is he the kindly, peaceful Christ depicted in the catacombs ? Or is he the stern judge who frowns above the altar of Saints Cosmas and Damianus ? Or can he be rightly represented in the bleeding ascetic broken down by physical pain of too many mediæval pictures ? Are we to accept the Jesus of the second or the Jesus of the fourth Gospel as the true Jesus ? What did he really say and do ? and how much that is attributed to him in speech and action is the embroidery of the various parties into which his followers tended to split themselves within twenty years of his death, when even the three-fold tradition was only nascent ? If a man can find a friend, the hypostasis of all his hopes, the mirror of his ethical ideal, in the Jesus of any or all of the Gospels, let him live by faith in that ideal. Who shall, or can, forbid him ? But let him not delude himself that his faith is evidence of the objective reality of that in which he trusts. Such evidence is to be obtained only by the use of the methods of science as applied to history and to literature, and it amounts, at present, to very little."

Equally emphatic are the remarks of John Vickers, the author of *The New Koran*, etc., who, in his work, *The Real Jesus*, on pp. 160, 161, writes : " Many popular preachers at the present day are accustomed to hold Jesus up to admiration as the special friend of the poor—that is, as the benefactor of the humble working class, and their representations to this effect are doubtless very generally believed. But a greater delusion respecting him than this can scarcely be imagined ; for, however much he may have been disposed to favor those who forsook their industrial calling and led a vagrant life, his preaching and the course which he took were prejudicial to all who honestly earned their bread. He did nothing with his superior wisdom to develop the resources of the country and provide employment for the poor ; all his efforts were directed to the unhinging of industry, the diminution of wealth, and the promotion of universal idleness and beggary. It was no

part of his endeavor to see the peasant and the artisan better remunerated and more comfortably housed, for he despised domestic comforts as much as Diogenes, and believed that their enjoyment would disqualify people for obtaining the everlasting pleasures of Paradise. A provident working man who had managed to save enough for a few months' subsistence he would have classed with the covetous rich, and required him to give away in alms all that he had treasured as the indispensable condition of discipleship. On one occasion he is said to have distributed food liberally to the hungry multitude; but the food was none of his providing, since he was himself dependent on alms. Moreover, the recipients of his bounty were not a band of ill-fed laborers returning from work, not a number of distressed farmers who had suffered heavy losses from murrain or drought, but a loafing crowd who had followed him about from place to place, and spent the day in idleness. Such bestowment of largess would only tend to produce a further relaxation of industrial effort; it would induce credulous peasants to throw down their tools and follow the wonder-working prophet for the chance of a meal; they would see little wisdom in plodding at their tasks from day to day, like the ants and the bees, if people were to be fed by wandering about trustfully for what should turn up, as the idle, improvident ravens (Prov. vi. 6; Luke xii. 24)."

Many eminent Christian writers maintain that Jesus was a social reformer, because he is represented as having been in favor of dispensing with the private ownership of property, and also of people living together, enjoying what is called "a common repast." Professor Graetz, in the second volume of his able *History of the Jews*, devotes a chapter to the social practices which prevailed at the time when Jesus is alleged to have lived. On page 117 he states that Christianity was really an offshoot from the principles held by the Essenes, and that Christ inherited their aversion to Pharisaical laws, while he approved of their practice of putting their all into the common treasury. Further, like them, Jesus highly esteemed self-imposed poverty, and despised riches. In fact, we are told that the "community of goods, which was a peculiar doctrine of the Essenes, was not only approved, but enforced. . . .

The repasts they shared in common formed, as it were, the connecting link which attached the followers of Jesus to one another; and the alms distributed by the rich publicans relieved the poor disciples of the fear of hunger; and this bound them still more strongly to Jesus." But Graetz also adds that Christ thoroughly shared the narrow views held by the Judæans of his time, and that he despised the heathen world. Thus he said: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you" (Matt. vii. 6). If this is "Christian Socialism," it is far from being catholic in its nature. The Socialistic element of having "all things in common" was limited by Christ to one particular community; it lacked that universality necessary to all real social reforms. It was similar to his idea of the brotherhood of man. Those only were his brothers who believed in him. He desired no fellowship with those who did not accept his faith; hence he exclaimed: "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John xv. 6); "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me" (John xvii. 9); "But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God" (Luke xii. 9); "He that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 16). This may be the teaching of theology, but it is not indicative of a broad humanity, neither would it, if acted upon, tend to promote the social welfare of mankind.

Professor Graham, M.A., of Belfast College, contends, in his work, *Socialism: Old and New*, that Christ taught "Communism" when he preached "Blessed be ye poor," when "he repeatedly denounced" the rich, and when he recommended the wealthy young man to voluntarily surrender his property to the poor. The Professor also says: "In spite of certain passages to the contrary, pointing in a different direction, the Gospels are pervaded with the spirit of Socialism"; but he adds: "It is not quite State Socialism, because the better society was to be brought about by the voluntary union of believers." He admits, however, that "the ideal has hitherto been found impossible; but let not any say that it does not exist in the Gospels—that Christ did not contemplate an earthly

society." Now this last point is just what could be fairly urged, if the Gospels were trustworthy. There can be no reasonable doubt that the disregard of mundane duties would be the logical sequence of acting up to many of the teachings ascribed to Jesus. For instance, he said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John xviii. 36). "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John xii. 25). "I am not of the world" (John xvii. 9). "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body what ye shall put on. . . . Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself" (Matthew vi. 25, 34). "If any man comes to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv. 26). "Everyone that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life" (Matthew xix. 29). Even the disciple who wished to bury his father was advised by Christ to forego that duty of affection, for "Jesus said, Follow me; let the dead bury the dead."

