

**THE  
HISTORIC  
CHRIST**

**BY  
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## FOREWORD.

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THE following pages bring to bear convincingly upon the reader the force of the questions asked by Christ concerning himself, "Who do men say that I am?" and "Who say ye that I am?" not only as applying to the times when our Lord was among men, but as of importance for everyone to-day.

Appeal is made to the Four Gospels, in their presentation of Christ, not as the result of a set attempt to describe His Person, or prove that He existed, but through the harmonious records of historic facts concerning Him.

We are shown how the questions referred to were answered by His contemporaries and how they have been answered since, and the answers are examined from the standpoint of His detractors and His confessors.

Finally, the claims of Christ Himself are presented as testifying to the objects of His coming into the world and as pressing themselves imperatively upon every heart. The title, "The Historic Christ," serves to indicate that period in which He was on the earth. It is at once clear to the reader that the Historic Christ is the Living Christ, He who testified to His beloved Apostle, "I am the first and the last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore" (Rev. 1. 17, 18).

W.E.V.

# THE HISTORIC CHRIST.

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## The Question.

THE life of the Lord Jesus as recorded in the Four Gospels is divided into two parts of unequal length, one of about thirty years, spent apparently in the quiet of Nazareth fulfilling the ordinary duties of man, "the daily round, the common task," the other perhaps of a little more than three years, during which He went about the cities and villages of Palestine preaching and teaching, and doing good to all with whom He came into contact.

This latter period had run a considerable part of its brief course when on His own initiative He addressed to a few of His more intimate friends the somewhat startling questions, "Who do men say that I am?" and "Who say ye that I am?" (Mark 8. 27-29). Had He been merely what He seemed, Jesus, the Son of Joseph and Mary of Nazareth, He could hardly have asked such questions unless His mind had become unhinged, as indeed His hostile critics and His own perplexed family averred was the case (Mark 3. 21,

John 10. 20). And had not the men to whom He spoke occasion for suspecting that a secret lay behind these questions, they could not have heard Him without evincing some surprise or mystification. His antecedents and His circumstances were at least as well known to them as to those who on other occasions said among themselves, "Is not this the carpenter? the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brethren, and His sisters, are they not all with us?" (Matt. 13. 55, 56, etc.). Yet His disciples were neither puzzled nor offended; on the contrary, one of them responded with the astounding words, "Thou art the Son of the Living God" (Matt. 16. 16).

Such, in meagre outline, were the circumstances under which these strange yet simple questions were asked. Not, "What do you think of My teaching, My words, My line of things generally?" but, "Who do you say that I am?" His intention, plainly, was not so much to add to the sum of human knowledge, as to present Himself as the proper object of faith, as when He said, "Come unto Me, . . . and I will give you rest," and, "Ye will not come unto Me, that ye may have life" (Matt. 11. 28, John 5. 40). And from that hour this question became of vital importance to all who hear of Him. It cannot be evaded; in a thousand forms it presses itself insistently upon men, demanding an answer.

Sometimes the appeal is made to the intellect, as when literary problems present themselves, such as those raised by the higher criticism concerning the origin and composition of the Old Testament ; or scientific problems, such as those raised by geology and biology concerning the age of the earth and the origin and development of life upon it. Sometimes the appeal is made to the heart, as when men stand face to face with great suffering or with great wrong, and marvel that a God, beneficent and almighty, should not put forth His power to relieve the suffering, to rescue the innocent, and to confound the guilty and the oppressor. The connection between Jesus of Nazareth and the circumstances and experiences of individual men and women two thousand years remote from Him in time may not be immediately apparent ; none the less is it true that the ultimate solution of every perplexity of mind and heart is found in Him Who asked, and still asks, the question, "Who do you say that I am?" He claims nothing less than to be the touchstone of character and of destiny ; that for men to be ignorant of Him is death, to know Him is to live.

### The Four Gospels.

The material necessary to enable men to reply to this question is strictly limited in extent, and

happily, is now readily accessible in every country of which the language has been reduced to writing. It is contained in four little books, mere pamphlets in size, known as "The Four Gospels." Originally written in Greek they have been translated repeatedly into our own tongue, and so much attention has been given to them, hostile as well as friendly, that we need not hesitate to accept them in their English dress as reliable representations of what was originally written.

