



*The Saviour of the World*

Volume 5

# THE GREAT CONTROVERSY

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Charlotte Mason

This edition published 2026  
by Living Book Press  
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ISBN: 978-1-76153-866-7 (hardcover)  
978-1-76153-873-5 (softcover)

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## *The Great Controversy*

*by*

CHARLOTTE M. MASON





*Christ the Redeemer* TIZIANO VECELLIO

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## Preface

HAVING reached the middle of a great (and bold) undertaking, may I be allowed again to offer my *apologia*?

It is not because I “relish versing,” or with any hope to give pleasure to persons who care for poetry, that I am essaying to throw the life and teaching of our Lord into the form of verse; but because, under that progressive teaching which we believe is vouchsafed to the Church, a new need appears to have arisen, in response to which many efforts worthier than mine are being made.

Day by day we are taught to pray, by way of summing up all our requirements in this life, for “knowledge of Thy truth”—the prayer in the Liturgy which seems to summarise most fully our Lord’s teaching. But our practice hardly keeps pace with our prayer; we are apt to put two or three legitimate desires before what should be our primary aspiration; to *have* good—the cult of prosperity—is the prayer and effort of the natural man; to *be* good—the cult of sanctity—is the desire of the spiritually-minded; to *do* good—the cult of philanthropy—sums up the “religion of humanity”; these things we should have, be and do, but we are becoming aware that there is a further duty which we may not leave undone.

Our Lord’s promise concerning the teaching of the Holy Spirit implies this further obligation: “He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto

you.” “All,” “whatsoever,” a sort of double superlative, lays upon us the duty of detailed devout study of each one of the divine sayings; for, how can we remember that which we have not fully known?

Now, the difficulty is, the sacred text is so familiar that we take in as little of the sense in our readings as we do of the force of “good-bye” when we lightly call the phrase to one another. There are times when “good-bye” becomes a prayer, as there are moments when some word of Christ’s comes to us as direct inspiration; but to be prepared for such inspirations in many directions we must embrace in our devout studies “all things,” “whatsoever” our Lord has spoken. By way of arresting the attention of the reader upon each incident and every saying, I have ventured upon a verse rendering of the gospels, because the medium of verse seems to be at once more free and more reverent than that of prose. The approximate chronological order has been followed, because the progressive difficulty of the ideas placed before us seems to require such ordered study. I have made use throughout, with much gratitude, of *The Gospel History*<sup>1</sup> (in the words of the Revised Version), by the Rev. C. C. James.

Though with a profound sense of its inadequacy as a treatment of so great a subject, I offer this verse rendering with some confidence to devout students. Certainly, the little volumes will fulfil their purpose for those, because the effort of such students is to visualize, realize, every incident of our Lord’s life; to ponder, search after the sequence and the occasion of every short saying as of every long discourse; and, in this effort of devout study, proper for the closet, it seems to

1 Cambridge Press

me that the “marginal notes” made by a fellow-student, one who does not speak with authority, should be of use.

The student reads the text, whether a phrase or a paragraph, and ponders: the effort to hear the words of our Lord as if they were immediately spoken is not a slight one, and we are eager to see what someone else “makes of it.” At this point, if we read an authoritative exposition of the words, our inert minds are apt to subside into passivity; but a rendering, by no means authoritative, in the newer form of verse, should be stimulating: if we accept the paraphrase or comment offered in poetical form, we do so after critical examination, applying the only appropriate standard, that is, the Personality of our Blessed Lord; the intellectual labour we have given makes the conception our own, and we have gained some fragment of that knowledge which is eternal life.

If we reject the proposed rendering, we are in still better case, because we do not do so without much labour of thought as gives us another conception of the situation, another interpretation of the saying, and so our religious life becomes vivified by a further realization of the Divine Person; thus, the verse rendering will have served its purpose as a point of departure.

