

WHAT WAS CHRIST?

A REPLY

TO

JOHN STUART MILL.

BY

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WHAT WAS CHRIST?

THERE are many passages in John Stuart Mill's *Three Essays on Religion* which the apologists of Christianity very prudently ignore. Orthodoxy naturally shrinks from the description of a God who could make a Hell as a "dreadful idealisation of wickedness." Nor is it pleasant to read that "Not even on the most distorted and contracted theory of good which ever was framed by religious or philosophical fanaticism, can the government of nature be made to resemble the work of a being at once good and omnipotent."

But Christian lecturers are never tired of quoting the panegyric on their blessed Savior, which occurs in another part of the same volume. They never mention the fact that the Essay which contains this eulogium was not revised by the author for publication, while the other two essays were finally prepared for the press. It is enough for them that the passage is found in a volume of Mill's. Whether it harmonises with the rest of the volume, or whether the author might have considerably modified it in revision, are questions with which they have no concern. "Here is Mill's testimony to Christ," they cry, "and we fling it like a bombshell into the Freethought camp." We propose to pick up this bombshell, to dissect and analyse it, and to show that it is perfectly harmless.

Mill's panegyric on Christ, as Professor Newman says, "caused surprise."* Professor Bain, who was one of Mill's most intimate friends, and has written his biography,† uses the very same expression. The whole of the Essay on Theism "was a surprise to his friends," not for its attacks on orthodoxy, but for its concessions to "modern sentimental Theism." Professor Bain observes that these concessions have been made the most of, "and, as is usual in such cases, the inch has been stretched to an ell." Speaking with all the authority of his position, Professor Bain adds that the "fact remains that in everything

* "Christianity in its Cradle," p. 57.

† "John Stuart Mill: A Criticism; with Personal Recollections."

characteristic of the creed of Christendom, he was a thorough-going negationist. He admitted neither its truth nor its utility."

How, then, did Mill come to write those passages of his *Three Essays* which caused such surprise to his intimate friends? The answer is simple. "Who is the woman?" asked Talleyrand, when two friends wished him to settle a dispute. There was a woman in Mill's case. Mrs. Taylor, afterwards his wife, and the object of his adoring love, disturbed his judgment in life and perverted it in death. He buried her at Avignon, and resided near her grave until he could lie beside her in the eternal sleep. No doubt the long vigil at his wife's tomb shows the depth of his love, but it necessarily tended to make his brain the victim of his heart. There can be no worse offence against the laws of logic than to argue from our feelings; and when Mill began to talk about "indulging the hope" of immortality, he had set his feet, however hesitatingly, on the high road of sentimentalism and superstition. How different was his attitude in the vigor of manhood, when his intellect was unclouded by personal sorrow! In closing his splendid *Essay on The Utility of Religion*, he wrote:

"It seems to me not only possible, but probable, that in a higher, and, above all, a happier condition of human life, not annihilation, but immortality, may be the burdensome idea; and that human nature, though pleased with the present, and by no means impatient to quit it, would find comfort and not sadness in the thought that it is not chained through eternity to a conscious existence which it cannot be assured that it will always wish to preserve."

How great is the range of egoism, even with the best of us! Writing before his own great loss, Mill sees no argument for immortality in the yearning of bereaved hearts for reunion with the beloved dead; but when he himself craves "the touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still," he perceives room for hope. His own passion of grief lights a beacon in the darkness, which his sympathy with the grief of others had never kindled.

We can easily understand how Mill's profound love for his wife affected his intellect after her death, when we see how it deluded him while she lived. In his *Autobiography* he describes her as a beauty and a wit. Mr. Maccall says that she was not brilliant in conversation, and decidedly plain-looking; and the same objection appears to be hinted by Professor Bain. Carlyle refers to her several times in his *Reminiscences*, always as a light gossamery creature. It is notorious that the Grotes regarded

