

A Test of the Truth

Felicia Skene

Table of Contents

<u>A Test of the Truth</u>	1
<u>Felicia Skene</u>	1
<u>I.</u>	1
<u>II.</u>	2
<u>III.</u>	2
<u>IV.</u>	3
<u>V.</u>	4
<u>VI.</u>	5
<u>VII.</u>	5
<u>VIII.</u>	6
<u>IX.</u>	7
<u>X.</u>	8

A Test of the Truth

Felicia Skene

This page copyright © 2002 Blackmask Online.

<http://www.blackmask.com>

- [I.](#)
- [II.](#)
- [III.](#)
- [IV.](#)
- [V.](#)
- [VI.](#)
- [VII.](#)
- [VIII.](#)
- [IX.](#)
- [X.](#)

'The sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled;
But now I only hear
Its melancholy long withdrawing roar
Retreating to the breath
Of the night wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.'

A TEST OF THE TRUTH.
BY OXONIENSIS.
'POST TENEBRAS8212;LUX.'

I.

ALL who share to any extent in the intellectual life of the present day, must come more or less under the portentous shadow by which modern Scepticism has darkened the whole world of thought; but there is a hidden subtle element in the scientific Materialism of this *fin-de-siècle* which has not been fully acknowledged or recognised, and that is the curse of secret intolerable pain which it has the power to inflict on minds of a certain stamp. There are many for whom the entire negation of belief in a self-existent Power behind the material universe in the survival of human consciousness after death and in any possible solution, here or hereafter, of the mysteries of earthly existence, becomes nothing less than the very blackness of despair; since it extinguishes for them the last gleam of light that could illumine the ocean of suffering and evil in every form, that floods the earth from pole to pole.

No one at the present time can escape the obtruding influence of rationalistic Agnosticism. Its voice is borne to us through every channel that can reach our consciousness; it pervades the literature of the day in endless

A Test of the Truth

variety of expression from the strong utterances of those who maintain that to destroy the ancient faiths is to uphold the truth, down to the shallow supercilious Atheism which mingles with novel-writers' visions of romance. Often it speaks to us from the lips of those whom we have held to be best and wisest of their kind, or in the tones that have been dearest to us all our days; but everywhere it penetrates, alike in the palaces of the cultured and refined and in the lowest dens of poverty and ignorance, while to thousands upon thousands in this land alone, it is even now sounding as the knell of all immortal hope. It seems almost to be the reversal of the ancient legend which affirms that at the dawn of Christianity, a voice was heard to wail over the Eastern seas proclaiming that the great Pan was dead for now, from shore to shore, the voice of modern unbelief peals forth the Requiem of the living Christ. To that inexorable fiat, may well be attributed the epidemic of suicide which of late has swept over the civilized world. It has become an invisible Juggernaut the very god of the self-destroyer, to whom human lives are daily offered up in senseless, fruitless sacrifice; but it passes the power of thought to gauge the depth and extent of the widespread, unseen anguish it has engendered.

II.

OF course, in speaking thus we do not ignore or forget the existence in this age, of a vast multitude who have not bowed the knee to the gods of nineteenth-century philosophy for whom the new lights supposed to have been shed upon theology by the researches of science and the Higher Criticism, are but as the delusive gleams of the wandering meteors that lead men astray into desolate moors. These cling to the Faith which is their life, present and eternal, deaf to the clamour of tongues that cannot drown its still small voice. Unheeding the intellectual strife around them, they dwell as under the calm shade of a great rock in a weary land, and they are in peace. With them we meddle not in these pages; their belief may be accounted a dream, and their hope madness, and their going from us to be utter destruction. They may be held in derision and a proverb of reproach, by those who have come out from among them to tread the new paths, and trample the ancient Faith under foot. To them it matters not: they abide untouched and untroubled in the strangeness of their rest. But outside their sanctuary of enduring trust, there is a very ocean of tumultuous thought, of hopeless perplexity, of torturing speculation, where the individual consciousness that animates the living being, by whatever name it may be called, wanders on helplessly to seek an explanation of its own existence a possible solution of its destiny only to be tossed in aimlessness from wave to wave over life's whelming depths of gloom and mystery.

