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CHRIST

AND

THE ETERNAL ORDER

"In whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden"

BY

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TO MY FATHER

WHO FIRST AWOKE IN ME THE IMPULSE TO FAITH
AND FIRST LED ME TO PERCEIVE THE
NOBILITY AND OPPORTUNITY
OF THEOLOGY

PREFACE

ALMOST from boyhood the writer has been concerned in finding a mental setting for Jesus Christ. Sometimes it has been a disturbing, but more often a stimulating, problem. The problem arose apparently from the absorption of his earlier religious life in God as Presence and Father, and the difficulty in finding such a place beside him for Christ as the Bible and the Church seemed to require. For a time the words, "Believe in God, believe also in me," afforded temporary standing-room. The first clear light on the intellectual problem came, after entering the ministry, through reading Frederick Denison Maurice's Theological Essays, in connection with the words in Colossians, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." The result was a great illumination of mind and uplift of heart. The difficulty of accounting for Christ in the contrasted aspects of his historical limitation and his universal significance largely disappeared. The conclusions reached were presented in an article entitled "The Indwelling Christ," published in *The Andover Review* for August, 1891, and met with a very warm response. The substance of this article is included in Chapter II, Part III of this volume. The conception was but germinal and needed time for development and that adjustment to theological

movements and systems which the present study aims to give.

In coming into an ever larger conception of the meaning of Christ and of his relation to God and to humanity, I have been most largely indebted to two men,—the late honored and beloved Professor Egbert C. Smyth, learned interpreter and earnest defender of the Incarnation, and Dr. George A. Gordon, theologian and preacher, friend and inspirer of those who are searching for an ampler conception of Christianity. Into the labors of many others also I have entered, as will appear in the pages that follow, and that not without the keen sense of privilege which must come to one who is working in any department of truth to-day.

In treating such a theme as this, one cannot but feel sometimes that he has transgressed the wisdom of the Psalmist who said, "Neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too wonderful for me." But with all the consciousness of the limitation of knowledge and the inadequate results of our efforts to attain and to express ultimate truth, one cannot but feel also that along with the "dust and chaff" of speculation he gathers enough of real truth to reward the endeavor and to prove the instinct which impels us to seek an answer to the great mysteries of life and God and destiny to be a divine impulse.

Perhaps the best recommendation this book could have is that it is open to the charges both of mysti-

cism and of rationalism; for the two tendencies counteract one another, and a theology which is not both mystical and rational is not a fair interpretation of Christian faith.

If there is any note of dogmatism or of speculative presumption here, it is repudiated at the outset. In discussions of this nature, to lay down any challenge of "thus and thus it must be" is both irreverence and folly. One can be very sure only of principles of reason and facts of experience. Interpretations of these facts can be rational and helpful only as they are tentative and suggestive. As such they have both validity and value.

In concluding this prefatory word let me say that this interpretation of the Christ has not been made from a partisan or one-sided view-point. It is useless to prop up any theology which does not rest upon secure foundations. I have faced both sides of this question. I share sufficiently the spirit of the age to feel keenly the difficulties of the New Testament Christology. It would be much easier, and apparently much more scientific and sensible, to throw aside all the supernatural and metaphysical elements of Christianity and explain Christ simply as a very good man with only a very good man's significance in a revelation which has no particular historical culmination. But would it be true to the facts? That is the vital question. Truth that is exclusive and not inclusive, that sacrifices reality to clarity, that blinks the harder

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facts and ignores the deeper meanings, is no truth. It is only the shallow verdict of a self-sufficient and pseudo-scientific age-spirit. We ought not to decide this Christological problem without getting as near as possible to the absolute human viewpoint, independent of the presuppositions of either the first century or of our own. When, therefore, we find that on the whole the major witness of the mind of humanity, in its most enlightened part, has recognized supernatural, or better, mystical elements in Christianity, we may well hesitate before eradicating them in obedience to the impulse of our time. If we do, we shall surely pave the way for the misgivings of Bishop Blougram,

> "Once feel about, and soon or late you hit
> Some sense, in which it might be, after all.
> Why not, 'The Way, the Truth, the Life'?"

Truth is too large, life is too real, mystery is too great for snap judgments, either by an individual or a generation, especially judgments of denial or exclusion. Far better is it, and far truer, to believe too much than too little, to unduly greaten Christ, if that is possible, than to unduly narrow him.

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PART I

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

"This teacher was reason itself, it was visible in him and indeed appeared bodily in him." — JUSTIN MARTYR.

"With Clement of Alexandria, the idea of the Logos has a content which is on the one hand so wide that he is found wherever man rises above the level of nature, and on the other so concrete that an authentic knowledge of him can only be obtained from historical revelation."— ADOLF HARNACK, *History of Dogma*, Vol. II.

"That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Become my universe that feels and knows!"

— ROBERT BROWNING, *Epilogue*.

"What we want is not a summation of doctrine. We have had enough of that. What we want a great deal more is something to give us breadth of standing and a greater vitality of idea." — HORACE BUSHNELL, *Life and Letters*.

"Ring in the Christ that is to be." — ALFRED TENNYSON.

CHRIST
AND THE ETERNAL ORDER

I
THE CHRISTOLOGY OF TO-DAY

WE face vital issues in Christology. There is perplexity, uncertainty, confusion. Divergent theories, varying attitudes prevail. Agnosticism looks upon Christ with a respectful pity, as one prattling innocently of a God of whom he knew nothing; Monism, the Mysticism of modern science, absorbed in cosmic secrets, feeling after the Unknown, ignores Christ; Naturalism promptly classifies him with the *genus homo* and queries no further; Humanitarianism honors his humanity, and is blind to himself; Philosophy and Ethics pay tribute to his teaching and fail to apprehend the Teacher; the older Orthodoxy clings desperately to outgrown formulas of his Deity, convinced of standing fast for a truth that it can neither relate nor define, yet conscious of the antiquity of its armor and the inadequacy of its defense. The scholarship of the Church is absorbed with questions concerning the literary sources of his life and with problems connected with its historical presentation.[1] And all the time the Living Christ moves

Present-day Christology

[1] "The unsatisfactoriness of the present teaching, which leaves us only Jesus of Nazareth, is becoming more and more

among men, and they find in him the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

A Question that will not be put aside

So long as Christ has not only personal pre-eminence, but the power of saving men, the question will be, must be, asked: Whence has he this power, what is the secret of his life-giving personality, why does he continue so to dominate our modern thought and ideals? Is it a fictitious and failing hold that he has upon us, or is it real and vital and destined to be controlling? If so, what is the secret? *What think ye of Christ?* The question presses and burns, and refuses to be put aside. Thinking men must meet it, meet it anew in this day, and strive to answer it in the light of enlarged conceptions of God and of man and of the universe.

I

The Christocentric Theology, and its arrested Progress

The most virile and hopeful movement in modern theology is what is known as the *Christocentric Theology*.[1] Largely the outgrowth of modern study of the Gospels and of the Historic Christ, it has laid hold of the true worth and significance of Jesus Christ with an insight and a power that have aroused attention and produced conviction. But it has failed to move onward beyond a certain

apparent from day to day."—Pres. Charles Cuthbert Hall, *The Universal Elements of the Christian Religion*, p. 144.

[1] A historical sketch of the Chistocentric Theology will be found in the Appendix.

range of affirmation. The principle has been clearly stated, the method justified, the sufficiency of the Christ personality demonstrated, but progress is arrested. It still remains to show how nature and humanity are to be interpreted through Christ. The Christocentric theology is at a standstill, and for this reason: *The Historic Christ* (to whom the modern Christocentric thought has confined itself) *alone is insufficient to interpret either humanity or nature.* The difficulty is that nature and humanity were here before Jesus. Unless, therefore, Jesus was intimately related to a Logos, who was before him, nature and humanity explain him, rather than he them. With a thrill of insight and joy, the new theology has caught the universal significance of Jesus as the new science of history has disclosed him. Not until the evolutionary principle had reconstructed the conception of history was it possible to realize how commanding and constructive a place Jesus Christ occupies in human history. It is no wonder that the new theology, smitten with the splendor and significance of this new disclosure of the centrality of Jesus, has confined its attention to this illuminating fact, and failed to coordinate with it the fact of the presence of a religious nature and a spiritual Presence in humanity before the Incarnation.[1]

[1] The Ritschlian theology is surprisingly narrow and short-sighted here. "The distinction," says Kaftan, "drawn

It is this limitation of view, this concentration upon the historic and individual in Christ, to the neglect of the inner, eternal, less definable, more universal in him, that has caused the reluctance and protest, which have all along accompanied the new theology, on the part of many philosophical and comprehensive minds. If Christianity can be wholly reduced to historic terms and centered in Jesus Christ, what of those fundamental and underlying elements in Christianity which are common to all religions, and which seem to be an innate possession of the human soul, a part of man so far as he can be detached from a historic setting?

The Defect of the Christocentric Theology

The time has come when the Christocentric theology must either enlarge its conception and its interpretation of Christ, or surrender its position. In order to be the center of the historic movement, Christ must be more than this; he must be the center and power of the whole sphere of the religious life of man, Christian and non-Christian, past and future, elemental and developed, primitive and perfected.

Thus are we led, just as inevitably as the Christian thought of the first century was led, from the Historic Christ to the Eternal Christ, from the Christ of Experience to the Logos, — showing that

> between a historical and ideal Christ involves the destruction of our faith in the Christian revelation." (*Dogmatik*, p. 404.)

Christianity involves, necessitates, such a development.

There are two equally characteristic and significant facts about the gospel — the simplicity that is in Christ and the profundity that is in Christ. Side by side with the simple story of the Man of Galilee are the mystic, far-reaching intuitions of Paul and of the authors of the Fourth Gospel and of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Cut out one or the other presentation and the New Testament is shorn either of its simplicity or of its splendor.

II

Whatever the origin of the Logos doctrine, whether it came from the Greek mind or the Jewish, or both, through Plato or the Stoics, or Philo, matters comparatively little. The value lies in the idea itself, as it meets a universal conviction of the human mind in its searching into the relation of humanity to God. Greek, Jew, Oriental, Western, first century or fourth century or twentieth century, — so that a theology think itself through concerning Jesus Christ, it comes to much the same conviction of the divineness of humanity and the humanness of God, as both truths stand out strong and clear in the revealing personality of Christ.

The Value of the Logos Doctrine

Neither the phenomenal, uncorrelated Christ of Ritschlianism, having the worth of God and representing him to men, yet not himself divine, nor

the racial prototype of Schleiermacher and others, "a man in advance of his age and surroundings, so exceptional in moral development and consciousness as to become and remain a guide and example to his fellow men in all religious faith and conduct,"[1] will satisfy Christian thought. Such tentative, makeshift conceptions of Christ will serve only for transition purposes. We must move on, either into the naturalistic interpretation of Jesus as a singularly good man but without racial significance, or into a reaffirmation and reinterpretation of the Logos doctrine in terms of modern thinking.

Transition Christology

III

This volume is an essay in the direction of the adaptation of the fundamental truth of the older Christology to the atmosphere and interests of the present day. Ever since the rise of Ritschlianism in Germany and the publication of the Hibbert Lectures of Edwin Hatch in England, the tendency has been to abjure the metaphysical element in Christianity and to exalt the historical and ethical. The movement has been healthful, invigorating, clarifying, restoring a long-disturbed balance. But it has been a movement of protest, built upon a narrow foundation, and its limitations are becoming more and more apparent. Minds of a certain type

Christianity is Philosophy as well as History and Ethics

[1] *Evolution of Trinitarianism*, L. L. Paine, p. 282.

chafe and are restive under its restrictions. For such at least a larger interpretation of Christ is essential. But must we then say that it is all a matter of temperament, and that the best that can be done is to consign the historical Christ to the man of the practical temperament and the mystical Christ to the man of the mystical temperament and so have done with the problem? Rather, shall we not say that Christianity is so comprehensive in its scope, and the Christ so sufficient and significant, that he not only meets the need of every type of mind, but that he unites all moral and spiritual values so harmoniously and consistently that every man may recognize in him not only his own especial need but also something of what his fellow finds?

This is the conviction and purpose with which this book is sent forth. It is an endeavor to delineate the Greater Christ. If the aspects of Christ presented seem so many as to be confusing it is only because his import is so large and his potencies are so rich. If the historical aspect of Christ is subordinated to the spiritual and eternal it is only because the Historical Christ is now attracting an attention that is too exclusive to be comprehensive. For it is only in relation to the eternal that the true values of history can be apprehended, just as it is only in history that we can recognize the true values of eternity.

II

REVELATION: PROGRESSIVE AND FINAL

RELIGION involves revelation. Otherwise it is purely one-sided and subjective, a bird with a broken wing. The outgoing of God to man, the impartation of the Divine to the human, is revelation. Unless there had been revelation from the very beginning of human life, preceding and initiating it, religion could have been only a human product and must have withered away, root and branch. For religion is either a divine-human mutuality, or it is a colossal human self-deception. And such a self-deception must have long since worn out. The very survival of religion, if not its very existence, implies revelation.

I

Revelation is multiform. The channels of the divine communication are rich and varied. Life is revealing; nature is revealing; reason, inspiration, conscience are revealing. God touches man at as many points and through as many media as man touches God. Always the relation is reciprocal. Always on the

Revelation multiform

part of God it is revelation, and on the part of man religion. "Revelation," it has been well said, "is but the obverse of discovery. No truth is ever revealed to an intelligence except as it is discovered;" nor is any truth discovered except as it is revealed.

Revelation is universal. Revelation is not confined to any one people or age. It is as impartial as the sunlight.

"Love works at the center,
Heart-heaving alway;
Forth speed the strong pulses
To the borders of day."[1]

Men were not seeking God vainly in the pre-christian centuries. Revelation reached to the Aztec and the Chinaman, as well as to the Greek and the Jew. It flowed forth with the stream of Time; it flows to-day. The light dawned with the dawning of intelligence. Through the muddy vesture of human ignorance and superstition it long glowed but dimly, but the light itself was the pure flame of eternal truth.

Revelation impartial

But, though revelation is universal, it is not uniform. God has ever been impartial, but never undiscriminating. Races differ, religions diverge, revelation varies. Certain truths possess certain nations. Racial capacities are unlike. All cups are filled, but all are not of the same shape or capacity. God has

Revelation discriminative

[1] Emerson, "*The Sphinx*."

some nations, as he has some souls, "whom he whispers in the ear," not that they may keep the secret to themselves, but that they may impart it to others. Revelation is for transmission, as election is for service.

II

May we not take another step and say that, as revelation, though universal, is nevertheless discriminative and comes to different races in differing forms and degrees, so to two or three races especially, and to one supremely, God revealed himself, in order thus to impart himself most fully and most normally to humanity at large?

Revelation selective

Until the later years of the last century it was customary to magnify the revelation to the Jews by disparaging, or denying, revelation to other peoples. Now that the study of religion has shown the reality and extent of the divine revelation to many peoples, — and in some measure to all, — the superiority of the Hebrew religion can be made evident only by comparison, no longer simply by contrast. It is by such comparison, free and fair and impartial, and by that only, that the true splendor and scope of the revelation of the divine glory and righteousness to Israel appears. Compared with the imperfect conceptions of other races, the truth reached by the Hebrew

prophets (but reached only by revelation) is so transcendent in its nature as to justify calling it, not the only, but the *highest*, revelation of God to any people. This is simply induction from literature and history, and not mere assumption in behalf of a theory. The superiority of the Hebrew conception of God is a demonstrable fact. And the inference is natural, if not inevitable, that the superiority is due, not simply to greater achievement, but also to a unique and gracious revelation on the part of God.

III

One more step makes our ascent complete. If the Divine Being may reasonably have revealed himself with especial clearness and fulness to and through one nation, may he not as reasonably have revealed himself yet more fully to and through one individual — still for the sake of humanity? Can any form of revelation conceivable be as pure, as persuasive, as perfect, as incarnation? Detach the question, as far as possible, from its connection with Christ and consider it by itself.

Revelation through an Individual

Besides incarnation in an individual, there are but three other forms which revelation could conceivably take for its ultimate expression. Granted that revelation is progressive, it must culminate either in a direct communication from above, or in

nature, or in incarnation, general or individual. Revelation by direct communication, oral or written, appeals to the uncultured mind as quite the most complete and convincing method possible. A Koran from heaven, commandments graven on tablets of stone, an infallible Bible — such, to the unthinking mind, seems the only infallible, absolutely satisfying method of revelation. But a moment's consideration of the rigidity and inadequacy of language displays the defect of such a method. The provincialism and hollowness and unreality which would inevitably attach to it show it unworthy of a God whose thoughts are high above our thoughts and his ways above our ways.

When we turn to nature it is at once evident that while nature affords a constant and cumulative revelation of God, it does not constitute the highest, the complete revelation. If there is harmony in nature there is also discord; if there is beauty there is also ugliness; if there is evolution there is also devolution; if there is life there is also death. It is conceivable that nature might have been constituted without these defects, but it is questionable how far a flawless creation would meet the needs of our moral nature in the struggle for character. A perfected nature goes best, as Paul saw, with a perfected humanity. There is enough in nature of sublimity and beauty to reveal God increasingly to men, but nature herself is not, and could not be, so perfect

Nature inadequate for Revelation

a medium of revelation — so truly *capax Dei* — as humanity.

Humanity as a whole inadequate for a Perfect Revelation

Coming to humanity, then, as alone capable of affording the highest revelation of God, the question at once arises whether national, racial or individual incarnation offers the purest, most responsive and most intensive medium for the divine purpose. A chosen nation, as we have already seen, constitutes a natural and effective instrument of revelation, but one that must in the nature of the case have limitations. A peculiar people, peculiarly endowed and enlightened, is intelligible, but a perfect people in whom God is perfectly incarnated would be an abnormal spectacle that would alienate the world rather than save it. Only figuratively and by analogy can God be said to have incarnated himself in Israel. And only thus, too, can he be said to have incarnated himself in the race as a whole. The idea of *humanity* as the incarnation of God has of late gained increasing favor. In a sense it is a true and fruitful conception. God is in humanity, in men of all times and races, revealing himself as virtue, truth and love. But only in a secondary and figurative sense can this be called incarnation. There is a mingling of baser elements with finer, of earthy with spiritual, of satanic with divine, in humanity which makes it incompetent to speak of humanity as the incarnation of God in any reasonably exact sense. Panthe-

ism alone can make humanity, as a whole, wholly divine by breaking down all distinctions between divine and human, good and evil.

IV

Only a Person can reveal a Person

It is only in a single life, unitary in its purity and radiance, all-embracing in its winsomeness and sympathy, that we can hope to find a true incarnation, a perfect revelation of God, in his human kinship and character. Given such a life, and a true knowledge of God and an assured confidence in him follow. Personality alone suffices. Only a person can reveal a person. If God is personal, nothing less than a personal being can reveal him as he is. Nature may reveal certain of his qualities and attributes; humanity in its corporate and superior life may disclose even more of his nature; but only a person, conscious, clear-souled, perfect, can reveal his very Self. "It is no more unworthy of God," says Athanasius, "that he should incarnate himself in one man, than it is that he should dwell in the world. Since he abides in humanity, which is a part of the universe, it is not unreasonable that he should take up his abode in a man, who should thus become the organ by which God acts in the universal life."[1] Whether such a Revealer must of necessity be human or divine,

[1] *De Incarnatione Verbi.*

or both, is a question that cannot be settled abstractly. The first task of Theology is to focus all its light, concentrate all its attention upon the individual man whom history furnishes as the only possible claimant of such a prerogative and, without prejudice or passion, ascertain whether he bears the marks, carries the strength, and exhibits the grace necessary to the fulfilment of so solitary and sublime a mission.

III

THE CHRISTOCENTRIC VIEW-POINT

CHRISTIAN Theology should begin where the Christian religion began — with Christ. He is the radiating center of both. Theology, of course, precedes Christ, just as does religion. Yet both were made new in him. As a matter of fact we cannot divest ourselves of our Christianity in studying theology. We are Christian by environment, whether we are such by conviction or not. We may make pretense to be unaffected by Christian conceptions, and beginning where the untutored savage began, with Natural Theology, ask what are the evidences of God in nature (a question, however, which the primitive man never asked), pass from Natural Theology, as most systems of theology do, to the Bible as a source of revelation, thence to the doctrine of God as a Trinity, thence to anthropology, and so at length arrive at Christ.

Christ the starting-point for Christian Theology

I

Such a method, although it has the seeming advantage of following and repeating, after a

fashion, the racial experience in reaching Christ, is nevertheless both unreal and irrational. For, in the first place, the racial process cannot be reproduced in one nurtured in Christian truth and standing upon a higher level of revelation. He may look back, but he cannot go back, over the course of development. Moreover, to ignore our vantage-ground, to defer the study of Christ until after the study of nature, of God and of man, is to fail to make use of our chief source of illumination. It is like hunting in the dark when a light is at hand. "To build up a professedly revealed theology on a professedly natural one is to construct a system without either unity or profound connection," wrote Sabatier.

The True Order too long reVersed

The mind of Christ colors, even if it does not shape, all our thought of God, of nature and of humanity. For the mind of Christendom is, at least partially and professedly, the mind of Christ. The true method of theology, therefore, is to go first to the Christ, — the ultimate fact of Christianity, the clearest, strongest Light upon the whole religious horizon, — determine, so far as possible, what this Light is, whence it is, how far it throws its beams, and then, if it prove a true Light, to study God, nature and humanity in the illumination of its rays. In other words, Christian Theology should be Christocentric.

Using the Light we have

It is strange how slow we have been in coming to this view-point, or rather in coming back to it, for it was that of the early fathers, as well as of the apostles. "Men still believe," says Dr. McConnell, "that 'belief in God' is a prerequisite, preparing the way for one who would be Christ's disciple. They, therefore, with well-meaning folly, assault the mind with 'evidences.' They would establish first the being of God by means of arguments drawn from nature, from history, from intuition, from the reasonableness of things. They would first discover God, then introduce Christ as his Son, and prove the relationship. They strangely fail to note that should they be successful in the preliminary task, Christ becomes superfluous. It exactly reverses his method. For 'no one knoweth . . . the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him.'"[1]

The return to a Truer Method

That theology is slowly but surely adjusting itself to the Christocentric view-point, making him central in form who is central in fact, is as clear as it is hopeful. It means the coming of Christianity to a new and deeper self-consciousness, a fresh sense of the reserves of truth and power which lie in the simple but profound evangel.

If it be asked what gain will accrue from the

[1] *Christ*, p. 206.

Christologizing of theology, the answer is, gain in the direction of unity, of reality and of progress.

II

That theology needs unifying, hardly admits of question. As theology broadens and becomes more comprehensive with enlarging scientific knowledge, the need of a unifying principle becomes more and more evident. Most of the great systems of theology have been attempts at unification. They have failed because they have sought unity in system rather than in personality. Cumbrous systems centering in the sovereignty of God, or human sin, or the divine authority of the Church, or the Bible, must give place to the unifying and harmonizing personality of Christ, unfolding, in its revelation of God, the relations and proportions of truth. "The principal content of Christianity," said Schelling, "is first, Christ himself, not what he said, but what he is and did." To limit the principal content of Christianity to Christ himself might seem to involve a meager and restricted theology. On the contrary the implications of Christ's personality are incomparably rich and replete. From him, as a center, lines of suggestion and interpretation extend in every direction, Godward, manward, natureward. Toward him all problems point, all paths converge. The unity which results

How to unify Theology

from making him central is a unity of simplicity, yet one of incomparable comprehensiveness, coherence and harmony, a unity in which all truths find their order, all legitimate interests their proportionate value, all right activities their true place and meaning.

