

WHAT IF CHRISTIANITY IS NOT TRUE?

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Is the Christian religion true or false? In other words, is there really such a person as Jesus Christ, who righteously claims our whole heart, and who will assuredly, now and for ever, redeem from evil and bring to God all who cordially believe in Him and love Him? This is the grand question of fact we have to deal with. Christianity is Christ. As a revelation to us, it is a revelation of our Father through His eternal Son, our Brother and Lord. As a revelation *in* us, it is a revelation of the Son in our souls, through the Spirit; or, supreme love to God and man, in Jesus Christ.

But if there is no such person as Jesus Christ, "whom not having seen we love,"—if the faith of the Christian Church has been faith in a fancy; if our supposed personal knowledge of Jesus has been a delusion;—if the deep devoted love of eighteen centuries, which, from every portion of the Church catholic, has been poured forth like the precious ointment on Jesus Christ, the unseen yet ever-present Saviour, is a mere sentiment, without any real person to draw it forth, receive it, and return it; if all the life, strength, and joy which millions have derived, as they believed, from knowing Christ, has been the result of only a pompous fraud practised on themselves—then, but not till then, is Christianity false! For Christianity, we repeat, is not a mere system of morals or of doctrines, apart from a living Person; but is Jesus for us, Jesus to us, Jesus in us, Jesus ours, and with Him all things, now and for ever!

Christianity is false if there is no such person; but to disprove the evidences of Christ's life and power, derived from history and from the experience of the universal Church, is by no means the easy task which some people appear to imagine. We will not presume to assert, that all who oppose what they call Christianity hate Christianity itself. They may be protesting only against a false representation of it; or against false arguments in support of what is true. Such persons may be actu-

ally nearer the kingdom of heaven than many who are too indifferent to doubt, and therefore really to believe. But without wishing to pass any judgment upon the motives or standing before God, who alone knows us, of those who, from whatever cause, seem resolved to destroy the only Christianity we know of, we may express our joy in knowing, that up till this moment their attempt has not succeeded! For, in whatever way we may account for it, the fact is undeniable, that Christianity not only survives, but that in no age of the world's history was it so strongly rooted in the convictions and affections of men, nor did it ever give such promise of filling the whole earth. Millions of Christians are ready solemnly to declare before God that they believe in Jesus Christ; that they trust their own souls to his keeping for time and eternity, and desire nothing better or more earnestly than that those they most dearly love should do the same; and they are willing at any moment to dispense with all they possess on earth, and risk life itself rather than part with Him!

Let us suppose, however, for the sake of argument, that by some process hitherto undiscovered, Christianity, as the religion of supreme love to this living Person, Jesus Christ, shall at last be proved a fiction; that the millennium of infidelity has come,—that the religion taught by Christ and his apostles has become as dead to the world as that of Buddha or Confucius is now to the mind of Europe; that our Christian churches, like the heathen temples of Greece or Rome, remain but as monuments of a superstition long ago exploded by the light of science and philosophy,—that all these supernatural Christian facts and truths, which, like a mighty firmament of stars, now cluster around the name of Jesus, shall have departed as lights from the visible universe,—that Jesus Christ is proclaimed as one who was dead, but is not alive; until even the wailing cry has ceased of the last despairing and disconsolate believer on earth,—“They have taken away my Lord