It is to such as these that we would speak, not, indeed, assuming that any feeble human words could fully unveil the light for them the light towards which they are struggling unconsciously, but only venturing to hope that the means which have availed to illumine with serene radiance the dark agony of others, may suffice to shed some brightening rays upon their own despair.

III.

IT may be said that all do not find despair in Atheism. There are some who will tell us that their Agnosticism produces no bitter distress in their experience; they are content to take this visible, palpable life as they find it, and make the best of it, looking neither beyond it nor within it for more than the fleeting, uncertain gratification it can give them. Is not this, however, the very worst form of despair, because it is unconscious and unacknowledged? Can there be in the abstract a more hopeless picture than that of a man, flung by no will of his own into sentient life, going through a period of mental training and education, disproportioned in its length to the brief existence that lies before him; and if he reaches even its utmost limit, without being prematurely smitten down by disease or accident, then does he return to dust stamped with the record of failure on all his aspirations, whether his aim has been to win for himself fame or happiness, or any of the ephemeral joys that can have no solid basis here. If this were all if the possession of conscious being had no other purpose or meaning, surely we may well count his existence a despair a curse, as though he had been

A Test of the Truth

the mocking sport of some malevolent Power. Is it possible that any, not steeped in vice and sensuality to the extinction of all higher perceptions, could rest content with such a theory of life, however much they may strive to persuade themselves that they look no further? Surely, then, if any suggestion can point to a way of escape from the dead level of Agnosticism, it must be welcome to all who hold that creed of negation, from whatsoever source the proffered aid may come.

This is certain that, however varied may be the effect of Materialism on individual minds, the standpoint of all who adhere to it must necessarily be the same: they can but count this present life as their sole possession. Whether it proves to them, in its gradual development, a curse or a mockery, it is their all, and the whole powers of their being can have no better employment than to wring what good they can from it, as its swift hours pass to return no more. But, side by side with this transient life, on which alone they will to fix their eyes, there stands another Power, with whom they will one day have to reckon, under conditions undreamt of in their present philosophy; for at some one hidden point within the compass of their unknown future, the dark, shapeless form of the veiled Death waits for them, immovable, indomitable. Of course they do not attempt to ignore its certain advent sooner or later, but they do deny its import to themselves. They hold that it means simply the termination of their only possible existence the destruction of consciousness, the painless void of annihilation. They deal with it as they do with the thought of night in the daytime: they know that evening will surely come, that it will bring the darkness, when the blank stupor of sleep will fall upon them. So be it: they cannot hold it back one hour; therefore they discard it from their mind, and while the light endures and the sun shines, they give themselves wholly to such occupations or amusements as may lie within their grasp for that brief space of time.

Even thus in like manner do they rest composedly beneath the certainty of death, refusing to listen to its muffled steps echoing ever nearer and nearer on the pathway they must surely tread in days to come. It is, however, an unquestionable truth that this passive acquiescence will fail them altogether, when they find themselves confronted with the actual presence of that mysterious Power. We can assert emphatically, on the testimony of numberless death-beds, that, except in the cases where disease has obliterated thought, no one who feels the grasp of death upon their throat can look it in the face and believe it to be annihilation; it is a moment of terrible revelation as to the fallacy of all such theories, which suffice only while the obtrusive pressure of the things of sense still smites with blindness the conscious Ego; and if such an inevitable moment is undoubtedly before us, call ourselves by what philosophical name we will, surely it were wise at least, if nothing more, to grapple with its pregnant certainty while vigour of mind endures, and strive to ascertain whether by any means the secret of its potentiality may be penetrated ere it closes over us.

IV.

FROM the far distant past there rises still, like a strain of Divine music lingering in the air, the echo of the serene rapture with which death was voluntarily embraced albeit it came in the guise of torture by those who gave themselves up to it for love of One whom they held to be its Conqueror.