III

The Christologizing of theology means, also, the imparting of new reality to theology. The

How to make Theology real

disposition on the part of theology to drift into remote seas of abstraction and speculation is all too apparent. It is this that has made theology "caviare to the general"; this that has made its voice thin and querulous and dogmatic. Men ask for the note of vitality, of sincerity, of reality, in theology. "When theology is made to square with life," said Conan Doyle, "I will read it up." Countless signs today point to personality as the key to reality. It is time that theology concerned itself less with the divine attributes and the human will and the two natures of Christ, and more with the God who has attributes and the man who has a will, or is a will, and the Christ whose personality is of far more concern than his nature. It is true that personality itself is the greatest of all problems and leads far into the realm of metaphysics and psychology, and the courageous mind cannot content itself

with any taboo which curtails its freedom or any tether which limits its range of thought. But in dealing with personality, the mind grasps a reality whose atmosphere attends it in its most remote and difficult adventures into the mystery which enfolds all that is most real. The fact and meaning of personality nowhere stand out so vividly and so completely as in Jesus Christ. He is the most real person of history, in puissance and permanence. He offers the richest study in personality that humanity presents. He is a real problem and not an academic one. No question is at once so fascinating and so vital as the problem of his personality. The theology that centers in him cannot but be real.

IV

The Christologizing of theology also promises *progress.* If Christianity is a revelation, progress must come through the unfolding of its content, not through successive accretions. Right here lies the crux of the question of the absoluteness of Christianity. If Christianity simply introduces and inaugurates a new religious era in which the Spirit continually opens new truth, not contained in germ in the original revelation of the incarnate Son, then the claim for Christianity of absoluteness and finality must be relinquished.

The true Progress of Christianity an unfolding Revelation not a Series of Advances

If, on the other hand, the incarnation is central in its significance and inexhaustible in its content, if in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, then Christianity is absolute and final, and progress consists in the development of its content, the unfolding of its implications and its applications. Modern thought demands a choice between these alternative conceptions, and the future of Christianity depends largely upon the decision. This is the problem which Robert Browning raises and resolves in *A Death in the Desert.* He presents first, the view which makes Christianity a stage in the divine revelation:

> "I say that man was made to grow, not stop;
> That help, he needed once, and needs no more,
> Having grown but an inch by, is withdrawn:
> For he hath new needs, and new helps to these.
> This imports solely, man should mount on each
> New height in view; the help whereby he mounts,
> The ladder-rung his foot has left, may fall,
> Since all things suffer change save God the Truth.
> Man apprehends him newly at each stage
> Whereat earth's ladder drops, its service done;
> And nothing shall prove twice what once was proved."

To this the aged John replies:

> "This might be pagan teaching: now hear mine.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ
> Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
> All questions in the earth and out of it,
> And has so far advanced thee to be wise."

Here we have, set over against one another, in their true antithesis: Christianity relative and Christianity absolute, Christianity partial and Christianity final, progress through an advancing revelation and progress through an unfolding revelation. If the former alternative is accepted, the personality of Christ is but a secondary and comparatively inconsequential factor, revelation is a process of which Christianity is only a stage, not the culmination, and advancing truth leaves Christ behind. If the latter alternative be the true one, Christianity is the absolute religion, the all-inclusive revelation, the Person of Christ is central in human life, and progress in theology consists in the Christologizing of doctrine, the interpretation of the universe in relation to the incarnate Son of God.

The alternatives

IV

CHRIST INTERPRETING GOD

JESUS revealed the divine Fatherhood. The substance of the doctrine lay in the dim disclosures of earlier revelations; the doctrine itself came with Jesus Christ. "In the distinctive peculiarity of that conception lay the root of all the new elements of his teaching,"[1] says Wendt. This is but the confirmation at the hands of thorough-going scholarship of the swift intuition of Renan: "God conceived immediately as Father — this is the whole theology of Jesus." It is this which Harnack, too, finds to be the essence of Christianity, although he, also, does scant justice to the personality through whom the great truth came.[2]

"Our Father"

Not that in point of originality this truth of divine Fatherhood was absolutely new with Jesus, but in potentiality and in universality it was new with him. No one before Jesus, Jew or pagan, had ever made it a vital, personal, practical reality. No one before him had given it universal significance and appli-

Divine Fatherhood a new Truth with Jesus

[1] *Teachings of Jesus*, Vol. I, p. 184.

[2] See the appendix for a discussion of the Harnack controversy.

cation. It is true that if we look for a declamatory, dogmatic assertion of the universality of the divine Fatherhood in the words of Jesus we shall look in vain, but it pervades his whole teaching, as the dawn pervades the sky, silently, serenely, splendidly.

I

Whence did Jesus derive this truth of the divine Fatherhood? Partly through the ancient normal medium of social, national, parental instruction. But this teaching alone, though passed through the alembic of religious genius and raised to the highest level of the prophet, fails to account for the intensity and confidence with which Jesus realized this truth. Nothing less than a unique religious consciousness will suffice. Great truths do not originate in small souls. They are not guesses, nor surmises, nor happy hits. Men do not gather grapes from thorns, nor figs from thistles. The man through whom humanity entered into its richest experience of God can hardly have been less than holy, guileless, undefiled, a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, one to whom we may apply every term of endearment and homage without fear or constraint. From the character of his mission, from the quality of his personality and from the quiet confidence of his own words concerning himself (*e. g.* Matt. 11 : 27) we are impelled to find in him a sonship peculiar to himself.

"No man knoweth the Father but the Son"

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"No man knoweth the Father but he Son"

II

But if God was Father to Jesus Christ in an especial sense and manner, does not that make him somewhat less than a Father to us? Rather, it is through Jesus Christ that he is a perfect Father to us. The relationship, like that of friendship, is mutual. The father who has an only son who is disobedient and rebellious may learn through suffering love a great deal of what fatherhood means, but if he had a son who was in perfect concord and sympathy with him he would know a great deal more of the meaning of fatherhood through such a son. It may be that God can be a perfect Father to us only because he has a perfect Son. He is a perfect Father to us, as well as to his only begotten Son, — so far as our imperfection and sin permit the relationship to be perfect. The father in the parable was a truer father to the prodigal because he had an elder son who was ever with him.

Perfect Fatherhood requires perfect Sonship

With this truth of perfect Fatherhood through perfect Sonship there enters inevitably the real essence of the Trinitarian conception, namely, the existence of a wealth of life, of love, of relationship in the Being of God such as no naked numerical unity, no solitude of absoluteness, no closed circle of existence will express. To assert that the same human qualities — the best of them — which we find in

Fatherhood and the Trinity

ourselves are also in God, raised to their perfection, is to differentiate the Being of God. For there certainly must be other qualities in him besides these human ones. And to differentiate the Being of God is to postulate that for which the Trinity stands. To secure a symbol that expresses diversity in unity, that postulates in God human as well as transcendent attributes, that makes Fatherhood not a mere contingent relationship but inherent in the divine Selfhood — this is the motive of Trinitarianism.

To accept Jesus' presentation of God as Father as *final* does not necessarily mean its acceptance as *ultimate*. Fatherhood applied to God is more than a metaphor and more than an analogue; it is a *homologue*. It is taken from a relationship which is partly physical and partly spiritual; therefore it cannot be ultimate. But as our present nature and environment cannot be wholly spiritual, Fatherhood is final for the present stage. No higher and ampler representation of God is possible to humanity, for this term as applied to God seizes and sanctifies our highest and holiest consciousness. It remains for us not to seek a higher conception but simply to unfold the content of this.

The Fatherhood of God a Homologue

The Fatherhood of God, as taught by Jesus, involves: (1) The divine nearness and accessibility. Fatherhood implies home life, and home life is a sphere of close contact and free intercourse be-

tween parent and child. Here lies a complete and sufficient motive for prayer. (2) Fatherhood involves a right over us which by the very term is a natural right. To assert the Fatherhood of God does not define whether he is such by creation, or derivation, or in what manner, but it does imply a deep, fundamental, inherent bond, which can be broken, but cannot be dissevered. (3) Fatherhood involves the divine love for us. Jesus never said "God is Love." But when he called God "Our Father," he said as much, and said it more concretely and convincingly.

The Implications of Fatherhood

III

Jesus' conception of God as Father is by no means rigid, or exclusive of other conceptions of him. The truth of God's sovereignty is recognized in the title Jesus attaches to him, "Lord of heaven and earth." But he is a sovereign Father, rather than a fatherly Sovereign. His spiritual nature is given full recognition in that saying — the nearest to a definition of God which Jesus presents — "God is a spirit." Nevertheless it is as Father that Jesus loves to address and to refer to God. It is significant how seldom he uses the common Old Testament appellations for God. Richer, ampler, dearer, more vital to Jesus than any other is the word FATHER.

The Fatherhood of God not an Exclusive Conception.

The stability and sufficiency of the doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood is proven by its history. The attempts to make other conceptions of God controlling have failed. Calvinism, deism, pantheism have had their day and ceased to be; agnosticism and monism vainly strive to supersede Divine Fatherhood, which in spite of doubt and dismay never was so strongly entrenched in the faith and thought of humanity as to-day. The reason is not far to seek. The truth of the Divine Fatherhood is at once a judgment of value and a judgment of reason; it is both exoteric and esoteric; it satisfies the heart and does not affront the intellect; it is neither anthropomorphic nor speculative; it does not clothe the Deity with "parts and passions" nor does it dissolve him into a nebulous abstraction. It is as ample as it is definite in the wealth of its meaning for thought and for life. Out of it grows the doctrine of the Trinity, but without exhausting or superseding it; from it flow unfailing currents of life and truth. It is one of the endless misunderstandings of the Unrecognized Christ that so many persons to-day say "Our Father," without realizing through whom the revelation came.

Why the truth of the Divine Fatherhood prevails

V

CHRIST INTERPRETING NATURE

AMONG the rude representations of Jesus carved by a loving though uncultivated Christian art upon the tombs of the catacombs of Rome is one which pictures him as a youthful shepherd bearing a recovered lamb, or kid,[1] upon his shoulders. The fresh countenance and athletic figure serve to suggest not only the saving power and love of the Redeemer, but, indirectly also, a phase of his character which is coming into greater recognition as the perspective of the years gives us a truer conception of the richness of his personality — that is, his closeness to nature. It is well that we have not only the infant innocence and childhood charm of that unknown yet best-known face as it shone upon the souls of the old Masters, not only the various portraits of the mature beneficence and thoughtfulness of Jesus the Teacher, not only the *Ecce Homo* and other representations of the face marred as no other man's, but also an essay of art to suggest

The joyous Saviour

[1] The fact that the figure resembles a kid rather than a lamb has furnished Matthew Arnold a touching *motif* for his sonnet "*The Good Shepherd with the Kid.*"

the joyous health and grace of the youthful Christ, in the strength and serenity and joy of his redeeming might. And no elaborate work of art could better do this than the crude, symbolic shepherd of the catacombs.

Jesus was not only the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, but the Man of Nature and acquainted with joy. Life sang as well as sobbed for him, and above its sob arose its song. It was not in barren, priest-ridden Judea that Jesus was brought up and passed most of his life, but in fair, fertile, simple-hearted Galilee where men lived near to nature. Those thirty years in picturesque Nazareth, almost voiceless so far as the Gospel narrative is concerned, are gradually filling the reverent imagination with pictures of Jesus as the inspired student of Scripture poring over the glowing prophecies and nature-psalms of the Old Testament, and as the free, communing, spirit-filled youth, moving alone in contemplative joy through the fields and over the hilltops of Nazareth, looking, listening, loving, drinking in from the fountain of nature all the sweetness, the purity, the wisdom, and the gladness with which it overflows. And afterward, in the stress and heat of those burning years of his ministry, how often did he turn aside to the quiet mountainside, the restful lakeshore, the secluded garden for refreshment and soothing and strength in communion with the Father.

Jesus' love of Nature

I

The best Nature-teaching

The nature-teaching of Jesus is not less marked and characteristic than his personal attachment and resort to her. Though neither botanist nor geologist, biologist nor ornithologist, never was such a nature-teacher as Jesus. Picture him on the hillside of Galilee, preaching the Sermon on the Mount, the open heavens above him and the fair fields about, the soft breeze caressing him, the dew of youth upon his brow, the light of love upon his face, the poise of health, the freedom of faith and the great joy of his mission upon him. Of what does he speak? Of life and duty and trust and freedom from care, while the skies bend down in benediction and the breeze whispers *Yea* and the flowers nod a gentle *Amen*. No part of this sweet sermon which the summer winds of Galilee have wafted to us across the years, is more dear to the heart of Christendom than that in which, with the swift seizure of a divine insight, Jesus unfolds the very heart of the scene about him in the words: "Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. . . . Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Here is nature-teaching that has no parallel. So long as birds fly, this lesson will fly with them;

so long as flowers bloom, this word will bloom in them. Nor does this passage stand alone. Throughout Jesus' teaching run the roots of nature-symbolism and analogy, holding it fast to reality and supplying it with unfading verdure and beauty. Aphorism, precept, parable, twine about some familiar nature fact which lends form and support, and often, in Jesus' use of it, seems itself a part of the greater spiritual truth which it symbolizes.

II

But, according to the Gospels, a still more intimate sympathy and fellowship than this existed between Jesus and nature. Nature responds to minds that understand and love her — almost miraculously. Finer laws, subtler adaptations, secret sympathies, flow forth from her to meet the seer, be he scientist, artist or poet. It would be strange, indeed, if she had made no unusual response to Jesus. Given a personality whose insight and purity and force were such as to change the whole course of the life and thought of the world, and what must have been its legitimate and transforming power over nature! Marked, indeed, would be the discrepancy if He who had power on earth to forgive sins, could not also say to the sick of the palsy, "Take up thy bed, and walk"; if He who could cast out seven devils could not also heal the fever-stricken body.

Miracles the response of Nature to Personality

The personality of Jesus is the greater miracle, and carries the other miracles with it, or (if any be offended) stands without them. To explain the miracles away is quite as difficult as to explain them. Of almost all, if not all the miracles of Jesus, it is coming to be seen that the more they are studied the more closely do they cling to his personality and refuse to be torn away. For long, theology strove to make use of miracles in precisely the way that Jesus forbade, as signs, evidences. As such they have been defeated by science and have come to naught. But the moment we begin with the personality of Jesus, cease defending miracles as infractions of law, and relate them to those subtle mental and spiritual forces to which nature so swiftly responds, science raises her embargo and abandons her hostility. The miracles of Jesus attest the accord of nature and spirit. They are notes of a deeper harmony which underlies apparent confusion and discord.

The greater Miracle

III

The gospel of Jesus Christ cannot be a revelation and leave us wholly in the dark concerning the religious meanings of nature. If Jesus has no deep spiritual insights into nature his "credentials"[1] are lacking. If his nature-teaching is wrong, we cannot trust him fully in his revelation of God and

Jesus trustworthy in his Nature-teaching

[1] *Ecce Homo*, Chap. V.

his understanding of man. To make him less than central in revelation is, in the end, to displace Christianity; to make him central requires that he be trustworthy in his interpretation of nature as well as of God and man. "His was a childlike understanding of nature," it is said, "possible only at a period before science had discovered to us the true order and understanding of nature." But it may be that the narrowly scientific and unbelieving are, after all, the childish, and he, the childlike, the trustful, the far-visioned, the truer scientist, — in the science of ultimate truth. His teaching was not simply a reflection of that of his day. It was not made up of current ideas, scientific or theological. It was his own. While it grew out of the ideas and conceptions of his time, it is on a higher level, a universal plane, where no scientific or theological mutations can touch it. It has the note of the timeless and the universal.

Not that Jesus' interpretation of nature is complete and exhaustive on all sides. On the purely scientific side of nature he did not touch; on the esthetic side he did not dwell; it was the moral, the spiritual interpretation of nature, as it stands related to the life of the soul, with which he was concerned. And here we may accept his word as final. What is that word? It is that nature is God's — full of his thought and of his love. If it be said that, in this optimistic and providential view of nature, he

The falling Sparrow and the dark side of Nature

ignored entirely that darker side which modern science has brought out in such terrible distinctness, the answer is that he did not ignore the darker side but saw it transformed and absorbed in the light of the All-Father's love. The falling sparrow is Jesus' interpretation of the evil and suffering of nature. Explain the pain of nature he does not, but interpret it he does. "Not without your Father" is a word with larger meaning than has yet been taken from it. All-embracing compassion, all-wise beneficence, all-inclusive ultimate justice and well-being are in this word. It goes further and deeper than science ventures to go, or can go.

Few and simple as are Jesus' words concerning the meaning of nature, the light which they throw upon nature will never cease to invest it. Analyze our modern nature trust and joy, and it will be found to rest ultimately largely upon Christ's teaching. Humanity will come, more and more, to see nature, not only through his eyes, but through himself, through the undivided revelation which he brought, — or rather which he was and is, — to the world.

VI

CHRIST INTERPRETING MAN

In order to understand any organic species it is necessary to know it in its origin, its development, and its maturity. Most emphatically is this true of humanity. It is not enough to trace its origin and its development; we should see it also in its perfection. Anthropology alone is insufficient to explain man; anthropology and history are insufficient; we need also revelation. Since we cannot see the future man, the final product of social evolution, by him to know what manhood is, we require a Prototype, a Forerunner, an Ensample by whom to interpret ourselves and our race. But is this possible? Is not the perfect man impossible save as the product of a perfect society? Yes, unless he enter the race from above, as a sent and supernatural being, "trailing clouds of glory from God who is his home."

Humanity understood through a Prototype

I

Here, then, we meet our chief problem: Can we find reasonable cause and evidence for the transcending of evolution, in the case of Christ? In

other words, is revelation consonant with evolution? If we were obliged to find in Jesus the sole instance of departure from a rigid law of development, the strain upon faith would be severe; but such is not the case. The law of evolution grows more flexible as it reaches the higher ranks of life. Other forces enter and act with it. There is at least one phenomenon which is absolutely inexplicable by evolution alone, — the fact of *genius*. The great souls that have enlightened and enriched humanity can by no means be explained simply as the products of racial development. They enter the race mysteriously, supernally, royally. Genius cannot be produced as a new rose is, by experiment and culture; its comes as a gift from above. No form of evolution can account for Raphael or Shakespeare. Ancestry fails to solve the benign mystery of genius. We are in a realm where natural selection and hereditary instinct are puerile futilities. The law of heredity acts, but it is transcended. The supernatural absorbs, molds, transfigures the natural and endows it with a power and radiance that hold us awestruck and spell-bound. By this token, the gift of genius, we know beyond a peradventure that this world is ruled and endowed from above and not from beneath or within. Evolution is God's process — beautiful and fruitful — but it is not his only process. He is not limited to one method. Evolution and rev-

Revelation and Evolution

The Mystery of Genius

elation are not mutually exclusive terms. With the advent of self-consciousness evolution yields to a higher law. "Resident forces" are supplemented by non-resident ideals. An amœba does not need an ideal before him in order to stimulate him to perfect development, but a man does. Conscious development cannot proceed without a goal, an ideal, — a Christ.

Does this mean that Christ is simply a religious genius? Yes, and No! Like every other genius he is a gift of God to men — *the* Gift of God to men. He so far transcends all other men in goodness and in greatness as to constitute a class by himself, in which, by virtue of his peculiar vocation, he is the sole possible member. This gives him a relation both to God and to humanity which had he been less than divine he could not have fulfilled. His deity is not above his humanity nor alongside it, but in and through his humanity. By virtue of his perfect humanity he is the revelation, not only of God, but of humanity, — the God-man. The individual can see himself in the whole splendor and scope of his possibilities only in Christ; and the highest vision of society is that of a corporate body made up of persons striving toward the Christ-life and thus in their common life realizing the kingdom of heaven. It is only through Christ that a man can know himself, his brother man, or the humanity of which both partake.

Jesus the Gift of God

II

The first and greatest revelation that Christ makes to mankind, then, is the *revelation of its possibilities*. What can a man become, what can *man* become? The answer lies in the Christ. There have been other partial answers. Every great and good man is such —Gautama, Confucius, Socrates. But the complete answer is found only in Christ. The sages, heroes, prophets are but broken lights of him, and he is more than they. When Pilate said, *Behold, the man*, he unwittingly acted as spokesman to the race. Mankind has looked, and beneath the crown of thorns has seen so regal a brow, behind the purple robe so great a heart of sacrificial love, as to make all who receive him kings and priests unto God. In this Man every man sees his own manhood transfigured and crowned. His is a manhood magnetic with spiritual currents, vital with communicative puissance. The moment a man sees Christ, he sees himself in a new light. Undreamt-of possibilities flash upon him. He is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new. In an old house in Bruges there is this simple motto: "There is more in me." Beholding Christ every man reads that motto "writ in living characters." It is true that seeing Christ each sees One forever and forever beyond him, but the humanity is so warm and real, the splendor

Christ reveals our Possibilities

so winsome and impelling that we are attracted and not repelled by the superiority. He is, as Dr. Gordon calls him, the Flying Goal. It is only by poetic license that we can speak of *becoming* Christs; but to be *like* him — that is the result of seeing him as he is. This is Spurgeon's account of his conversion, swift, simple, sufficient: "I looked at Jesus, and Jesus looked at me, and we were one forever." In that look the great preacher saw his own possibilities hidden in Christ's excellences. Such an unveiling is there, for all who will look.

Through Christ man sees, also, the counterpart of his possibility, that is, his sinfulness. On one side of the coin of humanity is stamped the image of the King; on the reverse side that of a distortion almost too devilish to be human. The first possibility could not be, without the second. Christ reveals both, — the one in himself, the other in his anti-self. In seeing his possible goodness in Christ a man sees also his possible evil, and somewhere between the two his own present sinfulness. *If I had not come . . . unto them, they had not had sin.* Sense of sin is independent of Christ; sensitiveness to sin comes with him. If Christ were not lifted up before men as he is, it is probable that the same fearful moral callousness would recur that cursed the pre-Christian world. Man does not see himself as he is, or as he might be, unless he sees himself also as sinful.

Christ reveals our Sinfulness

Doubtless the fact of sinfulness has been abnormally exaggerated in many periods of the life of the Church, but, if so, it has been only by departing from that normal, healthful but poignant sense of sinfulness created by the contact with the real Christ.

III

Once more, Christ interprets man to himself *by revealing to him the true proportions and harmonies of his being.* The danger of a one-sided development is one of the chiefest perils of a complex civilization. This tendency Christ perpetually and benignly restrains. The physical, the intellectual, the cultural, each clamors for complete control. The paths of invitation open to the indulgent development of one side of our nature. And when one has given free rein to such a specializing until he has become a scientific, or literary, or musical monomaniac, all distorted in one direction, all dwarfed in others, and then one day Jesus appears across his path and he looks up and sees the splendid completeness and symmetry of his manhood, his own crippled life starts forth into distressing shapelessness and incompleteness!

Christ reveals the Symmetry of true Manhood

It is in upholding the supremacy of the moral and spiritual nature that Christ most persistently corrects our inner chaos and restores harmony and balance to our feverish and incoherent lives.

With unerring insight and firmness he puts the ethical and religious ideal of life first and then finds a place for all real and worthful interests in subordination to this. This order is in his teaching because it is first in himself. Nothing is more characteristic of Christ than the superb poise, both of his character and of his conduct. Sublimity and sweetness, strength and grace, thought and feeling, blend to make his life a perfect symphony. And, witnessing, we know that this is what man was meant to be. Thus the Christ interprets and harmonizes human nature.