Some years since, in the course of conversation in a railway carriage, a fellow-traveller said of these Gospels that they were Sixteenth Century forgeries. He was asked how the presence in the British Museum of a MS. copy of these very Gospels said to have been made in the Fifth Century was to be accounted for. "Then," he replied, "they must have been forged sixteen centuries ago." Inquiry, as was to be expected, elicited the reluctant confession that the speaker had never taken the trouble to read the books he so glibly condemned.\* Now every one is aware that these four pamphlets have exercised an unparalleled influence in the world; evidently, then, they have a strong claim upon our atten-

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\* Visitors to the British Museum should inquire for the Alexandrine MS. of the Bible. It is kept in a room on the ground floor, opening off the entrance hall. See Miss Habershon's "The Bible and the British Museum," pp. 105-6.

tion, and the first step of the candid inquirer will be to make himself acquainted with their contents. That done, he can fairly face the question whether they are forgeries of any century, early or late. But the first thing, let me repeat, is to read the Gospels, not merely to read books about them, for or against, but to read the Gospels themselves.

The question of the authenticity of the Gospels cannot be adequately treated here. One or two suggestions may, however, be made. They are biographies, giving brief and evidently much condensed accounts of the experiences and of the teaching of One Man. The standpoint of each writer is different, consequently the narratives do not exactly coincide one with the other. Indeed, it is sometimes charged against the Gospels that there are certain discrepancies in them, that the statements in one are irreconcilable with those in another. Now this very objection establishes their independence one of another, for had the writers been in collusion, designing to foist a fictitious story upon credulous people, they would have taken care to make each account at least superficially consistent with the rest. Unless, indeed, they bungled ; but then how could bunglers produce work that has commanded attention and provoked admiration through centuries, and never more than to-day? Moreover, the apparent

discrepancies are of such a character that while as they stand they may seem irreconcilable, a little further information would probably solve the difficulties.\*

On the other hand, though the Gospels differ in point of view, in literary method and style, and to a large extent in material used, yet the impression left upon the mind of the reader is neither blurred nor confused in consequence; the character presented is one. This is the more remarkable since the writers neither attempt to describe the Person nor to analyse His character. They simply put us in a position to see His actions and to hear His words, that we may get to know Him for ourselves.

Two pictures taken from very slightly differing points of view coalesce when put together under proper lenses, with a result immeasurably more vivid than that given by either picture looked at alone. Nor, as we look, are we conscious that the picture is a compound. The Four Gospels

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\* One example may be given here. The statement of Luke 22. 27, "I am in the midst of you as He that serveth," seems quite inconsistent not only with the account of Matthew and Mark but also with that of Luke himself. According to all three He sat among them a revered Master. But for the Fourth Gospel this word, reported only by Luke, would have been pointed to as proof of the untrustworthy character of one, if not of all three, of the Evangelists. John, by supplying an account of the feet washing, vindicates the historicity of the Third Gospel. It may be safely concluded that additional information would in other cases have an equally illuminating effect.



are, so to say, the constituent pictures in a double stereoscopic view. They coalesce so perfectly, each is so completely in harmony with the rest, that we see but one figure, and that the more clearly and the more vividly because the accounts are four.

### **A Three-fold Cord.**

Concerning the central Figure of these narratives—whom we do not hesitate to call the Lord Jesus—three things are stated, each of which is without parallel in the history of the human race. He was born of a virgin. After His crucifixion He was raised from the dead to die no more. Predicated of an ordinary man these things would be quite incredible. The third thing, which links them together and lifts them into the region of credibility, is that He lived a sinless life. Now sinlessness is a moral miracle no more readily accounted for than miracles in the physical sphere. Were every one of the latter eliminated from the Gospel records, this most marvellous of all miracles remains, the sinlessness of Christ. The third fact explains the other two, making a three-fold cord not easily broken. Nor can the statement that He was sinless be denied on the ground that it rests merely on the assertions of the Evangelists. In fact, no one of them states categorically that the Lord Jesus was sinless. Such a statement might

easily be made ; they do that which is infinitely more difficult of accomplishment, they present a perfectly natural and yet evidently flawless character. They do not say that He was patient, or kind, or good, or that He exhibited any virtue whatever. They do not pause to praise Him, or to call particular attention to anything implied in His actions, ways, or words. They do not tell you what you ought to see and hear, they simply relate what they saw and what they heard ; for the rest their readers must hear and see for themselves.