The testimony of those martyrs in the early ages of the Faith, who in every form of agony, by fire or sword, or fury of wild beasts, seized upon death, compelling it to become the minister of their heart's desire for the Vision of God, bears witness to the fact that there is a mental consciousness which can dominate the mysterious Power that awaits us all, till it becomes no longer our master, but our slave.

As we stand before the portals of the tomb, to which men go down in these days hopeless, senseless, like the beasts that perish, can even the most unbelieving escape at least, from the sense of a sorrowful envy when the exulting voices of strong men and tender women echo back through the bygone ages with the heart-wrung cry, 'Welcome, agony of death, that leads us to the feet of Christ! Welcome, grave and corruption, through which we pass to the eternal day!'

A Test of the Truth

Men may assert, if they will, that these martyrs were deceived that they died for a delusion, for a dream; yet does not their joyful suffering, their marvellous endurance, point at least to the possibility, that all natural consciousness of pain and fear was destroyed for them, by the might of the one Truth they held inviolate?

If a Truth does haply exist which can thus take the sting from death, and from the grave its victory, were it not well even for the most determined Agnostic to adopt any expedient that may present itself, whereby he can seek to discover if its existence is indeed a reality?

V.

WHAT is Truth? This question, fraught with the secrets of life and death to every unit of our race, has lain at the root of all human thought since first a mortal breath was drawn upon this earth. Once it found expression at a great crisis in the world's history, and then but only then received an answer, in words that have not ceased to enunciate their changeless revelation, through all the ages that have elapsed since they were uttered. What is the truth of our origin as sentient beings, of our destiny on earth, of that inevitable change which suddenly reduces the living form, thrilling with feeling and intelligence, to a corrupting heap of senseless clay? What is the truth of the seemingly illimitable universe, with its myriads of shining worlds, moving under mysterious laws which no visible power controls? What is the truth of evil, of pain, of the instinct of hope, of the caprice of circumstance, of the irony of fate under endless phases of cruel meaning? These questions have surged up in every intelligent mind since time began, and never but that once alone, did it receive an authoritative answer, not of conjecture, not of logical inference, not of hopeful augury, but of definite, deliberate assertion, leaving no place for doubt, or cavilling, or speculation. As a historical fact which cannot be overthrown, the question and answer are stamped in imperishable lines on the world's record.

When the Roman governor, in the Syrian dawn of earth's most memorable day, demanded of Christ the Captive, calm in fathomless agony before him, 'What is Truth?' the kingly silence, to which no time was left for utterance then, was instinct with the answer that had been spoken by Him long before, **'I AM THE TRUTH.'**

Either these significant words are false, as the Atheist would affirm, or uttered in delusion, as the milder Agnostic will assume, or they are real and decisive, answering, sooner or later, every question which the intelligence of man can formulate as to the mysteries that lie around and beyond us, for in that pregnant answer are comprised all the secrets of eternity, though the open revelation thereof is not yet. 'I am the Truth; I am the Author of life, the Creator of the universe, the Conqueror of death, the Fountain of immortality, the Eternal Love.' No human words could have power to detail all that is contained in that utterance, if the words are accepted in the full measure of the unreserved assertion then proclaimed and never since withdrawn.

Agnosticism does not receive them flings them back into the vanished past as a futile delusion long since quenched in the tomb. But what if the delusion is, in fact, on that side? What if the Being who, according to historical records, gave forth that tremendous assertion does even now exist, Unseen? Then the unbelief of every living creature on the earth, could make no difference to His eternal certainty of self-existent Life. Let the thought for one moment take shape before the eyes of Scepticism. If it be so that, despite the mocking theories of myth and legend, or the assumption of those who merely credit Him with having had a brief term of mortal life like other men, and thereafter been resolved into senseless dust even as they if, despite all this arrogant scorn of His stupendous claims, it yet is so that, in the far reaches of the unknown infinity, there does even now abide that One who proclaimed Himself to be the eternal Truth were it not wise to test if by any means His existence may be proved to the living individual spirit, lest haply it be flashed on the dying eyes which, for lack of that knowledge, saw no meaning or nobility in their aimless, evanescent life?

