

may grow, but this is no question of *size*, but of *quality*. While the story grows the popular imagination makes it grotesque. All proportion is lost, and the original harmony becomes a discord. All the mythologies prove this. On the other hand think of the beauty, the proportion of Christ's character. Ask how any portion thereof had its excellent beauty if not from Himself. Did the sermon on the Mount instead of proceeding as we have it from himself, receive a grandeur to which it had no pretensions from floating in the cloud-land of tradition for some years, till at last it was condensed as an exquisite but combinate essence of Jesus and His Church, by Matthew. Or have we not rather to fear that much of the original beauty and force have been lost? Jesus is in some respects to us but the shadow of what he was. We have but a few of his sayings and doings—a fragment. The world could not contain the book of the whole. But fragmentary as is the life as shadowed forth by the Evangelists, we see as in a picture the glory of the Lord. *Ex pede Herculem*. These fragments indicate the colossal grandeur of the Jesus who was—the lowest estimate of the greatest sceptic being that He was the greatest and best of the sons of men—the more adequate being that here indeed is God manifest in the flesh.

The character of Jesus as indicated in the gospels is then real. There may be great differences in its shading as presented by John and Matthew, but whatever there is of grandeur in each is from Him. The sermon on the mount is his, the parables are his, the discussions with the Jews are his, the instructions to the disciples are his, the prayers are his, the claims are his. No one would have had the hardihood to write unless he had uttered those daring words, "I proceeded forth and came from God," "I and my father are one," "Which of you convinceth me of sin," "the son of man which is in heaven." "I am the bread of life" "he that eateth me shall live by me. Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood ye have no life in you." The idea that John invented such expressions would go far to

elevate him to the throne of Jesus, but for the diabolism of the deceit. To say that these great words are but the echo of the imagination of the disciples who saw in Jesus a sublimity of character, in correspondence with such claims is to leave the problem for solution which it was intended to get rid of—the *same character*; only in this way we have no means of finding out how that character was made known to the disciples. If they did not get their ideas of his character from the sublimity of his words and claims and personality, where did they get them? From the miracles? Well let us say we are agreed. But this would at once establish the divine character of the whole. Ah, scepticism will take care of that. They got the character from the imagination that the miracles were wrought. Well, let us see how this will work. We want a basis for the invention of these grand claims. If, having reduced the grandeur of his teachings and claims, you now take away the miracle as a reality, what is left as the foundation of the invention? You must have some basis for popular fancy to build upon—some material to work with. To make bricks without straw was hard, but this were like requiring them to be made without clay as well. No doubt popular fancy is capable of great feats, but they are grotesque, and hardly equal to the formation of a grand consistent character, with only a few tricks of legerdemain to begin with. With wonderful works the popular imagination may make their author a saint—the man of hair-cloth and cells, of fasting and prayer—but never a Jesus of Nazareth. Indeed, all the miracles in the world, without the one miracle, his supernatural character, could never have given us The Lord and Master.

But we are going too fast. It is, admitted he is a great and glorious character,—a good man, a great teacher, an excellent moralist; one who knows more of God than all the world besides—the breath of his voice is redolent of heaven. All this the sceptical school say. This is much; but had this been all we should have had no historic Christianity. We should have read some things of him along with the sayings