### The Sinlessness of Christ.

Moreover, the sinlessness of the Lord Jesus was not mere mechanical abstention from wrongdoing, the correctness of an automaton. He was not coldly faultless, He was sympathetically human. His was not mere conventional goodness, such as is to be seen among men. The best men we have known learned from their failures ; striving against sin they grew in grace as, in the ever increasingly realised presence of God, His holiness became better known and the conscience became more delicately sensitive to evil. Of all this there is no hint in the Gospel accounts of the experiences of Christ. No one ever lived in the realised presence of God as He did, yet He never found, as the maturest among His followers find, that when He would have

done good, evil was present with Him (Rom. 7. 21). On the contrary, the testimony of His conscience is that, "The Prince of the world cometh : and he hath nothing in Me" (John 14. 30). He was tested in all points as we are tested, but He knew no such conflict as the holiest among men know, for He was "without sin" (Heb. 4. 15). He never regretted word or deed, nor ever sought forgiveness. He knew no repentance, for He knew no sin. Good men rise "on stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things ;" He was as holy at the outset as at the close of His career. Yet He neither denied nor ignored the existence of sin or its gravity as a factor in human life. On the contrary, He alone among religious teachers made sin real to men. It was sin, He said, that kept men from coming to and trusting Him (John 16. 9). "Depart from me ; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" expresses the characteristic effect of contact with Him (Luke 5. 8). He claimed to forgive sins, but without producing any feeling of resentment, or indeed of anything but gratitude, in the hearts of these to whom the pardoning words were spoken. And yet always His demeanour attested that He Himself had no conscience of sins.

It would be folly to declare that one who had lived the life of men in the ordinary way had entered upon that life in a manner altogether

unprecedented, and that his death had had an equally unprecedented sequel. But granted the sinlessness of Christ, a unique life demands a unique beginning and a unique end ; in Him the three unite in a harmonious perfection that carries with it the conviction of truth.

### The Answer of His Contemporaries.

Wherever He appeared in the days of His flesh a cleavage among men was immediately manifested ; some drew near, some murmured against Him (Luke 15. 1, 2, *e.g.*). Some declared He must be a sinner, not indeed because He did evil deeds, but because He did good deeds at the wrong time (John 9. 16, 24). What a feeble notion of sin ! The answer, however, is at hand, for a wicked person neither could nor would do such works as He did on the seventh, or on any other day of the week.

Others, again, refused Him, because they were acquainted with His parents (John 6. 42). So occupied were they with the obvious that they failed to recognise the significance of what they saw and heard ; and His parentage certainly did not account for Him. Others, openly contemptuous or worse, said that He was demon-possessed or mad (John 8. 48, 10. 20). But He is not to be dismissed thus lightly. The marvel of His works lay not merely in the power displayed in them, but even more in their beneficent

character. Had demons or lunatics ever before spread sweetness and light?

“A sin against light draws blood upon the spiritual retina,” that is, it impairs such powers as we may possess to recognise what is true and good when it is presented to us. Continued refusal of Him hardened their hearts until finally they launched against Him the charge of blasphemy. This done, they sought, and soon found, occasion to put Him to death. But at least they were right in this, He did, implicitly and explicitly, make Himself God (John 10. 33).

Of those who drew near to hear Him the testimony of some is on record. Thus Peter, one of the inner circle of His friends, who knew Him in His private as well as in His public life, said to Him, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God,” “Thou art the Holy One of God.” And the final confession of another, the cautious Thomas who demanded proof, was, “my Lord and my God” (Matt. 16. 16, John 6. 69, 20. 28).

### The Answer of the Centuries Since.

Though He never left the land of His birth, the Lord Jesus assumed that His story would be told far beyond its borders. Before His death He asserted that “these good tidings . . . shall be preached in the whole inhabited earth;” and again He said, “Wheresoever these good

tidings shall be preached in the whole world." After His resurrection He commanded His followers to "make disciples of all nations," "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Matt. 24. 14, 26. 13, 28. 19, Acts 1. 8). Not for many centuries after was the significance of such words as "nations," "inhabited earth," and "world" fully understood among men. There was no science of geography then. What did that little company of artisans, peasants, and fishermen know of the many-millions of nations beyond their horizon? And yet the assumption has proved correct, the prophecy has been fulfilled, the command obeyed, for into all lands has the Gospel gone. Was it simply a happy guess, a bow drawn at a venture? Or is it indeed true that all authority in heaven and on earth are His, and that that authority is made effectual by adequate power? It would seem so, for the simplest explanation is usually the best. Emphatically the horizon of Christ was not the horizon of the men of His day.