IV

It is as unreasonable to study man and leave the Man out, as to study history and leave Christianity out. Christ has woven himself into the very mind structure of humanity. Psychology tells us that it is impossible for a person to read a book without being a somewhat different being for it.[1] Much less is it possible to hear the Christ story without being changed by it. And when an entire civilization is saturated with the Christ as its acknowledged Ideal, he must enter, consciously or unconsciously, into all thinking and doing, with a force that it is impossible to measure. Individuals reject him, but humanity has received him. Only through him can we know ourselves — our possibilities, our imperfection, our true harmony

Christ shapes Human Ideals

[1] See James' *Psychology*, Vol. I, p. 5.

of being. Man as seen through evolution alone is a racial epiphenomenon, a freak, a nondescript; as seen through the average man he is a bundle of contradictions, "a groveller on the earth and a gazer at the sky"; as seen through Christ he is a child of God, an heir of the eternal, a unit of realizable possibilities. The light of the Incarnation falls upon the entire nature and history of man. It lights up the dull eyes of our low-browed simian ancestor with the promise of immortal progress and attainment; it falls upon the slowly developing, plodding savage and makes his every upward step significant; it falls upon the most hopeless individual member of the race and reveals him as a brother of the imperial Christ and capable of illimitable progress.

VII

THE WORSHIP OF CHRIST

IT concerns us to ask: What light is thrown by the modern Christocentric theology upon the much debated question concerning the worship of Christ?

I

The aversion of the older Unitarian school to the worship of Christ received its most representative expression in Emerson's *Sermon on The Lord's Supper*, in which he said: "I am so much a Unitarian as this: that I believe the human mind can admit but one God, and that every effort to pay religious homage to more than one being, goes to take away all right ideas. . . . In the act of petition the soul stands alone with God, and Jesus is no more present to your mind than your brother or your child. But is Jesus not called in Scripture the Mediator? He is the Mediator in that only sense in which possibly any being can mediate between God and man — that is, an instructor of man. He teaches us how to become like God. And a true disciple of Jesus will receive the light he gives most thank-

Emerson on the Worship of Christ

fully, but the thanks he offers, and which an exalted being will accept, are not compliments, commemorations, but the use of that instruction."

How bare and cold and un-Emersonian this reads, in our day of a broader and richer conception of Christ! Indeed the sermon throughout has not a single suggestion of the true Emerson. In contrast with its negative and chilling plaintiveness Theodore Parker's indiscriminating heartiness is refreshing. "Jesus made a revolution in the idea of God, and himself went up and took the throne of the world. That was a step in progress, and, if called upon to worship the Jehovah of the Old Testament, or Jesus of Nazareth, a plain man, as he is painted in the first three Gospels, I should not hesitate; I should worship my brother, for in the highest qualities this actual man is superior to men's conception of God. . . . Let us not be harsh, let us not blame men for worshiping the creature more than the Creator. They saw the Son higher than the Father, and they did right. The popular adoration of Jesus to-day is the best thing in the ecclesiastical religion." And yet, with customary outspokenness, he proceeds immediately to add, "But I do not believe in the perfection of Jesus."

Theodore Parker

The contrasted attitude of these two devout and virile thinkers upon this subject can be understood only as one traces it to the contrasted temperaments and view-points of the two men. Emerson,

the transcendentalist, meditative, mystical, worships the God of nature, the Absolute; Parker, the humanist, the preacher, the reformer, worships God in his human attributes, his Fatherhood, his Motherhood, his Brotherhood. To the latter, therefore, Jesus representing the human side of God appeals much more strongly.

II

Turning to William E. Channing we find his position nearer to that of Parker than to that of Emerson. In his Baltimore Ordination Sermon Channing said: "We also think that the doctrine of the Trinity injures devotion, not only by joining to the Father other objects of worship, but by taking from the Father the supreme affection which is his due, and transferring it to the Son. . . . Men want an object of worship like themselves, and the great secret of idolatry lies in this propensity. A God, clothed in our form and feeling our wants and sorrows, speaks to our weak nature more strongly than a Father in heaven, a pure spirit, invisible and unapproachable, save by the reflecting and purified mind. . . . We believe, too, that this worship of Jesus, though attractive, is not most fitted to spiritualize the mind, that it awakens transport rather than that deep veneration of the moral perfections of God which is the essence of piety."

William Ellery Channing

It is difficult for us in the wider outlook and more human atmosphere of this twentieth century to realize the point of view of one who thus seeks to school himself away from the worship of the more human and lovable attributes of the Deity to those of "a pure spirit, invisible and unapproachable, save by the reflecting and purified mind." When Channing goes on to speak of the "moral perfections" of God he must mean, not the highest moral perfections, for those are the very qualities revealed in Christ, sympathy, sacrifice, love, but the less central, less "attractive," perfections,—justice, holiness, impeccability. To imply that these are more "moral" than love is to impeach the very heart of morality, as well as of God. A Unitarian is surely the last Christian of whom we should expect this.

What is more moral than Love?

The question, after all, is this: Is the heart of God essentially human,—in the highest, noblest sense of humanity? In other words, is love central in the divine Being? If so, Christ is so true and sufficient a revelation of him that we may accept his words: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," and draw from them their natural corollary—he that worships the Son worships the Father.

The Real Issue

It is impossible to worship Christ without worshiping God. Herein lies the solution of the whole difficulty — which is purely academic and not real,

except when it arises from a merely humanitarian conception of Christ. So long as Unitarianism can keep its conception of Christ down at the level of ordinary humanity it is entirely self-consistent in not worshiping him; but the moment he escapes these limitations (as he often does with Unitarians), he inevitably calls out the worship which his perfect Sonship really makes equivalent to worship of the Father. Fatherhood is impossible without Sonship. Imperfect Sonship implies imperfect Fatherhood. Perfect Fatherhood cannot be understood without perfect Sonship. If Jesus had been no more, no higher, than any other son of God we should not have come to the knowledge of the divine Fatherhood that we have in Christianity. To worship Christ is to worship perfect Fatherhood through perfect Sonship.

III

The Secret of Channing's Attitude

Seeing in Jesus none other than a good man, it is not strange that Emerson protested against worshiping him and administering the service which so highly exalts him; nor that Theodore Parker, while condoning the worship of Christ in others, rejected it for himself. It *is* strange, however, that Channing, who held so high a conception of Jesus that he could say, "We believe that Jesus Christ was the most glorious display, expression and representative of God to mankind, so that seeing and knowing him,

we see and know the invisible Father," should have objected to the worship of Christ. It can be explained only as arising from his extreme *aversion to the doctrine of the Trinity*, which he understood only as it was so sadly misrepresented in the New England theology of his day. It was Frederick Robertson who said of Channing, "I should be very glad, if half of those who recognize the hereditary claims of the Son of God to worship, bowed down before his moral dignity with an adoration half as profound or a love half as enthusiastic as Dr. Channing's."

The discussion concerning the deity of Christ has passed into a distinctly new phase in the Ritschlian theology. Starting from the vantage-ground of Luther, who, it is held, regarded confidence in Christ as the true confession of Christ, the Ritschlian school, going forth with its famous divining-rod, *Worth-judgment*, finds the spring of Christ's true divinity in his sinless and perfect character and his perfect fulfilment of his unique vocation in redemption. Ritschl entitles Jesus "the perfect self-revelation of God" and says of him: "He is that magnitude in the world in whose self-end God makes his own eternal self-end in an original manner operative and manifest."[1] "The Deity of Christ can only be expressed by saying that the mind and will of the Everlasting God stand before us in the historically

The Ritschlian Attitude

[1] *The Ritschlian Theology*, Garvie, p. 280.

active will of this man,"[1] writes Hermann. And again, "We first know what Divine Nature is when we apprehend it in Christ." To the same effect Kaftan declares: "That Jesus Christ is God means that in him we have a complete revelation of God."[2]

That this representative relation of Christ to God and to men amounts to actual *deity* may be doubted. But that it warrants *worship* of him can hardly be questioned. For as Hermann affirms: "We stand thus toward Christ in a relation of the greatest conceivable dependence."

Whatever the limitations and inconsistencies of the Ritschlian school, it is firmly grounded and sincere in its devotion to Christ and in its ascription to him of virtual deity. The difference between the Ritschlian conception of Christ's deity and that of the older Unitarianism represented by Channing, is this: In order to ascribe deity to Christ the early Unitarians thought it necessary to limit and circumscribe his humanity, whereas Ritschlianism conceives that perfect and exalted humanity is, in so far, deity.

The natural inclination of the heart, won by the grace and glory of Jesus, to pay homage to him who so uniquely reveals the Father, involves no real inconsistency, much less any disloyalty to the Supreme Being. The sincere worship of the true

[1] *Communion with God*, p. 138.
[2] *Dogmatik*, p. 419.

Christ includes within itself the worship of the Father. It is worship of the Father in the Son.

He who worships the Son worships the Father also

The worship directed to Jesus finds its ultimate object and explanation in the Eternal Christ, the Logos, incarnated in Jesus. As such it is worship of the Revealing God, the Father manifested in the Son.

PART II

ASPECTS OF CHRIST

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men."

"Many man for Christes love
Was martired in Romayne
Er any Christendom was knowe there
Or any cros honoured."

— *Old English Verse.*

"All who are rational beings are partakers of the word, that is, of reason, and by this means bear certain seeds implanted within them of wisdom and justice, which is Christ." — ORIGEN, *De Principia.*

•

"The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too —
So, through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!"

— ROBERT BROWNING, *An Epistle.*

"Christ is lost, like the piece of money in the parable; but where? In thy house, that is, in thy soul. Thou needest not run to Rome or Jerusalem to seek him. He sleepeth in thy heart, as he did in the ship; awaken him with the loud cry of thy desire. Howbeit, I believe that thou sleepest oftener to him than he to thee." — WALTER HILTON, *The Scale of Perfection.*

VIII

THE HUMAN CHRIST

So far as the modern emphasis upon the Historic Christ is in the interest of his true humanity the motive is unimpeachable. Unless Jesus is understood and felt to be deeply, really, richly human, he can have no lasting and saving hold upon humanity. Whatever tends to actualize and vivify Christ's humanity, therefore, may be hailed as wholesome and true. But the question is: Is the historic Christ, as such, and alone, the most truly and wholly human Christ? On the contrary, we hold that too narrow and exclusive attention upon the historic Christ obscures and limits his real humanity.

A Human Christ needed

I

There are two distinct and contrary meanings bound up in the term "human" as we commonly employ it. The first is that of the weakness, incompetency, imperfection of which we are conscious as attaching to our human nature. This meaning appears in such common phrases as "to err is human," "human follies," "human nature." On this side of our human nature there is enough that is discour-

What is it to be Human?

aging, weak, pitiful. It is human to be selfish; human to be sensual; human to be indifferent, hateful, cruel. The other hemisphere of our human nature is as bright as this side is dark, as noble and beautiful as this side is ignoble and unholy. To our humanity belong, also, dignity, strength, divineness. It is human to aspire, to rise, to attain, to bless, to sympathize, to love.

Now it is impossible to think of these higher qualities of our humanity without seeing that while they are ours, while they belong to us and befit us far more than the opposite qualities, they are ours as *spiritual* rather than as human beings. They are ours as from above and not from beneath. Strangely do these two conflicting lives meet in us, forming the insoluble mystery and tragedy of our being, —

"My life is twofold;
Human and divine, buried and crown'd."

Whoever has caught, however dimly, a vision of ideal manhood, or has striven, however vainly, to realize it, knows that if he could only find a man who really is all that a man might be, to such a one he would give the utmost homage of heart and soul. Life is one long, disappointing search for the reality of that image of human perfection that lies in the depths of each human heart. Jesus Christ is the fulfil-

To be perfect humanly is to be divine

ment of the longing, the end of the search, the realization of the image. As such he is splendidly, supremely human; but just because he is so supremely human he is also divine. For the perfectly human is divine, because the perfectly human is a human impossibility. No mere man has reached it; no mere man can reach it. Not a man who ever lived but has felt that he could have reached a higher manhood, but not a man but has felt that had he done his utmost he could not have been a perfect man. Perfection is outside the range of human possibility, — in the present life at any rate. Paul, who reached it as nearly as any one, exclaims with noble earnestness, "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect." Others, looking from the outside, may think a man near perfection; he himself knows better. And if he is a true man he will confess his imperfection. Why is it that Jesus never made such a confession? By that token we must infer, either that he was far less perfect than the best of his fellows or far more perfect.

Thus the study of the historic Christ leads us on into conjectures, convictions, affirmations concerning him which take us out of the historical, the understandable, the narrowly human, into the realm of the spiritual, the mysterious, the universally human. Only so could we have a completely human Christ, a Christ who at once satisfies us and saves us. Of men

The perfect Man must be more than Man

of imperfect, incomplete humanity, nobly striving after perfection, the world has had many, and richly have they helped their fellows; but not one of them could redeem humanity because not one was wholly, perfectly human. Paradox though it seem, perfect humanity is necessarily superhuman, supernatural, divine. If the best that is in us all is divine, He in whom the best rules absolutely is divine indeed. Would we have a Christ who is wholly, richly, perfectly human, we needs must have an incarnation.

II

Here we are met by what seems an insuperable objection. If Christ is perfectly, supremely, divinely human, what of that struggle with self, that attainment, that victory over evil which is the very glory and crown of our humanity; without which humanity is but a semblance and no reality? A Christ who is not "in all points tempted like as we are" is no Christ, at least no human Christ. It is worthy of note that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews who presents the most touching and humanizing picture of the Christ, tempted, battling, overcoming, is one who from start to finish of his noble epistle represents Christ as the divine Mediator, the perfect Revealer of God — "the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance." In his mind there was no incongruity between such divinity and such humanity.

How can the perfect Christ be tempted

And not only is there to him no incongruity between these two aspects of Christ, but clearly he feels that the one is essential to the other. For immediately upon asserting the temptability of Christ, he adds "yet without sin." It was that alone which gave significance to Christ's temptation, that it was *without sin*, as no other man's has ever been. In other words, it is the divinity of Christ which gives depth and scope and reality to his humanity. If his humanity had not been divine humanity, it could not have been perfect humanity, and if it had not been perfect, it would have had no peculiar and universal significance.

III

All that Nestorianism and Socinianism, all that Unitarianism and Ritschlianism have insisted upon for the true humanity of Christ, — his dependence, his temptability, his struggle, his victory — finds ample place in the theology of the incarnation. In fact, the very conditions involved in an incarnation afford the only adequate scope for the development and realization of a full, complete, perfect humanity. The gradual awakening of Jesus to the consciousness of a peculiar mission to men (Messiahship), based upon a peculiarly pure and intimate sense of communion with God, must in itself have led to peculiar temptations, struggles, yearning toward men, fellowship with God.

Incarnation alone affords scope for absolutely complete human Development

It is impossible to account for Jesus' assumption of the rôle of Messiahship except as he felt within himself a unique heavenly endowment, qualifying him for a superhuman task. Given this endowment and this vocation, and you have the conditions essential for the complete development of a character made perfect through sufferings. The stress and sublimity of the temptations attending the assumption of his mission, so graphically and feelingly allegorized in the temptations of the wilderness, are such as are possible to and productive of a humanity deeper, nobler, more potent, than any other man has possessed. And so throughout, to the garden hour and the darkness of the cross.

The level of a person's life is indicated by the character of his temptations. It is a crude mistake that any level of human life is free from temptation. It was far from the wicket gate that Christian met Apollyon. Holiness immunes are the victims of a peculiarly subtle temptation. To be above temptation and struggle Christ must have been, not sinless, but unsinable, not perfect but super-perfect. It would be nearer the truth to regard him as the most severely tempted of men. The fact that his temptations were on the very highest level does not diminish their power. Sensual temptations may be the most immediate and violent, but not the most insidious and terrible. It is only a Christ,

To be human is to be tempted

looking down from a pinnacle of the temple, who sees the real depths below.

He who has won his victory on the lower levels of temptation can understand little of the storms that assail him who stands upon the higher. But he who has won on the higher levels can understand something of the whole range of temptation, down to the very bottom. It is impossible to think of Jesus struggling with lust or alcoholism, yet the intensity of his own temptation lets him into the secret of every temptation with the wealth of complete sympathy. Such a One stoops to a Mary Magdalene without effort and treats even a Judas with marvelous charity and pity.

The greater the Victory the deeper the Sympathy

The Human Christ is touched with a feeling of our infirmity not because of his imperfection but because of his perfection, not because of his limitation but because of his fulness, not because he is "merely" human, but because he is divinely human.

IX

THE HISTORIC CHRIST

THE modern illumination of the Historic Christ is twofold: the refreshening of Jesus as a person *in* history and the beginnings of an understanding of his influence *upon* history.

The Historic Christ revivified

As the result of the first of these investigations, we have to-day the most vivid and scientific knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth reached by any generation, since his own. Not only has the dust been brushed from the original portrait, but new pictures of his country, his people, his environment, have been painted, with the utmost possible accuracy and realism, and hung beside the original, in order that all possible light may be thrown upon this most preeminent of men. Criticism, which seemed at one time about to shatter the reality of the historical Jesus, has resulted in establishing the trustworthiness of the Gospel narrative. It is evidence of the return to equilibrium of Biblical criticism that one of the leading New Testament scholars of the day can say: "Let the plain Bible reader continue to read his Gospels as he has read them; for in the end the critic cannot read them otherwise." [1]

[1] Harnack, *Christianity and History*, p. 58.

I

The striking and significant fact concerning this fresh illumination of the Jesus of history is that he proves so real and so magnetic to the world of to-day. Many centuries separate him from us; mighty changes have swept across the intervening generations; civilization has moved on through diverse periods and vast developments, but the Man of Nazareth is the same yesterday, to-day and forever in his hold upon men. Above the now curious and outgrown ideas of his time, the meager life, the archaic customs, he rises supremely real, supremely commanding and supremely winsome.

Knowledge of the second aspect of the Historic Christ, namely, his impress upon history, has not progressed so far. In fact we have just begun vaguely to apprehend, without yet estimating carefully and broadly, the effect which Jesus has had in determining the course and movement of human history. It is an arduous enterprise and awaits the genius and labor of historians yet to appear. The merest glance at the movement of history reveals how large, how revolutionary, how beneficent, has been the part which Jesus has played in forming men and shaping events. Rightly to estimate this, it is necessary to study the impact of Jesus, not only upon the history of the Church and of Christianity itself,

The Effect of Jesus upon History

but the total, often subtle influence of his teaching and personality upon the entire movement of humanity.[1]

"Far as the curse is found"

How far has Jesus molded civilization in the last two thousand years, — its movements, tendencies, events, its thought and life? It cannot be said that he has completely controlled Christendom itself. He does not yet guide, for he has not yet conquered the motives of world-wide humanity; he has not yet been universally crowned; he has not yet put all things under his feet. Nevertheless, Jesus has dominated history. He has been its Force of greatest moment. Now exalted, now thrust aside, now honored, now ignored, he has persistently asserted his sway over the tumultuous forces of the world. He has bidden its waves and tempests, "Peace, be still." He has commanded its evil spirits, "Come forth." He has spoken "Ephphatha" to its blindnesses, shamed and driven forth its irreverent money-changers, has said, "Take up thy bed, and walk" to its impotents, "Go, and sin no more" to its penitents. He has called, "Awake" to its dormancy and, "Arise" to its death. Through its market-places he has gone, within its temples he

[1] "Jesus therefore cannot belong exclusively to those who call themselves his disciples. He is the common honor of all who bear a human heart. His glory consists not in being banished from history; we render him a truer worship by showing that all history is incomprehensible without him." Renan, *Life of Jesus*.

has entered, into its sick chambers he has softly stolen, across the thresholds of its prisons and dens and brothels and into all its lowest hells he has fearlessly stepped; within its palaces and parliaments he has gone; beside its open graves he has stood, and the toiling, sinning, suffering, sorrowing, aspiring world has felt him and known him and bowed before him and loved him. Of the greatest and most enduring of human organizations, the Church, he has been the acknowledged Master and Lord. To millions of redeemed souls he has been Light-bringer and Life-giver.

The crises of history have turned upon Christ, not always obviously, but always his teachings, his person, or his Church, have been implicitly, if not explicitly, involved. Evolutions and revolutions, wars and pacifications, colonizations and reformations have felt his power. Art, literature, science, have been purified and stimulated by him. Civilization itself has been largely molded by him. Take away all that is distinctively Christian from civilization, and what a disintegration and corruption would remain! Without him the world might have had another Greece or Rome, but not an England or an America. The freedom of the slave, the emancipation of woman, the rescue of the helpless, the amelioration of the laborer, the progress toward universal peace — such are some of the achievements of Christ in history.

II

But is it the Jesus of history simply who has accomplished all this? Could any individual alone, however vital his influence upon his own and succeeding generations, have so mastered and molded human history? Only by virtue of an inner, spiritual principle, in league with him, moving within the human soul both before and at the same time that Jesus moves upon it from without could these great achievements have been effected. No external force, argument or person can affect the individual or society decisively except there be Somewhat or Someone within that responds to, and abets, the outer influence. We may call this inner advocate, Conscience, or Reason, or Ideal, or whatever we choose; we may assert that it inheres in our very being and constitution; but when we have done our best to identify this Inner Impulse with our self, we know, that however intimately inwrought into our very selfhood, nevertheless it is not of our earth-born nature, not our individual possession, but is, in its essence, universal and eternal.

An Ally within

Nor is this inner Reality impersonal, an abstraction or a quality, but a vital, concrete, personal Presence. Who, then, can it be but He of whom Frederick Denison Maurice wrote, in his impassioned way: "I mean a reality, I mean something

that does not proceed from you or belong to you. Nay, stay a moment. I mean that this light comes from a Person, from the Lord and King of your heart and spirit — from the Word — the Son of God."

III

To neglect, or subordinate, or set aside, the Jesus of history results either in mysticism or in rationalism. The warning is writ large in the history of doctrine. Mysticism too often sailed away without chart or compass upon unknown seas and disappeared in fog and futility. Rationalism dug so deep for a foundation for faith that it was buried under the soil upon which it should have built. Absolute Idealism spurned the earth and has always remained in the air. To find in Jesus Christ, as does Hegelianism, only an Idea, however rich in significance and fruitful in influence, of which Jesus is but the concrete expression, is to resolve religion into an unfolding and apotheosis of Reason, and Christianity into a syncretistic gnosis. Christianity began with a historic person and rests absolutely and permanently upon history. The Jesus of history can never, without apostasy and disaster, be ignored or left behind.

The Peril of Ignoring the Historic Christ

But to account for Christianity by the Historic Christ *alone* is quite as one-sided and disastrous,

for it leaves no place for a direct and inner communion with God. Christ means far more to humanity than a historic individual. The unique and potent place which he holds in the life of the race can be explained only as we connect the Historic Christ with the Christ who was before history and above history, — the Word who was in the beginning with God and was God. This Christ was in the world before Jesus came and remained after he had departed. The Eternal Christ was the first Messenger of the Incarnation and the first Missionary of the Cross. It is he who was preferred before the Historic Christ, for he was before him; it is he who survived Jesus and glorified him. This is the Christ of consciousness, the Christ of the Fourth Gospel, the Inner and Eternal Prototype and Ideal.

The equal Peril of ignoring the Eternal Christ

X

THE ETERNAL CHRIST

THE distinction between the Historic Christ and the Eternal Christ is by no means a merely academic and speculative distinction. It represents, even if it fails to express, a real element in the Christian consciousness. The Christ whom we love and worship we feel is not a mere creature of time. Manifested in time, he nevertheless transcends time, in nature and in significance. Else we could not justify our attitude toward him. It is only as the Historic Christ and the Eternal Christ supplement and fulfil one another that we gain a consistent and complete conception of Christ as he exists in Christian life and consciousness.