I think we must bear three things in mind in study of this nature: that we build upon the foundation which is laid—the teaching of the Church<sup>2</sup>—for no Scripture is of private interpretation; that we have no special thesis to advance, but are open to “receive with meekness the engrafted word”; and that our reading be not casual,—as though one were to dip here and there into a book of mathematics,—but continuous,

following the chronological order of our Lord's life rather than the sequence of events as given in any one Gospel: only so shall we be in a position to realize the progressing and cumulative character of the Christian philosophy proposed to us.

The present volume, for example, deals largely with controversial passages, which some of us are apt to put aside as irrelevant and perhaps a little tiresome! But this controversial matter makes up a large part of the "all things" "whatsoever" Christ has spoken, and a line-upon-line study here appears to disclose aspects of the divine character and teaching peculiarly suited to modern life. Christ stands before us labouring painfully and incessantly to make men *know*, understand; He tells the Jews, that truth makes a universal appeal; that every one has power to discern the truth when it is put before him; that men must before all things be candid, think sincerely. We can hardly read these chapters in St. John's Gospel devoutly and continue to allow ourselves in the random-thinking, leading to vitiated conclusion, which spoils so much of life.

Little or no attempt at textual criticism is made in these volumes, because we are probably approaching an era of yet "Higher Criticism," based upon a truer apprehension of the Divine Person; and towards this Higher Criticism every devout study is a contribution.

The part played by "the disciple" hardly requires explanation: the disciple is any devout reader of the Gospel history who must needs, inadvertently, play the part of the Greek Chorus by offering such "authentic comment" as the occasion calls for.

The Church possesses an illimitable field of literature—

sermons, commentaries, expositions, hymns,—including all the ground I am attempting to cover; but perhaps every new presentation is a gain; and it may be that the gradual progressive development of Christ's teaching can be advantageously set forth by way of paraphrase and amplification in the rarely attempted form of verse.



CONTENTS OF VOLUME I

*The Holy Infancy*

*ANGELS and prophets long had searched in vain  
Those mysteries, now, for wayfarers writ plain:*

*How Christ was born in Bethlehem of pure Maid,  
How to three kings His Rising was displayed:*

*How holy Simeon blessed Him and foretold  
His Mother's grief, He, sacrificed and sold.*

*How out of Egypt did God call His Son  
That all the prophets figured might be done.*

*How, simple Child, He dwelt in Galilee  
That simple folk His light might daily see.*

*How to Jerusalem in His twelfth year  
He went, before Jehovah to appear:*

*How there He shed His light, a duteous Boy,  
To keep the law His errand, not destroy.*

*How eighteen years of meek submission then  
Prepared Him for His labours amongst men.*

*How He went out to John to be baptised,  
And John in Him a greater recognised.*

*How in the wilderness for Forty Days  
He bare assaults of Satan. Give we praise!*

*How in Cana He made the water wine,  
That men should see of life in Him a sign,*

*How in Jerusalem quick drave He forth  
The traders and their wares—of how small worth!*

*How journeying north to Galilee once more,  
He sate and taught that Woman heavenly lore.*

*How all the men came out who heard His fame,  
And, SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD, did Him proclaim.*

*These things have we considered as we might,  
And hence would meekly follow in His light.*

CONTENTS OF VOLUME II

*His Dominion*

*CHRIST healed the rich man's son: the man believed;  
"God is a spirit," the lesson he received.*

*He preaches to His own; mad hate they bring,—  
Would from steep brow of hill the Saviour fling!*

*People who sat in darkness saw great light  
Whose brightness baffled unaccustomed sight:*

*Those fishers four on Sea of Galilee  
The fishers of the Lord were called to be:*

*At Capernaum Christ preached: the people heard,  
And knew Authority was in His word.*

*Vile spirit bade He forth in that same hour,  
And all men recognised an unknown Power.*

*Peter's wife's mother, raised from fevered bed—  
By hand that raised her would thenceforth be led.*

*“At even ere the sun was set,” they came  
To Him for healing, sick and blind, and lame.*

*Then wearied, He, a great while before day,  
Went out to desert place that He might pray.*

*The folk of Galilee would make Him King;  
He knows how little worth the praise they bring.*

*Weary with preaching, Christ bade put to sea;—  
Behold, a wondrous draught, the fishers’ fee!*