Mill's attachment to her as an infatuation. And certainly he did a great deal to justify their opinion. In the dedication of his *Essay on Liberty*, he refers to her "great thoughts and noble feelings," and her "all but unrivalled wisdom." This eulogium a little astonished those who had read her *Essay* in the *Westminster Review*, reprinted by Mill in his *Dissertations and Discussions*, which revealed no very wonderful ability, and assuredly did not place her beside Harriet Martineau or George Eliot. But in his *Autobiography* this panegyric was completely eclipsed. Mill informs the world in that volume that her mind "included Carlyle's and infinitely more," and that in comparison with her Shelley was but a child. Apparently seeing, however, that sceptics might inquire why a woman of such profound and original genius did not leave some memorable work, Mill confidently tells us that she was content to inspire other minds rather than express herself through the channels of literature. In other words, she played second fiddle in preference to first, which is exactly what men and women of original genius will never do. But *whom* did she inspire? We know of none but Mill, and on examining his works chronologically we find that all his greatest books were composed before he fell under her influence. Mr. Gladstone explains Mill's "ludicrous estimate of his wife's powers," by saying that she was a quick receptive woman, who gave him back the echo of his own thoughts, which he took for the independent oracles of truth.

Over the tomb of this idolised wife, whom his fancy clothed with fictitious or exaggerated attributes, Mill wrote his *Essay on Theism*. Miss Helen Taylor says it shows "the carefully-balanced results of the deliberations of a life-time." But she allows that—

"On the other hand, there had not been time for it to undergo the revision to which from time to time he subjected most of his writings before making them public. Not only, therefore, is the style less polished than of any other of his published works, but even the matter itself, at least in the exact shape it here assumes, has never undergone the repeated examination which it certainly would have passed through before he would himself have given it to the world."

If Mill had lived, he would perhaps have made many improvements and excisions in this unfortunate essay. As it stands it is singularly feeble in comparison with the two former *Essays*. He "hopes" for immortality, and "regrets to say" that the *Design Argument* is not inexpugnable, as though this were the language of a philosopher or a logician. After writing several pages on the "Marks of Design in Nature," he passingly notices the

Darwinian Theory and admits that, if established, it "would greatly attenuate the evidence" for Creation. Yet he drops this great hypothesis in the next paragraph, and talks about "the large balance of probability in favor of creation by intelligence" *in the present state of our knowledge*. What he meant was, *in the present state of our ignorance*. Mill neither understood nor felt the force of Darwinism. We shall find, in examining his panegyric on Christ, that he understood that subject just as little, and that, where his knowledge did apply, he flatly contradicted what he had written before.

Let us now ascertain what were Mill's qualifications for the task of estimating the teachings and personality of Christ. He had a subtle logical mind, strong though restricted sympathies, a singular power of mastering an opponent's case, and remarkable candor in stating it. But his intellect was of the purely speculative order. He possessed a "rich storage of principles, doctrines, generalities of every degree, over several wide departments of knowledge," as Professor Bain says; but he "had not much memory for detail of any kind," although "by express study and frequent reference he had amassed a store of facts bearing on political or sociological doctrines." In short, "he had an intellect for the abstract and the logical out of all proportion to his hold of the concrete and the poetical." He was cut out for a metaphysician, a political speculator and a sociologist. But he never could have become an historian or a man of letters. He had little sense of style, no faculty of literary criticism, a dislike of picturesque expression, a scanty knowledge of human nature, and an extremely feeble imagination. He was a great philosopher, but perhaps less an artist than any other thinker of the same eminence that ever lived.

Now the faculties required in dealing with the origin of Christianity, including the character of its founder, are obviously those of the literary critic and the historian, in which Mill was deficient. He was, therefore, not equipped by nature for the task.

Had he even the necessary knowledge? Certainly not. There is not the slightest evidence that he had studied the relation of Christianity to previous systems, the growth of its literature, the formation of its canon, and the development of its ethics and its dogmas. He probably knew next to nothing of the oriental religions, and was only acquainted with the name of Buddhism. Nay, if we may trust Professor Bain (his friend, his biographer, and his eulogist), he knew very little of Chris-

tianity itself. He "scarcely ever read a theological book," and he only knew "the main positions of theology from our general literature." Just when Mill's *Three Essays on Religion* appeared, Strauss's *Old Faith and the New* was published in England, and Professor Bain justly remarks that "Anyone reading it would, I think, be struck with its immense superiority to Mill's work, in all but the logic and metaphysics. Strauss speaks like a man thoroughly at home with his subject." Mill does indeed say, in his *Autobiography*, that his father made him, at a very early age, "a reader of ecclesiastical history"; but he does not tell us that he continued so in his after life, and even if he did, ecclesiastical history begins just where the problem of the origin of Christianity ends.