To such a question we can anticipate the cavilling voices that will answer, 'How would you have us ascertain

A Test of the Truth

the existence of a Being, whose only record is in the time-worn books which the Higher Criticism asserts to be unsound and unreliable, or in the vague tradition of an impalpable Church authority? Are we to appeal to human testimony, which the world's history has proved in all ages to be faulty and valueless? Where are we to find better proofs than other false religions have brought forward, to attest the unseen survival of their dead heroes?'

We might answer that in these despised records there is a weight of internal evidence to the truth of the facts they relate, which no unprejudiced mind can with honesty deny or ignore. It is certain that no purely human intelligence could have invented the unique character of the Sinless Being therein portrayed, or conceive the marvellous idea of God becoming Incarnate for the welfare of mankind. However much our complex nature may be capable of noble conceptions, it could never, unaided, have compassed the idea of such a manifestation of supreme love in an unknown Creator. But let that pass let men disbelieve as they will in the testimony of Scripture: it is not on that ground that we contend they may discover whether the tremendous assertion, 'I am the Truth,' will indeed be verified when heaven and earth shall have passed away, and also find that it may become a certain fact in their own consciousness even now.

VI.

NO disbelievers in Christianity, whatever peculiar form their Scepticism takes, have ever been able virtually to deny that the appearance upon earth of the Founder of that faith is a historical fact. That He who has been called the Christ did live and teach, and die a cruel death in the Judea of nineteen centuries since, is not, as a rule, gainsaid by any. It remains, therefore, that He is either long since lost in the dust of death, as Materialists affirm, or that He, once dead, is now alive for evermore in the Eternal Being of God, according to His own affirmation, as believed by His followers. One or other of these alternatives must be true beyond all possibility of denial.

If, in the everlasting ages, it should be made manifest that the last of these hypotheses is indeed the truth if all who now doubt or deny it, shall pass out of the grasp of that death which they held to be annihilation, to find themselves in the visible Presence of Life, self-existent in Him who proclaimed Himself to be 'the Life' no less than 'the Truth' then does it import them above all other learning or scientific research, to ascertain if it be possible for them to compass that knowledge, ere they sink with their mournful ignorance into the hidden mysteries of the grave.

Our object in these few pages drawn from the experience of the living and the dead alike is to show that this vital knowledge is attainable even now on earth; not by any appeal to what is called Revelation, or to the testimony of millions out of all lands who have been enrolled in the Christian ranks, but by a method within the power of any who will use it, in unprejudiced sincerity and in the strength of an indomitable determination. Assuming it to be admitted that the continued existence of the living Christ, is logically as much a possibility, as that the belief in His survival is simply a hopeless delusion, it remains to be considered how the truth or falsehood of this possibility is to be tested.

VII.

THE first step to be taken in such a quest, is to form a distinct conception of His personality and attributes, in so far as they were made manifest during His brief sojourn on earth. It cannot be denied, even by the opponents of the Faith, that the most marked individuality of Christ's character found expression in His love for the human race. While it was once especially mentioned that, looking on a young man, He loved him, it might with equal truth be affirmed that He never looked on any of the dwellers in this sin-marred world, whom He did not love with a compassionate intensity such as has never been shown in the same strength and completeness by any other upon earth. If, therefore, He still exists, it can only be as that Essential Love

A Test of the Truth

Which His whole manner of being proved Him to have been, in His relations with our mortal race. If, then, it is possible to attain to a knowledge of His present existence, He must Himself be desirous to co-operate with all struggling efforts to find Him, on the part of those who are wandering in the bewildering shadows of this inexplicable sphere; for with the emphatic declaration 'I am the Life' He coupled the marvellous statement that He, and He alone, could give to others that Life eternal which He possessed in Himself. Should He, then, even now be alive unseen, it can only be as that which He claimed to be, undying Love, and self-existent Life. As such the power to penetrate into the innermost being of all who exist in this finite state, must be inherent with Him. He who read the thoughts of His disciples, and is asserted to have known what was in man, cannot fail to be equally cognisant now of every human thought which rises towards Himself.