The fact is, Christ was a spiritualiser, and not a social reformer. If he had been to his age what Bacon and Newton were to theirs, and what Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, and Tyndall have been to the present generation; if he had written a book teaching men how to avoid the miseries of life; if he had revealed the mysteries of nature, and exhibited the beauties of the arts and sciences, what an advantage he would have conferred upon mankind, and what an important contribution he would have given to the world towards solving the problems of our present social wrongs and inequalities. But the usefulness of Jesus was impaired by the idea which he entertained, that this world was but a state of probation, wherein the human family were to be prepared for another and a better home, where "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

We have thus seen the views of the scientist, the historian, and the professor, upon the subject under consideration; it will now be interesting to learn what one

of the successors to the apostles has to say in reference to the same question. B. F. Westcott, D.D., the present Bishop of Durham, in his work, *Social Aspects of Christianity*, says: "Of all places in the world, the Abbey, I think, proclaims the social gospel of Christ with the most touching eloquence. . . . If I am a Christian, I must bring within the range of my religion every interest and difficulty of man, 'for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'"

This is not by any means correct, for many other "foundations," which have nothing to do with Christ, have been laid, and upon them systems, some good and some bad, have been built. For instance, there are Individualism, Socialism, material standards of progress, unlimited competition, and the application of science. These are "other foundations" that men have had apart altogether from Christ. But the solution to present social evils, Dr. Westcott considers, is to be found only in the Christian faith. He says: "We need to show the world the reality of spiritual power. We need to gain and exhibit the idea that satisfies the thoughts, the aspirations, the aims of men straining towards the light." He admits that science has increased our power and resources; but, he adds, it "cannot open the heavens and show the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." Of course it cannot; for science has nothing to do with the impossible, or with the wild speculations of theology. In the *Social Aspects of Christianity*, as presented by the Bishop, it would be difficult, indeed, to recognise the principles of true Socialism. Moreover, as it is admitted by him that science has increased our "power and resources," it is a proof that Jesus must have been a poor reformer, when we remember that he did nothing whatever to aid this strong element of modern progress.

From the references which I have here made to some of the ablest writers of to-day, it will be seen how Jesus is estimated by them. I now propose to analyse the various statements which, according to the Four Gospels, were uttered by him, that have any bearing upon the political and social questions of our time. It will then be seen whether Christ has any claim to be considered a political and social reformer.

That the political views held by Jesus were exceedingly crude is evident from the circumstance recorded in Matthew xxii. It is there stated that, on finding a coin of the realm bearing the superscription of Cæsar, Jesus declared that both Cæsar and God were to have their due. The very pertinent question put by the disciples afforded a good opportunity for some sound advice to be given upon the political subjection in which the people to whom Christ was talking were living. They were in bondage to a foreign power, and were anxious to know if it were "lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not." Instead of returning a clear and intelligible answer, Jesus replied in words which were evasive and meaningless, so far as the information sought for was concerned. If he had any desire to alter the then existing political relations, or to suggest any improvement, he might have given a practical lesson upon the duties and obligations of the ruled to the rulers. Another opportunity was lost when, Pilate having asked Christ an important question, "Jesus gave him no answer" (John xix. 9).

Subsequently, however, Jesus recognised the "divine government," for he said: "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above" (John xix. 11). He also, having stated, "My kingdom is not of this world," added: "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews." Christ's notions of government were similar to those of St. Paul, who said: "The powers that be are ordained of God. . . . and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" (Romans xiii. 1, 2).

Now, in the very face of these scriptural utterances, we have men to-day who allege that Christ is their hero of democracy. The belief that he ever intended to improve the government of this world by secular means is utterly groundless. His negligence in this particular cannot be explained away by saying that society was not ripe for reform, and that Jesus lacked the power to revolutionise the institutions of his time. There is truth, no doubt, in the latter allegation, for the power of Christ for all practical work seems to have been very limited indeed. He did not attempt any political reform, as other men in all ages have

done; he did not make honest endeavors to inaugurate improvements which, under happier circumstances, might have been carried out. There is no evidence that Christ ever concerned himself with such reforms as civil and religious liberty, the freedom of the slaves, the equality of human rights, the emancipation of women, the spread of science and of education, the proper use of the land, and the fostering of the fundamental elements of human progress. His language was: "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin. And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Christ's declaration that his kingdom was not of this world may be taken as a reason why he made no adequate provision for secular government; but those who worship him assert that his plan is the only one that can be successfully adopted to secure the desired reforms, and that he really did contemplate a better state of society on earth than the one that then obtained. Where is the evidence that this was so? Not in the New Testament, for it is nowhere recorded therein that such was his mission. With him the question was: "For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Even Renan, who is so frequently quoted by Christian advocates as extolling Jesus, admits that he lacked the qualities of a great political and social reformer. In his *Life of Jesus* Renan says that Christ had "no knowledge of the general condition of the world" (p. 78); he was unacquainted with science, "believed in the devil, and that diseases were the work of demons" (pp. 79, 80); he was "harsh" towards his family, and was "no philosopher" (pp. 81-83); he "went to excess" (p. 174); he "aimed less at logical conviction than at enthusiasm"; "sometimes his intolerance of all opposition led him to acts inexplicable and apparently

absurd" (pp. 274, 275); and "bitterness and reproach became more and more manifest in his heart" (p. 278.)