A helpful Distinction

I

The Historic Christ gives form and embodiment to the dim and indistinct outlines of the Eternal Christ. Fact ratifies ideal; sight confirms consciousness. In the assuringly real and tangible Jesus, the Eternal Christ comes forth from the vague background of eternity and the shifting shadows of experience,

The Historic Christ fulfils the Eternal Christ

and stands out in the clear light of incarnate, historic reality. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." Men turn to him with joy as to One whom they have already known in the deeper insights of the soul. Jewish prophecy of the Messiah is but a fragment of the instinctive prescience of the human spirit that finds its realization in Jesus. He, as he comes, interprets this prescience to itself. The white light of dawn above the eastern hills is part of the sunrise, but when the sun itself swings clear and free above the horizon the fainter flush that preceded it is both explained and exceeded. So the Christ of history explains and exceeds the light of the Eternal Christ in the soul.

At first thought it seems impossible that any individual, with his single, segregated qualities and his necessary limitations, can represent the heart of the Living God, can incarnate the Eternal Word. How can one man stand for God? It seems like snatching a star from infinite space and making it burn upon an earthen candlestick. No wonder that when the proposition is detached from the Person, the intellect rebels, faith fails. But when we turn to the New Testament and read the familiar story, in its simple and convincing straightforwardness, the figure of Jesus rises before us so sane and yet so sublime that we feel we cannot compress him into the mold of ordinary humanity. He rises too high

How can these things be?

above all other men to be measured by customary standards. We cannot bind him to the bed of Procrustes. He passes through the midst of us and of our inadequate estimates and standards and leaves us awed and humiliated. He grows upon us in mystery and majesty. What can we do but bid conception follow upon conviction and crown him Lord of all?

"But," objects the realist, "this is an unwarranted idealizing of history, a wholly irrational exaltation of an individual life, a purely arbitrary universalizing of a person fixed to a single generation and a single race." Is this a conclusive objection? It would be, if Jesus were the sole revelation of God, or if he were unrelated to other forms of revelation. The Historic Christ unpreceded by and unrelated to an Eternal Christ would be an anomaly, thrust into the process of history, unheralded and unexplained. But coming as the embodiment, the historic incarnation of a Christ eternally existent and present in humanity universally and from the beginning, the Historic Christ interprets, clarifies, consummates the whole process of revelation.

II

Not only does the Historic Christ define and fulfil the Eternal Christ, the Eternal Christ ratifies and universalizes the Historic Christ. If the Historic Christ verifies the Eternal Christ, not less does the Eternal Christ verify the Historic Christ. His-

tory alone will not save the world, even if it be the history of a divine Man. History without relation to eternity would be a hopeless maze, an endless flux, a meaningless succession.

The Eternal Christ witnesses to the Historic Christ

To make Christianity dependent upon historic fact alone is as short-sighted and suicidal as to cut it away from fact altogether. "Woe to us," well says Harnack, "if our faith rested on a number of details to be demonstrated and established by the historian."[1] To the same effect Sabatier wrote: "Criticism will always be a just cause of alarm to those who elevate any historical and contingent form whatever into the absolute, for the excellent reason that an historical phenomenon, being always conditioned, can never have the characteristics of the absolute."[2] The Christian consciousness, individual and corporate, which is the ultimate reliance of religious truth, is above historic fact, precedes it, outruns it, outranks it. In its pure, essential self, truth may be factless, formless, eternal, absolute. But, for us at least, truth, though not identical with form or fact, is always clothed with form or fact. In this relationship the advantage is mutual. If fact expresses truth, not less does truth glorify fact. If the Christ of history focuses, visualizes, incarnates the Eternal Christ, the Eternal Christ interprets, glorifies, transfigures the Historic Christ.

[1] *Christianity and History*, p. 60.
[2] *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, p. 167.

III

It is a daring, and almost overwhelming, hypothesis that thus unites history and eternity with the golden link of a single life, a solitary consciousness. It requires a superb outreach of faith to grasp and hold fast such a conception. To surmise and speculate over it is not difficult, but to hold Christ, as Paul held him, as the solution of all problems and the inspiration of all deeds — this is a summons to supreme heights of thought and life. And yet, it is neither irrational nor without analogy. It taxes reason, by transcending lower superficial and merely common-sense views of the universe, but it does not transgress reason. Philosophy tends more and more to exalt personality. This doctrine carries forward this tendency and concentrates all truth in one perfect, divine-human personality. Science furnishes an analogy in what Professor Shaler has termed "critical points," and Professor De Vries "saltation," where either a sudden leap from below or an external reenforcement occurs, as miraculous in natural history as are certain phenomena, scorned by the scientist, in human history. Are there not critical points, saltations, in human history? Above all is there not *one* critical point, as epochal as that of the appearance of man on the earth, namely the advent of him whom Paul calls the Second Man, the Lord

The Life that links Eternity and History

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from heaven, in whom time and eternity meet, who thus becomes the Revelation of God and the Creator of a new humanity?

Moreover, this hypothesis approves itself to the pragmatic test, — it works. The man who takes Jesus Christ as his Interpreter and End finds himself in harmony with God, with nature and with humanity. God is real, living, near; nature is resplendent, harmonious, aspiring; humanity is dear, lovable, salvable. Ethical relations are clarified and strengthened, spiritual insights purified and potentialized. The spiritual mind which is life and peace takes possession of the soul. The universe has a meaning, the present life a purpose, the future a hope. In Christ the man is a new creature. Old things are past away, behold all things are become new.

The Pragmatic Test

Not every man who takes Christ as the Center of his universe, the Explanation and Goal of existence, thinks himself through as to what Christ means to him intellectually as well as spiritually. Very rare is the Christian who attempts, or who needs to attempt, to solve the problem of the Christ personality — how he is related to God, to nature and to humanity, and why he has such power over himself. And yet Christianity demands, for the sake of its own consistency and self-assurance, that this attempt be made. And when made, it inevitably leads to the distinction between the Historic Christ and the

Christ means more to many a man than he knows

Eternal Christ, the Christ of history and of experience, and the endeavor to relate the two aspects to each other. Only in the Logos Christology is there room for this problem and only in the Living Christ can we find its solution.

XI

THE LIVING CHRIST

CHRIST has been to humanity, successively, an inner, prophetic, potential Logos; a visible, historic individual God-Man, and an invisible, exalted, living Lord. We may not say that the Living Christ is a fusion of the Eternal Christ and the Historic Christ; but the Christ whom we know in the blending of these is a completer Christ. In effect he is a new Christ, — new in universality and in potency.

I

The Living Christ Paul's Christ

The Living Christ, risen and redeeming as well as cosmic, indwelling and prepotent, is the Christ of Paul, as the Historic Christ is the Christ of the Synoptics, and the Eternal Christ the Christ of the Fourth Gospel. It was the Living Christ whom Paul met on the Damascus road. For this Living Christ it became Paul's passion to live. Very little of the Historic Christ appears in the writings of the great apostle. He is there, as the indispensable historic revelation (beyond him in the cosmic background the Eternal Christ), but to Paul the resurrection projected

Jesus into a new and limitless sphere of relationships and potentialities, far more vital as well as universal than was possible to Him in his earthly life. And this Living Christ Paul succeeded — to speak after the manner of men — in enthroning as the ever-living Lord of humanity. Once and again the Church has drifted away from him, now toward the merely human and historic Jesus, now toward the Eternal but indistinct Christ of Reason; but always it has been brought back, face to face, heart to heart, with the Living Christ, and always Paul has had a part, now greater, now less, in effecting the return. It was Paul through whom Luther and Wesley and the Protestant Church found again the Living Christ.

The Living Christ is our Christ of to-day. The pagan world had the Eternal Christ and rejected him; the Jews had the Historic Christ and crucified him; we have the Living Christ, and now is the day of salvation.

The Living Christ the Christ of To-day

Not that we of to-day have not also the Eternal Christ and the Historic Christ. The Living Christ embraces both of these. We do not start where the pagan world started, with a mere revelation within. We do not start where the disciples started, with a flesh and blood Companion. Our Christ has emerged from the shadowy recesses of conscience and reason, has passed through and beyond the limitations of earthly existence, and become the Living Lord of humanity, clear to

conception, winsome to the heart, potent over the will; Master of the individual, Lord of the Church, Redeemer of the world.

Into this Living Christ both the Eternal Christ and the Historic Christ pass, each, as it were, losing himself to find himself in one revealing Person, who was before time and place, in time and place, and above time and place, as well as in them, the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, who was, who is, and who is to come.

II

This is the Living Christ because he himself lives. He lives in a deeper, larger sense than Jesus lived. For He who toiled at the carpenter's bench and renewed his physical strength with food and drink and slept away the weariness of the day, was necessarily "cabin'd, cribb'd and confin'd" by material limitations. It could not be otherwise. But, in fuller union with the Eternal Logos, freed from the accidents of individuality, the restrictions of time and place and the confinements of human knowledge and activity, he now truly, completely, gloriously lives.

"Life in Himself"

Not that the Living Christ, let it be repeated, is another or different being from the lowly, loving Jesus. In character and purpose and communicableness he is unchanged, the same yesterday, to-day and forever. But he has passed on into wider relations and fuller life. In Tennyson's *In*

Memoriam the poet, in one of the cantos, addresses his immortal friend:

"Tho' mix'd with God and Nature thou,
I seem to love thee more and more."

In the eternal life, identity is not lost in the wider spiritual relationships but is so heightened and glorified as to win a nobler and more unselfish love. Jesus is no less real and lovable in his eternal transfiguration as Living Lord than in his temporal taskmastership.

III

This is the Living Christ also because he gives life. The earthly Jesus redeemed a few, the Living Christ redeems many; the former gave life, the latter gives it more abundantly. This Life-giver touches the individual and he becomes a new creature. He imparts himself to his Church and reformations and revivals follow. He moves upon society and freedom, peace, brotherhood dawn, never to set till the kingdom has come.

"I came that they may have Life"

The Living Christ is more, not less, *personal* than the earthly Jesus. The body is, without doubt, an expressive instrument of personality, but by no means a perfect instrument. It is not sensitive enough for the finest communications. We comprehend one another more by inner intuitions than by outer signs. The

"Spirit with Spirit can meet"

intimate thought-feeling of another person comes to us as a kind of unmediated personal impact. The finer and more sensitive to one another we grow, the less need of language or symbol. Shouting, pantomime and gesticulation disappear before the finer culture. Signless, soundless, soulful is the purest, deepest self-impartation. The sense of presence, of communion, is the most intense and vital experience that the Christian has. Call it the presence of God, or of Christ, or of the Spirit, it matters not. It is the Father, the Spirit, the Son — the Living God. But let us not forget that the Living God comes to us only through the Living Christ. In his very impartation of himself to us he becomes the Living Christ. Whoever experiences the nearness of God feels his nearness in Christ. The Son who reveals him; reveals him near. Such an experience is a living and personal experience. It is too vital to be impersonal. Indeed it is more personal than the ordinary contact of every-day intercourse. More personal even than the communion of the disciple who leaned on Jesus' breast was that of him who said, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me."

IV

The Living Christ is more, not less, *potent* than the earthly Jesus. If Christ were only a figure in history, however majestic, however in-

fluential, however fadeless, he would fall short of being a Redeemer. There is a sense in which a great spirit of the past, like Washington, lives, and ever will live, in the lives of his countrymen. Each new generation appropriates him, is made better, more patriotic by him. No effort is needed to keep such a memory, such a personality, alive. It keeps itself alive and inspires and uplifts the heart of the nation perpetually. Jesus Christ lives, and will ever live, in this way, not as a national but as a racial hero. But this is not the only way in which he lives. If it were, "what soul could utter on the true scale of his soul the universal woe, 'We trusted that it should have been He who should have redeemed mankind'?"[1] For such an influence could no more save mankind than the rays of a star could melt the winter snows. It needs more than a memory, a history, a record, to redeem a world. It demands no less than a living, present, vitalizing Person. And such is Christ. Men revere the name of Washington, but they are not baptized into it; nor do they sing to him, "My faith looks up to thee," or, "Dear Lord and Master mine!" There is a potency as well as a supremacy in the Christ which declares him living in a sense that no other man, past or present, lives. Just how, or why, it is so, we may not be able to tell; but such

"I am with you always, eVen unto the end of the world"

[1] P. T. Forsyth, *The Holy Father and the Living Christ*, p. 133.

is the incontestable consciousness of ever multiplying millions who share in part at least the experience of the apostle: "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me."

The Living Lord

We need a Living Christ, and a Living Christ we have. The Church sometimes longs for one of the days of the Son of man; the disciple wishes himself back in the days of the Galilean companionship; but it is not the visible, tangible Christ who is most real, most personal, most vital, but the Christ whose spiritual presence and power are vitally felt. It remains for the Church to realize this, to cease thinking of the Christ merely as a historic person, or as an exalted and heavenly being, and to find in him the vital nearness and reality of a Living Lord. With such a Living Christ in human life all best things are possible; they are certain. We may be of good cheer. The Living God is on the throne. The Living Christ is in the world.

XII

THE COSMIC CHRIST

IN company with fellow travelers, an American once stood, looking down upon Interlaken. Observing how deeply he was moved by the nobility and beauty of the wonderful scene, a German lady standing next him, herself sharing his emotion, spoke in an undertone of reverence and joy the single word, "*Christlich!*" It seemed to him, as he caught it, the one word that expressed and interpreted the scene, translating it into spiritual meaning, into human-divine values.

A scene "Christlike"

What was there Christlike in the scene — anything more than that its purity and freshness and harmony suggested corresponding moral qualities in the life of the One altogether lovely? Most persons would say, "This is all." But a more tenacious reflection follows further and queries whether it is not possible that, through Him who in some way caused both this beautiful vale and this resplendent Character to be, there may not be some deeper and subtler relationship.

I

It is one of the most striking facts in the history of human thought that a good man who lived a humble life in a Roman province and died upon a cross two thousand years ago should have aroused in more than one of his contemporaries the conception that he himself was, in some mystical but profoundly real way, uniquely and vitally connected with nature, nay with the process of creation itself. The author of that marvelous book, the Fourth Gospel, which has hushed the world to silence with its deep authoritative note, has dared to affirm that the Word incarnate in Jesus was also the medium of universal creation. "All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made." And Paul, one of the most virile and commanding minds the world has ever known, came to practically the same thought of Christ: "All things have been created through him, and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist." Nor did these daring minds fail of a following. The Apologists, trained in all the subtleties and skepticisms of Greek thought, took up the conception and made it the very center of a theology that won for Christianity intellectual prestige and strength. Origen, that most capacious and glowing mind of the Early Church, made for the doc-

Christ and Creation

Nothing made without Him

trine a permanent place in Christian theology. Athanasius gave it a still deeper interpretation, declaring that "he who contemplates Creation rightly is contemplating also the Word who framed it and through him begins to apprehend the Father."[1] To this day this conception has held its own, commanding the support of many of the most acute and thorough thinkers of every generation, including our own.

Modern science seems, indeed, to shatter this conception as an empty dream. If there is creation at all, it must be continuous, and the process of evolution, by which the universe came to be what it is, knows Jesus Christ only as a minute and hardly distinguishable product of human development, having no more to do with its stupendous movement of world-architecture than an insect has to do with the creation of the sun in whose warmth it basks. But is it so sure that modern science thus carelessly fillips Christ into oblivion?

Does Science contradict?

In all the vast, titanic process by which the universe came to be what it is, if we accept the controverted nebular hypothesis, the whirling of star-dust, the swirl and crush of matter, the magic of chemical reactions, the emergence of vegetable and animal life, was there no order, no purpose, no progress? Was it all one colossal, fortuitous, meaningless dance of

No Cosmos without Rationality

[1] Athanasius, *Discourses Against the Arians* I, 12.

unintelligent, undirected forces? If so, why has evolution been from "an indefinite incoherent homogeneity, to a definite coherent heterogeneity"? Why have life, harmony, beauty, intelligence emerged? Evolutionary philosophy itself assures us that unless a factor is present in the initial stage of a process it will not emerge in the final stage. We are forced to the conclusion that there has been from the beginning a principle of Order in creation. This principle of Order, — what is it but an unmistakable evidence and expression of Mind, of Reason, of Wisdom? And can Wisdom be less than personal? Here we have reached the prologue of the Fourth Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word." A cosmos demands a cosmic Christ.

The world of nature, as we know it through experience, or through reason, or however, is a realm of uniformity. Science is constructed upon the prevalence of uniformity. Uniformity is not simply a law that we find in nature; neither is it a category of the human mind which we impose upon nature; it is a synthesis of the Mind within nature and the mind within ourselves. Nothing will account for the law of uniformity in nature except a divine Mind, a Logos, which precedes and underlies and permeates the very structure and process of creation, constituting the universe a cosmos and not a chaos.

What is Uniformity?

II

But is this Logos teleological, purposive, benevolent, as it should be in order to be a true Logos? The answer lies in the existence of beauty, virtue, personality. These realities are here; science tells us that once they were not here. What will account for their coming?

Beauty cannot exist without an eye and an object. It is neither in the eye alone, nor in the object alone, but in that correspondence between them which can be explained only by a common authorship of both. The traveler looking down upon Interlaken beholds a scene whose beauty, as he sees it, is the result of countless millenniums of geologic upheaval and chemical alchemy. And he himself, as he gazes upon it, helping to create for himself the beauty which he sees, is the result of still more marvelous creative processes. Can the joy and reverence with which the conjunction of the scene and of himself stirs his soul be accounted for otherwise than by a vinculum uniting them, a common relationship of both to a Mind, a Logos, through which traveler and vale alike came to be what they are? It is not simply, as Emerson said to the rhodora, "The self-same Power that brought me here brought you." Besides this, we must infer that the same Wisdom that created and inheres in the beautiful flower or the in-

The same Power constitutes Seer and Scene

spiring scene created and inheres in the observer and establishes the bond between them. Thus, again we come back to the Eternal Logos, the Cosmic Christ.

Language implies a Logos

Futhermore, the very existence of personality, as well as the mutual communication between human persons, necessitates a Logos philosophy. Personality cannot have come from impersonality. The stream does not rise higher than its source. Nature produces freaks, but her freaks are never finer than her fruits. Personality issuing from impersonality disrupts and derides every law of science, and of philosophy, including that of evolution. Personality lives and moves and has its being in an eternal order of reason that is itself a personal, divine Word. Nor can there be, as Horace Bushnell has said, any basis of communication between personalities except through the Logos that is both in themselves and in the medium of communication. "It is only as there is a Logos in the outward world, answering to the logos or eternal reason of the parties, that they can come into a mutual understanding in regard to any thought or spiritual state whatever." [1]

The Logos doctrine seems to many, in this scientific, practical age, remote, speculative, untenable. Yet Bushnell, one of the most vital, intense, unfettered of modern thinkers, is by no means alone in

[1] *God in Christ*, p. 21.

finding in the Logos theology the only adequate interpretation of Christ, of humanity, and of the universe.

Paul's Cosmic Christ finds little recognition in present-day nature philosophy, but now and again from some deep, devout, reflective mind come words like these from Alfred Tennyson: "I firmly believe that if God were to withdraw himself from the world around us and from within us but for one instant, every atom of creation, both animate and inanimate, would come utterly to naught, for in him alone do all beings and things exist." This is not monism. Taken in connection with the poet's further declaration that in Christ our higher nature was "truly divine, the very presence of the Father, the one only God, dwelling in the perfect man," it comes much nearer to Paul's word, "In him all things consist."

III

What of the dark side of Nature?

But any view of nature which sees only its divine side and fails to recognize the presence of disorder, disease, imperfection, is rose-colored and unreasonable. It is useless to close our eyes to the frustration, the ineptitude, the ugliness, the cruelty, that nature thrusts before our reluctant vision. With pathetic bewilderment the mind of the trustful and sensitive child comes upon the ever-increasing evidences of pain and evil in nature, arousing in him the ques-

tion finely typified in the closing line of William Blake's child-poem, *The Tiger:*

"Did He who made the lamb make thee?"

What is the meaning of it all? Is it the blindness and stumbling of a self-made, uncaring world? Or were the Persians right in holding that after Ormuzd the Good created, Ahriman the Evil created also? It seems an insoluble difficulty, the rock upon which faith must go down. And yet the heart compounds with the eyes in approving those words in the old Hebrew cosmogony: "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." And a yet deeper response of the soul answers the words of the Logos hymn: "And without him was not anything made that hath been made."

The only solvent of this obstinate problem in Providence which I have been able to find — and it is but partial and tentative — lies in the increasing indications that come from science and from nature-study of the presence in nature of something like *freedom* in man, — the power, however limited, of initiation, of experiment, of self-development. Into the ancient injunction of Elohim to the animal kingdom "be fruitful and multiply," we may well read a meaning larger than that of mere reproduction. The potency of variation, the power to develop fresh functions and new forms, — this is granted to

Germinal Freedom found in Nature

the lower forms of life. Creation provides both a divine norm, resident in each divergent type, and also a certain range of self-activity, a field of modification, a power to the contrary, or, in other words, scope for that will to live, and to live in its own way, which is so manifest in all forms of life.[1]

With such a field for self-energizing, becoming more and more intelligent as life mounts upward, there is room, not only for the great divergence of vegetable and animal forms, but also for that deflection from the norm, that distortion and degeneration, whose effects we see in the disease and the deformity marring the face of nature — marring but not despoiling the beauty, blurring but not obliterating the meaning, hindering but not frustrating the divine purpose of perfection. For in nature as in humanity, the tendency is upward, the light grows, the divine purpose unfolds. Obnoxious growths, destructive forces, venomous animals, disappear under the control of man, God's agent and collaborator. The comely, kindly, and serviceable survive. The meek inherit the earth.

Voluntary Divergence from the Norm

[1] Since writing the above there has come to my attention a scientific work of great value which strikingly tends to confirm this theory — "*Evolution, Racial and Habitudinal*," by the veteran missionary and scientist, John T. Gulick, published by the Carnegie University of Washington, D. C. From a careful and detailed study of the habits of the snails on the island of Oahu, Mr. Gulick has demonstrated the preponderance of self-initiated habit over environment in determining the development of new species.

As man advances, nature advances. As his progress is dependent upon her, so is hers upon him. Long indeed has been nature's waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God; but at last the self-imposed bondage of her imperfection has been broken. The inalienable bond between man and nature, constituted in that Eternal Logos who is the sole interpretation of each to the other, is drawing the two into ever closer sympathy and service. Together they move on toward the vision of the prophet, the apocalypse of peace, when "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain."

Waiting for the Manifestation of the Sons of God

Is there no Christ in all this progress in scientific knowledge? Is there no Christ-love in all our deepening affection for nature? When our eyes are opened we shall see that every newly-known force of nature released for the blessing and help of man, every new law that admits us to a wider knowledge of the cosmos, every quickened insight into the ongoing of nature, reveals more of that Word which was in the beginning with God, through whom all things were made, and in whom all are to be consummated.

