

# **THE REDEMPTION OF RELIGION**

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BY

CHARLES GARDNER

AUTHOR OF 'VISION AND VESTURE: A STUDY OF WILLIAM BLAKE  
IN MODERN THOUGHT,' 'THE INNER LIFE OF GEORGE  
ELIOT,' 'WILLIAM BLAKE, THE MAN'

*'The best wine is the oldest, the best water the newest.'*

WILLIAM BLAKE

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.  
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TO

THE VENERABLE ARCHDEACON LILLEY





## PREFACE

THERE are various attitudes that people to-day take towards the Higher Criticism of the Bible. The severely orthodox, of whatever school, see in it the master-stroke of Satan, once subtly hidden and calculated to catch even the elect, now openly demonstrated to be the devil's work by the downfall of the German Empire. Some, going to the other extreme, anxiously await the latest higher-critical word from Germany or France, and are tormented lest they should be supposed to believe in anything that is not perfectly new. There is a middle position. Some of us believe that the Higher Criticism has a positive value if we can only get at it. This book is my attempt to extract what I suppose to be its value.

Higher Criticism does not stand alone. It goes hand in hand with what is called Modernism. It is a theological attempt to be at one with the spirit of the age. It succeeds perfectly only at the price of ceasing to be catholic; for the catholic spirit can only live in so far as it transcends any particular age. The value of critical modernism lies in the one aspect that it has seized of the person of Jesus; its grand mistake is when it supposes that it has captured the whole Jesus.

Those who have waded through the long German lives of Jesus must often have wished, as I have, that the vast accumulations of extraneous matter could be melted down, and nothing but the outline of the story of Jesus left. Even in Schweitzer one loses the thread of the story by the repeated digressions. It occurred to me that if I could get at the higher-critical residuum, and tell the story of Jesus on that only, there might arise a fresh light on Jesus, which would be criticism's positive contribution.

This is what I have done in Chapters III and IV. Whatever value the Jesus of criticism may have, it necessarily remains partial. It is a side-light which must not oust all other lights, but may stay only if one among many. Here I am following New Testament precedent, where there is no attempt in any one book to portray the whole Jesus. The four Evangelists are each intent on one aspect, and nothing is more astonishing than their austere self-control in omitting words and deeds of Jesus that are outside of their particular purpose. The remaining letters and books are still intent on aspects, and therefore while a partial Jesus is found in each Gospel and Epistle, the whole Jesus lives only in the whole New Testament. A verbal harmony in the books is not attempted: a many-sided harmonious Jesus is reached. Critics reject much that does not harmonise verbally with their conclusions: we need reject nothing that completes our picture of Jesus. Following this method, we can accept all that is best in modernism without sacrificing anything of our larger catholic faith.

There have been many minds at work on criticism. As one studies them one becomes aware how subjective and arbitrary they usually are. This has made it difficult to decide just what is the residuum to which many critics would consent. I have trusted mainly to St Mark's Gospel, turning to St Matthew and St Luke only for supplemental touches, and to St John not at all. I have followed Schweitzer in placing the Transfiguration before Peter's confession, though I think the chief reason Schweitzer gives for his transposition invalid. I am indebted to him for interpreting sacramentally the feeding of the five thousand, and his teaching of the eschatological side of Christ's vision. But just here I have been forced to part company from him, for I cannot agree that Jesus thought only of the coming Kingdom. No doubt we, like Schweitzer, should find it difficult to discover an immanent text in the synoptics, since we may not use 'The Kingdom of God is within you'; but that is only because Jesus, like the best psalmists and prophets before Him, took the present immanence of the Divine Kingdom for granted.

Again Schweitzer sacrifices everything to his theory of the Messianic secret. But the four Gospels are unanimous in their account of a great rejection. The Gospel story turns on the fact that Jesus was manifested to Israel as the Messiah, and Israel was guilty of the mortal national sin of