But let us further consider what it is said that he taught in reference to life's social requirements, and also what was his estimate of the world and the things of the world. Under any system conducted upon rational principles the first social requirement is to provide for sufficient food, clothes, and shelter; for to talk of comfort and progress without these requisites is absurd. Now, it was about these very things that Jesus, as it has already been shown, taught that we should take no thought. In Matthew (c. vi.) special reference is made to the Gentiles who *did* take thought as to the necessities of life; but other people were not to be anxious upon the subject, "for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things," and a promise is given that he will provide them as he "feedeth" "the fowls of the air." Poverty and idleness were essentials to Christ's idea of a social state, as is proved by his advice to the rich young man, to whom he said: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor" (Matthew xix. 21). In John (vi. 27) it is also said: "Labor not for the meat which perisheth." What wealthy Christian will sell what he has and give to the poor, and thus carry out Christ's idea of social duties? And if the toiling millions did not labor for their meat, they would get but little of it. It is not overlooked that Jesus said to the young man, "and follow me"; which meant, I presume, that he was to join the Christian society in which they had "all things common" (Acts iv.). But this state of existence could only be maintained by giving up all one's possessions and adding them to the general stock. If all did this, the stock would be soon exhausted. And the point here to be noted is, that in Christ's scheme no provision is made to provide for a permanent mode of living, except by prayer or miracle.

Surely it must be obvious to most people that a communion of saints, fed directly by God, could not be any solution of the social problem for those outside such communities. Besides, there is little prospect of outsiders being made partakers with the saints, unless God the Father draws them unto Christ (John vi. 44); but no one can go to the Father except by Christ (John xiv. 6).

Thus our chances of admission into the Christian fold are very remote, for if we are admitted it must be through Christ, to whom we cannot go unless the Father draws us; but then we cannot go to the Father except by Christ. This is a theological puzzle, which must be left for a "Christian Socialist" to unravel if he can.

The belief that a social condition of society is sustained by an invisible power, where no labor is performed, and where no interest is taken in its progress, or in the dignity and personal independence of its members, is the height of folly. It implies the destruction of all human institutions, and the substitution of a "divinely-ordered state of things," such as some of Christ's followers allege they are now hourly expecting. Well might the late Bishop of Peterborough say: "It is not possible for the State to carry out all the precepts of Christ. A State that attempted to do so could not exist for a week. If there be any person who maintains the contrary, his proper place is in a lunatic asylum" (*Fortnightly*, January, 1890).

The Sermon on the Mount, or "in the plain," as stated by Luke (vi. 17), has been called the Magna Charta of the kingdom of God, proclaimed by Christ, although it has never been made the basis of any human government. Its injunctions are so impracticable and antagonistic to the requirements of modern civilisation that no serious attempt has ever been made to put them in practice. It may be mentioned that the genuineness of the "Sermon" has been boldly questioned. Professor Huxley writes: "I am of opinion that there is the gravest reason for doubting whether the Sermon on the Mount was ever preached, and whether the so-called Lord's Prayer was ever prayed by Jesus of Nazareth" (*Controverted Questions*, p. 415). The Professor then gives his reasons for arriving at this conclusion.

The Rev. Dr. Giles, in his *Christian Records*, speaking of the Sermon on the Mount, says: "There is good ground for believing that such a collective body of maxims was never, at any time, delivered from the lips of our Lord"; and Milman declares that scarcely any passage is more perplexing to the harmonist of the Gospels than this sermon, which, according to Matthew and Luke, appears to have been delivered at two different places.

Mr. Charles B. Cooper, a very able American writer, aptly observes: "If this discourse is so important, as Christians profess to believe—the sum of all the teachings of Jesus, and the sufficient source of all morality—it is curious that Mark and John knew nothing about it, and that Luke should dismiss it with such a short report. Luke, omitting the larger part of the matter, takes only one page to tell what occupies three pages in Matthew; and to find any parallel to much of Matthew we have to go to other chapters of Luke and to other occasions. In addition to which, they disagree as to whether it was given on a mountain or in a plain."