Another thing must be said. Professor Bain states, and we can well believe him, that Mill was "not even well read in the sceptics that preceded him." He was really ignorant on both sides of the controversy. His idea of Christ was formed from a selection of the best things in the New Testament. A most uncritical process, and in fact an impossible one; for the New Testament is not history, but an arbitrary selection from a mass of early Christian tracts, of uncertain authorship, different dates, and various value. The literature on this subject, even from the pens of eminent writers, is vast enough to show its immense complication. Unless it is read in a *child-like* spirit, which in grown men and women is *childish*, the New Testament needs to be explained; and when the process has fairly begun, you find all the familiar features shifting like the pieces in a kaleidoscope, until at last they reassume an organic, but a different, form and color. Twenty Christs may be elicited from the New Testament as it stands. Mill deduced one, but the nineteen others are just as valid.

Strictly speaking, our task is completed. It would logically suffice to say that Mill's panegyric on Christ is a mere piece of fancy. Like other men of genius, he had his special aptitudes and special knowledge, and his authority only extends as far as they carry him. Mr. Swinburne's opinion of Newton is of no particular importance, and Newton's famous ineptitude about *Paradise Lost* in no way affects our estimate of Milton.

Let us go further, however, and examine Mill's panegyric on Christ in detail. In justice to him, as well as to the subject, it should be quoted in full:

"Above all, the most valuable part of the effect on the character which Christianity has produced by holding up in a Divine Person a

standard of excellence and a model for imitation, is available even to the absolute unbeliever and can never more be lost to humanity. For it is Christ, rather than God, whom Christianity has held up to believers as the pattern of perfection for humanity. It is the God incarnate, more than the God of the Jews or of Nature, who being idealised, has taken so great and salutary a hold on the modern mind. And whatever else may be taken away from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left; a unique figure, not more unlike all his precursors than all his followers, even those who had the direct benefit of his personal teaching. It is of no use to say that Christ as exhibited in the Gospels is not historical and that we know not how much of what is admirable has been superadded by the tradition of his followers. The tradition of followers suffices to insert any number of marvels, and may have inserted all the miracles which he is reputed to have wrought. But who among his disciples or among their proselytes was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee; as certainly not St. Paul, whose character and idiosyncracies were of a totally different sort; still less the early Christian writers in whom nothing is more evident than that the good which was in them was all derived, as they always professed that it was derived, from a higher source. What *could* be added and interpolated by a disciple we may see in the mystical parts of the Gospel of St. John, matter imported from Philo and the Alexandrian Platonists and put into the mouth of the Savior in long speeches about himself such as the other Gospels contain not the slightest vestige of, though pretended to have been delivered on occasions of the deepest interest and when his principal followers were all present; most prominently at the last supper. The East was full of men who could have stolen any quantity of this poor stuff, as the multitudinous Oriental sects of Gnostics afterwards did. But about the life and sayings of Jesus there is a stamp of personal originality combined with profundity of insight, which if we abandon the idle expectation of finding scientific precision where something very different was aimed at, must place the Prophet of Nazareth, even in the estimation of those who have no belief in his inspiration, in the very first rank of the men of sublime genius of whom our species can boast. When this pre-eminent genius is combined with the qualities of probably the greatest moral reformer, and martyr to that mission, who ever existed upon earth, religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching on this man as the ideal representative and guide of humanity; nor even now, would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavor so to live that Christ would approve our life."