PART III

THE POTENCIES OF CHRIST

"A perfect man, of the degree of the perfection of Jesus Christ, reaching 'unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,' is to me more incomprehensible, more impossible, than the incarnate Son of God. I would deny no essential likeness of the human to the divine; but even if we carry the likeness to the possibility of a divine humanity, we are not to overlook the fact that a difference in degree may amount to a difference in kind. I take a drop out of the ocean. The drop is like the ocean, but it is swayed by no tides, it bears no ships on its bosom, it does not unite continents. I take a grain of earth from a mountain. The grain is like the mountain, but I can dig no quarries out of its bowels, I can cut no forests on its slopes, I do not see it lifting its summits to the first light of the day. Man may be like God, but I locate Jesus, not in the drop and the grain, but in the ocean and the mountain. . . . I search among the sons of men of all time, and I look in vain for one who had the consciousness of 'life in himself.' . . . No: any interpretation of the personal life of Jesus Christ which can satisfy my mind must allow it the substance and quality and fulness of the life of God. I grant the mystery of the Incarnation, but I prefer mystery to insufficiency in my faith. As I watch the process by which men are made to become sons of God, as I follow the stream of human redemption in its ceaseless and widening course, I can trace it to no other or nearer source than the Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ." — PRESIDENT WILLIAM JEWETT TUCKER, D.D., *Life in Himself: A Meditation on the Consciousness of Jesus Christ.*

XIII

CHRIST PRE-PRESENT AND PRE-POTENT

THE term "preexistent," as applied to Christ, is open to three objections: — (1) As a simple time-affirmation it is empty of content; mere previous existence is a barren and colorless predicate. (2) It is unrelated and discrete in significance; such a Christ might be anything or nothing, so far as his relation to God and man is concerned. (3) Even in its time-affirmation the term is uncertain and insufficient; for it affirms nothing as to the *duration* of Christ's preexistence. Ever-existent would be a more adequate term. There is, in truth, but one term that suffices to define the relation of Christ to time — the term *eternal*. The Eternal Christ transcends time as a part of his supremacy over all limitations. It is this truth of the eternity of Christ that theology was striving after when it accepted and canonized the conception of preexistence.

Preexistence a barren affirmation

I

As an aid to the conception of the Eternal Christ, the designation *pre-present* is preferable

in many respects to *preexistent.* The Pre-present Christ is the Christ present before the incarnation, not only with God the Father and with the creation, but also with humanity. In this usage the term pre-presence may be taken to denote the transcending of place, somewhat as eternal transcends time, conveying us into the realm of pure, not spatial, relations. Indeed the word has already been elevated to this signification in the term omnipresence, —a presence that is *super-spatial,* rather than spatial.

Pre-present a better term

The pre-presence of Christ is much nearer the New Testament representation than preexistence. The Logos of the Fourth Gospel is much more than a preexistent being; he is present with the Infinite as the eternal Outflow of his Being, the Revelation of his Nature, the Word of his Wisdom. By virtue of this very relation to God he is present too in creation as its interior structural Secret, the Process and Pattern of its final perfection; present, also, with humanity, as the Light that lighteth every man coming into the world. Christ himself, as interpreted by the author of the Fourth Gospel, speaks not so much of his preexistence as of his pre-presence. If he were asserting merely his preexistence it would have been more to the purpose to say, Before Abraham was born, I *was.* Instead of that his assertion is, "Before Abraham

Eternal Life richer than Preexistence

was born, I *am*." This is an affirmation of eternity, of the transcendence of time, rather than of mere previous existence in time. The time content is too narrow and confined for Christ's consciousness. He breaks it and throws it from him that he may breathe more deeply in the freedom of the eternal life. Yet the eternal life of which he speaks so confidently as his, both to possess and to impart, is never spoken of by him as separate and solipsistic. Always it is intimately associated by him with his Father. His own life and glory are ever "with the Father."

The Christology of Paul, too, is a Christology of eternal presence rather than of preexistence. Christ is not only before all things, but in him all things consist. He is the spiritual Rock from which the people of God drank, the Rock that followed them in all their wayward wandering. He is the Mediator of universal reconciliation unto God. Thus potent and pervasive is his relationship to the universe. Indeed this Christ of Paul is *pre-potent* as well as pre-present. He is the active Principle, or rather the active Personality, through whom God has been moving upon his world and within it, the mysterious, indwelling Presence who has been the hidden source and inspiration of all goodness and truth, of all progress and all hope. In a word, he he is not merely a preexistent Christ but a pre-present, pre-potent Christ.

Christ pre-potent as well as pre-present

II

A query arises

But how is this eternally present and potent Christ related to the simple, understandable, communicable, human Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels? Is there any vital association? Are not the two figures incongruous and irreconcilable? At first, it seems so. Our sensations in trying to identify the two may be compared to those of a child when, for the first time, he sees his father, whom he has known only in the familiar contact of the home, upon whose knee he has sat, and whom he has caressed, in the exercise of a wider and more august relationship, as a judge on the bench, or a minister in the pulpit, honored, revered, exalted. Is this the same person with whom he has romped in the nursery and roamed in the fields? The child comes to the consciousness of the identity with wonderment. Somewhat similar is our own growing experience of the wider relationships, the deeper meaning, the universal glory, of the Christ whom we have first known in his Galilean simplicity.

III

How can the same Christ be Plato's Light and mine, Simon Peter's Saviour and my neighbor's? How can he be eternal and yet have a place in history, cosmic yet human, racial yet a Jew, uni-

versal yet an individual? The key to the solution of this mystery, the reconciliation of this antinomy, lies in part in the relation of personality to individuality. Personality is possible without individuality. God is a person, but not an individual. Individuality, too, can exist without personality. There is individuality among animals, but no personality. There is even a suggestion of individuality among crystals, but certainly none of personality. In humanity, personality and individuality are always conjoined. We know no person who is not an individual; we know no individual who is not, at least incipiently, a person. Jesus was both person and individual. The Logos is intensely personal but not individual. Individuality is limiting, personality is free. As an individual, Jesus was born, lived, and died; that is, he had a temporal existence. The Eternal Christ, the Logos, has an eternal existence, apart from time, above time. But time and eternity, history and heaven, are not unrelated and incommunicable. The Eternal Christ incarnated himself in the individual Jesus. The Word became flesh. This involved kenosis, self-limitation, humiliation, but not degradation.

Personality vs Individuality

IV

The preexistence or pre-presence of Jesus, as an individual, is unreasonable; it is the Logos who is preexistent. To assert the existence of the man,

the individual, Jesus, before his birth except in the purpose of God, is to resolve his humanity into a phantom; it is no more nor less than Docetism. On the other hand, the Logos who indwelt in Jesus, transfusing his whole self with a divine personality, must have been, not only preexistent with God, but pre-present in humanity, as the source of all its light and its virtue. Before the incarnation the Logos was in *men* genetically, partially; in the incarnation he took possession of *one man*, completely controlling his whole being, raising his humanity to its highest exercise and fusing it with Deity. At least this is the nearest we can come to the interpretation of this divine mystery. The depth of the mystery we may not penetrate. Indeed we cannot penetrate the mystery of physical life and how can we expect to penetrate this? The very terms in which we attempt to state it are but accommodations, adaptations, essays at a meaning which lies beyond our reach.

The Logos not Jesus, pre-present

It is easy to call this "speculation" and taboo it. It is far simpler and easier to rate Jesus as an exceptionally good and wise man and stop with that. But the easy explanation, the surface valuation, is not satisfying. And something in the unique and perduring personality of Jesus has compelled men to seek a deeper secret to account for him. The impulse has led, it is true, to mysticism, extravagance, speculation, but in all the fan-

tastic and futile attempts to interpret this mystery there is the persistent conviction that, in some way or other, Jesus of Nazareth is peculiarly related to the Eternal God, to his universe, and to humanity. Above time, around time, through time and into time, flows this eternal, timeless revelation of God, this vital, personal, present Word, this pre-present, pre-potent, indwelling Christ.

XIV

CHRIST INDWELLING

AN absentee Christ were no better than an absentee God. And a Christ who visited the earth but once — for a mere pin-point of time amid the millenniums — would be virtually an absentee Christ. Not such is the Christ of the New Testament, nor of Christian theology.[1] To be, in any true sense, a Saviour of humanity, Christ must have been always, as he is now, a *present* Saviour. And there is only one way in which he can be a present Christ, and that is as an Indwelling Christ.

An absentee Saviour insufficient

I

To speak of Christ as indwelling at once creates hesitation and confusion in many minds because of the difficulty of conceiving him as, at the same time, with the Father in heaven and with men on earth. It is in reality the same difficulty that arises in harmonizing the Divine transcendence and the Divine immanence.

Immanence relates to Personality, not to Place

[1] "The Logos has not entered abruptly or from without into humanity; but He was ever in the world." Dorner, *System of Christian Doctrine*, Vol. III, p. 342.

In terms of locality such a harmony is quite impossible. It is necessary to lay aside entirely all ideas of place, and to think of the relation only in terms of compatibility and personality. Is there any reason why a higher personality should not indwell in — that is, constantly influence and move, and, if permitted, direct and mold, — a lower personality? An ardent advocate of free will might protest that this would annul freedom; but only if influence were compulsory and restrictive. When the influence of one person over another, as in the case of Christ and the soul, is purely rational and persuasive, and in the direction of the highest activity and well-being, freedom is promoted, not retarded.

Eliminating the notion of locality, there is no inherent difficulty in conceiving of God as at once transcendent and immanent. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." Nor is there any greater difficulty in conceiving of Christ as at the same time dwelling with the Father in light everlasting and in the human heart.

II

It is Paul again who leads the thought of Christianity to the Indwelling Christ. In the Epistle to the Romans (8: 10 and 10: 8) and in the Second

Epistle to the Corinthians (13 : 5) he affirms the presence of Christ in the disciple, and in the striking passage in Colossians (1 : 26, 27) he speaks of "the mystery which hath been hid from the ages and from the generations: but now hath it been manifested to his saints, to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the [you] Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Paul and the Indwelling Christ

The passage is difficult and admits of several interpretations. Ἐν may mean *among* or it may mean *in*; the latter, as Lightfoot says, seems the more probable. But the chief problem is whether *you* means *you Gentiles* or *you disciples among the Gentiles*. The second meaning goes better with the allusions to the Indwelling Christ in the earlier epistles referred to, where the allusion is to Christ within the soul of the Christian, but the former meaning fulfils far better the figure of the *mystery* of which the apostle here makes so much. Is the mystery simply that the Gentiles should come to believe in a Jewish Messiah, or is it, rather, that the invisible Christ who had been among them, in them, through all the ages and generations, now at length, through Jesus, is manifested to them in the clear light of revelation?[1]

Christ in you

[1] That this representation of Christ is given in the New Testament did not escape Calvin, who defined the gospel as

It is not sufficiently certain that this is Paul's meaning, to conclude from these words alone that he teaches a universal indwelling of Christ, but something not very far short of this is certainly implied; and when, in the speech on Mars Hill, he avers, "He is not far from each one of us," he teaches a Divine Immanence of which the Indwelling Christ is but the fuller explanation. Nor in this teaching does Paul stand alone in the New Testament. The author of the Fourth Gospel could hardly have given to this truth of a universally indwelling Christ a more emphatic, certainly he could not have given it a more beautiful and undying, expression than in the words: "There was the true light, . . . which lighteth every man, coming into the world."

Other passages

III

"There is something good in every man," we are wont to say, with a firm conviction that in the affirmation we have touched a vital truth. Well, then, what is this something good? It is reason, moral sense, conscience. Yes, but if these are only automatic endowments, inherited instincts, functional adjuncts of man's personality, they may be vestiges of a distant Creator, but they are not pledges of a present

"Something good in every man"

"the clear manifestation of the mystery of Christ," yet confined the Christ mystery to the Old Testament.

Redeemer, man is God's creature but not his child, there is no vital kinship and communion between the Divine and the human. What if, on the other hand, Reason and Conscience are God speaking within us, Christ indwelling in us, the seal of our sonship, the hope of glory? The "something good" within us becomes no longer a thing but a Person, a *Some One* that makes for righteousness, that impels us on toward that fulfilled personality which consists in complete union with himself.

Some One good in every man

This Indwelling Christ is a racial as well as an individual Presence, and the individual is largely dependent for the strength and vividness of the Christ-mystery within him upon inherited attitude, moral training, religious instruction. But these, potent as they are, do not supply conscience, nor furnish spiritual life, nor insert Christ into his soul. They do but arouse, awaken, appeal to a life, a possession, a Christ, within the individual that is his own, — not apart from the race, but through the race. Christ is, as Ritschlianism insists, a possession of the Christian community, and can be appropriated by the individual only through the mediation of the community, but he is also, in a less vivid form, a possession of the race, a Conscience, a Moral Reason which the individual receives only through the race, mediated to him through the channel of racial and ancestral inheritance and training. But

One Christ of the Church and of the Race

more than this, there is also a revelation of Christ to the *individual*, a Mystery of his own, clouded or clarified by the racial medium through which his whole life and selfhood comes, but still his own. And his attitude toward this inner revelation determines his development and destiny.

IV

It has always puzzled theologians to account for the deeds of virtue and honor which light up the pagan world. What is their source and what their explanation? Some have so far outraged truth as to call them *splendida vitia*, beautiful but deceptive flowers growing out of a corrupt soil, utterly destitute of worth or holiness, because not springing from a regenerate principle within. Others have estimated these deeds overhighly, and held them up to show to what heights unaided humanity can attain. The one explanation is as far from the truth as the other. Was God absent from the human heart before the Christian revelation? Was there ever a noble deed or a true word that was not God-inspired? No. A divine Mystery underlay all that was noble, true, and beautiful in Greek and Roman as well as Hebrew. That Mystery was "Christ in you, the hope of glory." He was the justice of Aristides, the wisdom of Plato, the heroism of Leonidas. If not, what was the source of that justice, virtue, wisdom? Surely it was not solely

The Source of Pagan Virtues

human. And if the divine was interblended, was it not the presence of the yet unveiled Christ, the Immanuel, the Eternal Son, the Light that lighteth every man coming into the world — then a Mystery, now a Manifestation? And if Christ was in the world before he came in the flesh, surely he is in men now, and in all men of whatever race and religion. Yes, Christ is in the heathen heart. Dim, indeed, is his image, faint the whisper of his voice, but he is there. How else can we explain the reception which the Gospel meets as it falls from the lips of the missionary? "Yes, that is *my* Saviour of whom you have told me. I have known him long." Is not this the Mystery coming forth to meet and claim the Manifestation?

Only by asserting this organic relation of every man to Christ can we convince men of their obligations toward Jesus. Only by attributing every outflow of moral goodness to its source in Christ can we give him his true place in the human heart. It is time we had done with accounting for the sweet and gracious lives, or the brave and unselfish deeds of men and women who are not professedly Christians as the exalted products of human attainment. If they can be as gentle, as pure and as true without Christ as we are with him, then is our faith vain. But it is *not* without Christ. Is there any radiant human grace in any life? — it is Christ-begotten. It is this presence of Christ which we see in each other's

Every human virtue Christ's

lives, this pure radiance which illumines the good and even gleams fitfully at times from those not wholly evil, that gives life all its worth and beauty.[1]

"And every virtue we possess,
And every virtue won,
And every thought of holiness,
Is his and his alone."

V

But if this presence of the Indwelling Christ is universal, if Christ is in every man, what advantage hath the Christian? What is the difference between the man who has received Christ, and is born again, and the man who has not received him? All the difference between being saved and being unsaved. It makes a heaven-wide difference whether Christ is in the heart as Ruler or Remonstrator; whether he is there as the accepted

[1] A number of writers, notably Rev. E. M. Chapman in his stimulating volume, *The Dynamic of Christianity*, conceive of this universal indwelling source of virtue and truth as the Holy Spirit, rather than the Christ. In one way the difference is not vital. "Now the Lord is the Spirit." Wherever the Christ is the Spirit is, and *vice versa*. But with the Spirit, rather than the Christ as the source of pre-Christian and extra-Christian goodness, many persons are likely to miss the significance of the incarnation, and the old confusion concerning Christ remains; whereas the universal presence of Christ involves that of the Holy Spirit.

Light, the Guide of life, or as a Light breaking fitfully through the darkness; whether the Light is overcoming the darkness or the darkness the Light; whether a man prefers darkness to light, or light to darkness. Receiving Christ the Mystery, leads to receiving Jesus the Manifestation. Whether the Christ within shall be a dying hope, a retreating presence, or an ever-brightening glory, depends upon will and conduct. With attitude toward the Indwelling Christ is intimately involved attitude toward the Historic Christ. The two blend into each other. The Christ of the inward mystery and the outward manifestation are the same. If we are *of the Truth* we hear his voice.

Accepting and rejecting the Inner Christ

There are two objections that naturally arise in this connection, which, though alluded to elsewhere, demand further consideration. The first of these objections is: What is the need and value of the Manifestation, if such is the worth of the Mystery? The answer is: Sunlight is better than twilight, — though it is always preceded by twilight. Humanity stumbled in the twilight; it is learning to walk securely in the Light.

Nor is the Christ — this is essential to the understanding of him — merely a revealing Personality, but an enabling Personality. That is, he is accompanied, in a measure that the prehistoric Christ could not be, by the Holy Spirit. It is his not only to reveal the Father, but

Christ enabling men

to enable men to reach the Father. Revealing the Father without potentializing man were an unavailing and insufficient service. Christ does far more than that. No better instance of the enabling power of Jesus Christ can be found than that contained in the "Confessions" of Augustine. In describing his progress into the light, Augustine thus refers to the influence upon him of Platonism: "By the study of the Platonist books I was taught to seek for the incorporeal Truth, and beheld Thy invisible things understood by the things that are made, and though cast back, I felt what the dullness of my soul did not permit me to gaze upon, I had no doubt that Thou art, and that Thou art infinite. . . . Of all this I was convinced, yet was I too weak to enjoy Thee. I prated like One who knew, yet, unless I found Thy way in Christ our Saviour, what I deemed true, was like to end in rue."[1]

In these words is disclosed, through the medium of a personal experience, that which is, equally with revelation, the great offiee of the Son of God — to impart not only sight but strength, not only the knowledge of the Infinite, but strength to enjoy him, — without which strength, knowledge is but a mocking futility.

It is in enabling power, as well as in revealing power, that Jesus, the incarnate, visualized, individualized Christ, exceeds the Logos, the Mystery,

[1] Chapter xx.

the prehistoric Christ,—thus constituting Christianity the universal religion. The Person who moved, darkling and indistinct, behind the forces of Nature and within the heart of Humanity, could not, *ipso facto*, have the same commanding glory as when he stood forth, visual and distinct, upon the field of history. If we ask, why then was not the manifestation earlier made? the answer is, it could not be. In order to be historical, the Incarnation must needs occur at some point in history. That point, that moment, was the divinely opportune one. "When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son." Nothing could lend such centrality and significance to the Incarnation as a historical event, as to have it the unfolding and outshining of a Reality, a Personality, already perceived and felt, but not clearly understood — rather than the advent of a new and hitherto unknown manifestation of the Godhead.

The second objection is one arising from the mystical character of the theory, and formulates itself somewhat as follows: "This is a needless and senseless obscuration; all that you mean is that there is a certain responsiveness in the human heart to the presentation of moral obligation and of the claims of the gospel." But what is this responsiveness? Is it a mere quality or capacity that has been inserted or grown up in my soul? Is it mine, simply and solely, — a part of myself? If so, I may do what I choose with it, accounta-

ble only to myself. But if it is not mine alone, but God has placed it within me, is it a mere product of his will, or is it not rather himself, his Logos, his nature, in me? My sin may have corrupted all the rest of my being, but *this* it cannot touch, for it is mine, yet not mine; in me, yet not of me. This is the divine spark, the *funkelein* of the Mystics. It is this of which William Law writes, so raptly yet so rationally: "If Christ was to raise a new life like his own in every man, then every man must have had originally in the inmost spirit of his life a seed of Christ, or Christ as a seed of heaven, lying there in a state of insensibility, out of which it could not arise but by the mediatorial power of Christ. . . . For what could begin to deny self, if there was not something in man different from self? . . . The Word of God is the hidden treasure of every human soul, immured under flesh and blood, till as a day-star it arises in our hearts, and changes the son of an earthly Adam into a son of God." [1]

Christ the Divine Spark or Seed of the Soul

But it is not in the Mystics alone that this truth finds recognition. Alike in religious philosophy and religious devotion, there is found frequent and convincing utterance of this truth of an indwelling divine Mystery, — which is "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

[1] See Inge: *Christian Mysticism*, p. 283.

XV

CHRIST IN CONSCIENCE

THE most impressive fact in life, to the reflecting mind, is the sense of duty. That a being with such a nature as ours, swayed by such appetites and passions, sueh ambitions and fancies, should be invisibly restrained on all sides but the highest, and on that side moved imperatively toward that which is worthiest for oneself and best for society, — this, surely, is most significant. The counter fact of disregard of duty has dulled us to the greater fact of duty itself. A moment's reflection restores our wonder. Here, in this mysterious sense of duty, is an invisible, intangible power that enters into every life, and every day of every life, with greater or less control, as the great conservator of society. Without it humanity would hasten rapidly to degeneration, perhaps to destruction. It is the balance-wheel of social relations, the savior of humanity.

The Mystery and Might of Duty

Very commonly, and very misleadingly, duty is thought of as a majestic impersonality, an unconscious law, like that of gravitation, that knows neither its author, its purpose, nor its objects. But duty

is such only to withholden eyes. We come up against duty as against a blank wall, only to find stone and mortar resolving into intelligence and love, — not less firm, but less forbidding. Duty often seems cruel, only to prove kind. We feel its grasp as of an iron vice, but when we yield it proves the hold of a divine Hand.

Duty not impersonal

I

The only adequate account of duty is that it is the reflection of the personal will of God. This alone explains its power, its purposefulness, and its personal character. Every attempt to interpret duty as *custom operating in consciousness* fails before the question, Why does obligation continue to be imperative when it ceases to be instinctive? The sense of obligation refuses to lend itself to any solution save that it originates in the rational appeal of a higher will to ours, in freedom. Through duty God makes his will known to us as it relates to our human life and conduct.

Duty governs in the Will of God

If duty reflects the will of God, conscience may be called the voice of God. It is a familiar metaphor and a true one. The language of conscience may not always be understood, but the voice is recognized. Its tones, heard in the silences of the soul, too musical and deep for a whisper, are characterized by an

Conscience the voice of God

authority and finality which belong only to that which is eternal. To make conscience the impersonal communication of an impersonal law would argue an impersonal God, and leave duty a puzzle in evolution. Kant recognized the real source of duty when he defined religion as the recognition of all our duties as divine commands.

If duty is thus personal and conscience revelatory, there must be relationship here to the Christ, the personal Revealer of God. Without such a relationship of Christ to conscience it is impossible to reconcile our Christianity with our psychology, our philosophy with our faith. If, as Christianity affirms, to obey Christ is to fulfil conscience, then to obey conscience is, in some sense, to obey Christ. Once more we are brought back to the immanent Christ, who is in us, not only as the hope of glory, but also as the guide to conduct, the voice of duty.

II

Christian experience normal

The need of a closer correlation of Christian experience with the moral nature upon which it rests, has long been felt. If Christian experience is treated as wholly unique and peculiar, wholly unrelated to the laws and processes of moral life, it can have neither a *rationale* nor an apologetic. Until its ethical and psychological sanity and substantiality are made evident, it hangs in the air, the sport of

the winds and the proper object of mistrust. No thoughtful Christian is content to leave his experience thus isolated and unexplained. The man who has undergone a change of heart is conscious that he has passed through a unique and transforming experience; he is also persuaded that this experience is profoundly real and normal, and accordant with the deepest laws of his moral and rational nature.