Taking a broad view of the teachings as ascribed to Christ, I should describe most of them as being the result of emotion rather than the outcome of matured reflection. They are based upon faith, not upon knowledge, trust in Providence being the cornerstone of his system, so far as his fragmentary utterances can be systematised. In my opinion, the idea of his being a political and social reformer rests upon an entirely mistaken view of the union of what are termed temporal and spiritual things. Examples of this may be seen in such injunctions as "Love one another" and "Love your neighbor as yourself." The first was clearly applicable to the followers of Christ, for he expressly states, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples" (John xiii. 35); and the second command applied only to the Jewish community, not to strangers who lived outside. These injunctions did not mean that those who heard them were to love all mankind. Christ himself divided those who were for him from those who were against him. To the first he said, "Come, ye blessed of my father"; to the other, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

It has always appeared to me to be remarkably strange that Christ should be regarded as the exemplar of universal love. Neither his own words, nor the conduct of his followers, justify such a belief. It is, of course, desirable that a social state of society should be based upon love and the universal brotherhood of man. This is the avowed foundation of the religion of the Positivists, their motto being, "Love our basis, order our method, and progress our end"; but no such commendable features are to be

found in the Gospel of Christ, or in the history of the Church. Jesus declared that his mission was only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew xv. 24). Moreover, the conditions of discipleship which he imposed would, if complied with, exclude the possibility of love among all men (Luke xiv. 26); as would also his avowed object of breaking the peace and harmony of the domestic circle (Matthew x. 34, 35). It may be said that such are the contingencies attending the belief and adoption of a new religion. Be it so; but that only shows the futility of the contention that Christ established universal brotherhood. It is absurd to argue that he did so, when we are told in the Gospels that his mission was to the Jews only (Matthew xv. 24); that he would have no fellowship with unbelievers (Matthew xv. 26); that he threatened to have his revenge upon those who denied him (Matthew x. 33); that he instructed his disciples to "go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not" (Matthew x. 5); and, finally, that he commanded those disciples, when they were about to start on a preaching expedition, that "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment than for that city" (Matthew x. 14, 15). Shaking the dust from the feet, be it remembered, was an Oriental custom of exhibiting hatred towards those against whom the act was performed. And surely the punishment that it is said was to follow the refusal of the disciples' administration was the very opposite of the manifestation of love. This accords with the non-loving announcement that "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thess. i. 7, 8, 9).

These references ought to be sufficient to convince any one that Jesus cannot be reasonably credited with a feeling of unqualified love for the whole of the human race. His conduct, and the general spirit of his teachings

towards those who differed from him, forbid such a supposition. His injunctions, if acted upon, would annul the influence of the ancient maxim of "doing unto others as you would they should do to you." Certainly he failed to set a personal example by complying with this rule, as his harsh language to those who did not accept his authority amply proves. It is reported that Jesus said (Matthew v. 22), "Whosoever shall say Thou fool shall be in danger of hell fire"; yet we find him exclaiming, "Ye fools, ye fools and blind" (Luke xi. 40; Matthew xxiii. 17). He advised others to "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you," while he himself addressed those who were not his friends as "hypocrites" (Matthew vii. 5); "ye serpents, ye generation of vipers" (Matthew xxiii. 33). We may here apply Christ's own words to himself: "I say unto you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matthew xii. 36, 37). In Luke (vi. 37) he counsels us to "forgive, and ye shall be forgiven"; but in Mark (iii. 29) it is stated, "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." The unfortunate point here is, that we are not told what constitutes blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

From these cases, and there are many more in the Gospels of like nature, it is clear that Jesus taught one thing and practised another—a course of conduct which his followers have not been slow to emulate. But such an inconsistent trait of character disqualifies those in whom it is found from being the best of social reformers. Example is higher than precept.

Whatever may be urged in favor of Christ's supposed "spiritual kingdom," his teachings have but little value in regulating the political and social affairs of daily life, using those terms in the modern and legitimate sense, inasmuch as he has given the world no practical information upon either the science of politics or of sociology. The affairs of this world had but little interest with Christ. With him pre-eminence was given to the soul over the body. We are not to fear him who can kill the body only, but rather fear him "who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"

(Matthew x. 28). Here we recognise the great defect in Jesus as a societarian reformer. He treats this world as if it were of secondary importance, and he furnishes no useful rules for its practical government. True he says, "Blessed are ye poor," and "Woe unto you that are rich"; but what does this amount to? These empty exclamations will not abolish pauperism, neither will they produce the organisation of honest industry, whereby human wants can be supplied and social comforts secured. Would it not have been better if Jesus had devised some plan whereby poverty should become extinct?

To talk, as Professor Graham does, about producing a better state of society by a "union of believers" is, in my opinion, folly. How is it to be done? Every member of "the union" would have to live on the alms of the wealthy members. It would, in fact, be a society of the destitute supported by voluntary contributions. Surely no sane Socialists ever proposed to divide mankind into two classes—*i.e.*, paupers and those who feed them. We know what the result of such a policy was in the case of the Church. As the Professor says, the Church obtained the funds of the rich in return for certain considerations which were supposed to affect them in this world and in the next; and out of such proceeds the clergy distributed bread to the poor and kept something better for themselves. Thus Europe for centuries was infested by fat, idle monks and an army of miserable beggars. A more detestable condition of society to men of honor and independent spirit never existed. Yet this "Christian plan" finds favor, as we have seen, in "the Abbey," and is really the necessary outcome of Christ's mendicant teachings. For did he not allege that the poor were blessed, and that "ye hath the poor always with you" (Matthew xxvi. 11)? If he contemplated that the period would arrive when "it should be impossible for men to be poor," why did he not give some practical instructions to hasten its advent? This would have been a grand contribution to social reform. But his overwhelming anxiety about another life was, with him, the "one thing needful," and to it every other consideration had to give way.