It may not be doubted, therefore, that if He, as the Perfect Love, the Source and Centre of life does exist at this very hour, a strong personal appeal, sent forth from the very heart of unbelief, entreating Him to reveal Himself if indeed He has any being, could not fail to reach His omniscience though it rose from a despair which denied His existence altogether.

We can hear the scathing words of contempt with which the nineteenth-century philosophy would meet the suggestion of a direct appeal at this day, to the Christ of tradition. 'What! are we to play like children with fairy-tales and dreams, and pretend to call on the hero of a bygone myth or legendary vision, when we know that there is none to hear nor any to make answer? Would you have us act like the followers of Baal in the olden time, who called on their god from the rising up of the sun to the going down of the same and cut themselves with knives that the shedding of blood might move him, when they were bid to cry louder lest he should be sleeping or on a journey? We are not babes or fools to call on a non-existent Christ.' Yet, let the mocking voice be hushed for one moment while we look on another picture:

A man drowning in a stormy sea, swept by a huge wave in the dense gloom of a tempestuous night from a ship that has vanished away, driven into the darkness by the raging billows; he is battling with all his strength in the foaming surge; there is no light of moon or stars in the flying rack of heaven; there is nothing round him but the seething waters, the pitiless howling blasts, and beneath him only the unfathomed ocean depths, where lie the bones of the countless dead. Yet will you call that man a child or a fool, because, already almost in the grasp of death, he sends out his voice to the unknown in a wild, despairing cry for help and with the gurgling waters at his lips shrieks out an agonized inarticulate wail that means entreaty, that means despair, though he knows not to whom it is addressed, or if it could be heard of any that might answer? The man is not a fool whether his cry mingles only with the roaring wind while he goes down to death, or reaches some unseen bark that turns its course towards his wild appeal, and, snatching him back from the whelming depths, restores him to light and life. Not more a fool is the man battling in the ocean of pain and mystery which surrounds him in this mortal life knowing that a brief space of time must see him engulfed in the darker mystery of Death who sends out in his agony a cry of appeal to any possible power that might offer him a better solution of his unasked existence, than annihilation for his immaterial spirit and corruption for his bodily frame. He knows however he may despise the authority on which that knowledge has come that One has been said to have existed on this earth who, in no measured or doubtful terms, claimed for Himself the power to give Eternal Life to all who come to Him, out of the dying world, with its fleeting joys, its mocking hopes, its unstable foothold for men's wandering, uncertain steps. Is, then, the man a fool who tests the possibility of Christ's existence by a solemn direct appeal that He would manifest Himself to him if, indeed, He has any Being, any omnipotent power, such as He assumed for Himself wherewith to fill the innate cravings for an ultimate all-satisfying destiny, which ever rend the spirit perishing in despair?

VIII.

FOOLS or not, the experiment has been made, and not in vain. The nature of the attempt must not, however, be misunderstood. It means not such prayer as in due conventional terms, rises from open churches and secret chambers in every land, even among those who call not themselves by the name of Christ, but merely join in

A Test of the Truth

the set worship of an unknown Supreme Being. No; the man who by direct appeal would seek to wring out of the infinite darkness that lies round the narrow shores of this visible world, some token of His existence who claimed to be the true God and Eternal Life, must free himself in this matter from all contact with his fellow-men, strip off the chains that bind him to habits of familiar inter-course and ordinary social community of thought, and cast himself out into a solitude where no sound of earthly learning can reach him, no words of fallible teachers, no footsteps of blind guides that would lead him in a thousand different paths; a solitude tenanted by his own spirit only, unless within it he can reach to a dim perception of an Eternal Spirit brooding over all. There, closing ears and eyes and heart to all that he has ever heard or seen of human wisdom or theories or reasoning or belief, let him fling himself, in complete abandonment of mental power and pride of intellect, out of all previous convictions, and concentrate his whole being in one intense prolonged and passionate entreaty that the Christ, if He be indeed risen from the dead, would reveal His truth of life to the abject, bewildered captive in bonds of flesh, who calls upon him from the depth of utter hopelessness. One appeal? No, but a very lifetime, if need be, of ceaseless entreaty.