Our first complaint is that the whole passage is too vague and rhetorical. What is the meaning of "the absolute unbeliever" in the first sentence? If it means a person who rejects *all* the pretensions of Christ, the sentence is absurd. If it means a person who rejects his divinity, it is practically untrue; for, as a matter of fact, those who have thought themselves out of Christianity (which Mill did not, as he was never in it) very seldom do take Christ as "a standard of excellence and a model for

imitation," much less as "the pattern of perfection for humanity." When the supernatural glamor is dispelled, we see that Christ is no example whatever. He is simply a preacher, and his personal conduct fails to illustrate a single public or private virtue, or assist us in any of our practical difficulties as husbands, fathers, sons, or citizens. Mill has himself shown that even Christians do not attempt to imitate their Savior; and we are puzzled to understand how he could speak of Christ's having "taken so *great* and salutary hold on the modern mind" after telling us, in his *Essay on Liberty*, that he has done nothing of the kind. He there says:

"By Christianity, I here mean what is accounted such by all churches and sects, the maxims and precepts contained in the New Testament. These are considered sacred, and accepted as laws by all professing Christians. Yet it is scarcely too much to say that not one Christian in a thousand guides or tests his individual conduct by reference to those laws. . . . Whenever conduct is concerned, they look round for Mr. A and B to direct them how far to go in obeying Christ."

Had Mill forgotten this passage when he wrote the *Essay on Theism*, or had Christendom changed in the interval? Scarcely the latter. John Bright has justly said that the lower classes in England care as little for the dogmas of Christianity as the upper classes care about its practice.

Until Christians follow their Savior's teachings, it is idle to expect unbelievers to do so. Yet it is perhaps as well they do not, for there are many things recorded in the Gospels which are far from redounding to his credit. It is a great pity that Mill, before eulogising Christ, could not read the chapter on "Jesus of Nazareth" in Professor Newman's last work. Why did Jesus consort with Publicans (or Roman tax-gatherers), the very sight of whom was hateful to every patriotic Jew? Why did he herd with Sinners, who so far despised ceremony as to dip in the dish with dirty fingers? Why did he avoid all who were able to criticise him? Why did he exclaim, "Ye hypocrites, why put ye me to proof?" when the Jews sought to test his claims, and to act on his own advice to "Beware of false prophets"? Why did he rudely repel educated inquirers, and then solemnly thank God that "he had hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes"? Why did he denounce inhabitants of cities he could not convince, and prophesy that they would fare worse in the Day of Judgment than the filthy inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah? Why did he assail his religious rivals with invectives which, as Professor Newman

says, "outdo Tacitus and Suetonius in malignity, and seem to convict themselves of falsehood and bitter slander?" Why, in short, did he so constantly display the vanity and passion of a spoiled child? Surely these are not characteristics we should emulate, but glaring blots in a "pattern of perfection." When the arrogance of Christ is countenanced by a writer like Mill, these defects must be insisted on. Professor Newman rightly says that

"If honor were claimed for Jesus as for Socrates, for Seneca, for Hillel, for Epictetus, we might apologise for his weak points as either incident to his era and country or to human nature itself—weakness to be forgiven and forgotten. But the unremitting assumption of super-human wisdom, not only made for him by the moderns, but breathing through every utterance attributed to him, changes the whole scene, and ought to change our treatment of it. Unless his prodigious claim of divine superiority is made good in fact, it betrays an arrogance difficult to excuse, eminently mischievous and eminently ignominious."

But this prodigious claim cannot be made good. As Professor Newman says: "It is hard to point to anything in the teaching of Jesus at once *new* to Hebrew and Greek sages, and likewise in general estimate *true*." The same view was expressed by Buckle, with more vigor if less urbanity. "Whoever," he said, "asserts that Christianity revealed to the world truths with which it was previously unacquainted, is guilty either of gross ignorance or of wilful fraud."

Mill had himself, in the *Essay on Liberty*, shown the evil of taking Christ, or any other man, as "the ideal representative and guide of humanity." He there charged Christianity with possessing a negative rather than a positive ideal; abstinence from evil rather than energetic pursuit of good constituting its essence, in which "thou shalt not" unduly predominated over "thou shalt." He accused it of making an idol of asceticism, of holding out "the hope of heaven and the threat of hell as the appointed and appropriate motives to a virtuous life," and of thus "giving to human morality an essentially selfish character." And he added that—

"What little recognition the idea of obligation to the public obtains in modern morality, is derived from Greek and Roman sources, not from Christian; as, even in the morality of private life, whatever exists of magnanimity, high-mindedness, personal dignity, even the sense of honor, is derived from the purely human, not the religious, part of our education, and never could have grown out of a standard of ethics in which the only worth, professedly recognised, is that of obedience."