I am quite unable to understand how anyone can mistake the obvious meaning of the parable in which the rich man

appears in hell and the poor man in heaven (Luke xvi. 19-26). The only assigned reason is that the one was well-to-do in this life, while the other suffered privations. This is no justification for either of the men being where they are represented to have been. For poverty is no virtue, neither is it a crime to be rich. Men of wealth can be worthy characters, and poverty may be allied with much rascality. The wrong does not consist in possessing riches, but rather in the misuse of them ; and, therefore, to be poor does not seem the highest qualification for future bliss, and to be rich is not a sufficient cause for anyone being excluded from an abode of happiness. But this parable is another illustration of Christ's exaltation of poverty. He even dispatched his disciples on a mission of propaganda, without scrip, money, or purse, to beg their way through the world (Luke x. 7-10). Is this the highest model that can be given for a mission to the poor ? It is thought so little of to-day, even by professed Christians, that they never adopt the plan suggested by their "Master." They may preach "Blessed be ye poor," but they have no desire to be one of them. They read the warning, "Woe unto you that are rich ; for ye have received your consolation" (Luke vi. 24) ; but they appear to be exceedingly comfortable with their material consolation. "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," and they are consoled more with the riches of this world than with the chance of having a harp in the next. In the case of the rich young man (Luke xviii.) it is true Christ advised the giving up of private property ; but it is also true that the advice was not deemed practical, for the young man "went away sorrowful" (Matthew xix. 22). Supposing he had accepted the advice, he would then have swelled the ranks of the poor unemployed, and thereby have become the recipient rather than the benefactor, although it is recorded that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts xx. 35). The giving up all one's possessions would be as injurious to a community as the amassing of wealth by the few is pernicious.

What is required is a social arrangement whereby all members of the community shall have their fair share of the necessities and comforts of life ; and this arrangement Christ did not understand, or, if he did, he made no effort

to bring it into force, and consequently he lacked the elements of a true social reformer.

There is an incident recorded in Luke (xii.) which shows that Christ refused to say anything upon the subjects of property, civil rights, and law and government. "One of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" Here Jesus had an opportunity, as a social reformer, to give the world an important lesson upon the duty of one man to another; but he did not avail himself of it. He acted more like a modern lawyer would do, who, when asked by a stranger to give him advice, would reply: "I am not your appointed solicitor; if you want information, you must consult your own legal adviser."

The parable of "the rich man who set up greater barns," related in Luke (xii.), is another illustration of Christ's defective teachings in reference to the affairs of this life. The man in the parable proposed to enlarge his premises so that he might be able to put by increased stock of fruits and goods, and thus be in a position to take his "ease, eat, drink, and be merry." There does not appear to be any great crime in this, for he lacked room wherein to bestow his fruits, etc. (v. 17). Surely there could be no serious objection to making such careful provision for "a rainy day." Such conduct is frequently necessary to the advancement of personal comfort and general civilisation. Have not Christians in all ages, since their advent, done the same thing, when they have had the opportunity? Laying up treasures on earth, although forbidden by Christ, is often an effective precaution against starvation, and against being in old age the slave of charity. But for doing this very thing the man was told: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" (v. 20). Jesus then said, "Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat," etc. Here we have the prominent Christian requirement of making the duties of this world subservient to the demands of a future existence put forth by one who is claimed as being a model social reformer. If it is alleged that Christ meant that the man in the parable should have distributed his fruits and goods rather than

store them up, the reply is, the account does not say so. Why did not Christ, instead of making heaven the principal consideration, point out the evil influence of the monopoly of wealth upon human society ? The social problems cannot be solved by indulging in speculations as to another world, of which we have had no experience. The principle sought to be enforced in this parable is evidently that the soul is of more importance than the body, and that heaven is of greater value than earth. Thoughtlessness of the things of time is directly encouraged by reference to the ravens : "For they neither sow nor reap ; which neither have store-house nor barn ; and God feedeth them " (v. 24).

It is worthy of note that Jesus never once intimated throughout his career, either by direct statement or illustration, that this world was the noblest and most desirable dwelling place for man, and that it was the home of social felicity and mutual happiness. His heart and home were in his Father's house, whither he went to prepare a place for his followers, to whom he gave a promise that he would come and receive them unto himself (John xiv. 2, 3). So little did Christ understand the philosophy of secular reform that when he condemned covetousness (which was very laudable upon his part) it was because he thought it interfered with the preparation for inhabiting "mansions in the skies," rather than in consequence of its effects upon homes on earth. He entirely overlooked the agencies that promote human comfort. The means that have been employed to produce and to advance civilisation received from him no matured consideration. If every word attributed to him had been left unuttered, not one feature of modern progress would be missing to-day. Let anyone carefully read, with an unbiassed mind, the four Gospels, and then ask himself the questions : What philosophic truth did Jesus propound ? What scientific fact did he explain ? What social problem did he solve ? What political scheme did he unfold ? The New Testament does not inform us. On the contrary, while other men, with less pretensions than himself, were active in giving the world their thoughts upon these great questions, Jesus remained silent in reference to them. It is no answer to say that to deal with the subjects was not his mission. For, if he came simply to talk about another

world, at the sacrifice of the requirements of this, then my contention is made good that, whatever else he was, he certainly was no political and social reformer.