### **Did Jesus Ever Live?**

How have they answered His question to whom the Gospel has come? Again, let us first consider what His adversaries and detractors have said of Him—that He never lived, that His supposed history is simply a variation of the ancient Solar Myth. But myths require cen-

turies for their growth, and indubitably this history was widely known within a few decades of His death, and in that early and well informed period not one of His bitterest enemies suggested that He had never lived. Moreover, in no subsequent age has Jesus of Nazareth been exalted to higher honours than those accorded Him by His disciples immediately after His death, their letters and other writings being witness.

### Did Christians Invent Christ ?

Or, that the Evangelists, or those who used their names, invented Him, raising their elaborate fabric on a slender foundation of historic fact. Certainly there have been great literary artists, men who possessed extraordinary powers of character delineation. But no Shakespeare or Scott, no Dickens or Meredith, ever described a perfect man. And if they never even made the attempt, was it not because of the absence of a type from which to work? Where lesser men have attempted the task the result has always been non-natural, mechanical, wooden. Yet the Evangelists—untrained and inexperienced in literary work—succeeded where literary genius has either refused the task or failed to accomplish it. Well might the French rationalist, Rousseau, declare that the inventor of such a character would be more astonishing than his hero. And we are asked to believe

not only in one such inventor, but in four! The simplest solution of the difficulty is, as usual, the true one. They did not invent Him, for they could not. They just recounted what they had seen themselves, or what they had learned from eye-witnesses.

### **Was He an Impostor?**

Or, that He was an impostor? Those who practise imposition have usually a tangible end in view, wealth, or fame, or what not, to gain. What He gained was a crown of thorns, a felon's cross. These were not His lot because He had failed and was found out. From the outset He knew that the course He had chosen must lead to them. Yet He set His face stedfastly whither they awaited Him, leaving behind Him a path marked only by deeds and words of mercy and of kindness.

### **Or a Martyr to Truth?**

Or, that He was a martyr to truth. Thousands such have died unknown or been forgotten. Why should He alone be remembered, worshipped? Not because His was witness to higher truth than that for which they suffered, for they were His followers and died for His sake. Is it not, then, because of the intrinsic value of His Person, and the unique character of the work he accomplished?



Martyrs are what men call victims of circumstances. They die because the opposing forces of evil are too strong for them. The time and place of martyrdom lie only to a very limited extent, if at all, within their control. The Lord Jesus chose to die. "I lay down My life. . . . No one taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." Nay, more, time and place are His choice, "He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," for there, He said, He must be mocked, shamefully entreated, spat upon, scourged, and killed (Luke 9. 51, 18. 31, John 10. 17; 18). By such considerations as these He is excluded from the ranks of the "noble army of the martyrs."

### **Or a Good but Deluded Man?**

Or, that He was a good man, but mistaken, and certainly not God. This, however, was just the dilemma of the men of His own day, for "some said, He is a good man; others said, Not so, but He leadeth the multitude astray" (John 7. 12). There is no escape from the alternative; He was either God, or He was not good.

### **The Confessors.**

The darkness of the past nineteen centuries has been illuminated by two classes of men who owned the name of Christ, the martyrs and the philanthropists. The first went to prison and to

death for His sake ; the second spent themselves and their possessions under the same constraint. There have, indeed, been men who inspired devotion, and for whose sake great hardships and even death itself were endured and heroic deeds performed. Such, for example, was Napoleon ; but there is a difference. Napoleon inspired men while he was present with them, his influence ceased when he died, had ceased, indeed, long before he died. The influence of the Lord Jesus became greater, both in its power and in its extent, after His death, and has continued unabated through centuries. Napoleon's influence over men was without moral quality, it did not move them to goodness. Devotion to the Lord Jesus has made men patient in adversity, and has constrained them to, and sustained them in, humble and kindly service among their fellows. True, many dreadful things have been done, and are still done, in His name, but this is an obvious device of His enemies to cast a slur upon Him and to hinder the spread of His Gospel. Where He is known and owned as Lord in truth, men take Him for their model and follow in His steps.

Martyrs and philanthropists have not been His only witnesses. Through nineteen hundred years wherever the Gospel has been preached, the needy, the bereaved, the troubled, the sinful—men, women, and children—have testified to

the comfort He has administered in their sorrows, the strength He has imparted in their weakness, and have ascribed their patience in trial and their victories over sin to Him alone.