*A leper cried, Thou canst,—wilt make me clean?  
I will, saith Christ; healed, who had leprous been!*

*Levi took customs’ dues by the seaside,  
And when the Master called, he straight replied.*

*His Jews rejected for hypocrisy;  
Too skilled in subterfuge, what hope have we?*

*Man at Bethesda’s pool so long had lain—  
The Lord who healed him to betray was fain!*

*Christ taught,—the Father and the Son were One  
In words They spake, in all works They had done.*

*On the Son the royal crown of judgment set;—  
He learned the ways of men, nor would forget:*

*In Him was Life; and all the souls that live  
Draw breath from Him, to Him their praises give.*

*The Law, the prophets, witness; to each heart,  
The Father testifies, and shows his part.*

*Thy Jews condemned, grant us, good Lord, to heed—  
Unstable in our faith, slack in our deed!*

*Christ walked in cornfield on the Sabbath day,  
And set men free from bondage whilst they pray.*

*He instantly the withered hand restores,  
And, grieved, the Rulers' faithlessness deplores.*

*Once more to fair Gennesareth He came,  
And multitudes drew nigh, with love aflame.*

*Our Founder chose the Twelve, and laid them, sure  
Stones to sustain that Church which shall endure.*

*He charged them; told them, how the poor are blest;  
How persecutions should their lives molest:*

*Taught them the brother-secret; how to give;  
How with all men as brothers they should live.*

*Of blind man led by blind man, cupboard's store,  
Of building House of Faith, He told them more:*

*And then He climbed the Mount that all might hear,—  
That multitude had come from far and near:*

*“Blessed are they that mourn,” He told the sad;—  
With promise of the Father’s care made glad.*

*Chaste must they be and kind and guard their speech;—  
For God’s own holiness is in man’s reach.*

*He taught men how to give their alms, to pray;  
And all their anxious fears to put away.*

*Behold, the Church He founded on that day  
Received those Institutes should guide her Way.*

*The people heard, and hardly understood,  
But knew the Word He spake was very good;*

*Perceived Authority in every word  
And fain would bear due fruit of that they’d heard.*

CONTENTS OF VOLUME III

*The Kingdom of Heaven*

*THE centurion, begging that the Lord would heal  
His suffering servant, did great faith reveal.*

*Behold, with joy return the mourning train  
Come forth to bury that young man of Nain.*

*The prisoner, John, makes question by his friends;  
News of His works, the answer Jesus sends.*

*“What went ye to the wilderness to see?”  
Cried Jesus, praising John’s fidelity.*

*A woman anoints His feet with costly nard;  
Christians shall know thy deed—her great reward.*

*He walks in Galilee, and women tend,  
And gladly of their substance on Him spend.*

*The sower sowed in various kinds of ground;  
The Lord to hearts of men a likeness found.*

*Who knows the things of God and doth not tell,  
Like him who hides a lamp, doth not do well.*

*Together are let grow the wheat and tares,  
Till each kind to its place the reaper bears.*

*Thou think'st to watch the growing of the seed?  
A secret, that,—so by God's will decreed.*

*A grain of mustard-seed, so small to see,  
May yet become a mighty sheltering tree,*

*Thou'st found a treasure? Go and sell thine all,  
Ere thou this treasure all thine own may'st call.*

*The woman hid the leaven in her flour;  
The Word hid in a heart shall rise with power.*

*A merchant came upon a pearl of price  
And forthwith bought—by liberal device.*

*And, "Have ye understood?" the Saviour cried;  
"Yea, Lord," they said, but in their lives denied.*

*"Thy mother and Thy brethren would Thee see;"  
"These be My kinsfolk—they who follow Me."*

*Proud Nazareth rejected Him who came  
To save the humble: Do not we the same?*

*Jesus came walking o'er the stormy sea;  
His friends, relieved, were there—where they would be.*

*The demoniac raged as fierce as angry storm;  
Christ spake,—and meek he sat who'd wrought such  
harm.*

*The little maid was raised by Jesus' hand:  
“Now, see ye no man tell,” the Lord's command.*