It appears to me that the gospel of Christ is a very poor one for any practical purposes, inasmuch as it never deals with the material comforts of human beings. It does not suggest any means by which the poor could obtain that power by which they could secure the amelioration of their sad condition. It is not here overlooked that Christ is credited with saying that those who sought the "Kingdom of God" should have food, drink, etc., added unto them (Luke xii.). But, unfortunately, experience teaches that such a promise cannot be relied upon, for it is too well known that many of those persons who occupied much of their time in seeking the kingdom of God remained destitute of the necessaries of life. It was during the prevalence of this superstitious belief, and of an unreasonable reliance upon Christ, that personal misery and intellectual sterility prevailed throughout the land. For many generations the indiscriminate followers of Jesus failed to give the world any new thought, or to establish any new political or social institution; and from the Church nothing of practical secular value emanated during the fifteen centuries of its uninterrupted reign. This, however, is not all that can be fairly urged upon this point. The followers of Christ not only failed to originate any social scheme for the good of general society themselves, but they did their utmost to crush those who did. It appears almost incredible that such persistent efforts were ever made to extinguish every new thought as those recorded of Christians, when they had the power to do as they pleased. New books were despised and destroyed, and new inventions were said to be the work of the Devil. True happiness cannot co-exist with physical slavery and mental serfdom, and yet, it must be repeated, Jesus did nothing to remove these evils. His apathy towards the institution of slavery is the more strange if we accept the authority of Grätz, that Christ was connected with the Essenes, and that, to some extent, he founded his system upon theirs. By that community slavery, we are told, was prohibited; yet we read that both bond and free were one in Christ Jesus. Is not this striking evidence that

Jesus had no intention to seek the removal of this inhuman blot from the history of our race ?

Those persons to-day who desire to establish a relationship between Socialism and Christianity dwell with much persistency upon Christ's views as to the division of property. But let us see what are the facts of the case. Jesus told those who were willing to leave their homes, families, and lands for his "sake and the Gospels" (Mark x.), that they should receive "an hundredfold" of each in this world, besides "eternal life in the world to come." Now, this is ridiculous in the extreme ; for what possible advantage could it be to any one to have his or her relatives multiplied a hundredfold ? Besides, where could Christ get either a hundred mothers to replace every one that had been forsaken, or a hundred acres of land to compensate for each one that had been given up ? And even supposing he could do this, what becomes of the theory of despising landed possessions ? Moreover, if the smaller number and quantity were a drawback, the larger must be more so. Further, there is but little self-denial involved in parting with ten acres of land to secure a thousand. It is really surprising that the Jews did not "catch on" in this matter. Probably they saw that it was all a sham, because Christ had no means of keeping his promise. Where were the houses, land, etc., to come from ? Evidently Christ had none, for he appears to have been entirely destitute of all worldly goods, having "not where to lay his head" (Matthew viii. 20). Would not such an augmentation of property be antagonistic to the principle Jesus taught on another occasion, when he said "lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth" (Matthew vi.) ? No marvel that his friends thought he was "beside himself" (Mark iii. 21), or that the Jews considered "he hath a devil, and is mad" (John x. 20), and that "neither did his brethren believe in him" (John vii. 5). If any man at the present time dealt with the question of property in the same way as Christ is here represented to have done, he would not be regarded as a social reformer, but rather as a man whose intellect was far from being brilliant, and whose ideas were exceedingly confused. Christ's reply to the high priest, who asked him the question, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the

Blessed?" (Mark xiv. 61), is, to my mind, clear evidence that he was neither the political nor the social Messiah that some persons allege him to have been. His reply was, "I am; and he shall see the son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Does not this accord with his statement, "I am not of the world," and "my kingdom is not of this world"? Should not this settle at once, as a fact, that the mission of Jesus was not to be the founder of an earthly government, or the promoter of a mundane social system?

As to the idea that Christ will come, as he said, "in the clouds," that relates to the future, and has no bearing upon the present inquiry, the results of which will not be affected by either the fulfilment or the failure of that prediction. The question is not what will be, but rather what Christ did to entitle him to be classified as a secular reformer. Professor Graham, as we have seen, admits that Christ did not inaugurate State Socialism, but that he only proposed a sort of friendly society among Christians themselves. In doing even this, however, he showed himself sadly defective in the knowledge necessary to a real reformer. There exists to-day in this country an old-established Christian sect, termed Quakers, who keep a common treasury for the purpose of aiding those of their numbers who are in need. But, be it observed, they fill their treasury by industry and the result of laboring "for the meat which perisheth," the very thing that Jesus forbade. The method of the Quakers is a very charitable one, for it prevents their poorer members from going to the workhouse, or from begging in the streets, as other Christians are so often forced to do. They are enabled, by this plan of industry and of "taking thought for the morrow," to preserve their dignity and self-respect, and to receive all the advantages of assistance without being branded as paupers, who have to forfeit many rights in consequence of their poverty. This scheme of mutual aid is not based upon Christ's advice to "forsake all," under the insane idea that they will be kept alive, upon the same principle that the ravens and the lilies of the field are; on the contrary, among the Quakers all who can both "toil and spin." Jesus, in his method, counselled no sort of thrift, nor made any provision for the time of need. There is no record, that I am aware of, that any society of

men ever lived upon help from heaven without labor, and due care being taken for the requirements of life. Certainly such a society does not exist in "Christian England."

