

tory, of its geography, of its races, of its politics; nurtured amid the misconceptions, prejudices, and exclusiveness of his countrymen—conceives a kingdom of pure spiritual life, that is to include all races of men and all generations; in its principles and requirements, alike adapted to the ancient Asiatic and to the modern European, to the shivering Esquimaux and to the torrid Hindoo; a kingdom of universal brotherhood, in which all men are to be knit together in holiness and love; a kingdom to be won and ruled by only moral forces, whose only sword is “the sword of the Spirit,” whose only coercion is the coercion of strong conviction and affection; a kingdom whose foundations are to be laid in a cross—the great instrument of his triumphs—and which unaided is to maintain a successful war against all the opposing powers of the earth, against all the strongest passions of human nature. This was his conception, and for nineteen centuries the course of events has justified it. His cross has gone forth conquering and to conquer, and at this moment it is the symbol of the mightiest intellectual and moral forces of the world.

What must have been the intellectual and moral grandeur of the nature in which such a conception as this could be rooted, and out of which it could spring. The very conception is the greatest miracle of human history; upon any hypothesis it places its author infinitely higher than all the statesmen, all the philosophers, all the moralists who have appeared in our world.

May we not, then, fairly appeal to the moral portraiture of the New Testament in proof that it is of God? Not merely to its apostles and saints, its Ephesians and Corinthians, its *healed men*, but also to their healer, to him who is the incarnate ideal of all goodness, the perfection of the human in the divine. If our blessed Lord never existed as these brief records of the four evangelists so artlessly and yet so profoundly delineate him, whence their conception of him? If four men could simultaneously imagine such a character, each presenting an individual portrait of him, and yet all so congruous and harmonious—why not a fifth or sixth? Skepticism has had its men of genius—why has it never produced another gospel?

Upon the moral integrity of its Christ Christianity is staked. He alleged that he wrought miracles. He bade the disciples of John tell their master the things they had seen and heard; how then deaf heard, the lame walked, the blind saw, and, most marvellous of all, the poor had the gospel preached unto them.

But if he never wrought such miracles, if they were miracles only in seeming, achievements of greater knowledge or cleverness, not only is his religion deprived of its credentials, but it is founded upon a huge imposture. The loftiest truth, the purest morality of the world, is the offspring of a lie—a moral solecism so great that our entire consciousness rejects it.

It is vain to talk about Christ's personal goodness and excellent doctrine, and deny his miracles. He declared that he raised Lazarus from the dead, that he himself came forth from the sepulchre. If these things did not occur in the sense intended, if the pretended death of Lazarus was only a pious fraud of the family at Bethany, if Christ himself was only in a state of suspended animation, he is infinitely less than a good man. He is found a false witness before God; he roots a holy religion in falsehood and fraud. He must be apologized for whenever he is named, his self-assertions excused, his self-selected credentials explained away. Is he not more culpable than Mohammed in his pretended journey to Paradise, more unscrupulous than the fabricator of the “Book of Mormon?” He claims more than religious teacher ever claimed, sets up a higher moral standard: and if his claims have forged credentials appended to them. Pharisees were right—he is “a deceiver of the people.” He whom we thought the most perfect of men is really one of the most base. I cannot receive as a perfect man a Christ like this. Either he himself was deceived, and must be ranked as the most credulous of men—and this in the face of the imperial intellect of the Sermon on the