*A woman crept behind and healing took;  
Christ made her happy by a pitying look.*

*Two blind men came and cried on Him for sight:  
The Lord restored to these the joys of light.*

*A dumb deaf man sat moody by the way;—  
Christ taught dumb lips to praise His name that day.*

*The time had come to send the Twelve abroad,—  
Bless'd messengers to carry forth the Word.*

*As father charges son would cross the seas,  
So Christ, their Father, gave His charge to these.*

*“Dangers I see await you on your way;—  
Be prudent, friends, and bide a better day.*

*But have no fear; knows not your Father all  
Of good or ill His children shall befall?*

*Yet ye must bear the cross, nor shrink in shame  
From any obloquy or any blame.*

*Of this be sure, whoever you befriends,  
Your Father in heaven will make that man amends.”*

*Forth fared the Twelve in pairs to do His will,  
And as they went, the Lord was with them still.*

*With joy these men returned to shew their Lord  
How it had prospered with the seed, His Word.*

*Now, John the Baptist prisoned in strong tower  
To chide the king has used a prophet's power:*

*The king sware foolish oath to grant what boon  
The princess asked of him; vindictive, soon—*

*“Give me John Baptist's head,” she cried; and, lo,  
The sorry king bade armed men to go*

*And bring the prophet's head. The news was brought  
To John's disciples; quick they Jesus sought*

*And told their grief to Him, “Come ye apart,”  
Saith Christ to the weary Twelve; with tender heart*

*They follow Him and tell what things befel  
In all the cities—whether ill or well.*

CONTENTS OF VOLUME IV

*The Bread of Life*

*“COME ye apart into a desert place:”  
But, quick the folk the Master’s steps to trace:*

*All day the Master spake; the people heard,  
And hungered while they listened to the Word.*

*“Give them to eat,” He said: and one produced  
A meal scarce more than one to eat was used.*

*Christ blessed and gave to all that multitude  
And all were filled with meat—and gratitude.*

*He bade His friends take ship; then sent away  
The folk, and climbed the mountain there to pray.*

*A storm arose; He looked and saw them row  
Their little craft while wild the winds did blow.*

*He walks upon the sea; they take Him in;  
Instant, subsides the tempest’s fearful din.*

*Next day the people seek Him in the place  
Where He had fed them amply by His grace.*

*Returned, they question Him; and mysteries,—  
The work of God, the bread of God,—to these*

*Unlearned He discloses; shows them how  
God gave the manna as He feeds men now.*

*Having made plain that life-sustaining bread  
Must ever come from God, He turned and said,—*

*“I am the bread of life; who eats of Me,  
That man alone eternal life shall see.”*

*His disciples were offended: “How can He  
Give us His flesh to eat? Can such thing be?”*

*Many forsook Him and fled; the Lord was grieved:  
“Will ye, too, go away?” they who believed*

*Were asked in sadness: one stood up and said,—  
“Thou hast the words by which a man is led*

*In the ways of life; to whom then should we go?”  
Peter, that happy saint who answered so.*

*“Nay, you Twelve have I chosen, and one of you  
Is a devil:” said the Lord, whose word is true.*



*HE told of things which most defile a man;  
Not casual soil, but evil which he can*

*Conceal in his heart while outwardly he's clean;  
But his foul secret thoughts by God are seen.*

*Nor shall one unto God that portion give  
Which he owes to his father—that the man may live.*

*He journeyed northwards to the coasts of Tyre;  
A woman came with passionate desire*

*That He would heal her daughter, sorely vexed;  
Nor at His chiding did she go perplexed,*

*But spake that word of faith the Lord approved,  
And He healed the little daughter whom she loved.—*

*“The dogs,” she said, “the crumbs that fall may eat,”  
And Christ received her at His mercy-seat.*

*A dumb-deaf man they brought; He touched his tongue;  
“He hath done all things well!” —the people sung.*

*Again, a desert place the Saviour sought;  
The people followed and their sick folk brought.*

*Three days they listened to the Master's Word;  
Ah, blessed folk who on the mountain heard!*