What if all the powers of the man's being were exhausted in that effort through the entire sum of his mortal years, were he not well repaid if the glory of the Eternal Life flashed in its infinite radiance on his eyes, unveiled by death, and the response to his life-long appeal were made to him by the everlasting presence of the Love that never fails in the very being of God? Yes; it were well with him if, even in death alone, his quest was crowned with the visible Truth for if the calling upon Christ to make Himself known is ever to avail, it is logically necessary that the seeker should extinguish and destroy all that might prevent the contact with the fallible human spirit of that One who alone claims for Himself essential holiness and perfection; fallible, it must be, but it may not be wilfully guilty or impure for it is by no barren appeal that the continued existence may be tested of Him whose historic utterance in these words is yet on record:

'If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak from Myself'; and elsewhere He says of one who keeps His commandments, 'I will love him, and manifest Myself to him.'

IX.

IN these statements, Christ proclaimed the conditions on which He could manifest Himself to the consciousness of men, and cause them to know of the doctrine whether it be of God, and that condition may be summed up in the one word **righteousness**. What is the keeping of His commandments, the doing of the will of God, but the maintenance of an indomitable effort to attain to a pure and blameless selflessness? Is it not worth the cost? Though the price that must be paid for certainty in the truth of Christ is heavy indeed, a stern, unrelaxing effort, the remorseless crushing of human passions, the slaying, even with agony, of evil tendencies, the tearing out by the roots of every form of sin, so that the strong appeal for the manifestation of the Eternal Christ within the living consciousness may be made from a spirit so far purified as to be capable of His Presence does it seem a task too hard, a renunciation too complete, for a doubtful issue? Look at the alternative. What is the condition of the man for whom God in Christ exists not either in time or in eternity? He stands in the midst of a world generated he knows not how or wherefore, where he is cursed with an uncontrollable desire for happiness that ever eludes his grasp. If he seeks it in the love or friendship of his fellow-creatures, sooner or later they will but force the truth upon him that human nature is essentially weak, unstable, unreliable, that in the matter of earthly happiness, as in that of life eternal, no man can redeem his brother, or satisfy his deathless spirit. If he seeks it in sensual pleasures, they expire in satiety; if less ignobly in the triumphs of art or science, they do but mock his ambition, or sting him with disappointment. Such fleeting joys as earth can offer him only turn to impalpable shadows amid the suffering and evil that surround him; while ever in front of him rises the great black wall of Death inscrutable, inevitable against which his own hurrying steps shall fling him speedily, and dash out of his inanimate form the fleeting breath by which he lived. Is this a condition so enviable that a man might not be well content to quit it for a quest that will at least make his earthly existence noble, even if it bring him not, as we contend it will, the fruition of a life

A Test of the Truth

immortal? The man who resolves to test the truth of God by the doing of His will, to seek the manifestation of the existent Christ, with the sincerity which is shown in the keeping of His commandments, stands out from the throng of egotists and sensualists as one who lives not for himself, but for the help he may give his fellow-men; as one who in his agony of desire to find the Eternal Love, having named the name of Christ, though he knows Him not, has departed from iniquity; who in his outward visible existence seeks neither joy, nor fame, nor pleasure, but only strives to imitate, in every action, in every word, the Sinless, Selfless One whose record was written in His own blood on the hill of Calvary.

Around him surges the vast ocean of human suffering; its bitter waters bathe his very feet. He cannot move one step along its toil-worn ways without encountering pain in others, the numberless tortures that can rack the mind and spirit, no less than the physical pangs that may assail the material frame; he cannot stretch out a hand but that there will be despairing fellow-creatures ready to grasp it in a piteous call for help; well-nigh each moment that he lives may bring consolation to others from the well-springs of his freely-flowing sympathy, and there will be to himself a sense of sweetness ineffable in the consciousness that he has lessened the pangs of human misery wherever his untiring feet have turned healing the broken-hearted, loosing the bonds of the oppressed, bearing the burdens of the heavy-laden, ministering to the poverty-stricken and afflicted, shining on the darkness of mortal anguish as a ray reflected from the Incarnate Love.