Mill does indeed throw a sop to orthodoxy by allowing that Christ and Christianity are different things; but he is obliged

to add that the Founder of Christianity failed to provide for "many essential elements of the highest morality." He maintains that "other ethics than *any* which can be evolved from exclusively Christian sources must exist side by side with Christian ethics to produce the moral regeneration of mankind." And he deprecates the policy of "forming the mind and feelings on an exclusively religious type." Surely these arguments are quite inconsistent with Mill's later notion of taking Christ as our ideal, and living so that he would approve our life.

Besides, as Professor Bain points out, the morality of Christ belongs to this exclusively religious type. Its sanctions are all religious, and if religion is dispensed with they "must lose their suitability to human life." Professor Bain very justly observes that "the best guidance, under such altered circumstances, would be that furnished by the wisest of purely secular teachers."

That Christ was "probably the greatest moral reformer" that ever lived is a statement easy to make and difficult to prove. When Mill, in the *Essay on Liberty*, twits the Christians with professing doctrines they never practise, he furnishes a catalogue of the duties they neglect.

"All Christians believe that the blessed are the poor and humble, and those who are ill-used by the world; that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven; that they should judge not lest they should be judged; that they should swear not at all; that they should love their neighbors as themselves; that if one take their cloak, they should give him their coat also; that they should take no thought for the morrow; that if they would be perfect they should sell all they have and give it to the poor."

Surely Mill was aware that all these absurd and impracticable maxims were taught by Christ. How, then, except on the theory we have advanced, could he call him the greatest moral reformer in history?

The "rational criticism" by means of which Mill obtains the "unique figure" of Christ is a purely arbitrary process. George Eliot, who knew the subject far better, said in one of her letters that the materials for any biography of Jesus do not exist. The Unitarians have tried Mill's process with small success; and, as Professor Bain maliciously observes, "It would seem in this, as in other parts of religion, that what the rationalist disapproves of most the multitude likes best." Professor Bain's remarks on Mill's construction of his "unique figure" from the Gospels are so pertinent and happy that we venture to give them in full:

"We are, of course, at liberty to dissent from the prevailing view, which makes Christ a divine person. But to reduce a Deity to the human level, to rank him simply as a great man, and to hold ideal intercourse with him in that capacity is, to say the least of it, an incongruity. Historians and moralists have been accustomed to treat with condemnation those monarchs that, after being dethroned, have accepted in full the position of subjects. Either to die, or else to withdraw into dignified isolation, has been accounted the only fitting termination to the loss of royal power. So, a Deity dethroned should retire altogether from playing a part in human affairs, and remain simply as an historic name."

Mill finds in Christ "sublime genius" and "profundity of insight." Surely it did not require any very sublime genius to teach those peculiar doctrines which Mill catalogued for backsliding Christians, nor any very great profundity of insight to see that none but paupers and lunatics could ever practise them. Many of the best sayings ascribed to Jesus were the common possession of the East before his birth; but many of the worst seem more his own. "Leave all and follow me" is a vain and foolish command. "Give to everyone that asketh" is an excellent rule for pauperising society. "That industry is a human duty," says Professor Newman, "cannot be gathered from his doctrine: how could it, when he kept twelve religious mendicants around him?" "Resist not evil" is a premium on tyranny. "Blessed be ye poor" and "Woe unto you rich" are the exclamations of a vulgar demagogue, a cunning agent of privilege, or an irresponsible maniac. "By shovelling away wealth," says Professor Newman, "we are to buy treasures in heaven. Unless our narrators belie him, Jesus never warns hearers that to give without a heart of charity does *not* prepare a soul for heaven nor 'earn salvation'; and that selfish pre-speculation turns virtue into despicable marketing. To forgive that we may be forgiven, to avoid judging lest we be judged, to do good that we may get extrinsic reward, to affect humility that we may be promoted, to lose life that we may gain it with advantage, are precepts not needing a lofty prophet." - It is also from the words of Christ alone, according to the New Testament, that the doctrine of Eternal Punishment can be established; and he is responsible for the intellectual crime of identifying Credulity with Faith, which has been a fatal rottenness at the very core of Christianity.