### The Answer of To-day.

The Lord Jesus still dominates the minds of men. He may be acknowledged or denied, He cannot be ignored. The march of knowledge, graciously permitted by God Who created all things, demands new theories to account for His handiwork. Of these the latest is that of the evolutionary process. When it was first promulgated men at once asked, What room does evolution find for Christ? Does it account for Him? Significant, is it not, that He should be the touchstone of science as well as of morals? Two millenniums have produced no second Christ. History repeats itself, but alone among men this Man has never had a duplicate. He remains what He was, unique.

### Did Christ Belong to His Own Time?

The philosophy of history relates all men to their own period. The great figures of the past were no more really ahead of their times than they were distinctly the product of them. They had their fellow-workers, their all but equals, from whom they differed, not in kind but only in degree, and without whom their work as

statesmen, generals, or what not, could never have been accomplished. Leaders are born of the movements they lead. Not so Christ. He stood alone. Themselves being witness He owed nothing to His disciples. There was nothing in His environment to account for Him. The great religious parties of His country and His day, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, were not the kind of soil in which the plant of goodness might take root, find nourishment, and grow. Strikingly applicable to Him are the words of the ancient prophet, "He grew up . . . as a root out of a dry ground" (Isa. 53. 2).

### **Was He One of the World's Teachers?**

There have been in all lands men, wiser and better than the rest, who have sought by their teaching to work deliverance for their fellow-countrymen. The influence of some of these, indeed, has overflowed political bounds and affected other nations, and even other races. Such men should be estimated at their best. It is no more just to say that China is what it is because of the teaching of Confucius, than it would be to say that the worst elements in Western life are due to the teachings and influence of Christ. China is what it is in spite of the teaching of Confucius, the West what it is in spite of the teaching of Christ. It cannot be necessary to detract from the legitimate claims of any man

in order to enhance those of the Lord Jesus. There is a more excellent way. Take them each at his best, Confucius, Sakya Mouni; Socrates, Mahomet and the rest, and which of their names will you couple with Christ's? A few social and political maxims, of excellent quality for the most part, exhaust the legacy of Confucius to the Chinese. Sakya Mouni, the Gautama Buddha, set his heart on freeing himself from a world whose sorrows wounded his spirit, but for which he could find no mitigation. Mahomet began with the lofty purpose of delivering his countrymen from the degradation of idolatry, and of purifying the debased Judaism and Christianity of his day. A measure of success lifted him up in pride, and finally he appealed to the lowest elements in human nature in furtherance of ends not wholly those with which he set out. How different the Christ of the Gospels, meek and lowly in heart, going about doing good, serving, not seeking service, and finally giving His life for the redemption of men.

To a company of literary men in London the question was once propounded, What reception would we give to him if one of the celebrities of past days were to enter the room? Shakespeare, Milton, and others were mentioned and various suggestions were made. They would receive one thus, and another thus, rising, uncovering, cheering. Then some one asked, And if Jesus

Christ were to come in? Silence fell; it was Charles Lamb who broke it with the reply, We should kneel to Him!

That is just the difference. We admire and praise the great; but we criticise them too, for, however great, they are still men. Christ cannot be put in the same category with the greatest men. We do not criticise Him. We do not even praise Him as we praise men, but as we praise God. In the presence of Christ we kneel to worship.

### The Claims of Christ.

So far the judgments of men. Before we close it is fitting to ask, What was His own account of Himself? For surely He who knew men so well that "He needed not that anyone should bear witness concerning a man; for He Himself knew what was in the man," must have known Himself (John 2. 24, 25). It is true He recognised that witness to one's own claims is not conclusive; indeed, this general principle was never more distinctly asserted than in His own words, "If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true." Moreover, when He had said this He proceeded to adduce external testimony, as abundant as it was irrefragable, in John the Baptist, in His own miracles, in the voice of God from heaven, and in the prophetic Scriptures in general and the Mosaic writings in particular, in vindica-

tion of His claims (John 5. 30-47). But when, later, His relentless adversaries referred Him to His own statement in justification of their refusal to accept Him as the Light of the World, He replied, "Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true ; for I know whence I came, and whither I go." There was no impenetrable veil, such as bounds the vision of men, either before or behind Him (John 8. 14).