Yes; there will be this one great solace to a life from which he will have rent all such joys as might have sprung from the worship of self, and if to his human nature, his personal existence, with its crushed passions, its sacrificed desires, seems almost unendurable in its monotonous hardness and gloom, yet will it be crowned with the knowledge that it has been pure and noble. This, for his outward life, but that which is unseen in its determined solitude must be wholly merged in his untiring quest. He may seem to be as other men amid the common interests and occupations round him, and only perhaps in the silence and darkness of night may he appear to be alone and separate from his kind; but day and night alike, the master thought of his one supreme desire must dominate his being, and still in moments of isolation, must his intense heart-wrung cry go up in passionate direct appeal to the Christ once dead, if indeed He be alive for evermore, to make Himself known in the deep secret of the hidden spirit as an actual Existent Reality.

X.

IF it should be that the desperate appeal is heard, that the answer comes in vital internal manifestation by spiritual perception, then let the experience of all who thus have sought and found the Christ, attest that the indomitable sense of His Presence within the actual consciousness, outweighs all the specious reasons wherewith the cavilling voices of the world would seek to prove Him non-existent. What imports the criticism of Scripture, the demonstrations of science, the arguments of Materialism, if the very Living Christ is there, manifest within the human spirit in such mysterious, unquestionable reality that if all the universe seemed crumbling into dust, the certainty of His existence would remain the Central Fact the Eternal Truth that never more could be doubted or over-borne?

If, on the other hand, through all the seeker's mortal life no such splendour of response be given to his ceaseless inward appeal if it should be that to the very end his quest seems barren of result, and no Divine Light from the Presence of the Living Christ, floods for him the black mystery of death, still it will be rest and bliss to him to feel that he dies a martyr to the cause of suffering humanity, a victim to the compassionate service of his fellow-creatures; and dying with only this for consolation, this one pure thought to sustain him, his gain is great indeed; but, inasmuch as his gaze cannot penetrate beyond the grave, in which his mortal frame will meet corruption there remains for him at least a possibility with which no scepticism or scientific arguments has power to cope at all. It may be that the glorious knowledge vainly sought and denied him here, will burst on him with deathless effulgence in the dawn of a new life, and his spirit, freed from the shackles of the flesh, will hear the Voice that cannot lie, thrilling through the waking consciousness of his emancipated

A Test of the Truth

being with the words, '**It is I, be not afraid;**' while the spiritual sight, new-born when his eyes grew dim in death, looks up to see the Form once offered in holocaust upon this earth, waiting to receive him on the eternal shore even as of old, 'When the morn was now come, Jesus stood upon the shore.'

If, as we have said, he may be counted blest who dies with only the fair retrospect of a lofty, unselfish life to shine as a bright vision of the past before his closing eyes, what human words could ever describe the overwhelming rapture that would envelop him when death had opened that upon the Throne of God, in the irreversible recognition there of the very Presence of the Living Christ, the ineffable benediction of that crown and consummation of all the elements of his being?

Well did they speak, not knowing what pregnant truths they uttered, when they said to the Christ, clothed in human form, '**All men seek Thee**'; for it is He, the Eternal Love, whom all do seek unconsciously, in their restless desire for happiness and abstract good in a thousand different forms.

The Divine element still lingering in man, however darkly it may be obscured by the corrupting animalism of the lower nature, craves instinctively for all that is pure and noble for intellectual and spiritual perfection, and in Him, the everlasting Righteousness, can it alone be found; in Him all the aspirations of our complex being have their final and perfect satisfaction, and if either in life or in death, the intense appeal feebly portrayed in these pages, has its fruition in the personal revelation of Jesus Christ, then, and then only, will that ceaseless thirst be slaked which, under manifold disguises, consumes the whole human race with its uncomprehended and intolerable desire—the thirst for the Living God:

'Quid est veritas?

Ego sum veritas.'