As for the "personal originality" of Mill's "unique figure," he might be safely challenged to demonstrate it from the Gospels. We shall have something more to say about the originality of Christ's teaching presently; we confine our-

selves now to his personal character. Take away from the Gospel story the pathetic legend of Calvary, which throws around him a glamor of suffering, and what is there in his whole life of a positive heroic quality? He is a tame, effeminate, shrinking figure, beside hundreds of men who have not been made the object of a superstitious cultus. His brief, ineffective career, so soon closed by his own madness or ambition, will not bear a moment's comparison with the long and glorious life of Buddha. It pales into insignificance before the mighty genius of Muhammed. Doctrine apart, the Nazarene is to the Meccan as a pallid moon to a fiery sun. With the single exception of Cromwell, who was a more original character than twenty Christs rolled into one, where shall we find Muhammed's equal in history? As Eliot Warburton well said, he stands almost alone in "the sustained and almost superhuman energy with which he carried out his views, in defiance, as it would seem, of God and man." Christ quails in his Gethsemane. Muhammed struggles through his seven years' ordeal of obloquy and danger like a resolute swimmer, who scorns to turn back, and will reach the other shore or die. When his followers faint under the burning desert sun, he tells them that "Hell is hotter," and silences their murmurs. Christ cries in an agony of despair, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" When Muhammed's assassination is resolved on at Mecca, each of the tribes devoting a sword to drink his blood, and Abubekar, the companion of his flight, says "We are but two," the indomitable prophet answers "We are three, for God is with us." Christ implores "O my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." When Muhammed is threatened by the Koreishites, so that his most devoted followers remonstrate against his projects, he makes the sublime answer, "If they should place the sun on my right hand, and the moon on my left, they should not divert me from my course." Within a century after the Hegira, the empire of Islam had spread from Arabia eastward to Delhi and westward to Granada. Oh, it is said, Muhammed used the sword. True, but not before it was drawn against him. The man who rode to Jerusalem, and called himself King of the Jews, would have used the sword too had he dared. "The sword indeed," snorts Carlyle at this rubbish, "but where will you get your sword? Every new opinion, at its starting, is precisely in a *minority of one*. In one man's head alone there it dwells as yet. That *he* take a sword and try to propagate with that will do little for him. You

must first get your sword. On the whole, a thing will propagate itself as it can. We do not find, of the Christian religion either, that it always disdained the sword, when once it had got one." True, thou sarcastic old sage of Chelsea, and the sting is in the tail. From Constantine downwards, Christianity has not been imposed on mankind without, as Sir James Stephen remarks, exhausting all the terrors of this life as well as the next.

Mill tells us that Christ was a "martyr" to his "mission" as a "moral reformer." We should like to know how he discovered the fact. Certainly not from the Gospels. It was not the Sermon on the Mount, but his vagaries at Jerusalem, that led to the crucifixion. Christ deliberately chose *twelve* disciples, the legendary number of the tribes of Israel, and told them that when he came into his kingdom they should sit on twelve thrones as judges. Professor Newman answers those who call this language figurative with the just remark that "we should call a teacher mad who used such words to simple men, and did not expect them to understand him literally." When the disciples ask him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom unto Israel?" he does not rebuke them (although it is after his resurrection), but simply says that the time is a secret. His triumphal entry into Jerusalem can only be considered as a declaration of sovereignty, and his countenancing the shout of *Hosanna!* (the war cry of previous insurrections, and an appeal to Jehovah against the foe) could only be construed as rebellion against Rome. His conduct inside Jerusalem was that of a man intoxicated with vanity and ambition, without judgment, policy, or purpose. The very inscription on the cross shows that he was believed to aim at earthly royalty. Pontius Pilate tried to save Jesus, acting wisely and humanely as the representative of an empire that was always tolerant in matters of religion. He would not receive a charge of blasphemy, but he could not overlook a charge of sedition. Yet he still gave Jesus an opportunity of escaping. "Come now," he seems to say, "your enemies want your blood. Your blasphemy is no business of mine, and I shall not decide a squabble between your rabid sects. But I must try you if they accuse you of sedition. You are young, and cannot wish to die. Plead 'not guilty.' Deny the charge. Say you are not the King of the Jews and do not contemplate rebellion. One word, and I save you from death. You shall go free though all the rabbis in Jerusalem howled like mad dogs. Rome shall stand between bigotry and blood." But