The burden of Christ's preaching was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." What was meant by this kingdom it is rather difficult to decide, for it is variously described in the Gospels. It is certain, however, that, whether it signified the reign of peace and justice on earth, or the appearance of Jesus "in the clouds," neither event has taken place up to date, although Christ said that in his time the kingdom was "at hand." In Luke (xvii. 21) it is stated "the kingdom of God is within you"; but that does not quite harmonise with the description given of it in Matthew (xiii. 47-50), where it is alleged that the kingdom of heaven is "like unto a net that was cast into the sea," which, when full, had the good of its contents retained, and the bad cast away. "So shall it be at the end of the world," when the angels are to "sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Now, if this refers to a condition upon earth, it is not a very happy one. And in neither case is there any light thrown upon the rational conduct of men, either politically or socially. Besides, the repeated references made by Christ to the approaching end of all earthly institutions render the idea of his being a reformer of this world altogether meaningless. The termination of mundane affairs was to occur in the presence of those to whom Jesus was speaking (Matthew xvi. 28). Whatever other texts may be cited to the contrary, the meaning here is clear, that no opportunity was to be given, and no provisions made, to reform the political and social conditions of earth. Let any one read the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and try to harmonise the declarations there ascribed to Christ with the belief that his mission was to reform the world, and the impossibility of the task will soon be evident. True, in Matthew (xxv.) works of utility are required to secure a place at the "right hand" of God. But what does this involve? Uniformity of belief (Mark xvi. 16), and only the relief, not the cure, of poverty. No scheme was even hinted at by Christ whereby the great army of the poor and depraved should be impossible. He was inferior to the

French philosopher, who aimed at providing a condition of society wherein men should be neither depraved nor poor.

To put the matter concisely, what are the factors of political and social progress? Briefly, they are these: The cultivation of the intellect, the extension of physical and mental freedom, the recognition and the application of the principle of justice and liberty to all members of the community, regardless of their belief or non-belief in theology, the knowledge and application of science and art, the organisation of labor and the proper cultivation of the soil, the possession of political power, the understanding of the true value and use of wealth, and, finally, the persistent study of, and the constant struggling against, the numerous evils, wrongs, and injustice that now rob life of its comforts and real worth. These are the agencies that all men, who claim to be political and social reformers, should support and cultivate. Not one of these originated with Jesus, and throughout his career he never availed himself of these essentials of all progress. Thus, to designate him as the great social redeemer is entirely unjustifiable. His very mode of living was the opposite to that of a practical reformer. He was an ascetic, and avoided as much as possible the turmoil of public life, from which he might have learnt something of what was necessary to adjust the social relations. Prayer, not work, was his habit. In the day, and at night, would he retire to the solitude of the mountain, and there pray to his father (Luke vi. 12 and xxi. 37). So far did he believe in the efficacy of supplications to God that he frequently told his disciples that whatever they asked of his father he would grant the request (Matthew xviii. 19; xxi. 22; John xvi. 23). That this was a delusion is clear from the fact that he prayed himself for the unity of Christendom, that his followers might be one (John xvii. 21); yet from his time down to the present divisions have always existed among Christians. He distinctly promised that "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do" (John xiv. 13, 14). Relying upon this, the Church for centuries has been asking that unbelief should cease, and yet we find it more extensive to-day than it ever was. The lesson learnt from experience is, that all reforms are the result of active work, not the outcome of prayerful meditations.

With all these drawbacks in the character of Jesus, it is to me marvellous how he can be accepted as a model for us in the present age. But thousands of his devotees insist upon claiming him as their Ideal, although they cannot regulate their conduct by such a standard. Such persons overlook the fact that, if the better parts of an Ideal are marred by that which is erroneous and impracticable, it is comparatively useless as a guide in life. That Christ's alleged teachings are so marred the Gospels amply testify. His conduct, on several occasions, was such as his followers would not attempt to emulate to-day. Such, for instance, as his treatment of his parents (Luke ii. 43-49; John ii. 4); his cursing of the fig-tree (Matthew xxi. 18, 19); his driving the money changers from the temple with "a scourge of small cards" (John ii. 15); his possession of an ass and a colt, which evidently did not belong to him, and riding upon both of them into Jerusalem (Matthew xxi. 2-11); his expletives to the Pharisees (Luke xi. 37-44); his breaking up the peace of the domestic circle (Matthew x. 34-36).