Undoubtedly there is an element in Christian experience which is not felt in the ordinary processes of moral life — a sense of divine support, of spiritual communion, which lifts the soul into a purer atmosphere. It is difficult to overestimate the reality and importance of this difference between the merely moral life and the regenerate life. Conversion raises the whole content and detail of life into spiritual and personal relations with God. Obedience to duty becomes obedience to God; the behests of conscience become the promptings of Christ. And yet the difference, great as it is, is largely one of recognition — a recognition that transforms dreary obedience into personal devotion. All earnest and unselfish obedience of conscience is obedience to the indwelling Christ. But it is only when this fact emerges in consciousness that the soul kindles. It may be confidently affirmed, out of general human experience, that no one accepts and devotes himself to a great and noble duty without feeling a sense of personal associa-

tion, as if he were doing the will of a supreme person in closest relation with himself. He becomes aware that he is identifying himself with some one "closer than breathing," with whom he thus enters into a deep and uplifting alliance that stirs his soul to its noblest exercise. This may be scouted as mystical, but it is the secret of the absorbing appeal and the ennobling effect of duty. This sense of companionship with the Supreme Self makes the soul fearless and joyful in the midst of sacrifice and sorrow, in the service of the higher conscience. What is conversion but this sense of fellowship with God through duty lifted into the conscious control of life?

Fellowship with God through Duty

III

Those who would guard the sacredness and autonomy of individuality here interpose the pertinent objection to which we have already referred:[1] "Is not this immanence of God in Christ destructive of personal integrity? Does it not disrupt my own personal character and freedom if Christ is in me, as my very virtue, my better self, my guide, my conscience? Did not Paul dishonor his own selfhood when he said: 'It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth

An Objection and Its Answer

[1] Vide, p. 111.

in me'?" Were it other than an absolutely disinterested guidance and an absolutely free and rational following, it would certainly annul human personality to be thus inhabited and animated by divine personality. But the fact, as reported in consciousness, is that in this relationship, intimate and determinative as it is, there is not the slightest infringement of human freedom and personality, but on the contrary, a conscious development and fulfilment of personal freedom and power; so that the Paul for whom it was Christ to live was the Paul whose own personality thus became freest, most intense, and most replete. It is only the influence of abnormal personality that is coercive and repressive. Live with a thoroughly good person in spiritual intimacy and your soul becomes saturated with him; he is in you, his spirit atmospheres yours and instils itself into your thought and conduct. Yet, if his personality is sufficiently pure and high, there is never for an instant a violation of your personality. On the contrary, you are conscious of being your "best self" under his influence. It is thus with the indwelling of God in Christ with us. Only because he is within us are we persons at all. And the more fully his presence is recognized and honored, the more completely do we come to ourselves, the more fully and freely do we realize our own personality. The Christ of conscience is the germ of spiritual selfhood within us.

IV

The failure to recognize Christ in conscience has led to a serious misrepresentation of the gospel.

Rejection of Duty a Rejection of Christ

There is much said in evangelistic preaching about rejecting Christ, which interprets the rejection simply as that of the historical, or, more properly, the ecclesiastical Christ, and entirely ignores the rejection of the Christ in conscience,— the Christ who stands veiled but central within every duty and every opportunity for service. Not that the acceptance or rejection of the Christ of the Gospels is not of supreme importance, but a great deal more is involved in it than a single apprehension or a momentary choice. The subordination of the moral to the mechanical Christ, of the ethical to the external, results in a travesty of the real Christ, who cares not for the "Lord," "Lord," of him who does not his will.

It is not enough that Jesus *taught* morality. If that were all it would leave duty orphaned and unexplained. What we need to know is that *right* is not a mere human deposit, a product of human creation, however high and worthy, nor yet a mere external will-product of God imposed upon humanity, but that it is of the very being and essence of God, as much a part of his nature as of ours, — the soul of personality, human and divine,

and therefore the very kernel of the eternal revelation that culminated in Jesus Christ. And that we can know only as Christ is recognized in conscience as well as in history, in character as well as in creed.

XVI

CHRIST REGENERATING

ETERNAL Love has more than one regenerative process, more than one path by which he leads men out of darkness into light, more than one way of re-creating the soul. His means are multiform and his messengers many. Too long the Church has been blind to the regenerative agencies which lie at the very heart of life itself. Nature, friendship, home, thought, labor, love are channels through which the divine life flows into the human. The means and messengers of the soul's awaking — who can circumscribe them?

Regeneration and Life

I

When the heavenly Beatrice saluted Dante, the soul of the poet uprose into a new world. "And passing through a street she turned her eyes thither where I stood abashed: and by her unspeakable courtesy, which is now garnered in the Great Cycle, she saluted me with so virtuous a bearing that I seemed then and there to behold the very limits of blessedness."[1]

Regeneration through Human Love

[1] *Vita Nuova.*

This hour of "her most sweet salutation" was the hour of the immortal poet's entrance into the *vita nuova*. To explain such an experience as only the vibration of the chord of youthful sentiment is to reduce gold to dross. That outshining of purity and beauty made of Dante another man. In that hour he was created a poet. God took him into fellowship with himself. "Every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God." Human love that is deep and pure and sacrificial is of the very quality and essence of the new life, "the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."

And if love has power to awaken the soul, so also has truth. If there was ever an awakened soul outside of Christianity, surely it was that of Plato, "the father of theology," as Professor Edward Caird calls him. "By their fruits ye shall know them." He who lifted so many into the realm of the good, the true, and the beautiful, — was not he born from above? The Spirit, blowing where it listeth, which stirred John to lofty contemplation and noble expression, must have been the same which moved Plato. Find a man in any age who thinks deeply and loves the truth devoutly, and you have found a man who is born, not of the flesh but of the Spirit, whose life is lifted above the lust of the eyes and the pride of life into the realm where he thinks God's thoughts after him.

Regeneration through Truth

And if love and thought afford to God awakening access to the soul, so also does nature. Not only are there flashes from her beauty which move the soul to momentary communion with the All-Beautiful, but here and there is one who lives in constant exaltation of spirit through communion with her, whose "days are bound each to each by natural piety." What shall we say of the nature poets, whose souls have fed upon dawns and sunsets, hues of flowers and beams of stars? Ignorantly or consciously, they worship the Soul of all beauty. If they refuse whatever of lower suggestion they find in nature, and are true to the highest and finest, are they not led by the Spirit? What of Wordsworth, the high priest of nature, finding God in "the light of setting suns," and the law of duty in the march of the stars? What of Emerson, living in Puritan New England like a Greek philosopher or a Hindu sage, oblivious of Sabbath bell and Christian creed, yet in blissful comradeship with nature and in holy converse with the Over-Soul?

Regeneration through Beauty

Are not all these pure and high-hearted lovers, thinkers, poets, sons of God, children of the Spirit? Are not all the lowly, love-lit souls, in the narrow furrow of every-day duty, — in the home, the field, the shop, — some of them never having heard of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, some having heard but not consciously accepted, who lift their eyes to the hills and walk steadily and uprightly

their humble way, — are they not all God's own, ruled by his laws, renewed by his Spirit?

II

But what, then, of the relation of these regenerate ones to Christ? Can they be of the Spirit and not of Christ? Have they no vital touch with Him in whom alone eternal life is revealed, and through whom the Spirit works? There can be but one conclusion. In some way, and in some degree, all who walk by the Spirit, in any age or land, know the Christ, — not in the flesh but in the spirit, not all of them in his historic embodiment, but all in his eternal personality. Because we of the Christian era and the Christian area have seen Jesus the Christ we have believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed. And if some who have the written record of Jesus and yet fail to identify him with the eternal Logos in the Living Christ, are true to the indwelling Christ, we may wonder that the great light blinds their eyes, but we may not exclude them from the number of those who, being led by the Spirit of God, are thereby sons of God. Call these lives of "outside saints" incomplete acceptances, if you will, partial regenerations; nevertheless they are real.

Yet no Regeneration without Christ

Do we then make Jesus of none effect? Rather would we seek to understand and exalt him. Not

otherwise can he be understood and exalted than as the full shining of an earlier and eternal Light. The prologue of the Fourth Gospel is the inevitable outcome of clear and comprehensive thinking upon Jesus Christ. Athanasius grappled with the same problem, and reached practically the same conclusion. So has the great body of devout and thoughtful minds in every Christian age. Given Jesus of Nazareth, in the clear and simple outlines of the Synoptic narratives, and steadily and surely reflection conducts the mind back to the Eternal Word. Jesus interprets the Word, and in turn the Word interprets him. Since, then, the eternal revelation precedes and exceeds the bounds of historical revelation, all who have been and are true to the wider and fainter revelation are one with those who are true to the closer and clearer revelation. For the hardness of our hearts mutual recognition is not always immediate, but when shibboleths cease and veils are torn away, it will be seen that all disciples of the Word, all children of the Spirit, are one.

Jesus understood through the Eternal Logos

III

Inconsistency and confusion have characterized Christian thought concerning the relation of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Theology has never given to this relationship as earnest thought as to the relationship of the Father and the Son. In order

to account for the righteousness and faith found in humanity, especially in the Hebrew race, before the Incarnation, it has been assumed that the Spirit, independently of the Son, was present in the world before Jesus came. But, besides involving a serious contradiction of the Divine Unity, this theory is in every way unsatisfying. To detach the Spirit from the Christ is like separating heat from light. It is like severing will from reason. Neither can be rightly conceived as acting without the other. Nor can their joint activity occur save through the Father, the primary power in all spiritual energizing.[1] So close is the relation between Christ and the Spirit in the illumination of the human soul that St. Paul (2 Cor. 3: 17) momentarily identifies them. Whenever the veil is taken away from human hearts so that they see clearly, it comes, says Paul, through the turning of the heart to the Lord, who "is the Spirit."

The Holy Spirit never present without the Eternal Christ

If Christ is essential to one regeneration he is essential to all. If the new birth cannot take place without the Spirit, neither can it without the Christ. Jesus, the incarnate Christ, inexpressibly clarifies, illumines, objectifies, expresses the indwelling Christ; but, after all, it is the latter, not the former, who is the "essential Christ." Wherever and whenever

The Ever-present Spirit shows to men the things of the Eternal Christ

[1] It was to combat this separation of the activity of the Word and the Spirit that Luther strove.

regeneration, complete or partial, has occurred without the pale of historic Christianity, it must have been through the Ever-present Spirit taking the things of the eternal Christ and showing them to men. If one takes the narrower view and holds that no soul ever entered into the spiritual life until Jesus came, then Christianity is but an unaccountable historical cataclysm, and revelation a comet, flashing suddenly across the pathway of the steadier stars of human faith and duty and destined to disappear in the darkness out of which it came.

IV

Upon the assumption of a circumscribed and enclosed Christianity, whatever of faith, virtue, love, were in humanity before Christ, or beyond Christ, are false and deceptive. They are not real because they are not regenerate, and do not spring from the life in Christ.[1] This inference both Roman Catholicism and Calvinism unhesitatingly accept. In the unbaptized, the Roman Church finds only corruption and selfishness. Calvin stoutly affirms that "everything that proceeds from the corrupt nature of man is worthy of condemnation." He admits, it is true, that virtues like those of Camillus were "gifts of God," and that there are "most excellent gifts of the Divine Spirit, which for the common benefit of mankind he dispenses to whom-

The Absurdities that followed the Theory that Christianity is confined to History

[1] *Vide*, p. 109.

soever he pleases," but even these natural gifts "have been corrupted, not that they can be defiled in themselves as proceeding from God, but because they have ceased to be pure to polluted man, so that he can obtain no praise from them."[1]

To dissever thus sharply and completely the "natural man" from the "spiritual man" may seem to have a certain warrant in parts of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, but it does not agree with his speech on Mars Hill, or with his doctrine as a whole. Nor does it reflect the teaching of Jesus. The early Church did not recognize this absolutely unrelated nature of regeneration. Cornelius' prayer and alms could never have come up to God acceptably if they had arisen from a heart wholly corrupt and evil. Bound up with a narrow and now exploded form of the doctrine of the fall of man, this distorted view of human nature, as utterly perverted and alienated from God, has been rejected by modern thought as unreal and provincial. With the larger horizons opened by modern science and history, it is absolutely incompatible. The question now becomes: Shall theology go completely over to the opposite extreme, and adopting the creed of humanism, declare human nature, in and of itself, altogether noble and perfect, barring the necessities of incomplete development? Or, shall theology cling to the real truth which underlies

Humanism or Calvinism?

[1] *Institutes*, Book I, chapter 3.

Calvinism, namely, the utter worthlessness and sinfulness of humanity *without God*, and correct its false premise by asserting that, *as a matter of fact, humanity never has been entirely without God, but that in every true purpose and holy desire and noble deed the Eternal Word and the Eternal Spirit have been acting upon and with the human spirit?*

Regeneration thus becomes a divine process as ancient and as varied as humanity, yet coming to its full effect only in Christianity; the Holy Spirit, no late-sent visitant from heaven descending to earth at Pentecost, nor yet a divine influence restricted to one people alone, but the Father's gracious Paraclete, sent to help his children from the beginning; and the Christ, through whom the Spirit operates, not merely the God-man coming in the flesh in the fulness of time, but also the ever-present Word, the Light that lighteth every man coming into the world.

XVII

CHRIST ATONING

Incarnation and Atonement inseparable

IT has been a common practise in systematic theology to distinguish so sharply as almost to separate the person of Christ from the work of Christ. Incarnation and atonement have been treated as if they were as distinct as multiplication and division. Incarnation has been regarded wholly as a state; atonement as a deed. Thus, Professor Denney in his book, *The Death of Christ*, accentuates the position of many earlier writers as follows: "Christ not only was something in the world, he *did* something. He did something that made an infinite difference, and that puts us under an infinite obligation. He bore our sins." Most certainly he did something; but was the sum of his doing confined to the sacrifice of the cross? Was not all the rest, — self-conquest, teaching, ministry, — doing as well as being, sacrifice as well as service? Could he have been something without doing something, or done something without being something? It is a limited view which sets the atonement over against the incarnation, and argues for

one or the other as central. They are hemispheres of one full-rounded revelation, and the equator which separates them is, at best, but an imaginary line.

I

The issue between the defenders of the incarnation and of the atonement is a superficial one, and disappears as soon as the personality of Christ is placed in the foreground. Too long the person of Christ has been obscured. In the doctrine of the incarnation, the nature of Christ has been emphasized at the expense of his person, and in the doctrine of the atonement, the act at the expense of the person performing the act. Modern theology is turning from the vain endeavor to understand the nature of Christ to the more inspiring contemplation of his person.

An atoning Person rather than an atoning Death

The time has come to interpret the atonement, also, more in the terms of personality and less in those of accomplishment, to exalt the dying Christ rather than the death of Christ, to contemplate the atoning Christ rather than to speculate concerning the nature of the atonement wrought by him.

The uplifting of the personality of Christ in atonement is a return to the New Testament emphasis. It is upon him that the ictus there falls, rather than upon his work. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth," "And ye know that he was

manifested to take away sins," — this is the Johannine emphasis. As High Priest, rather than as sacrifice, did Christ appeal to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. "Jesus Christ, and him crucified," was Paul's message. "Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree," was the adoring exaltation of the person of Christ by the author of First Peter. The death of Christ and the cross of Christ are often alluded to in the New Testament, but always in closest association with Christ himself, never in the detached and impersonal manner of our systematic theology, as if the death, the sacrifice, possessed virtue in itself apart from him who died.

The misdirection of emphasis upon the deed rather than the doer, the work rather than the person of Christ, has lent to the atonement an almost magical efficacy in the minds of many. If, instead of exalting him, attention is directed mainly to the debt he is paying, or the propitiation he is making, or the death he is dying, until he himself comes to be looked upon as subordinate to the transaction of which he is the instrument, we lose sight of Christ behind a doctrine. It is true, there is much in the New Testament which apparently forms a basis for the construction of the elaborate theory of the atonement which has been erected, but only if the terms used are taken literally; and, as Coleridge so pertinently

The New Testament terms, not definitions but metaphors This makes the terms not less but more real

pointed out, these terms are metaphors, not definitions. Of this we may be sure, for the reason that, taken literally, they are mutually contradictory. Christ cannot be at the same time Ransom and Redeemer, Priest and Sacrifice, Propitiation and Advocate.

These ardent New Testament disciples have experienced a new life, a transforming truth, a fresh relationship to God in Christ, which no term, no language, is adequate to express. Therefore they seize every symbol which helps to convey a meaning greater than words can contain. To literalize rigidly these words, and attempt to turn their vital, flaming utterance into set theological phraseology is to withdraw the gaze of the soul from the atoning Christ in order to fasten attention upon a plan, a method, a device, for saving men.

II

It is only as we turn from the impersonal, juridical view of the atonement to the personal and ethical, that we enter into its deeper and more searching reality. So long as death, blood, ransom, propitiation, substitution; taken literally, constitute the essential factors of atonement, it is impossible to get at the heart of the doctrine; but the moment its ethical and personal implications are put forward, these terms become vivid and luminous symbols, and the doctrine itself vital and thrilling with the touch of the personal Christ.

The need of atonement lies in the very nature of moral relationships, disturbed and ruptured by sin. Men are bound together in a social whole. None liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself. Bitter fruits must be shared, evil deeds must be borne by others as well as by the doer. Infinite love cannot reverse this order. "All's love, but all's law." There is no offhand forgiveness on the part of God. He never says to his children, "Oh, well, never mind." It only needs to be shown that Christ is racial in his relations for the conclusion to follow that he must needs suffer atoningly for human sin.

The vicarious Nature of Suffering for Sin

Christ atones by the moral victory which he achieved, by the manifestation of the divine love which he made, by the penitence for sin which he aroused. But this is not all. Christ atones by bearing, and thus bearing away, human sin. This is the vicarious element in atonement. But it is not substitution, nor equivalence, nor imputation. All these quantitative and forensic terms must be flung away. They may, perhaps, have served a purpose, but they have come to obscure those deeper ethical values of the cross which set it at the very heart and center of life.

You cannot help the person who loves you bearing your sins. Nor can he help it, if he loves you. He suffers with you and for you in your sin

and its consequences, and the more in that he does not *sin* with you and for you. And this vicarious suffering, bearing our sins by sympathy, helps bear them away, for it arouses us to renounce that which can bring such pain to others. The love that thus suffers vicariously burns up the love of sin until it shrivels and dies in the holy flame. Thus, ethically, sympathetically, vicariously — through his racial relationship — the Son of God bears human sin.

The ethical Value of the Atonement

Let us not think that this ethical value of the atonement was wholly unrecognized until the modern era in theology. It was the ground-tone in the doctrine, which hallowed it from the first, though overlaid with many false and discordant notes. Now and then one catches vibrations of this deeper note in Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo.* Jonathan Edwards sounds it, full and clear, in his paper on *The Satisfaction of Christ,* in which he represents the sympathy of Christ with God and with men as perfected by his death. But only through the searching thought and spiritual insight of such modern theologians as McLeod Campbell, Maurice, Bushnell, Dorner, and Robertson have we come to see the primary ethical quality of the doctrine. As Nitzsch has put it, "It is in the depth of his sympathy and in the endeavor for the world's salvation that Christ bears the penalty of sin."

III

We have been speaking of the atonement hitherto as if it occurred solely at a given point in time, at a certain crisis in human history. But more thorough thinking shows that this cannot be. In order to be in any sense historical, the atonement must be an eternal process in the heart of God. An eternal atonement is the necessary corollary of eternal divine love. A love that never suffered for human sin before the crucifixion, or that never before the incarnation in great compassion sought to win men away from sin, would not be love. "The redemption of the Christ was the manifestation of that which is eternal in the being of God."[1]

Eternal Atonement

An eternal atonement is the only explanation of a historic atonement. To hold any theory which contains the implication that God made up his mind, at a certain point in the history of human sin, to be atoned by the death of his Son, or even that he determined from eternity to be atoned at that particular time and by that particular event, is to degrade our thought of God. Christ refutes the notion in the parable of The Husbandmen. Many messengers of atonement are sent, and all suffer ill-treatment; the Son comes only when the refusal of other

Eternal Atonement explains Historic Atonement

[1] Mulford, *Republic of God*, p. 184.

endeavors toward reconciliation makes his coming possible and needful.

Nor need we absolutely exclude — although here we should proceed with extreme hesitation, lest we exercise ourselves in things too high for us — the thought to which theology has clung so tenaciously, that in the sacrifice of Calvary the heart of God was moved to a still deeper and fuller forgiveness of men. God is unchangeable, yet surely not stagnant. It is not irreverent to conjecture that the heart of the Eternal may have known a fresh outflow of forgiving love to man in the sacrifice of Calvary, as Bushnell suggested, arguing from the analogy of the man who in sacrificing for one who has wronged him feels a deeper and more complete forgiveness toward him.

IV

Eternal Atonement does not lessen the need and value of the Historic Atonement

Here, as elsewhere, neither a purely historic Christ, nor a Christ who was preexistent with the Father but entirely unknown to humanity before the incarnation, will suffice. God must have been in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, even before the great historic reconciliation. Otherwise it is impossible to account for the sense of divine forgiveness and compassion experienced by men before Christianity, as reflected, for example, in the penitential psalms of Assyrians and Egyptians,

and in the tender assurances of divine forgiveness in the words of Hebrew prophets and psalmists.

And yet, how almost universally was this inner revelation despised; how persistently men preferred darkness rather than light; how urgent became the need of an historic atonement! Eternal love has always waited with the ring and the best robe and the forgiving embrace, and never without cost of suffering and sacrifice; for although the parable does not tell us what the Father suffered on the day the prodigal took his journey, and the days that followed, we may read it between the lines, in the very warmth of the welcome. But humanity in its sin had rejected the Indwelling Christ, had forgotten the deserted home and the forgiving Father, and it needed the suffering Son of man and the uplifted cross to restore mankind to itself and to God. Thus does the sacrifice of Jesus, in time, disclose the heart of God in eternity and reveal the sacrificial nature of Love.

XVIII

CHRIST RISEN

CHRISTIAN Evidences and Apologetics make far more of the resurrection than of the Risen Christ; the New Testament makes far more of the Risen Christ than of the resurrection. The difference is more radical and serious than at first appears. It amounts to a subversion of emphasis, on the part of Apologetics, from the personal to the impersonal, from the essential to the incidental. This displacement of emphasis has injured Christianity not a little; for false emphasis is first cousin to false doctrine.

The Risen Christ versus the Resurrection

I

The Risen Christ was the day-star of Christianity. It was he who reawakened the drooping hearts of the disciples, and won new believers to their ranks. It is commonly asserted that the resurrection was the central truth of the new propaganda. Rather it was the Risen Christ.[1] Not a resurrected body, but an

Not a resurrected Body but an Imperishable Person

[1] "The apostolic conception of the Resurrection is rather 'The Lord lives,' than 'The Lord was raised.'" Bishop Wescott, quoted by Canon Hensley Henson in the *Hibbert Journal*, April, 1904.

imperishable Person saved the world. Peter, in his Pentecostal speech, revealed the secret of the resurrection when he said of Christ: "Whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." A personality too vital to be held by death — it was He whom the Church adored and whom the world could not withstand.

Here, too, lies the secret of Paul's emphatic resurrection-teaching. To be a Living Christ his Lord must be a Risen Christ, — this he cannot too ardently affirm. "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain." Although to Paul the Risen Christ involves the fact of a resurrection, it is not upon the fact that he places the emphasis, but upon the *person* who overcame death and led captivity captive. It is *he* without whom Christianity is disabled, and not the mere external fact of the resurrection, much less the manner, evidences and accessories of resurrection, upon which theology has been far too prone to dwell.[1] True, each of the Gospels presents a circumstantial account of the events attending the resurrection, but it is a narrative of experiences rather than a presentation of evidence. For that very reason it is, in some respects, all the better evidence. The vivid human touches that make up the account are the quickened and memorable impressions that

The Person transcends the Event

[1] See Harnack's *History of Dogma*, Vol. I, p 85.

attend a great experience rather than intentionally gathered testimonies. The disciples were sure of him risen. That was enough. He still lived — it was this that set their hearts throbbing, and sent them forth with the gospel message. The fact that each saw him risen but none saw him rise, itself indicates that the emphasis belongs upon the person rather than upon the miracle involved. It is possible to believe in the actual resurrection of Jesus (as, for example, with such a theory as that of Stapfer [1]) without assuming the literal resumption by Christ of the crucified body, although all such theories create as many difficulties as they remove. The out-and-out miracle is as reasonable a supposition as any. But, miracle or no miracle, the emphasis does not belong there, but upon the Christ, who so stamped the reality of his risen personality upon the mind of men that it never has been, and apparently never will be, effaced. The Christ survives all theories of the resurrection. *He is risen indeed!*

II

Christ himself has been too long obscured by his miracles, particularly by that of the resurrection.