Jesus actually admits the indictment, and afterwards remains contumaciously silent. Pilate had no alternative ; he sentenced Jesus to execution ; but amid all the absurd fictions of the narrative, the fact shines out clearly that he did so with the utmost reluctance. To call the death of Christ, in these circumstances, a martyrdom, is to degrade the name. He died for no principle. The truth would have saved him, and he would not utter it. Either he was in a stupor of despair, or so crazed with the Messianic delusion that he still trusted to the legion of angels for his rescue. In any case it was an act of insanity. He courted his doom. It was not a martyrdom but a suicide.

We may also observe that, if a cultus had not been formed around it, and men's imaginations suborned in its favor from the cradle, the "martyrdom" of Christ would be obviously less severe than that of many persecuted reformers. Giordano Bruno's Gethsemane was an Inquisition dungeon, where he languished in solitude for seven years, and was tortured no one knows how often. What was Christ's few hours' agony of weakness before death compared with this? Bruno died by fire, the most cruel form of murder, whilst Christ suffered the milder doom of crucifixion. Christ was watched by weeping women, whose sympathy must have alleviated his pain ; and it was not until the hand of death touched his very heart that he despaired of assistance from heaven. Bruno stood alone against the world, without any sources of courage but his own quenchless heroism. Christ quailed before the inevitable. Bruno met it with a serene smile, for he had that within him which only death could extinguish—a daring fiery spirit, that nothing could quell, that outsoared the malice of men, and outshone the flames of the stake.

Mill's remarks on the originality of Christ's teaching betray his utter ignorance of the subject. It is of no use, he says, to assert that the Christ of the Gospels is not historical. Begging his pardon, that is the most important factor in the problem. If the Gospels are what we allege (and no scholar would dispute it), George Eliot is right in saying that the materials for a biography of Jesus do not exist, and Mill's "rational criticism" is a purely fantastic process. But the reason he assigns for his position is still more absurd. Who, he asks, could have invented the sayings ascribed to Jesus? Certainly, he says, not St. Paul : a sentence which alone stamps him as an incompetent critic. No man who understood the subject would ever have thought of anticipating such a preposterous objection. "Cer-

tainly not the fishermen of Galilee," is equally futile, for no student of the origin of Christianity supposes that the Gospels were written by the first disciples. They are of much later date. But except for that fact, why might not the "fishermen of Galilee" have been able to invent the *logia* of the Gospels as well as Jesus? He was only a carpenter, and there is no reason in the nature of things why fishermen should not equal carpenters as prophets, preachers, and moralists. Mill is altogether on the wrong scent. There was no need for Christ or his disciples to invent the sayings ascribed to him. As we have already remarked, they were the common possession of the East before his birth. The Lord's Prayer is merely a *cento* from the Talmud, and, as Emanuel Deutsch showed, every catchword of Christ's was a household word of Talmudic Judaism before he began his ministry. There is not a single maxim, however good or bad, however sensible or silly, in the whole of Christ's discourses that cannot be found in the writings of Pagan moralists and poets or Jewish doctors who flourished before him; and his best sayings, if they may be called his, were all anticipated by Buddha several centuries before he was born. It is also well known that the Golden Rule, as it is called, was taught by Confucius long before the time of Christ, without any of the absurdities with which the Nazarene surrounded it. "Love your enemies," says Christ, as though it were wise or possible to do so. Confucius corrected this exaggeration. "No," he said, "if I love my enemies, what shall I give to my friends? To my friends I give my love, and to my enemies—justice!"

We think we have said enough to show that Mill's panegyric on Christ is utterly valueless. Mr. Matthew Arnold is far more subtle and dexterous in his eulogy; but he knows the subject as well as Mill knew it badly. If the apologists of Christianity are prudent, they will cease to make use of Mill's tribute to their Blessed Savior, or at least employ it only before people who are in that blissful ignorance which fancies it folly to be wise.
