

or charm, or myth, might in that period have produced some equal if they produced Him. But we seem doomed to know no second Jesus. Our admiration grows as each new heroism of his life is evolved. Even scepticism praises,—is rapturous over his character.

The character as drawn by the Evangelists is wonderfully real. Its completeness of supernatural makes it natural. We find a perfect harmony between the grandeur of the man and the God that indwells. The claims, facts, teachings agree. We are struck with this. The followers of Jesus have hardly recognized this more than many of the sceptical school of the present day. The sarcasm of Voltaire and the coarseness of Paine have given place to compliment and courtesy. I need not quote Rousseau, as his testimony is so widely known. Parker says, "he unites in himself the sublimest precepts and divinest practice, thus more than realizing all the dreams of prophets and sages; rises free from all the prejudices of his age, nation, and sect; gives free range to the Spirit of God in his breast, sets aside law, sacred and true,—honoured as it was,—its forms, its sacrifices, its temples, its priests, puts away the doctors of the law, subtle, irrefragable, and pours out a doctrine beautiful as the light, sublime as heaven, true as God. . . . Eighteen centuries have passed since the sun of humanity rose so high in Jesus. What man—what sect has mastered his thought, comprehended his method, and so fully applied it to life."—Then Renan says: "Jesus had no visions. God is in him; he feels that he is with God, and he draws from his heart what he says of His Father. The highest consciousness of God that ever existed in the breast of humanity was that of Jesus." Indeed, the whole of the "*Origins of Christianity*," is a laboured panegyric on Jesus according to the ideal of the Frenchman, tempered by the airs and scenery of Galilee and Jerusalem. Strauss is too cold to express admiration for the noble tower of character he set himself to destroy. Newman is depreciatory. But with few exceptions the critical school pronounce him divine. Whenever

they depreciate they have first had to destroy. How? By attempting to show that the character of Jesus is in large measure the result of imagination. They do not say it was *invented*. That has been shown to be impossible. What is the process then? There was an actual Christ; but what we have is this Christ sublimed, elevated. What there was of actual nobleness in the real Jesus was made nobler, of parity, purer, by passing through the contemplative soul of John, the ardent mind of Peter, the loving heart of Mary,—the golden character was refined in the alembic of the church's enthusiasm—the rough angularities were all polished off—the gross was filtered, and the flawed became perfect. What a grand work of moral art is this Galilean imagination capable of? A fortuitous concurrence of moral ideas has agglomerated round a rough pretentious character, and behold the glorious, the divine image, which men have worshipped for eighteen centuries—and yet worship! It is strange that no such result ever was seen before or since. What was there in that patristic Pharisaic age which so sublimed the minds of the followers of Jesus, *if not himself*, that could produce this unparalleled spiritual sculpture? If we should affirm that the Venus de Medicis was fashioned by a hundred sculptors, not one of whom had learned the art, by each one taking up the chisel and working a little on the rough block, without common design, we should not say such a foolish thing. Admit that the report of a wonderful work may grow into a miracle, we are not helped thereby to see how the character of God in man can be the growth of an imaginative enthusiasm, as an exquisite aroma rises from a garden of flowers. The traits of His character are too distinct, as well as proportionate, to be the result of such social efflorescence.\* The account of the miracle

\* "The complete catalogue of the virtues could give no adequate view of the great peculiarity in the character of Jesus; the absolute similarity in all moral faculties, the perfect inward harmony unruined by the slightest passion or selfishness. Never a moment withdrawn from the closest communion with the father in heaven, or from unreserved devotion to the welfare of man: ind."—*Schaff's History*, page 56, Vol. 1.