[1] "He arose on the third day, but it was not the flesh that formerly lived that returned to life; it was a spiritual and celestial body coming forth from the material and earthly body which died on the cross." See *American Journal of Theology*, July, 1900.

Apologetics has raised so great a dust about this event that it is difficult for the face of the risen Sun of Righteousness to shine through. "The apologist who seeks to refute skepticism by demonstrating the resurrection as the 'most certain of all historical events,' and arguing back to the divinity of the mission and character of Jesus, inverts the method in which revelation was historically given. . . . A man will not be able to accept this most mysterious of all supernatural manifestations, if he has not first been led up, as the disciples were, to find the supernatural in the life and person of Jesus; to find it, that is, in a form in which it can be verified by human experience."[1] To rest the whole weight of Christianity upon the provableness of a single historical event, to make the resurrection the *articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiae*, is to entrust it to a support too slender to bear the strain. The evidence for the reality of the Person, Jesus Christ, is absolute and conclusive; the evidence for the external fact of his resurrection is necessarily much less conclusive. It is sufficient only when kept in immediate connection with his unique character and personality.

Christianity does not rest on a Miraculous Occurrence

Evidence is inevitably influenced by personality. If the same amount of evidence were brought forward to prove the resurrection from the dead of

[1] Forrest, *The Christ of History and of Experience*, p. 157, 3d ed.

Theudas, or Simon the Sorcerer, as of Jesus Christ, who of us would accept it? It makes all the difference in the world of what sort of a person a given act is alleged. It would take a prodigious deal of evidence to convince us that certain persons whom we know had done a great deed of self-sacrifice; of others we would believe it upon the merest hearsay.[1] If you were informed that Thomas Edison had invented a successful flying machine you would be prepared to believe it, but if you were told that your neighbor's boy, who does not know enough to make a kite, had done so, you would ask to see the machine first. It is unscientific to demand the same degree of proof for the resurrection of Jesus Christ as would be required for that of John Smith or Tom Jones. If you ask a man to believe in the resurrection of Jesus who does not first believe in Jesus, you ask an unreasonable thing. Nor would it greatly concern us if it were proved that John Smith did rise from the dead — except as a remarkable phenomenon. But if Jesus rose, each of us is intimately concerned, because of that personality which makes him racial and representative and by virtue of which we may say, with St. Paul, If He rose I shall rise also.

The weight of evidence affected by the person involved

[1] See article by Canon Henson in the *Hibbert Journal*, April, 1904.

III

The return of emphasis from the mere external fact of the resurrection to the Risen Christ is one of the marked tendencies of contemporary Christianity. The Ritschlian school has done much to promote this change. Placing Christ at the helm of history, Ritschlianism holds that the resurrection of Christ "is the completion of the revelation made in him, which not only absolutely corresponds with, but necessarily results from, the worth of his Person."[1] But this subordination of the resurrection of Christ to his Person has become much wider and more pervasive than the tenets of any one school. "A clear distinction has been discerned," says Dr. James M. Whiton, "between the real resurrection of Jesus — his rising from the mortal state into the immortal — and his phenomenal resurrection in the visible world. So conservatively orthodox a writer as Dr. G. D. Boardman goes so far as to say: 'After all, the real question is not, Did Christ's body rise? That is but a subordinate, incidental issue.' The real question, as Dr. Boardman admits, is, 'Whether Christ himself is risen and is alive to-day.'"[2] As the Church at large gradually comes back to this earlier and truer perspective, the physical resurrection will come

Emphasis is returning to the Risen Christ

[1] *The Ritschlian Theology*, Garvie, p. 224.
[2] *Miracles and Supernatural Religion*, p. 115.

more and more universally to be regarded as of minor moment in comparison with the Risen Christ, who proves the resurrection far more than the resurrection proves him.

IV

The Risen Christ convinced the disciples of his identity. Does he convince us? Is he "natural," — as depicted in the narratives, — one with the Christ of Galilee and of the upper chamber? The Risen Christ portrayed in the Gospels is the same Jesus, and yet not wholly the same. Had he been too much shadow, or too much substance, the disciples would have doubted, and so would we.

The Resurrection one of the three Births of Christ

But, not so. He is so much the same as to be himself, and yet too much changed not to have passed through death. The transition is not a mere return to previous limiting conditions. The old limitations are gone. He comes and goes at will, with the freedom of the Spirit. Nor is the Risen Christ in the same stage of self-development. "According to the New Testament," says Dorner, "the resurrection is not merely Christ's justification and his vindication, . . . but also an epoch of development in his person."[1] It is a bold conception, but not without foundation. We instinctively feel that the Risen Christ of the Gospels, while he is at one with the pre-resurrection Christ, has passed on

[1] *System of Christian Doctrine*, Vol. IV, p. 134.

into a wider amplitude of personality and a wider scope of activity. The ancient Church spoke of the resurrection as one of the three births of Christ.[1] As such, the resurrection introduces Christ to an ampler sphere of being. He becomes a still richer and more productive personality. His character is just as human and winsome, his contact just as intimate and loving as of old, and yet there is a closer converse with the spiritual, a richer self-realization, purities, potencies, pleromas that awaken fresh love and reverence. His salutation, as he enters the room, breathes a vital serenity, as of another realm, and his presence stirs a still deeper faith. To fix firmly in the minds of the disciples the identity of this new selfhood with that of the Jesus with whom they were so familiar, was the constant endeavor of the Risen Christ. If he appears to lay undue stress upon his physical body, his hands, his feet, his side, it is that he may convince the disciples of his identity, not of his corporeity. His one aim is to assure them that this is his very self.

Identity versus Corporeity

Thus does the Risen Christ accentuate and amplify the Christ personality. The resurrection as an external event is absorbed and lost sight of in the resurrection as a stage, a waymark in the progress of this expanding Spirit, "machinery just lent, to give the soul

Resurrection a step in the progress of Christ

[1] Dorner, *System of Christian Doctrine*, Vol. IV, p. 134, note. See Col. 1:18.

its bent." In the light of the Risen Christ it is easy to understand those words in the Fourth Gospel, so enigmatical at the time they were spoken: "I am the resurrection, and the life." Here is the utterance of a consciousness so vital, so puissant, so triumphant, that it scorns death and sees resurrection only as a phase, a process in its own invincible, outflowing life. Just as surely as this Soul, this Consciousness, this Person whom we call Jesus Christ, is understood in his real strength and supremacy, just so surely the conviction follows that he could not be holden of death, but that the crucified Christ must needs become the Risen Christ.

XIX

CHRIST RETURNING

As the mind of the Church grows more sensitive and discerning in its understanding of Jesus, it becomes increasingly conscious of a discordant note, an inherent self-contradiction, in the Gospel representation of him. For many years past this disharmony has been thought to lie in an irreconcilable discrepancy between the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel. But a more mature study of the Fourth Gospel and a more thoughtful comparison of it with the Synoptics shows that this diagnosis has been too hasty. The point at which the real divergence occurs, where the picture of our Lord fails to be true to itself, is that at which Jesus is made to reverse and confute all his previous teaching concerning himself and his kingdom and, exchanging the spiritual for the material, the eternal for the eschatological, to descend to the Jewish level of thought and expression, and enwrap himself in the tinsel trappings of his time and people. I refer to the discourse known as "The Last Things."[1] It is

The discordant note in the Gospel Symphony

[1] Matt. 24 and 25; Mark 13.

safe to say that for the discerning and devout disciple of Jesus to-day it is impossible to read these chapters in the first Gospels without an ever-deepening sense of disappointment and incongruity. Instead of the simplicity, the sanity, the spirituality of the Sermon on the Mount, the Parables, the words at the Last Supper, here are extravagance, literalism, apocalypticism. This Jesus seated outside the wails of Jerusalem is another Jesus from him of the Galilean hills and lakeside, as well as of the upper room.

I

The Jesus who speaks in the thirteenth of Mark and the twenty-fourth of Matthew is not the Jesus who takes farewell of his disciples at the Paschal meal, in the searching spiritual language of the Fourth Gospel. The two accounts as they stand are mutually incompatible representations of himself and of his kingdom. In the Synoptic discourse Jesus represents his return as external, cataclysmic, spectacular, — "on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory"; in the Johannine, he represents his return as invisible and spiritual, — "I come unto you," "Ye in me, and I in you."[1] Between these two representations

The spectacular vs. the spiritual Second Coming

[1] Of the two allusions to a Second Coming in this Gospel (14:3 and 16:22) the first refers to the entrance of the disciple into the future life — "that where I am, there ye may be also" — and the second to the reappearance of Christ after his resurrection.

we must choose. Shall we do so upon the mere basis of the priority of the Synoptic tradition or upon the deeper ground of inherent superiority and self-consistency? Which of the two representations coincides best with Jesus' previous teaching, with his character, with his attitude toward Jewish ideas, with his approach to the cross, his conduct upon trial, his outlook upon the world and his estimate of its forces? Upon such principles of choice there can be no hesitation. We turn inevitably from the Jesus of the Advent discourse of the Synoptics, unnatural, provincial, predictive, to the Jesus of the last discourse in the Fourth Gospel, familiar, sane, spiritual. In Him we recognize the true, ever-living, ever-returning Lord.

This preference for the latter tradition by no means requires the Johannine authorship of the Fourth Gospel (although, in the absence of sufficient data, the Johannine tradition is too strong to be lightly set aside), nor does it require the acceptance of the discourse at the Last Supper as the *ipsissima verba* of Christ. It simply requires that which such scholars as Wendt and Harnack concede, that this is a genuine and trustworthy representation of the mind of Christ, from the view-point of a disciple of rare spiritual insight.

II

Nor is it simply the Johannine account of the returning Christ with which the representation con-

The Kingdom Parables and the portents of the Parousia

tained in the discourse on the Last Things conflicts. *It is entirely out of harmony, also, with the earlier representations of the Synoptic narratives themselves.* The kingdom parables, so characteristic of the first two Gospels, can with difficulty be reconciled with the lurid pictures of the second coming of this discourse. The kingdom cannot be like a mustard-seed, or leaven hid in the meal, and at the same time be preluded by heavens shaking and stars falling. No; the earlier part of the Synoptic tradition, in the main, coincides with the Johannine in representing Jesus as from first to last, ethical and spiritual in his attitude, relying upon spiritual truths, spiritual forces, spiritual methods. It is hardly loyal to him to conceive him at the end as renouncing this for materialistic Jewish conceptions and programs. The case is one of united preponderating Synoptic and Johannine tradition *versus* a single alien section of Synoptic narrative.[1] It is hardly an exaggeration to assert that the

[1] It is true that there are other detached references which seem to convey the same external, material conception, as, for example, Mark 8:38–9:1. But this is an allusion to the Daniel passage and is a merely figurative expression of his coming recognition.

issue amounts to this: Was Jesus true to himself to the last, or not? That he was thus faithful to his higher purpose, everything goes to prove. The Risen and Ascending Christ is still true to his earlier teaching and attitude. His words are of witness-bearing, the enduement of the Spirit and of his own unfailing, unseen Presence, and not of his speedy return. It is only the two men in white apparel who reassert the temporal external eschatology that so misled the early Church.

III

How, then, account for this strange stratum, this incongruous element, in the sayings of Christ? It is possible, of course, to apply heroic treatment to the narrative, and, even without external warrant of any sort, cut out these alien passages as belonging to an impure Jewish tradition. But that would leave the universal expectation of the Second Coming in the Early Church too far unexplained. It is much more reasonable to conjecture that Jesus uttered a prophecy, in his own manner, of things to come which was so misunderstood and distorted by the medium through which it passed, as to produce a false and misleading perspective and impression. Modern scholarship has made it possible for us to disentangle, somewhat, the confusion of these words as reported, and form a reasonable conjecture concerning their purport. Three main threads

The probable character of the Last Discourse

of coherent prediction appear running through the highly colored fabric of the prophecy:— (1) the approaching destruction of Jerusalem with the consequent disintegration of the Jewish nation — a catastrophe which Jesus clearly anticipated; (2) the turbulence of the world history as it lay before his vision; (3) the marked and triumphant effect which his own cause was to have among the forces of history. In this triumph he himself was to be personally present as Leader.[1] The chief object of the whole prophecy seems to have been to make the disciples observant, watchful, active. In this prophecy he again made use of the passage from Daniel from which he may have selected his own title, and which, better than any other Old Testament prophecy, furnished the key to the true nature of his own kingdom, as contrasted with other great world forces and movements. Unless conservative scholarship has entirely misread Jesus, he used this apocalyptic passage from Daniel symbolically and not literally, whereas the disciples, the Apostolic Church and the great majority of Christians in all the ages since, have accepted the words as a literal description of the

[1] "For Jesus, the idea of his second coming to execute judgment and to consummate salvation was equivalent to the certainty of the continuance of his Messianic significance in the kingdom of God in spite of his death." Wendt, *Teachings of Jesus*, Vol. II, p. 283. But it was more than Messianic significance; rather, Messianic leadership.

manner of his second coming. No more flagrant instance of the bondage of the letter is to be found in history. And yet, it is not difficult to see that in the providence of God this misconception of a speedy Second Advent really helped on an undeveloped and short-sighted Christianity to take its infant steps until it could bear more light, take wider visions, and form larger conceptions.

IV

But if, brushing aside the confusions and misunderstandings of the discourse as we have it, we break through symbol and figure to the real meaning of the Master, what do we find it to be? Is there to be a return of Christ? If so, what manner of parousia is it? No satisfactory answer is possible save that which has been slowly dawning upon the Church through the unfolding of history and the progress of Christianity, namely, that the return of the King is unseen and spiritual, like the kingdom itself. *Thus* has Christ been not only a Living Christ but a Returning Christ. Thus has he been returning from the day of his ascension to this. Thus did he return to his own generation at Pentecost, at Antioch, at Corinth. In power and great glory he descended to transform the Roman Empire, and to become King of the nations of the West. He returned at the Reformation to resume his lordship over the Church. At the Great Awakening he sent forth his angels

Christ's many Returns

to gather his elect from the four winds. At the rise of the modern missionary movement the Bridegroom came and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast. In the release of the slaves, the reconstruction of prisons, the coming of the era of hospitals and homes, every unclouded eye saw him. In the modern social movement he is the real Leader. The truth of the Returning Christ is the truth that not only is he with his own always, but that he comes to humanity in ever fresh measures and unexpected manners to save, and further save, and yet further save, humanity.

Christ already come

And not only has the Christ been returning in power and great glory in all the Christian centuries, but still more is he to return in the years that are before. They are right who believe that Christ has already come. They are *most* right who believe that he is yet to come. Unto the purifying of the Church he is to come, unto the redemption of society, the overthrow of wrong, the universalizing of opportunity, the federation of the nations, the eternal triumph of peace and righteousness and love, he is to come. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

And still to come

XX

CHRIST AND SOCIAL REDEMPTION

Is the Christocentric theology in touch with modern life? Has it a message for the time? This is its ultimate test. We are in the whirl and ferment of a period of social reconstruction, in which — however blind the average man may be to the fact — not only ethics but theology is deeply involved. Has the Christocentric theology any cogent and vital contribution to make toward the settlement of the problems that press upon us?

The Final Test

I

Manifestly one of the foremost requisites of social progress is a right and true conception of the structure of society. If men are held together by nothing more than physical dependences, utilitarian motives, material advantages, the future of humanity is dark — a long vista of clashes and readjustments — with, at the best, nothing in the end but superficial progress, material gains, greater comforts, finer facilities, an apocalypse of conveniences and advantages, in-

Is there a Divine Purpose for Humanity?

dustrial truce, social stratification, but no vision of human brotherhood, universal peace and good-will, world-wide righteousness and love. With a future limited to material progress, it is an open question whether society is worth perpetuating, whether the game is worth the candle. But if humanity is grounded in a divine purpose and is capable of indefinite progress in true worthiness, if society can become a true mutuality of love and sympathy, then the face of our problem is wholly changed, a great hope takes possession of us, a vision of spiritual splendor attends us:

> "Order, courage, return,
> Eyes rekindling, and prayers,
> . . . . . .
> On, to the bound of the waste,
> On, to the City of God." [1]

Unless society were constituted in a divine order, it could never have reached even its present state of advancement. Nothing but the sense of moral obligation could possibly have brought men on into an ordered and secure state of society. The beavers have their colonies, the bees their hives, but there is no improvement in organization and structure from one millennium to another. Man has not remained stationary, and cannot. This sense of obligation, controlling man's growing intelligence as well as his imperious appetites and ambitions — what is it?

Yes; for the sense of Moral Obligation reVeals it

[1] Matthew Arnold, *Rugby Chapel.*

whence is it? The great consensus of mankind has been that it issues from a divine Source. Latter-day attempts to find the genesis of the moral sense in a source no higher than custom and convenience have not been successful. Men are deeply conscious that here, in the sense of Duty, is something that comes from above and beyond themselves.

The Christocentric theology comes forward with the declaration that the sense of obligation is not merely an instinct implanted by God in the soul, but that it *is* the living will of God in the soul — the Christ of conscience — that by virtue of this common divine indwelling every man is of worth and can become a true son of God, and that society, possessing this universal divine Presence, is constituted in God and can and will develop into God-likeness.

The older theology, with its emphasis upon the divine sovereignty, with its denial of the worth of all unregenerate virtue and of the presence of Christ outside the pale of the Church, and with its wreckage plan of redemption, had no adequate theory of society, no true conception of the relation of humanity to Christ, either genetically or historically. It is impossible for Roman Catholicism, with its institutionalism; or Calvinism, with its pessimism; or Arminianism, with its individualism; or Unitarianism, with its naturalism, to grasp the idea of social redemption. Not one of the theologies of the past

A Theology for Social Redemption

has had breadth and power enough to realize the fundamental relation of Christ to society, in its very nature and constitution, or to embrace humanity as a whole in the scope of the divine purpose. The kingdom of God is alien to them all. It is only a theology that dares put Christ at the very center and heart of humanity that founds society on a principle deep enough and firm enough to uphold the walls of a city of God on earth. Nothing but a Christocentric theology will convince the world that life itself, in its every part and relation, is sacred, spiritual, and belongs to God, and that whatsoever society does in word or in deed can and should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, who is its Heart and Soul.

The Principle of Social Redemption

II

Not only does the Christocentric theology furnish a principle for social redemption, but a motive. Nothing will inspire an enduring enthusiasm for humanity, a victorious love for men, except the conviction that every man is of inestimable worth to God and to humanity, that there is something in the individual man, as well as something in humanity as humanity, that is of exceeding and eternal value. For that conviction the Christocentric theology supplies a basis in the conception of the Indwelling Christ, who is in all men, giving to each his individual worth and

The Motive for Social Redemption

to humanity as a whole its splendor and possibility. To free this divine life, this Christ within each and within the whole, and make him dominant by means of the appeal of the Christ of history, — this is the joyous task of Christianity; not to make humanity divine, — for it is that already, potentially, — but to bring out and make regnant the Divine within it.

Beside principle and motive for social redemption, therefore, the Christocentric theology also furnishes *means*, — by availing itself of the definite and concrete redemption afforded in the Historic Christ. Here lies its power.[1] It believes in revelation as well as immanence, in the Christ of Calvary as well as the Christ of conscience, in the Son of man as well as the eternal Logos. And in the Living Christ, as he fulfils and potentializes the Indwelling Christ, it finds the only sufficient Redeemer of humanity. Lacking such a historical revelation, we should be without convincing assurance of the divine purpose and love and without adequate leadership in social redemption.

The Means for Social Redemption

[1] "There is no question in the world so vital as this of the spiritual power. The temperance question, the sexual question, the war question, the Irish question, the negro question, the question of labor, the question of the proletariat and other such are most grave and pressing. But none of them are so grave and deep in the long run as the question of the spiritual power." P. T. Forsyth, *Report of Second International Congregational Council*, p. 62.

III

Inspiring and impelling as is the man Jesus, as such alone he would be insufficient to accomplish the redemption of humanity. The reduction of Jesus to the level of ordinary humanity and the corresponding deification of humanity as sufficient to attain its own salvation apparently results in stagnation of effort. To make God a laborer together with man, instead of man a laborer together with God, is stultifying. It needs

A Christ-centered Theology alone adequate for social Redemption

a God-infused religion, a Christ-centered theology, to stir men to devoted action for social salvation, for world redemption. The great social redemption movement of England and America, not only in its evangelistic phases, but in social reform and social settlement has been, in the main, grounded in a Christ-exalting theology. Maurice, Kingsley, General Booth, Arnold Toynbee, and the men who have reproduced their spirit and deeds in America, have had a great faith in Jesus Christ, and in spirit always, if not always in method, have made him central in motive and in aim. The great missionary enterprise, the noblest and most fruitful advance toward social redemption in modern times, has been Christ-animated and Christ-directed.

Around personality converge all problems, all tasks, all hopes. And the Christ Personality alone is sufficient to meet them. "Jesus imparted new

values to things: He scattered new thoughts broadcast in the world. But it was only His person that gave these new values and these new thoughts that victorious power which transformed the world." [1]

[1] Paul Wernle: *The Beginnings of Christianity*, Vol. I, p. 37.

XXI

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

THE most marked characteristic of modern religious life is undoubtedly the breaking down of the old division between the sacred and the secular, the Church and the world. The fact is patent; it needs no demonstration. What does it signify?

When an earnest and observant soul looks out into the world about him and tries to gauge its moral and spiritual status, he becomes deeply perplexed. He is met by an inextricable confusion, an interblending of righteousness and unrighteousness, of selfishness and unselfishness, of faith and unfaith, which leaves him bewildered. At times he is optimistic and filled with hope; at times he is tempted to reecho the severe and solemn verdict of John Henry Newman: "If I looked into a mirror and did not see my face, I should have the same sort of feeling which actually comes upon me, when I look into this living, busy world and see no reflection of its Creator. . . . The sight of the world is nothing else than the prophet's scroll, full of lamentation and mourning and woe." [1] This is the earnest outcry

The World and the Prophet's Scroll

[1] *Apologia Pro Vita Sua.*

of a soul very jealous for God, and yet it is, after all, a narrow judgment. It fails to take account of the good that lies embedded in the life of the world, running like a vein of gleaming gold through its otherwise worthless strata. The gold is unmined and may not be ecclesiastically marketable, but it is there nevertheless, and — though his stamp may not yet be upon it — it is God's.

I

"To see life steadily and see it whole"[1] — that alone will give the true perspective. And the more steadily and comprehensively one views life, the more clearly do two convictions shape themselves out of its confusions and contradictions.

Eternity at the Heart of Things

The first is that into the very structure and fiber of life, its necessary functionings, its common cares, its inevitable ongoings, are wrought sacred possibilities and symbols, — potencies, disciplines of an eternal order. Toil, sleep, the daily meal, home duties, community life, trade, study, religious and civic relations — all the obligations, services, and dependences that make up the warp and woof of daily life are in themselves holy and beautiful and capable of such educative and fruitful discipline, such harmony and holiness, that the man of insight who has caught the true meaning of life cannot rest content with the commonplace, sordid world in which the majority of men live.