Judged by the New Testament, Christ was certainly not "The Light of the World," for he revealed nothing of practical value, and he taught no virtues that were before unknown. No doubt in his life, supposing he ever lived, there were many commendable features; but he was far from being perfect. While he might have been well-meaning, he was in belief superstitious, in conduct inconsistent, in opinions contradictory, in teaching arbitrary, in knowledge deficient, in faith vacillating, and in pretensions great. He taught false notions of existence, had no knowledge of science; he misled his followers by claiming to be what he was not, and he deceived himself by his own credulity. He lacked experimental force, frequently living a life of isolation, and taking but slight interest in the affairs of this world. It is this lack of experimental force throughout the career of Christ that renders his notions of domestic duties so thoroughly imperfect. The happiness of a family, according to his teaching, was to be impaired before his doctrines could be accepted. So far as we know, he was never a husband or a father; and he did not aspire to be a statesman, a man of science, or a politician. Now, a person who lacks

experience in these phases of life is not in the best position to give practical and satisfactory lessons thereon. Even in the conditions of life he is said to have filled, this "Light of the World" failed to exhibit any high degree of excellence, discrimination, or manly courage. As a son, he lacked affection and consideration for the feelings of his parents. As a teacher, he was mystical and rude; and as a reasoner, he was defective and illogical. Lacking a true method of reasoning, possessing no uniformity of character, Christ exhibited a strange example—an example injudicious to exalt and dangerous to emulate. At times he was severe when he should have been gentle. When he might have reasoned he frequently rebuked. When he ought to have been firm and resolute he was vacillating. When he should have been happy he was sorrowful and desponding. After preaching faith as the one thing needful, he himself lacked it when he required it the most. Thus, on the cross, when a knowledge of a life of integrity, a sensibility of the fulfilment of a good mission, a conviction that he was dying for a good and righteous cause, and fulfilling the object of his life—when all these should have given him moral strength, we find him giving vent to utter despair. So overwhelmed was he with grief and anxiety of mind that he "began to be sorrowful and very heavy." "My soul," he exclaimed, "is sorrowful even unto death." At last, overcome with grief, he implores his father to rescue him from the death which was then awaiting him.

Christ is paraded as the one redeemer of the world, but his system lacks such essentials of all reform as worldly ambition, and reliance upon the human power of regeneration. If we lament the poverty and wretchedness we behold, we are told by Christians that "the poor shall never cease out of the land." If we seek to remove the sorrow and despair existing around us, we are reminded that they were "appointed curses to the sons of Adam." If we work to improve our condition, we are taught that we should remain "in that state of life in which it has pleased God to call us." When we endeavor to improve our minds and to cultivate our intellects, we are informed that "we are of ourselves unable to do any good thing." If we seek to promote the happiness of others, we are assured that "faith in Christ is of more importance than

labor for man." We to-day have but a vague idea of the extent of the influence such teachings once exercised over the minds of those who believed them. These teachings have permeated the minds of orthodox Christians, stifling their reason and perverting their judgment, till they cherish the delusion that the reasonings of philosophers, the eloquence of poets, and the struggles of patriots are all worse than useless unless purified by the "Spirit of Christ." It is such delusions which foster the erroneous and retarding belief that every thought which does not aspire to the throne of Christ, every action which is not sanctioned by him, and every motive which does not proceed from a love for him should be discouraged as antagonistic to our real progress in life.

It is contended by some that, although Christ did not give detailed remedies for existing evils, he taught "general principles" which would, if acted upon, prove a panacea for the wrongs of life. This was not so, for his "general principles" lacked the saving power that was desired. What were those "principles" as laid down in the Gospels? So far as they can be understood, they were as follows: Absolute trust in God; implicit belief in himself; reliance upon the prayer of supplication; disregard of the world; taking no anxious thought for the morrow; encouragement of poverty, and contempt of riches; obedience to the law of the Old Testament; neglect of home and families; non-resistance of evil; that persecution in this world and punishment in some other would follow the rejection of Christianity; and that sickness was caused by the possession of devils. These are among the leading "principles" taught by Christ; and, if they were acted upon, there would be an end of all progress, harmony, and self-reliance. But even if the "general principles" propounded by Jesus were good, that would not be enough to make him the greatest reformer. It is necessary, in addition to knowing what is to be done, to have the knowledge of *how* it is to be done. And this is just what Jesus has not taught us. Principles do not aid progress unless they can be applied; and, whatever value his teachings may have as matters of belief, they are incapable of application in the great cause of political and social advancement in the nineteenth century.

Judged from the Secular standpoint, the real redeemers of the world are those who study the great facts of nature, learning her secrets, and revealing her power and value to the human family. While Christ devoted himself to the mysteries of theology, such reformers as Copernicus, Galileo, Bruno, and subsequently Newton, Locke, Darwin, and a host of other servants of humanity, endeavored to the best of their ability to ascertain the truths of existence, and to vindicate the principle of freedom. Copernicus and his immediate successors redeemed the world from errors which for ages had been nursed by the Church ; Locke based his philosophy upon knowledge, not upon the faiths of theology ; Newton contended that the universe was regulated by natural law, not by supernatural power ; and Darwin exploded the Bible error of creation. These redeemers rescued mankind from the burden of ignorance and superstition that had so long prevented the recognition of truth and the advancement of knowledge. Shakespeare contributed more to the enlightenment of the human race than Christ was capable of doing ; Darwin far surpassed St. Paul in bringing to view the great forces of nature, and the Freethought heroes and martyrs aided the emancipation of intellect to a far higher degree than either the "Carpenter of Nazareth " or the whole of his followers. The power that has enabled these secular redeemers of the world to achieve their glorious results was found, not in perplexing theologies, but in the principles of Science and Liberty—the true saviors of men.