His self-witness was varied in character, but it was always consistent. Sometimes He declared that He was sent from God, as on the occasion just referred to ; sometimes He declared at once His pre-existence and His voluntary assumption of humanity and submission to the conditions and limitations of human life, as in His words to Pilate : "To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world." Sometimes He was even more explicit, speaking of the glory which He had with the Father before the world into which He had now come had any existence (John 18. 37, 17. 5). With great solemnity, reiterating the "Amen," the Divine assertion of faithfulness and truth, He said to the hostile Jews, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." The implication of the words is unmistakable ; they were plainly intended as a denial of creaturehood, and as a claim to Deity, essential, self-existent, eternal (John 8. 58). Sometimes He

associated Himself in a unique intimacy with God, Whom He called "Father," a name for God which originated with His use of it, as when He said, "I and the Father are One," and, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 10. 30, 14. 9).

Nothing short of Deity could justify His claim on the lives of men to which even the highest claims of nature, those of father and mother, of wife and children, of brother and sister, and even the universal instinct of self-preservation, must yield (Luke 14. 26). Who can He be, and with what powers vested, who declares that those who refuse His mediation are for ever excluded from the presence of God (John 14. 6)? His statement of His purpose in coming into the world is not less astounding. Whereas the leaders of the human race have been content to teach, rarely daring to point to their own conduct in illustration of their doctrine, the Lord Jesus, teaching as never man taught, and acting out in His own ways every particular of His teaching, yet gave to both teaching and example an entirely subordinate place. He came to serve men in His life indeed, but this only in order that He might serve them in His death. Thus He said, "the bread which I will give is My flesh for the life of the world," or again, "I lay down My life for the sheep," *i.e.*, for His followers (John 6. 51, 10. 15). Not John, however, but Matthew and Mark record



what is in this connection His most significant statement. One man may give his own single individual life on behalf of, in the interests of, the lives of many. But the Lord Jesus declared His purpose to give His single individual life for, or instead of, the lives of many (Matt. 20. 28, Mark 10. 45). The words are plain, their meaning unmistakable. The preposition is that of the scales. Into the balance against the lives of all other men He puts His own, thus claiming for Himself an essential value out-weighting that of the aggregate of human life, past, present, and to come.

Ordinarily men look to others to carry on their work when the years fail them. The Lord Jesus knew that He must be cut off in early manhood, yet His words never suggest that His activities were to cease with His death. That event, indeed, would but widen their sphere, sweeping away the barriers of time and space. Wherever one is found loving Him and keeping His Word, He and His Father come and abide with him. Wherever such gather together in companies, however small in numbers, however remote in place, He is in the midst of them. Wherever His followers preach His Gospel He is with them (John 14. 23, Matt. 18. 20, 28. 20).

Whence He came, and whither He went, He claimed to know; He knew also that He would come again. This world moves toward a

catastrophe which, despite His warnings and their confirmation by subsequent events, will take men at unawares. That catastrophe will be brought about by His open intervention in the affairs of men. As a thief in the night He will come again, no more in lowly guise, but surrounded by the glorious hosts of heaven, their acknowledged Lord. His Word will empty the graves. Living and dead shall be judged by Him, for in His hand are the destinies of men.

Such, then, is His own testimony to Himself, such are His claims. Is He more or less worthy of credence than His critics and detractors? Consider His character, His actions, His teaching ; above all, consider His death and its declared purpose, the salvation of men. Does He not affect you? Does He not draw you to Himself? Can you say, I do not believe His words, I refuse to acknowledge the claim He makes ; His life, His death have no meaning for me? You hesitate, you do not mean to go as far as that. Then how do you answer the question He addresses to you now as really as He addressed it to the disciples nineteen hundred years ago, "Who do you say that I am?" Neutrality is impossible ; the question must be faced. You cannot escape from Christ. Meet Him you must, here or hereafter, as Saviour or as Judge.

Men once held the Sun to be part of a system of which the Earth was the centre. A necessary part, for does he not give light and heat to the earth? Still the Earth was the centre, and though the scheme of things could hardly be imagined without the Sun, he kept his own place afar off. Now men know that the Sun is really the centre around which the Earth revolves. So it may be with you. Christ has not been entirely shut out of your life. In a conventional, indefinite way you have acknowledged Him, or at least you have not denied Him. Are you satisfied with that? He cannot be. Is it not high time for you to make Him the centre of your life, to trust Him as your Saviour, to obey Him as your Lord?

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