[1] Matthew Arnold.

There is one, and but one, conception commanding and comprehensive enough to express and embody the highest ideal of human society, and that is the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is no less than the world transformed into the medium and expression of the divine life, — the home, the state, the church, business, society, education, literature, art, everything, become the organ and instrument of God's downreaching and man's upreaching life. Denied, disclaimed, thrust aside, neglected, as this ideal of a perfect God-filled human society has been, humanity is smitten to the heart with its goodliness. Men in all generations have dreamed of a Golden Age to come. The prophets of Israel stretched suppliant hands to God for its advent. The Christian Church saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, descending out of God from heaven. Poets have sung the coming glory and reformers have suffered and died that it might be hastened. In one form or another the ideal has been growing clearer, more real, more certain. Jesus gave it its fairest form, its noblest description, its strongest impulse, when he called it the Kingdom of God and described it as the pearl of great price, the treasure hid in the field, the seed growing into a great and goodly tree. This Kingdom is at hand, he said to men; it is among you; seek it, serve it, realize it.

It is only in our own time that the true character and scope of the Kingdom has come to be fully

recognized. Heretofore the seeker after God, the man of ideals, has thought to find God and fashion his character apart from the world, in the hermitage, the monastery, the church. Now he sees that he can win the ideal only *in* the world, as he finds God in its commonest duty and experience and fills the whole sphere of life with the endeavor to find his presence and realize his will.

"Not that thou shouldest take them out of the world"

And yet how far are we from the Kingdom still! The ancient, bitter denunciations of the world even now speak a partial truth. How sodden is business still, — business which ought to be the very means and instrument of human intercourse and fellowship; how selfish is trade, how infamous politics, how self-seeking and unaspiring literature, how artificial society, how imperfect and worldly the Church! How near is the Kingdom, yet how far!

II

Thus there grows up within us the second conviction, as strong and as clear as the first, that, except by the power and grace of God, the kingdom of God, the redemption of human society can never come. It is his Kingdom; he alone can bring it to pass. Again and again men have tried to establish this ideal for themselves, by means of their own human effort alone. Utopias, revolutions, reforms, communisms,

"Thy kingdom come"

democracies, socialisms, — how hopefully have they been instituted, how hopelessly have they failed! Human nature is too impotent and too vitiated to succeed of itself. A great cloud of disappointment and dismay has been slowly gathering over the hearts of those who watch for the coming of the Kingdom because America has so far failed to realize the hope of humanity. Municipal evils, legislative corruption, industrial strife, social estrangement, spiritual lethargy, — are these the fruits of the civilization begun in such promise and consecration in this virgin Western world? Is humanity to go on forever at "this poor, dying rate"? Is the world never to roll on into the light of the Golden Age of human brotherhood and peace? It does not satisfy the eager heart of hope to be reminded of the progress already made, and of the necessarily slow and gradual gains by which alone advance in higher life is made. God can surely do more for his children, after two thousand years of Christianity, than this!

III

What, then, if men should learn at last to recognize their own impotence and to rely upon God? What if the heart of humanity should turn and become again as the heart of a little child? What if a wide-spread dissatisfaction with material prosperity, with ease and pleasure and selfishness,

should come over our twentieth century civilization, — a great longing for righteousness and faith? Would the coming of the Kingdom delay and halt as at present? Would not the Golden Age be ushered in and humanity come at last to its own?

Some such longing and hope as this seems to be stirring in the hearts of many throughout Christendom to-day, based upon the conviction that political reform and industrial improvement and social betterment are not enough, indeed that they are not possible in any real way, without a regeneration that goes deeper than external wrongs and defects and renews the very heart of the individual and of society. Nothing of power and permanence can come in social redemption so long as we continue to make of God an Adjunct, an Assistant, an Abettor of humanity in the struggle for progress, and of Christ simply a Teacher, a Type, a Helper, to our ends. This is a self-exaltation of humanity, an affront to the divine Being, a perversion of the eternal order, which can result only in futility and disaster. Only the attitude of faith, of humility, and of service which alone befits man, can prepare him for his part, as a servant of God, in bringing in that Kingdom which God withholds only because man is unprepared to receive it.

"Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for eVer"

God, not man, is the Author of the Kingdom. If man has dreamed of it, portrayed it, struggled for it, it is only because God has given him the

vision, furnished him the motive, supplied him with the strength. And if God is the Author and End of the Kingdom, God in Christ is the Soul of it. Central within it, furnishing the concrete personal leadership without which it can never reach fulfilment, is the Living Christ. It is he who occupies the throne of the Kingdom, not in God's stead, not as his representative, but as the revelation of himself in his human aspects and kinship. Serving this King, one serves not only the King of kings, but the King of all kingdoms, earthly and celestial.

It is the very presence and grace of God, felt and recognized, not only as a pervasive consciousness but as a concrete reality in Christ, which gives this ideal of the Kingdom inclusiveness and effectiveness, incentive and momentum, while other social ideals fade and fail. To make Jesus Christ Lord of trade, of industry, of art, of education, of science, of literature, of all human pursuits and enterprises, — this is the way to bring each to highest fulfilment and to relate each rightly to all other human interests. This is the *summum bonum* of human society, the way out of chaos to order, out of discord and evil and imperfection, to harmony, holiness, and happiness.

"Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus"

IV

But if this Kingdom were simply a consummation, a climax, a coral island lifted out of the

waters of oblivion upon the sacrificial deposit of those who lived not to share its blessing, it could be neither a truly human nor a truly divine Kingdom. It needs to embrace humanity, to include all generations; it needs that men come from the East and from the West to sit down within it and share its fulfilled joy. It must needs be, that is, not only historical but eternal, not only earthly but heavenly. Such is the New Testament representation.

"That they without us should not be made perfect"

The beginnings of the Kingdom reach far back of history, of humanity, back into the heart of Eternal Love, creating all things, purposing all things, before all time, through the Eternal Word of Wisdom. The builders of the Kingdom — how they multiply upon our vision through the receding generations, a vast army, each one who obeys the Divine Will, the eternal Christ within him, making his contribution to the great structure that has risen through the ages, and within which, in its completion, all shall be gathered who have aided, however slightly, in its construction; and we know not how many more. For the kingdom is humanity's Kingdom, and the Christ is humanity's Christ.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

I

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE CHRISTO-CENTRIC THEOLOGY[1]

Primitive Christian life and thought were Christocentric. To the disciples, Jesus was all in all. Paul found in Christ not only the absorbing passion of his life, but the power of God, and the wisdom of God, unto salvation. The author of the Fourth Gospel, in his profound meditation, found himself impelled to associate Jesus with the formative Principle of creation and the Light that lighteth every man coming into the world. The Greek theology, finding the nexus of philosophy and Christianity in this Logos doctrine, conceived Christ as the incarnate Reason that illumines the universe. Origen centered his rich and radiating system of theology in Christ. Athanasius, touching a deeper and more ethical spring, found in Christ's eternal Sonship not only the clue to the nature of God and of humanity, but also the link binding the two together. The Antiochian theology followed the Nicene in concentrating its thought upon Christ.

But with the rise of Western Christianity the doctrine of the centrality of Christ sank into subservience to that of the divine sovereignty as set forth by Augustine. The

[1] Reprinted, by permission, from *The Bibliotheca Sacra*, July, 1905

Augustine of the "Confessions" is centered upon Christ, but the Augustine of the "City of God" is absorbed in the problem of the Church and the ground of its primacy. "It almost seems," says Professor Allen, "as though, if Christ were left out altogether, the scheme of Augustine would still maintain its consistency as a whole and retain its value as a working system." [1] Augustinianism was perpetuated by Calvinism. The authority of the Church in Catholicism, and of the Bible in Protestantism, inevitably obscured the supremacy of Christ. It was not until, through the combined agency of philosophy, science, and Biblical criticism, Christianity was released from the bondage of authority, that a day dawned for the free reconstruction of Christology, and the reassertion of the Christocentric faith.

It is instructive to watch the current of a new movement in the realm of thought widen and deepen. One can see, by anticipation, spiritual fields fertilized and mill-wheels turned by it, if it be of sufficient force and significance. Such interest unquestionably attaches to the modern movement toward the Christologizing of theology, the rereading of the universe in terms of the consciousness of Christ.

If we ask through whom this movement, in its modern form, took its rise, the name of Friedrich Schleiermacher, that great revivifier of spiritual theology, takes precedence of all others. "His it was to make Christ and his redemption the center of one of the most skilfully developed systems of theology which the Christian Church has known," said Henry B. Smith, in his Andover address on "Faith and Philosophy." The move-

[1] *Continuity of Christian Thought*, p. 158.

ment which Schleiermacher thus instituted was carried forward by many able successors, among them Schweizer, Neander, Rothe, and, above all, he whose motto was "Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," Isaac August Dorner. The latter's monumental work, "The Doctrine of the Person of Christ," completed in 1856, together with his constant insistence upon the "universal significance of Christ" as "the productive archetype" and "objective historical center" of the higher life, exerted great influence in shaping thought in the direction of the person of Christ.

The movement thus begun has progressed with characteristic distinctions in Germany, France, England, and America.

In England, Coleridge, Thomas Arnold of Rugby, and Frederick D. Maurice prepared the way for a truer conception of Christ,— as did Thomas Erskine and McLeod Campbell in Scotland, by exorcising scholasticism and formalism from theology, especially from Christology, and insisting upon sincerity and reality as the absolute prerequisites of a genuine theology. From the day that Maurice, with his searching, iconoclastic sincerity, thus cleared the way for a genuine Christology, religious thought in Great Britain has converged more and more toward the person of Christ. "Ecce Homo" (1863), Robertson's "Sermons," and the "Lives of Christ" of Edersheim, Giekie and Farrar helped in various ways to promote this cause. Liddon's Bampton Lectures on "Our Lord's Divinity," R. W. Dale's writings, A. B. Bruce's "Apologetics" and "Humiliation of Christ," have all furthered the movement. At the present time, the Christocentric theology, as represented in the Establishment by Canon Gore, and among the Free

Churches by Principal Fairbairn, is unquestionably the vital and dominant theology. In addition to Canon Gore's work on the "Incarnation," and Principal Fairbairn's "Place of Christ in Modern Theology" and "Philosophy of Christianity," this movement has given us "Lux Mundi," and James Orr's comprehensive and scholarly volume, "The Christian View of God and the World," with its able exposition of the principle that the person of Christ is "necessarily central in his own religion, nay, in the universe." Upon the same lines are working, with great enthusiasm tempered by fine scholarship, D. W. Forrest, — whose work on "The Christ of History and of Experience," is one of the most suggestive contributions to the discussion, — J. R. Illingworth, Robert Horton, Principal Forsyth, and others who are leading the religious thinking of Great Britain to-day.

Returning to Germany, whatever may be said in criticism of the theological apostasy of Ritschlianism, with its motto, "Back to Christ," it is assuredly a Christocentric movement. Christ is its chiefest *Werthurtheil*. In so far, at least, it is apostolic in its character, and should win from every earnest Christian the Pauline thanksgiving for all means by which, in whatever way, Christ is proclaimed. Hermann and Kaftan center theology in Christ; and Harnack himself — that electric battery of present-day theology — (though in his own way) is essentially Christocentric in his position. "Harnack is not less convinced than Ritschl of the uniqueness and originality of Jesus Christ. If we ask where we are to find the essence of Christianity, Harnack answers in a word, In Jesus Christ and in his gospel." [1]

[1] William Adams Brown, *Essence of Christianity*, p. 281.

Appendix

America has not been wanting in her appreciation of the significance of the Christocentric movement, nor in her contributions to its advancement. Henry B. Smith was the prophet of the movement in this country, and as early as 1849, in the remarkable address already alluded to, lifted high and clear the banner of the new theology in the memorable words, "Christianity is not only an historic revelation and an internal experience, but also an organic, diffusive, plastic, and triumphant force in human history; and in this history, as in the revelation and in the experience, the center round which all revolves is the person of Jesus Christ." But it was not given to Henry B. Smith to work out the large conclusions of this far-sighted inspiration. Before that could be accomplished, it was necessary that some one should do in America a work analogous to that of Maurice in England, and restore to Christology reality and freedom. That was the part so nobly played, and at such cost, by Horace Bushnell. Next to the works of Bushnell, probably no theological treatise in this country has been at once so emancipatory and constructive as Elisha Mulford's "Republic of God."

The history of the Christocentric movement in America is too fresh and familiar to need repetition. The principle and motive of it received a comprehensive statement from Professor Egbert C. Smyth, in the initial number of *The Andover Review*, in which he wrote: "God is revealed in Christ. The possibility, the unity, the unification, of a science of theology are given in him and in him alone."

As the wider Christocentric movement has advanced, it has won for itself here, as in Great Britain, the allegiance of many of the keenest and most active minds,

both in pulpit and seminary chair. Dr. George A. Gordon is one of its most earnest advocates. President A. H. Strong, Dr. A. H. Bradford, and Dr. Wm. Newton Clarke have in various ways interpreted the Christocentric theology. The late lamented Professor Stearns of Bangor enthusiastically adopted it in his inaugural, and reaffirmed it in his address before the London International Council. President King, in his notable volumes, "The Reconstruction of Theology" and "Theology and the Social Consciousness," has made a most valuable contribution to Christology. Dr. McConnell's "Christ," a book at once stimulating and superficial, takes the Christocentric position. The number of Lives of Christ that have appeared within the last twenty years, and are still appearing, evidences the unflagging interest in the historic Christ. Professor William Adams Brown, of Union Seminary, in his timely volume, "The Essence of Christianity,"— a clear and effective study in theology,— states the conclusion of his research as follows: "Would we express in a sentence what makes the genius of Christianity as a historic religion, we cannot do so better than by saying that it is the progressive realization, in thought as in life, of the Supremacy of Christ."

By far the largest constructive and carrying power in the Christocentric school at present belongs to the work of Principal Fairbairn in England, and of Dr. George A. Gordon in this country. The former, upon a canvass of such magnitude as only he can cover, has given us such a presentation of the "architectonic" nature of Christianity, as it centers in Christ,— its range, its significance, its supremacy, as it is related to other religions and to racial needs, — as affords to Christianity a new conception of its commission and conquering power as the

universal religion. The latter, Dr. Gordon, in "The Christ of To-day," "The New Epoch for Faith," and "Ultimate Conceptions of Christianity," has given us a no less inspiring interpretation of the intensive, as contrasted with the extensive, relation of Christ to human life and to our civilization, which He has so permeated that it can neither understand itself nor realize its ends apart from Him.

Sufficient evidence has been adduced, perhaps, to indicate how wide-spread, how vital, and how thoroughly an outgrowth of our own period, is this renewed Christologizing of theology.[1] That it has for many years been recognized as the dominating principle of modern theology is witnessed by the statement of Professor Fisher, when, at the close of his "History of Doctrine," in summing up the present doctrinal situation, he concludes: "The question of the implication of Christ's person and work forms the rubrics of the modern theological system."

[1] How far this revival of interest in Christology is a modern tendency may be seen by noting the proportionate place given to Christology in a comprehensive system of theology of an earlier day, such as Hodge's, which consists of three large volumes: I. Theology; II. Anthropology; III. Soteriology and Eschatology.

II

THE VITAL ISSUES OF THE HARNACK CONTROVERSY

In the field of theology and philosophy, certain books serve successively as conflict centers, by means of which opposing parties define and test one another. Such a book is Harnack's "What is Christianity?" It is admirably adapted to arouse interest and provoke controversy. Candid, perspicuous, positive, pertinent, fascinating in style, filled with the fruits of ripe scholarship and strenuous thinking, it is not surprising that it has stirred theological stagnation as no book of the century has thus far done. It has interested theological students, shocked Sunday-school teachers, stimulated preachers, roused theologians from their "dogmatic slumbers," and drawn the attention of thoughtful minds outside the Church back to the fundamental problems of theology, in a remarkable way.

There has been a general effort to "place" the book, — to apperceive it. Is it orthodox or heterodox, sound or dangerous, trustworthy or biased? Over this problem the Church has, for four years and more, been puzzling. Meanwhile appreciation, endorsement, criticism, and attack have been multiplying.

In estimating the real tendency and significance of Professor Harnack's statement of the essence of Christianity, two criticisms are of special value as coming from

contrasted Christian standpoints — Professor Hermann Cremer's "Reply to Harnack" and Alfred Loisy's "The Gospel and the Church."

The controversy regarding Harnack's representation of the essence of Christianity (*Das Wesen des Christes-thums*) resolves itself in the light of criticism and in perspective into two issues: (1) as to the *method* of finding the essence of Christianity and (2) as to *what is that essence*.

(1) In order to determine the true essence of Christianity, Harnack maintains, it is necessary to go back to the primitive gospel itself, in its purity and simplicity. Very ably and adroitly has M. Loisy, taking the law of evolution as his apologetic principle, argued, in refutation of Harnack, that Christianity is to be understood only in the whole process and product of its development. "The full life of the gospel," he asserts, "is not in a solitary element of the doctrine of Jesus, but in the totality of its manifestation, which starts from the personal ministry of Christ, and its development in the history of Christianity."[1] This would be convincing if the history of Christianity had been pure development. But, such it has *not* been. Degeneration has all too plainly accompanied evolution; the purity of the gospel has been stained by contact with a corrupting environment; the normal course of development has been deflected and distorted by opposition and obstacle; the essential and vital truth has been overlaid with extraneous and irrelevant accretions. Not that there has not been development, pure and progressive; but in order to trace this it is necessary to disentangle it from false

[1] *The Gospel and the Church*, p. 115.

forms and from extraneous issues, and, above all, to get back as nearly as possible to the source and spring from which the movement started. This Harnack endeavors to do.

"Herr Harnack," writes Loisy, "does not conceive Christianity as a seed, at first a plant in potentiality, then a real plant, identical from the beginning of its evolution to the final limit and from the root to the summit of the stem, but as a fruit, ripe, or rather overripe, that must be peeled to reach the incorruptible kernel; and Herr Harnack peels his fruit with such perseverance that the question arises if anything will remain at the end."[1] It is strange that M. Loisy makes no allusion to the fact that this is precisely what Harnack, in so many words, had said that he should not do. "We must not be like the child, who, wanting to get at the kernel of a bulb, went on picking off the leaves until there was nothing left, and then could not help seeing that it was just the leaves that made the bulb. Endeavors of this kind are not unknown in the history of the Christian religion, but they fade before those other endeavors [with what prescience he here forestalls Loisy] which seek to convince us that there is no such thing as either kernel or husk, growth or decay, but that everything is of equal value and alike permanent."[2]

"But did not Harnack peel the bulb, nevertheless?" it will be asked. That is the question — whether he peeled the bulb, or simply peeled off the dead and useless integument in which it is encased.

(2) Although in his "preliminary" pages Harnack makes several statements, in which he seems to present

[1] *The Gospel and the Church*, p. 19.
[2] *What is Christianity?* second edition, p. 16.

the person of Jesus Christ as the center of the gospel, when he comes to state more precisely the essence of the gospel, we find that he makes it consist in the *Fatherhood of God*; as revealed, not so much through the character and personality of Christ, as through his *knowledge* of God — a knowledge such as no one before him ever had. "Rightly understood, the name of Son means nothing but the knowledge of God."[1] For a basis of this theory of revelation, Harnack relies upon the saying, "No one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him."

Very clear and simple a Christology is this, but also very limited. Is it the Christology of Christ himself? Manifestly not, if we accept the sayings in the Fourth Gospel as in any sense reflecting the mind of Christ. For there Jesus gives a prominence to his personality which makes loyalty to him involve far more than a mere keeping of his commandments. Nor is this the Christology of Paul, nor of the New Testament as a whole.

It is impossible to measure Harnack without reckoning with Ritschl. It is in the Ritschlian denial of the right of reason to interpret the facts of history and experience — in other words, its attempt to taboo "metaphysical theology" — that we find the secret of Harnack's impoverization of the gospel. "Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep," says Ritschlianism to him who seeks to know more of Christ than lies upon the surface of the Synoptic narrative. "Here all research must stop,"[2] proclaims Harnack with the same restrictive dogmatism. But the author of the Fourth Gospel could

[1] *What is Christianity?* second edition, p. 138.
[2] Ibid. p. 139.

not stop here, neither could Paul, nor the unknown writer of the Hebrews, nor the Apologists, nor Athanasius, nor Augustine, nor Thomas Aquinas, nor the Mystics, nor the Reformers, nor the Cambridge Platonists, nor Jonathan Edwards, nor Horace Bushnell, nor Maurice, nor Fairbairn, nor Gordon, nor Loisy. Strongly, steadily, persistently, this development of the New Testament Christology has gone forward throughout the course of Christian history, in tireless response to Jesus' own question: "What think ye of the Christ? whose son is he?" If the development has been in the main a baseless and fruitless one, the Church has gone far astray and has much to unlearn.

But such a conclusion is not likely to be reached. The Pauline conception of Christ is deeply seated in the heart of the Church; though no Christology is adequate for its full expression. It is not strange, therefore, that such a protest as that of Professor Cremer — undiscriminating, unordered, ineffective, but genuine — flames up from the faith of the older Protestantism to challenge Harnack; while from the side of Catholicism emanates the scholarly, judicious criticism of Loisy, condemned for that very scholarship which is its strength.

No defect in Harnack's Christology, however, can nullify the freshening and stimulating value of his work. The limitations of his Christology the Christian communion will gradually recognize and fill up; his clarifying and glowing treatment of historic Christianity it will prize and utilize. More than that. *In the revelation of the Divine Fatherhood, Harnack has certainly discerned the heart of the gospel.* That truth is reached, as Harnack expressly maintains, *through Christ.* This is Christianity and it is historic Christianity. It is as distressing as it is

surprising, therefore, to find Professor Charles A. Briggs asserting: "The solution which Harnack gives is destructive to historic Christianity. He gives a Christianity, as his German critics rightly say, without Christ. He gives a Christianity to which a Jew or a Mohammedan or any monotheistic Oriental would find little difficulty in subscribing." [1] Such a superficial judgment is most misleading. As a matter of fact, neither Mohammedanism, nor Judaism, nor any other Oriental monotheism ever found the universal Fatherhood of God, in the intimate sense in which Harnack defines it. If any Oriental monotheist of to-day has found the Fatherhood, in the full sense of the word, he has found it, mediately or immediately, through Christ.

To understand Harnack's real estimate of Christ and the place which his personality occupies in the gospel, it is necessary to supplement this volume with such an utterance as that contained in his lecture on "Christianity and History," delivered before the Evangelical Union of Berlin, in 1895. In this lecture he discusses the relation of the personality of Jesus to history. To quote but a single sentence: "When God and everything that is sacred threatens to disappear in darkness, or our doom is pronounced; when the mighty forces of inexorable nature seem to overwhelm us and the bounds of good and evil to dissolve; when, weak and weary, we despair of finding God at all in this dismal world — it is then that the personality of Christ may save us." [2] The import and emphasis of such declarations are unmistakable in their ringing accord with historic evangelical Christianity.

No, Harnack has taken the true method and reached

[1] *The Expositor*, April, 1905.
[2] Translation by T. B. Saunders, p. 47.

the real essence of Christianity, only *he has failed to recognize the true character and claim of the Mediator through whom he reached it.* The medium through which he has seen the truth is so transparent and perfect that he is unaware of it. In order to look *through* Christ to the Father, he forgets that he had first to look *at* him. He has not seen the Sonship for the Fatherhood. He is like one who, finding himself in the Holy of holies, forgets the Holy place through which he has entered; or, if he does not forget it, regards it only as a vestibule, a *penetrale*, and not as a part of the Inner Temple.